



Season's Greetings!

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

The Catholic Reporter

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Pope at Angelus: Through Baptism, we are born to new life

- Linda Bordoni

Pope Francis reflects on the Baptism of the Lord which, he says, serves as a reminder of the intimacy of God's love, manifested in the humanity of Jesus, and invites believers to carry this love forward, living as children of the one Father who accompanies us at every step of our journey.

Addressing the faithful during his Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis reflected on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord that marks the close of the Christmas season.

Taking his cue from the Gospel of Luke, he invited Christians to contemplate the two elements highlighted in the reading: the face and the voice of God revealed at the River Jordan.

"The Gospel describes a scene of waiting," Pope Francis said, "where Jesus steps forward to be baptized by John, joining the crowds who approach him with 'a bare soul and bare feet,' a scene, he said that is dear to him, and that highlights the humility with which the people came to receive the baptism of repentance.

The face and voice of God revealed: The Holy Father urged the faithful to reflect on God's decision to reveal Himself through Jesus, establishing a special space for humanity to encounter Him.

"It is in the face of the beloved Son that we know who God truly is," the Pope said.

The Pope also noted the voice of the Father that resounded during Jesus' baptism and he encouraged believers to embrace the transformative gift of baptism.

Don't forget the date of your Baptism: Today's celebration, the Pope said, invites us to deepen our personal connection with God by asking: "Do we feel loved and accompanied by God, or do we think He is far away from us? Do we listen to His voice?" He also posed a practical challenge: "Do we remember the date of our baptism?"

Recollecting the date of baptism, he said, allows believers to cherish the moment they were "reborn to new life" and incorporated into the mystery of Christ and the Church.

He concluded urging every Christian to celebrate the date of their Baptism as if it were a birthday: "A birth into the spirit of God."

Finally, the Pope turned to the Blessed Virgin Mary, inviting all to seek her intercession: "Let us entrust ourselves to the Virgin Mary and invoke her help," he prayed.



The Holy Father after the Angelus (Picture Courtesy: ©Vatican Media/Dicastery for Communication)

Church mourns the passing of Bishop Arnold Orowae of Wabag Diocese

- Donovan Pintol and Jessica Oata



Wabag, Papua New Guinea: The Catholic community in Papua New Guinea is mourning the death of His Lordship, Bishop Arnold Orowae, who passed away on the 27th of December, 2024, at Wabag General Hospital. A pioneer in the Catholic Church, Bishop Orowae was the first local Bishop of the

man of humility, wisdom, and dedication to the Gospel.

The Diocese of Wabag, under the leadership of Bishop Orowae, witnessed tremendous growth and spiritual enrichment, making his loss profoundly felt by the Catholic community. As the faithful gather to bid farewell, they celebrate his remarkable contributions to the Church and pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Bishop Orowae's life and legacy is a solemn reminder of the unity and strength of the Catholic community in Papua New Guinea, rooted in faith, culture, and the shared mission to spread the love of Christ.

He is described by the Auxiliary Bishop of Wabag Diocese His Lordship Bishop Justin Ain Soongie as a very humble, kind and loving person.

"Every person would feel at ease in his presence. Never at one time did I see him getting angry. He had great love and concern for the Diocese and the local Church to be self-reliant and vibrant in faith. For the priests and religious he has always been the father of us all. And he will be greatly missed".

Bishop Soongie said he has always tried his best to help him in his responsibility as the bishop of the Diocese.

He added that he does not have any plans of his own yet but will continue to implement some of the plans late Bishop Arnold had in mind for the good of the Diocese".

"I have always been close to him and there are many fond memories but if you ask me about the most fond memory then I would say his very last words to me an hour before passing on. I left him at the hospital and went back to the Diocesan office to organise the medevac by St. John Ambulance from Wapenamanda the next day. Upon returning to the hospital I whispered to him that we had organised a medevac to POM from Wapenamanda and that two priests and a doctor would accompany him. That is when he said to me" *"But you must stay back."* When

he passed on I came to realise that his time was up and was leaving for eternity and that I have to stay on to continue where he left. May he rest in peace".

"Bishop Arnold Orowae was the President of the CBC - PNGSI for three years when I was General Secretary. He was a great leader because of his humility and simplicity" - Fr Victor Roche SVD, former General Secretary, CBC

"The late Bishop Arnold was a man of great humility. He was always down to earth and easy to talk to, someone who would bring himself down to the level of the people he was with. - Ahisha Mangot, CBC

"Bishop Arnold was a great man who talked about many things apart from matters concerning the church and his diocese. He loved his people dearly and always talked about seeing the goodness in others, especially seeing the goodness in his diocese and province that has been recently associated with SARV. Every time he came to CBC, people came to see him for prayers, advice or just to have a simple conversation". - Leo Iko, CBC

"Bishop Arnold Orowae would rather promote others than himself, let others shine while he observes from the backstage, like Jesus who withdraws to the hills at night in prayer but keeps an eye at the disciples who struggle with their boat in the lake. And if necessary he reaches out to them" - Fr Giorgio Licini PIME, outgoing CBC General Secretary.



Requiem mass for the late Bishop Arnold Orowae.

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Celebrating the Jubilee Year 2025

- Fr. Giorgio Licini, PIME | CBC General Secretary



In the year 1300 the Catholic Church, under Pope Boniface VIII, celebrated the first Jubilee Year inspired by the words of the book of Leviticus 25:10: "Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan". Soon the celebration of an ordinary Jubilee Year started to be held every quarter of the century. Pope Francis officially announced the Jubilee Year 2025 with the bull *Spes non confundit* (Hope does not disappoint) (*Rom* 5:5) on 9 May 2024, Feast of the Ascension of the Lord.

pilgrimage to Rome. Last Christmas night, 24 December 2024, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica, through which the pilgrims will go for the whole year 2025 till the closing of these twelve months of grace and forgiveness. The Lord Jesus is the door of our salvation.

The theme of the Jubilee Year 2025 is *Pilgrims of Hope*. The long walk of the pilgrimage signifies the desire for renewal and for a new beginning, the search for the things that matter and for the right attitudes. Hope is the unverified but deeply felt certainty that bad will give way to good through the mercy of God and our own personal commitment. The jubilee exercise, however, is not a private endeavour. Keeping with the spirit of the Leviticus it involves all the faithful in a common effort, indeed all peoples and nations to a certain extent.

In *Spes non confundit* in fact Pope Francis strongly calls everybody's attention to the "desire for peace in our world, which once more finds itself immersed in the tragedy of war" and the fact that "a number of countries are experiencing an alarming decline in the birthrate". He also expects to

see practical actions of kindness towards the prisoners, the sick, the young, the migrants, the elderly and the poor in general. Furthermore, Pope Francis calls for the creation of a global fund to fight hunger, and the forgiveness of debt for countries which will never be able to repay it.

Additional information on the Jubilee Year 2025 with the calendar of activities in Rome can be found online at <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>. The Bishops of PNG and Solomon Islands are choosing the Jubilee of Catechists on 26-28 September 2025 as the possible date for an organized pilgrimage to Rome (documentationofficer@catholic.org.pg). Participation in the jubilee pilgrimage also allows for the gaining of indulgence, which is the remission of the temporal punishment in purgatory still due for sins after absolution. It applies to both the living and the dead. Indulgence and mercy mean the same thing. The love and mercy of God for humanity and of people towards each other, especially the disadvantaged, are the key concepts of a Jubilee Year.

Key to the Jubilee Year is personal conversion and repentance through the Sacrament of Confession and receiving communion in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It can be done in the dioceses following the indications of the local bishop, at certain international locations, or better, to keep with the original tradition of the jubilee year, during a

The Letters of St Paul: 2 Thessalonians

- Fr. Tomás Ravaioli IVE
Liturgical Catechetical Institute Director



Date: Scholars who hold the traditional view of Pauline authorship agree that 2 Thessalonians was written about the same time and probably from the same place (Corinth) as 1 Thessalonians, in the winter months of late 50 or early 51.

Destination: The situation of the Church seems to be the same, and Paul's focus on the return of Jesus in both letters suggests the second could have been written within weeks or months of the first. In any case, both Thessalonian letters were sent to the same Church in Macedonia (northern Greece) that Paul and his coworkers had founded on his second missionary tour (Acts 17:19).

Purpose and Themes: Paul sent 2 Thessalonians as a follow-up letter to 1

Thessalonians, which was partly ignored and partly misunderstood by his readers. There was need now to correct the way certain believers were thinking and living in light of Christ's expected return. The letter addresses this twofold problem with doctrinal exposition and moral exhortation. **(1) Doctrinal Exposition:** As in his first letter, Paul gives readers an eschatological vision of things to come. This is necessary because some of the Thessalonians are shaken by an alarming idea, based on a misunderstanding of his first letter (1 Thess 4:13-5:12) and reinforced by another letter forged in Paul's name (2 Thess 2:2), that the end times have arrived and the Second Coming of Jesus is just around the corner. Paul considers this a deception (2:3) because Christ will not return in glory until a whole series of events have taken place first. Only

after this period of turmoil and tribulation will Christ come again (2:8). **(2) Moral Exhortation:** Confusion about the timing of Christ's coming has led certain believers into strange and disorderly conduct. We can infer from Paul's comments in 3:6-15 that some in Thessalonica were so convinced that Jesus would return at any moment that they had quit their jobs and stopped working for a living. Paul has nothing good to say about this behavior and seems annoyed that his readers have not heeded his earlier appeals to "work" diligently (1 Thess 4:11) and "admonish the idle" (1 Thess 5:14). The congregation is charged with addressing this problem decisively but charitably (2 Thess 3:14-15). In Paul's mind, these freeloaders who live on the charity of others will better prepare themselves for Christ's return by working than by sitting around waiting.

Re-Inculturation into the life in India

- Fr. Victor Roche SVD



I had very good farewells in many parts of Papua New Guinea, especially in those places where I served in the last 44 years. I was moved at the gratitude and the sentiments the people expressed for my service for the Church and the people of Papua New Guinea.

I reached India on the 31st Dec 2024 and celebrated New Year in my home town. I am yet to realize the fact that I have left PNG. I am still

communicating with people through Emails, WhatsApp and other Social Media.

I am slowly getting re-introduced to the life in India. At present I am attending a two-day "National Bible Seminar" organized by the Divine Word Missionaries (SVDs). There are 88 participants, mostly priests, religious brothers and sisters. It was a very good seminar: well-presented topics with very active participation.

I am slowly getting used to:

1. Large number of people in the public transport: trains, PMVs (buses) and planes

2. Very well-sealed and long roads
3. Fluency of my speech in my local language.
4. Increasing number of middle class in Indian society
5. Large number of Catholics in the churches
6. People leave their slippers, sandals and shoes outside the church and find their own after the mass
7. 24/7 electricity (Power)
8. Cheap (K15 per month- 2GB data free per day) and fast Wi-fi (5G)
9. Fast economic development in India.
10. I do not know many people in the church nor in the streets.

First Woman ever to lead Vatican department

- Sr Daisy Anne Lisania Augustine MSC

Pope Francis has named the first ever female to head the Vatican dicastery for the Holy See's international relations Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

On January 6, the Pontiff appointed Consolata Missionary Sr. Simona Brambilla as prefect for the Vatican office that works with religious orders and their members.

Sr. Brambilla adds to the list of women in leading roles after Pope Francis overhauled the Vatican's central bureaucracy for the first time in thirty years. On March 19, 2022 after nine years to the day of Francis' inauguration as pope in 2013, he released the 54-page text of the New Apostolic Constitution.

Under the title of *Praedicate Evangelium* ("Preach the Gospel") the new document stressed that evangelization is the central task of the church. Stating in the preamble to the text, "the reform of the Roman Curia is also placed in the context of the missionary nature of the church,"

Praedicate Evangelium took effect on June 5, 2022 replacing the 1988 constitution *Pastor Bonus* ("The Good Shepherd") by Pope St John Paul II.

Under the new constitution, the Vatican's Secretariat of State - which is broadly responsible for helping the Pope

remains the highest office, followed by 16 different Vatican departments.

The new structure eliminates previous distinctions between Vatican congregations and councils, with the newly streamlined title of "dicastery."



Sr Simona Brambilla...PC: Wikipedia.

Most notably, the document states that "any member of the faithful can preside over a dicastery, "an update to the 1988 constitution, which specifically stated that Vatican dicasteries are headed by a "cardinal prefect or the presiding archbishop"

Dramatically expanding the number of top leadership roles lay men and women can hold fulfils a top priority of the College of Cardinals. This desire was made clear to improve and decentralize church governance when

the Cardinals gathered to name the successor to Pope Benedict XVI. It will become the hallmark of Pope Francis' pontificate.

Brambilla will now join a growing number of women that Pope Francis has elevated including Sr. Nathalie Becquart who is the under - secretary of the Vatican's synod office.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Fernández Artime was appointed as pro - prefect to work alongside Brambilla. A Spanish Salesian and the 10th Successor of Don Bosco, he was made a Cardinal in the September 2023 Consistory by Pope Francis.

According to Catholic News Service, (CNS) Mercy Sister Sharon Euart, a canon lawyer in the US welcomed the news; "I don't think the appointment of the pro- prefect diminishes the role or authority of the prefect in carrying out the responsibilities" she cited. Adding that the appointment of the pro-prefect recognizes that there may be situations that call for the exercise of holy orders such as liturgical functions which only the priest could perform.

Holding a doctorate in psychology from Rome's Gregorian University, the Italian born missionary had served as secretary of the dicastery since October 2023.

Holy Family Parish - Kindeng celebrates three milestones.

- Sr Mary Lilian SND

Mt Hagen: Parishioners of the Holy Family Parish in Kindeng in the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen came together to celebrate three milestones in their Parish on Sunday December 29, 2024.

The milestones include the opening of the church that was renovated by the parishioners themselves, the Silver Jubilee of two priests: Fr Bonepas Omba and Fr. Kasper Waop and two hundred Catholic faithful receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation administered by Coadjutor Archbishop Clement Papa.

Gathered were more than three thousand people to witness the significant milestones including priests, religious, seminarians and the laity.

Everyone went away in happy spirits rejoicing with the Holy Family Parish for the faith which continues to increase on special solemnities.



Candidates receiving the sacrament of Confirmation from His Grace Coadjutor Archbishop Clement Papa.

The Jubilee of the World of Communications



- Sr Daisy Anne Lisania Augustine MSC
Secretary for Social Communication

From January 24 to January 26 Journalists from all over the world will gather in Rome for the jubilee event. The jubilee of the World of communications will be the first in the list of different jubilees for the entire year.

According to the website of the Jubilee Year; Journalists, video

producers, editors, graphic designers, and social media managers all are invited to make this pilgrimage to Rome to renew their faith and experience the graces granted by the 2025 Jubilee of Hope.

A welcome of the participants will begin the evening of the first day on January 24 with a penitential liturgy at 5:30pm. Followed by a mass for the feast of St Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists and writers to be held in St John Lateran Basilica.

The penitential liturgy is important as the jubilee year calls for renewal of hearts, of forgiveness, of reconciliation as Pope Francis urged pilgrims to

embrace hope as a divine strength that enables new beginnings..

The second day January 25, pilgrims will be able to pass through the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica at 8a.m. At 10a.m. two Catholic journalists from Philippines and Ireland will meet with the communicators. After that, the communicators will have an audience with Pope Francis at 12:30 p.m. in Paul VI Hall.

Later in the afternoon, the Dicastery for Communication will have a cultural and spiritual meeting. The Holy Father will preside in a live broadcast of vespers ending the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Jessica and Ahisha of Social Communications Commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands will be able to take part in the jubilee of young communicators with the theme "Uniting Communicators for a Shared Journey"

Different meetings are scheduled for the whole afternoon. Journalists can choose which conferences to attend; These meetings include the following;

- "Journalism as a mission, giving voice to the voiceless in the outskirts of humankind" -organized by the Vicariate of Rome

- "Journalism at the service of democracy" - organized by UCSI with the Italian Order of Journalists

- "Communicating hope and peace -organized by the Italian Episcopal Conference's Social Communications Office

- "Round table for communicators" - organized by the Pauline Family

- "How the Catholic media can act as peacemakers"

- *Communication and mission* - organized by the Fédération des Médias Catholiques

- "Reporting on the Church from Rome. Meet the Vaticanistas -organized by the Spanish Episcopal Conference

On 26 January, the jubilee of the World of Communications will culminate with the Holy Mass on the "Sunday of the Word of God" presided over by the Holy Father at St. Peter's Basilica with institution of new lectors.

- Jessica Oata

Catholic Church in PNG holds first National Eucharistic Congress

The Archdiocese of Mount Hagen was the generous host to thousands of Catholic faithful, the Bishops with the clergy and religious who gathered at the Rebiamul Cathedral grounds for the First National Eucharistic Congress.

Held from December 12 – 15, 2024 with the theme: Kam! Yumi Adorim Em!, the four – day spiritually uplifting event had a variety of programs centred around the Holy Eucharist.

The program officially began on Thursday December 12 with an array of processions by the different Dioceses taking part in the National Eucharistic Congress into the Rebiamul Cathedral grounds followed by adoration.

Present at the opening program along with the Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops was the Governor for Western Highlands Province Honourable Wai Rapa.

Chargé d'affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature Mons Federico Boni in his remarks extended the Holy Father's message of blessings and thanksgiving to the people and the Church of PNG and Solomon Islands for their gift during the Papal Visit and wished everyone God's blessings for the first National Eucharistic Congress.

In his message, Governor Rapa welcomed the pilgrims from other dioceses to his province and acknowledged the Catholic Church for playing a major role in service delivery to the people of Western Highlands Province and pledged to continue working in partnership with the church in the future.

A lovely evening candlelight procession was held in the evening with thousands of candles burning with hope and silent prayers before everyone

retired for the evening in preparation for the next day's activities.

Activities for Friday December 13 began with an opening Mass that had Most Reverend Coadjutor Archbishop Clement Papa from Mount Hagen Archdiocese as the principal celebrant.



Procession around Mount Hagen on Sunday.

Leading the faithful through the catechesis on *Understanding the Holy Mass*, Fr Savio Angelo Sanchez SDB took the congregation through a spiritual journey and invited them to explore the profound mysteries and divine beauty embedded within the Holy Mass. To complement his talk, Fr Angelo led the faithful in moments of singing.

The second catechesis was given by Sr Mary Altar of Sacrifice SSVM from the Diocese of Vanimo on *The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist*. The session provided a comprehensive understanding of the Eucharist as more than a symbolic act but a direct encounter with the living Christ and had the people listening with great interest and humility under the unforgiving highlands heat.

The last catechesis for the day on *The Eucharist and the Youth* was presented by Fr Pedro Sachitula SDB and provided a unique opportunity for youth to explore the richness of the

Eucharistic celebration, discovering its relevance and significance in their lives.

The activities for Saturday December 14 began with a Holy Mass that had Most Reverend Archbishop Anton Bal from Madang Archdiocese as the Principal Celebrant.

Bishop Dariusz Kaluza MSF from Bougainville Diocese began the series of catechesis for the day with a wonderful talk on the *Eucharist as Communion, Participation and Mission* highlighting the Church in the synodal journey led by 'Communion, Participation and Mission'. At the same time, the Church has always affirmed that the Eucharist is the source and culmination of the Christian life.

Following that, was another enriching talk on the *Eucharist and the Bible* by Reverend Dr Christian Sieland from the Diocese of Kundiawa highlighting how the bible talks about the Eucharist, both explicitly and figuratively. Reverend Dr Sieland also shared that the Bible points to the Eucharist starting from the sacrifice of Melchizedek in Genesis to the banquet of the Lamb in the Apocalypse.

Concluding the series of talks was the dynamic Bishop Walenty Gryk SVD from the Diocese of Goroka with the theme: *The Eucharist and Mission*. He highlighted that on one hand, the Eucharist sends us on our mission and on the other hand is the secret of every apostolate. The talk helped the faithful to discover how the Eucharist makes our efforts flourish and bear fruit. Providing moving testimonies to accompany the Bishop's talk were representatives from his Diocese talking about their work in the church as

children, young people, religious and lay men and women in the families.

Activities for the first National Eucharistic Congress culminated with a grand procession with the Holy Eucharist around Mount Hagen on Sunday December 15 followed by a Solemn Thanksgiving mass that had His Eminence John Cardinal Ribat MSC as the main celebrant. The procession started at St Paul's Parish and concluding at the Rebiamul Cathedral grounds.

In the concluding remarks, Archbishop Douglas Young SVD thanked everyone for fully participating in all the organized activities and encouraged everyone to go back to their respective parishes and dioceses and inspire those that did not have the opportunity to attend the event.

Chairperson of the First National Eucharistic Congress Bishop Donald Lippert OFM Cap from the Diocese of Mendi extended his word of appreciation to the hosting Archdiocese and thanked the people on the ground for their tireless efforts in ensuring all pilgrims were well-taken care of.

While the participants eagerly anticipated the announcement of the next National Eucharistic Congress, the President of the Catholic Bishops Conference Bishop Otto Separy clarified that information on the next National Eucharistic Congress will be disclosed on a later date.

The four-day event concluded with the final blessing and a group picture before everyone received a special memento of the program – a pendant of the Holy Eucharist in the monstrance before journeying back to their respective dioceses spiritually enriched.

- Donovan Pintol

Final Farewell to His Lordship, Bishop Arnold Orowae

Wabag: January 4, 2025, marked the solemn requiem Mass and burial of the late Bishop Arnold Orowae in the Diocese of Wabag, Enga Province. The event brought together a diverse assembly of religious leaders, laypeople, family, and friends, all united in their grief and respect for a man who touched countless lives.

Among the attendees were several of Bishop Orowae's brother Bishops, including the President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBCPNGSI) and Bishop of Bereima, Most Reverend Otto Separy, as well as Bishop Gryk of Goroka, Archbishop Anton Bal of Madang, Bishop Paul Sundu of Simbu, and his longtime collaborator, Bishop Justin Ain Soongie. Representing the Holy Father, Most Reverend Monsignor Federico Boni, Charge de Affaires, delivered a message of condolences from Pope Francis, extending the Vatican's prayers and solidarity with the people of Wabag and the Church of Papua New Guinea.

The requiem mass was celebrated by His Grace, Archbishop Douglas Young, SVD, of Mt. Hagen. Archbishop Young shared a profound bond with the late Bishop, having worked, grown, and served together in the Diocese of Wabag before being assigned to Mt. Hagen. His moving homily reflected on their shared journey and the immeasurable contributions of Bishop Orowae to the Church.

As part of the farewell, representatives from both religious orders and lay people shared heartfelt tributes. Sir Paul Kurai, a close friend, benefactor, and confidant of the late Bishop, delivered a particularly poignant address. Reflecting on their friendship, which began in 1964 during elementary school, Sir Kurai recounted a remarkable story about a photo taken in 1967 by the late Father Joe Supi. In the photo, a dove with open wings appeared above the young Arnold Orowae. Father Supi's interpretation of this phenomenon affirmed that Bishop Orowae was destined for greatness in service to the Church.

Sir Paul Kurai's emotional farewell emphasized the Bishop's humility and kindness, traits that endeared him to all who knew him. He shared how the Bishop's unwavering support and spiritual guidance inspired many, including seminarians. One priest described him as "like both a mother and father," recalling the Bishop's selfless love and care during their formative years.

After the mass, Bishop Orowae was laid to rest among his predecessors at Par Parish, a sacred resting place in the Diocese of Wabag. The burial ceremony was steeped in tradition and reverence, providing a final opportunity for the faithful to honor their beloved shepherd.

The passing of Bishop Arnold Orowae has left a memorable mark on the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea. His life of humility, service, and unwavering faith will continue to inspire generations to come. As the Diocese of Wabag bids him farewell, the legacy of Bishop Arnold Orowae lives on in the hearts of those he served so devotedly.

Franciscan Sisters of Mary (FSM) launch Golden Jubilee celebrations for the congregation

- Sr Grace Nakan FSM

Mendi: The Franciscan Sisters of Mary (FSM) launched the Golden Jubilee Year of their Congregation on Monday January 6, 2025 at the Mary Mother of the Divine Shepherd Cathedral.

The congregation proudly announced that the Golden Jubilee will be open until next year when it will be closed with the Jubilee celebrations and thanked God for his grace for the last 50 years (1976 – 2025).

“With our hearts full of gratitude, let’s pray and celebrate together! For all that has been, we thank you and for all that will be, we trust in you Lord! Thank you Lord for the past 50 years!”

The motivation behind the establishment of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary was to serve as missionaries in their own land as Melanesians and Papua New Guineans. At that time, there was a significant need for pastoral care in the Southern Highlands and Hela Province, as there was a shortage of sisters available for this work. Missionaries from other countries were few and often unable to commit to serving in Papua New Guinea. Bishop Firmin Martin Schmidt OFM Cap took the initiative, with the support of the Oldenburg Franciscan Sisters (OSF) from Indiana, the Capuchin Brothers, and other missionaries in the diocese, to found the Franciscan Sisters of Mary to serve in the Mendi Diocese in 1976.

When it came time to choose a name for the group, the OSF Sisters asked for suggestions. The

name "Franciscan Sisters of Mary" was chosen by the pioneers themselves, reflecting their desire to be guided by Mary, the Mother of God, and to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis within the Franciscan order. Their brown blouses and habits were inspired by their identity as Melanesians and Papua New Guineans, as well as their commitment to the Franciscan way of life.

Eventually, two more sisters joined the congregation: Sr. Patricia Puame from Kagua and Sr. Elizabeth Epe from Pangia. These strong and energetic women continued the mission, and many more joined them over the years until their passing. They left behind a legacy of dedicated service as missionaries in their own diocese.

Bishop Firmin, along with the OSF Sisters, Capuchin Brothers, and other supporting missionaries, worked tirelessly to help the congregation grow until Bishop Firmin’s death. The work continued under the leadership of the new bishop, His Lordship Stephen Joseph Reichert OFM Cap, who succeeded Bishop Firmin. After another transition under Bishop Donald Francis Lippert OFM Cap’s leadership, the congregation remains steadfast in providing pastoral accompaniment to the Diocese of Mendi and its people.

With the strong support of Bishop Donald Lippert OFM Cap, the congregation has remained resilient until today despite facing numerous struggles and

challenges over the last 50 years. All thanks to God’s increasingly grace and mercy and for which, they are deeply grateful.

The congregation extended their heartfelt thanks to the many missionaries, bishops, priests, and religious who have been part of their journey.

“We also express our gratitude to God’s people who have supported us in various ways to reach this milestone. May God abundantly bless you all”

Congratulations to the Franciscan Sisters of Mary (FSM) on achieving this significant milestone: the 50th Golden Jubilee!

We continue to pray for more vocations for the congregation.



FSM Sisters take a group picture after the launching of the Golden Jubilee celebration mass...Picture supplied.

Remain rooted in prayer, holiness and integrity as you serve God’s people, says Bishop Siby

- Sr Maria Tongop PBVM

Aitape: The Catholic Diocese of Aitape recently celebrated the ordination of three young men: Deacon Michael Laga OFM, Fr. Peter (OFM), and Fr. Peterson Mutuwai, a diocesan priest.

This historic event is significant as it marks the first ordinations in the diocese since Bishop Siby Mathew Peedikayil’s installation.

Fr. Peterson, a diocesan priest, takes his orders directly from Bishop Siby, while Fr. Peter and Deacon Michael, answer to the provincial superior of the Order of the Friars Minor. Despite their different vocations, all three men have demonstrated deep commitment, perseverance, and faith throughout their journeys to priesthood, overcoming personal challenges and sacrifices along the way.

Fr. Peterson’s ordination was particularly emotional and joyful, with the ceremony filled with tears of happiness from the congregation. It was seen as a testament to God’s grace and the men’s unwavering faith.

In his homily, urged the newly ordained priests and deacon to remain rooted in prayer, holiness, and integrity as they serve God’s people and lead them closer to Christ.

The ordination was a hopeful and inspiring moment for the Diocese of Aitape, reflecting a new chapter in its spiritual life. Bishop Siby reminded the priests that their vocation is a call to self-giving and sacrifice, urging them to be “life givers” and to follow Christ’s example of love and service.

“Embark on your new roles and may your faith and dedication continue to inspire and guide the communities you serve”



Bishop Siby Mathew Peedikayil HGN giving his blessings to Fr Peterson Mutuwai...Picture supplied

Sister of the Rosary celebrates 25 years of Religious Life and service.

- Sr Cathy Rarakau SR

Wewak: December 28, 2024 marked a significant occasion for Sr Loretta Wasi SR who celebrated her silver jubilee clocking in 25 years of Religious life and service.

Hailing from Japarakwa village of Kubalia in the East Sepik Province, Sr Loretta comes from the humble parish of Emmaus - Passam and belongs to the congregation of the Sisters of the Rosary.

The eventful day began with a thanksgiving mass by the Shepherd of Wewak Diocese, His Lordship Jozef Roszynski SVD.

In attendance to witness the Jubilee mass and activities was almost two thousand people comprising of Religious, Priests and the laity coming from different parishes like Christ the King - Wirui, Turubu Mambe, Sassoya, St Francis, Blessed Peter ToRot sub Parish, St Joseph- Yarapos, Holy Spirit - Wewak Hill, St Thomas - Yangoru and St Arnold Jenssen - Negri Yangoru.



Silver Jubilee Celebrant Sr Loretta Wasi SR is dressed in her grassskirt and standing next to His Lordship Bishop Jozef Roszynski SVD in a group picture with her Sisters from the congregation. Picture supplied.

Following the Holy Mass and speeches came a heavy downpour which was considered a sign of blessing for the jubilarian and all those who attended.

The celebration was very inspiring as well as heartwarming and another pride for the congregation of the Sisters of the Rosary witnessing one of their very own celebrating her anniversary.

The program for the day concluded in the afternoon with refreshments and a word of thanks before everyone departed for their respective Parishes after giving Sr Loretta Wasi SR their best wishes.

Congratulations Sr Loretta Wasi SR!

Building Bright Futures: 58 Children Graduate from Don Bosco Champions Literacy and Numeracy Program

- Shirley Numbos

DBTI Boroko, Port Moresby: The Don Bosco Champions Literacy and Numeracy Programme celebrated the success of 58 children during its 3rd graduation ceremony on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at the Don Bosco Technological Institute campus in Boroko. The DBTI gymnasium buzzed with excitement as Salesians, benefactors, invited guests, teachers, and parents gathered to witness the memorable occasion.

An outreach project first initiated in 2022 by the Don Bosco Mission Office of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (PGS), the literacy and numeracy program provides free quality education in basic literacy and numeracy to underprivileged children who have dropped out of school or have never attended school for various reasons. The main barriers to education for these children are often a lack of motivation and financial difficulties.

Since 2022, the program has operated as an extension of Don Bosco Technical School in Gabutu

under the guidance of the school’s rector, Fr. Pedro Sachitula, SDB. In 2024, the program expanded to Don Bosco Technological Institute in Boroko, where the Salesians and the Educative Pastoral Community, similar to those at DBTS Gabutu, embraced the initiative. They welcomed the opportunity to help underprivileged children from poor, marginalized family backgrounds living in nearby settlements surrounding each institution’s campus.

This year, a total of 58 children from both DBTS and DBTI successfully completed a year of intensive classes and formation. These graduates will now be integrated into the formal education system for the next academic year. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Fr. Gregorio Bicomong, SDB, the Salesian Provincial for PGS, who has been a strong supporter of the program and its efforts.

The Literacy and Numeracy program is an ongoing project run by the Mission Office of PGS, with the primary goal of reducing

illiteracy rates and school dropouts among marginalized demographics.

Fr. Srimal Silva, SDB, the Salesian Provincial Economer and Director of the Missions and Planning & Development Offices of PGS, expressed his gratitude to the sponsors and benefactors for their invaluable contributions and support towards the Don Bosco Champions Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

The children were filled with pride and a sense of accomplishment as they were celebrated for their hard work and dedication. They were encouraged to carry forward the values of perseverance and commitment as they continue their educational journey.



Group picture of the Champions Literacy and Numeracy Program graduating batch.

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, 2024.**

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