



# 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

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## Pope at Angelus: The source of everything is Love

- Kielce Gussie

During his Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis stresses that exterior practices do not matter, but rather how we love one another.

He reflected on St. Mark's Gospel passage of what the greatest commandment is. He explained that the question is not one just for biblical times but it "is essential for us too, for our life and for the journey of our faith."

In the midst of everyday life, the to-do lists and tasks, it is possible to become overwhelmed and lost, so the Pope posed the question, "where can we find the center from which all the rest radiates?" Just as Jesus told the scribe in the Gospel, the answer lies in putting two commandments together: love of God and love of neighbor. Pope Francis called them "the heart of Christian life."

**The heart of life and faith:** The Pope challenged everyone present in St. Peter's Square to "return to the heart of life and faith" because, he said, "the heart is the radical source of our strengths, convictions, passions and decisions."

"What counts are not the exterior practices," Pope Francis explained, "but the readiness of heart with which you open yourself to God and to brethren in love." He reminded everyone that at the end of our lives, we will have to give an account for the love we gave and the love we withheld.

To close, the Pope gave the thousands in the Square a task: to perform a daily examination of conscience, reflecting on how we love God and our neighbors.

**Dilexit Nos:** This message of the importance of returning to the heart is a central theme in Pope Francis' most recent encyclical, *Dilexit nos*. It is dedicated to the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ and calls for a renewal of

devotion to the Sacred Heart. The Pope stressed that we can change the world beginning with changing our hearts.



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

## The Vicar of Christ Visits Vanimo

- Fr. Tomás Ravaoli IVE

The 8th of September was an unforgettable day for the faithful of Vanimo: finally, the Vicar of Christ and Successor of St. Peter would personally come to visit us. According to the original plans, the Holy Father would leave POM at 1:30 pm, arriving in Vanimo at 2:30 pm, and return around 6:00 pm, just before sunset. However, at 11:00 am on the same day, we received a message saying that the Holy Father had specifically requested to bring the flight forward and leave POM earlier so that he could spend more time in Vanimo. The Holy Father left POM at 12:00 pm and landed in Vanimo shortly after 2:00 pm.

I believe it is necessary to divide his visit to Vanimo into its two main events: the gathering at the field with all the faithful, priests, and religious of the diocese, and his visit to Baro, the headquarters where the IVE Fathers are located.

**1) The gathering at the field:** The Vanimo field is located about 200 meters from the airport and in just in front of the cathedral, so only a few minutes passed between the landing and the arrival of the Holy Father to the field. The Vanimo field was absolutely packed with people. In all my years of mission in Vanimo, I had never seen so many people gathered in that place! The people from the bush had started coming a week in advance, and every night there were talks, prayers, and confessions in that very field, in preparation for the big event. Bishop Francis Meli gave a welcome and thank you speech to the Pope, and afterward, some testimonies were given by a variety of people (children, young people, couples, catechists, religious, etc.), where they shared with the Holy Father about life in Vanimo, their joys and sorrows. After the testimonies, the Holy Father addressed a few brief words to the faithful, encouraging them to remain faithful to Christ and to take care of the beautiful nature surrounding them, as it is a gift from God.

After his speech, something moving took place: all those present made a prayer of Consecration to Jesus through the intercession of Mary, placing the diocese, the missionaries, families, and children under the maternal care of our Blessed Mother in Heaven. After the prayer, the Holy Father presented Mary with a golden rose as a sign of filial love. The offering of the golden rose is a tradition over a thousand years old. Initially, it was given by the Popes to distinguished

personalities for their good works and devotion. However, for several decades now, that privilege has been reserved for Mary, and only she receives the golden rose. The image of the Virgin chosen for the offering was the image of Our Lady of Lujan, the patroness of Argentina, which arrived in PNG 25 years ago and is kept in the chapel of the IVE fathers in Vanimo. An exact replica of the original image can be seen in the CBC chapel, next to the tabernacle.

**2) The visit to Baro:** After the gathering at the field, the Holy Father traveled by car to Baro, the parish of the IVE fathers in Vanimo. The parish consists of five villages along the coast and many communities in the bush. It also has two primary schools and one secondary school. The secondary school, in fact, was built thanks to the financial help of the Pope himself.

The car ride took about 15 minutes. As soon as the Pope arrived in Baro, one of the Vatican gendarmes told me: "From this moment on, this is no longer considered a visit from a Head of State but a personal and private visit of the Holy Father to a group of missionaries. Therefore, the security protocols are different. He has absolute freedom to move around." And indeed, that was the case. The visit was completely informal, without any formal protocols or prepared speeches. On the contrary, the Holy Father allowed everyone to come close to embrace, kiss, and touch him. He had an assistant with two large bags: one filled with candies for the children, and the other with rosaries for the adults. The Holy Father greeted the students from our schools, listened to three songs from the parish children's orchestra (two songs were prepared, but the Pope asked for one more!), and then went up on an improvised stage where 25 replicas of the Virgin of Lujan awaited his blessing, which would later be distributed to all the mission stations where the Fathers work.

After the blessing, we took the Holy Father to our *haus pater*. It felt like a dream to see the Vicar of Christ entering the *haus pater*! There, we had a private meeting with him that lasted about 30 minutes. During the meeting, we shared some typical Argentine food with him since five of the IVE fathers in PNG are Argentinians, just like the Pope. In fact, two of us are from his same city. The private conversation was

entirely informal: he gave us some advice, shared many funny anecdotes, and we laughed quite a lot. He was also interested in the status of the Canonization Cause of Blessed Peter To Rot and asked how the work was progressing. Once again, he expressed his desire to canonize him.

After the conversation with the Fathers, the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara sisters (SSVM Sisters, the female branch of the IVE Fathers) also entered the house and had the opportunity to listen to him. The Holy Father was very pleased to see the first local vocations of the IVE and the SSVM, and encouraged us to continue working in that direction.

By this time, it was almost 5:30 PM, and the plane had to depart at 6:00 pm. One of the Pope's assistants approached him and showed him the time, and the Pope told us it was time to leave. We took some photos, and he left for the airport.

In total, the visit to Vanimo lasted almost 4 hours: from 2:00 pm to almost 6:00 pm. Of those 4 hours, the gathering at the field lasted one hour, and the rest of the time was spent in Baro.

It is important to highlight the immense generosity and charity of the Holy Father in wanting to come to Vanimo. He spent more time traveling (4 hours in total, 2 going and 2 returning) than visiting the city. It was a great physical effort, given his age, fragile health, the different time zones, and the many activities he undertakes daily. Despite the many material and logistical difficulties surrounding the visit, he wanted to be present.

Without a doubt, it will be an unforgettable day for everyone.



IVE priests meeting with the Holy Father in Baro during his visit to Vanimo.

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## Fr Victor Roche, SVD leaving Papua New Guinea

- Fr. Giorgio Licini, PIME | CBC General Secretary



"It is easier to take the man out of PNG than to take PNG out of the man", they say. And it will perfectly apply to Fr Victor Roche SVD, while boarding his last flight out back to his native India this coming 28<sup>th</sup> of December. He has been here since the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1981. Almost 44 years.

As a missionary priest who started with common and simple pastoral work in Sepik, it became easier for him to fast develop other interests and lines of service. In 1991, Fr. Victor picked up a Master of Arts in Scriptural Theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, USA. That opened to him upon return to PNG a couple of years later the doors of an intense ministry of biblical apostolate, retreats, seminars, courses all over the country. From 1994 to 2002, every year he gave a week-long seminar to the women and men religious of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (PNGSI) on "Mission Trends and Church History of PNGSI" at Xavier Institute in Bomana.

Then came the time for the media apostolate from 2003 to 2010 as director and announcer of Catholic

Radio *Trinité FM* in the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen, a larger platform and audience for the ministry of the Word of God. Fr. Victor will always treasure the potential and the positive power of the means of social communication. That was in fact the way we first came in contact in 2011, after the untimely death of Fr Geoff Lee, who was compiling the Catholic Reporter and doing a few other services in media, besides being the Vicar General of the diocese of Lae. Fr Victor had been appointed in 2010 General Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBC). "You should pick up our Commission for Social Communications now that Fr. Geoff passed away" – he told me once in Alotau after a retreat. By January 2012 I was in Madang, Chaplain of Divine Word University and Secretary of Social Communications for the Bishops Conference.

I ran away from both responsibilities by the end of 2014 back to Italy as Director of our PIME Mission Centre in Milan on a three-year engagement. Fr. Victor didn't lose track of me. In Port Moresby he was building the new CBC offices and in occasional emails he would mention his desire to turn it over to a new General Secretary right after inauguration,

presumably in 2018. He eventually ambushed me in Rome on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January of that year when, almost by chance, we bumped into each other. Everything was ready for my return in April to work in the diocese of Bereina. But he managed to leave the Bishops Conference and have me pick up the heavy load instead.

I am still here, while Fr Victor after a sabbatical break, went on serving for another five years, till now, as Secretary for New Evangelization and Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies for Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. His insistence on the catechesis and evangelization of children and young people will be hard to forget. He made it a key point of the Third General Assembly of the Catholic Church in PNGSI (Kundiawa, April 2022) and our Conference Pastoral Plan 2 (2022-'27).

Not only his pastoral dedication and Bible apostolate, but also his advocacy skills and cause oriented public profile will remain vividly impressed in the memory of the many who worked with him and knew him in Papua New Guinea.

## The Letters of St Paul: Colossians

- Fr. Tomás Ravaioli IV

Liturgical Catechetical Institute Director



**Date:** Scholars generally date the letter when Paul spent two years under house arrest in Rome, from 61 to 63.

**Destination:** The city of Colossae was built along the Lycus River in the Roman province of Asia (western Turkey). Interestingly, Paul had

neither founded nor visited the Church he addresses in this letter (2:1). A native Colossian named Epaphras was the first to bring the gospel to the city years earlier (1:7). He was likely converted while Paul was preaching in Ephesus and gaining a wide hearing from Jews and Greeks all over Asia Minor (Acts 19:10).

**Purpose:** The same Epaphras who founded the Colossian Church (1:7) also traveled to Rome to update Paul on their recent successes and struggles (4:12). Among other things, he informed Paul that

certain agitators were planting doubts in the minds of the Colossians about their new faith. Paul wrote to address this danger and to reassure these believing Gentiles of their Christian inheritance (1:12, 21-22). More probably, Paul is addressing the growing friction between Jewish and Christian communities in Colossae.

**Themes and Characteristics:** Paul's stance in Colossians is quite aggressive, as he confronts false notions that are making inroads into the local Church and muddling the thinking of many young Christians. It may be said, along these lines, that Paul in Colossians is engaged in constructive apologetics. Two motifs stand out in Paul's preaching. **(1) The Supremacy of Christ.** Towering above every theme in Colossians is the doctrine of Jesus Christ's preeminence over all things (1:18). Every person, every nation, every angel—indeed, every created thing—is subject to the Lord Jesus and is compelled

to acknowledge him as King. We can assume from Paul's emphasis on these matters that his Jewish opponents tried to depreciate the person and position of Jesus Christ in the minds of the Colossian Christians. **(2) The Completeness of Christians in Christ.** The practical side of Christ's supremacy is, for Paul, Christ's sufficiency. This is something he needs to stress to the Colossian Gentiles, who are bending under the pressure of local Jews to adopt the Jewish way of life. Paul warns them against this in 2:8-23, where he drives home the point that Christians have no future in their Jewish past and that Judaism has nothing to offer them that they do not already possess in greater abundance in Jesus Christ. In a word, the baptized Colossians are already complete in Christ (2:12); they have no need for the shadows of the Old Covenant when they already possess the "substance" of the New (2:17).

## Sunday is our Sabbath (contd)

- Fr. Victor Roche SVD

Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies



In the last issue we discussed that the Early Christian Community celebrated the Sabbath on the Lord's Day (Rev 1:10; Acts 20:7).

In this issue we see "**What the Early Church Believed: Sabbath (Saturday) or Sunday?**". The early

Church Fathers compared the observance of the Sabbath to the observance of the rite of circumcision, and from that they demonstrated that if the apostles abolished circumcision (Gal 5:1-6), so also the observance of the Sabbath must be abolished. The following quotations show that the first Christians understood this principle and gathered for worship on Sunday.

**1. The Didache:** "But every Lord's Day..... Gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your

sacrifice may not be profaned" (Didache 14)- (A.D 70).

**2. The Letter of Barnabas:** "We keep the eighth day (Sunday) with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead" (Letter of Barnabas 15:6-8 (A.D 74).

**3. Ignatius of Antioch:** Those who were brought up on the ancient order of things (Jews) have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death" (Letter to the Magnesians 8 (A.D 110).

**4. Justin Martyr:** "But Sunday is the day which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead" (First Apology 67 (A.D 155).

**5. The Didascalia:** "The Apostles further appointed: On the first day of the week let there be

service, and the reading of the holy scriptures, the oblation (the sacrifice of the mass), because on the first day of the week (Sunday) our Lord rose from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven" (Didascalia 2- (A.D 225).

**6. Athanasius:** "The Sabbath was the end of the first creation, the Lord's Day was the beginning of the second in which he renewed and restored the old in the same way as he prescribed that they should formerly observe the Sabbath as a memorial of the end of first things, so we honor the Lord's day as being the memorial of the new creation" (on Sabbath and Circumcision 3 (A.D 345).

( Edited from the "Catholic Answers").

Continued in the next issue

## You are all Ambassadors of Christ: Bishop Baquero SDB

- Kappa Gaoma, DWU Journalism Student

**Madang, Divine Word University:** Most Reverend Bishop Pedro Baquero SDB, the Bishop of Kerema presided mass at the Divine Word University's 16<sup>th</sup> Missioning Ceremony.

His Lordship blessed almost 500 final year students from the three undergraduate faculties including; Arts and Social Science, Business and Informatics and the Health and Medicine Sciences as significant act of the University recognizing the importance of their educational journey through the blessing being bestowed upon students by the Catholic Church.

His Lordship Bishop Baquero shared on the gospel of Mark 8:34-35, "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life

will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

He challenged the students to not compromise their Christian beliefs and ethical values that they have learnt throughout their years of studying in Divine Word University.

"As you (students) receive your crosses as symbol of being commissioned to serve, be reminded that you all are ambassadors of Christ and it is your Christian duty to serve in your respective spheres of life, whether in school, work, family..." he remarked.

The Bishop then offered a prayer of blessing and sprinkled holy water over the crosses before they were given to the final year students.

DWU's staff and students including family members of the students were all present to witness the 16<sup>th</sup> Missioning Ceremony.



From left to right: Fr Patrick Gesch SVD, Fr Jose Orathinkal SVD, Bishop Pedro Baquero SDB and Fr Phillip Gibbs SVD during mass at the 16<sup>th</sup> Missioning Ceremony...Picture by Kappa Gaoma.

## The first National Eucharistic Congress in Papua New Guinea

- Sr Daisy Anne Lisania Augustine MSC  
Secretary for Social Communication



The first National Eucharistic Congress has been in the planning for nearly a year and is the initiative of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. This will take place in the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen from 12 – 15 December 2024. During the days there will be prayers, adoration, processions with the Blessed Sacrament and talks on topics relating to the Holy Eucharist.

The National Eucharistic Congress in Mount Hagen is expected to draw some thousands of people, including bishops, priests and seminarians, as well as consecrated religious men and women, in addition to the lay faithful in the Church, not to mention all those who will participate online via Livestream with NBC, the official broadcaster.

While reflecting on different conferences for the youths or family life or social communication all of which were extraordinary moments of grace, I believe the first National Eucharistic Congress in Mount Hagen will supersede them all. The NEC will

assemble the whole Church together, the young and the old, cleric, religious and lay, and everything in between. It will be the entire Body of Christ coming together for prayer, unity and friendship in the Holy Eucharist.

From the Dioceses of Madang, Lae, and Dioceses in highlands region of Wabag, Kundiawa, Mendi, and Goroka there will be more expected pilgrims who will travel to Mount Hagen by car and bus. Their pilgrim groups will have representation from the whole dioceses. There will be several families, in addition to priests, deacons, and seminarians, and a large representation of consecrated religious sisters and brothers. It will be the Church in all her beauty and diversity.

In this age of technology and globalization which has swept through Papua New Guinea in mostly negative ways, the NEC will be a moment of healing of this land and all its people.

The talks will include priests and a bishop who are theologians and are most popular and effective speakers in the Church of Papua New Guinea. Every evening will conclude with Eucharistic adoration in the

compound of the Archdiocesan Headquarters of Rebihamul. It is expected the music will be absolutely stunning: all forms, from Gregorian chant and polyphony to contemporary, and the beautiful natural melodies of Papua New Guineans will fill the air in praise and thanksgiving for the great gift of Christ's real presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The heart of the National Eucharistic Congress will be the liturgy, which is the source and summit of our faith. The faithful will experience this first hand in the various expressions of the Church's liturgy that will be offered so beautifully, but also in the tremendous fruits of the liturgical source: the talks, praise-and-worship sessions, works of charity expressed in many forms — including the beautiful accompaniment of the dioceses from outside the highland's region and their needs. Also flowing from the liturgy will be the palpable community of faith among clerics, religious, consecrated and laity that spontaneously will grow out of the common experience and, uniquely for many bishops, the brotherhood of episcopal charity there felt which will be unprecedented.

- Ahisha Mangot

## CCAC urges PNG Government to come up with Comprehensive and Operational strategy to combat crime

**Port Moresby:** The Community Coalition Against Corruption (CCAC) has raised alarm over the increasing wave of violent crimes in Papua New Guinea, citing recent killings in East New Britain, Enga, and Port Moresby as evidence of growing lawlessness.

At a press conference held on Thursday, October 24 at the Catholic Bishops Conference, the CCAC Steering Committee called on the government to urgently implement a comprehensive operational strategy to tackle crime.

The Community Coalition Against Corruption Steering Committee include John Byrne (Lae Chamber of Commerce and Industry President), Wilma Kosi (PNG TUC), Michael Guka (PNG Council of Churches, Co-Chairs Peter Aitsi (Transparency International PNG) and Neville Choi (Media Council of PNG President) and Cathy Alex of Advancing PNG: Women Leader's Network.

According to the CCAC, the root causes of the rising crime rate are tied to deep-seated economic and social issues, including unemployment, poverty, and inequality. "The weak economy, coupled with soaring unemployment rates and the growing cost of living, has created a toxic environment that is breeding crime and violence nationwide," the committee stated.

They highlighted the breakdown in governance and law enforcement as further contributing to the deteriorating security situation.

The CCAC emphasized that immediate action is required from all sectors of society, particularly elected leaders, public officials, and the police force. They called for the government to work with law enforcement to develop a comprehensive, strategic, and operational plan aimed at addressing both the symptoms and root causes of crime.

"The focus must be on prevention and deterrence," the CCAC noted, stressing that the police must play a leading role in restoring law and order. The coalition advocates for increased police visibility, improved community policing, and targeted interventions in known crime hotspots to address violence and restore safety to affected communities.

The group also stressed on the importance of addressing the underlying economic issues that fuel crime. They called for measures that promote economic recovery, job creation, and equitable access to opportunities as essential components of any crime-fighting strategy.

Standing in solidarity with the victims of crime and their families, the CCAC urged all stakeholders, from government officials to community groups, to unite in a coordinated effort to combat the crisis. "This is not just a police problem; it's a societal issue that

requires collaboration across all sectors to restore peace and security to our nation."

The press conference concluded with a renewed call for the government to take swift action in the face of what the CCAC describes as a crisis and national emergency. The coalition warned that failure to act could lead to even greater instability and violence in the country.



Panelists of the CCAC Press Conference.

- Catholic Communications - Honiara

## Four Seminarians Graduate from Holy Name of Mary Seminary in Tenaru

**Honiara:** On October 26th 2024, the Catholic Church of Solomon Islands Theology School at Holy Name of Mary Seminary in Tenaru celebrated the graduation of four dedicated seminarians: Br. Joseph Manearea, Br. James Rapeka, Br. Simon Gatitsetse, and Br. Vickson Sovetania. After seven years of committed philosophical and theological studies, two graduates received bachelor's degrees while the other two earned certificates.

The graduation ceremony commenced with a Holy Mass presided over by His Most Rev. Bishop Peter Houhou, Bishop of the Diocese of Gizo, alongside the Administrator of Auki Diocese and the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Honiara. Several Catholic priests from across the Archdiocese were in attendance to support the graduates.

Although His Grace Archbishop Christopher Cardone, OP, was away, he sent his blessings for the occasion.

During the Mass, the graduating seminarians led the liturgy, creating a spiritually enriching atmosphere for all attendees.

In his homily, Bishop Houhou congratulated the graduates and shared reflections from the Bible, focusing on St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (4:7-16) and the Gospel of Luke (13:1-9). His message underscored the importance of faith and commitment in their ongoing journey.



Bishop Peter Houhou of the Diocese of Gizo is at the center, flanked by Fr. Jeffery Puritau on his right and Vicar General Fr. Peter Chele on the far left, standing alongside the four graduating seminarians.

The ceremony also featured addresses from prominent leaders,

including HNMS Rector Fr. Thomas Christiawan, CM, Dean of Studies Fr. Lawrence Samani, and Guest Speaker Fr. Jeffrey Puritau, Administrator of Auki Diocese.

Rector Fr. Christiawan expressed gratitude to the seminarian graduates for their perseverance, as well as to their families and the Religious Sisters who supported them throughout their studies. He reminded the graduates that their journey does not end with graduation, stating, "Non scholæ sed vitæ discimus," which translates to "we study not for school, but for life." This phrase highlighted the broader purpose of their formation, encouraging the graduates to live out their vocation and continue their spiritual growth as they prepare for the priesthood. Fr. Jeffrey Puritau also offered his congratulations and emphasized the importance of ongoing formation. He urged the graduates to remain committed to their formation and to the support of one

another as they advance toward their future roles in the Church.

The ceremony included the presentation of awards recognizing the most improved students and those with the highest cumulative grades. Thesis papers were presented, with summaries provided by Fr. Lawrence Samani and Fr. Agus Heru, CM, for Br. Simon Gatitsetse and Br. James Rapeka, respectively. Bishop Houhou and Fr. Agus Heru presented copies of these papers to the graduates, symbolizing their academic accomplishments.

The celebration concluded with a communal feast prepared by the Seminarian Brothers, marking a significant milestone in the lives of the graduates and celebrating their commitment to faith and service. This joyful occasion not only honored their achievements but also looked forward to their future contributions to the Church.

- Jessica Oata

## Catholic Bishops Conference of PNGSI Commission Heads share progress and challenges in their Ministries

**Port Moresby:** The Commission Secretaries of the different Commissions of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands came together in a round-table discussion to share their challenges and achievements in their respective ministries for the year from October 22-23, 2024.

In his welcome remarks, CBC General Secretary Reverend Fr Giorgio Licini PIME welcomed all Commission Heads and thanked them and their respective teams for their efforts in

ensuring that services offered by the Catholic Church trickles right down to the grassroots level.

"The meeting is an opportunity for us to sit together and share what we have done and appreciate what others have done as well. While we also appreciate the Church's contribution to society, we also acknowledge the challenges we faced in delivering services in our respective ministries and look forward to the next year".

The morning of the first day had presentations from Commissions that

fall under the Committee for Formation followed by Commissions under the Committee for Mission in the afternoon. The day also allowed for a few presentations from Commissions under Integral Human Development.

The last day had presentations from the remaining Commissions under the Integral Human Development Committee and wrapping up the series of presentations was the Finance team's presentation on Financial and Administrative matters.

The Secretaries' meeting concluded

with all smiles and a positive outlook for the new year's activities and plans.

The Secretaries' meeting takes place annually; in March and in October.



Commission Secretaries and Representatives with Fr Giorgio (front row centre).

### Religious Sisters in Aitape and Wewak Dioceses participate in workshop on Right Relationships in Ministry

- Sr Maria Tongop PBVM

**Aitape:** Thirteen religious sisters from various congregations across the Dioceses of Aitape and Wewak recently attended a five-day workshop hosted by "Right Relationships in Ministry," conducted by Sr. Ancy John SCSA, Directress of the Right Relationships Ministry.

The workshop, which ran from October 15-18, 2024, provided a unique opportunity for participants to explore themes around boundaries, relationships, consecrated life, and the intersection of spirituality and sexuality.

The group of attendees included members from the Order of St Clare (Poor Clares), Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Rosary Sisters. Among them were one finally vowed sister, six junior sisters, and six postulants. For many, this was a first-time experience, marking a significant moment in their religious formation.

With the theme "Boundaries and Right Relationships," the workshop highlighted the importance of

boundaries in life, that creates pathways for healthy relationships. It also focused on essential differences between consecrated sexuality and marriage, highlighting how spirituality and sexuality complement one another in the life of a religious woman. The sessions were structured to allow deep reflection on these vital topics, as well as active engagement through role plays, group discussions, and open sharing.

Participants expressed deep appreciation for Sr. Ancy's teaching style, noting her ability to break down complex concepts into understandable components. Her interactive methods and use of role play kept everyone focused and involved throughout the sessions. "The way Sr. Ancy presented the topics was perfectly in sequence, and she used concrete methods to keep our attention. She made sure we understood the core objectives of the workshop," said one participant.

The workshop was designed to address issues directly related to the daily lives of religious women. Topics

such as the rights and values inherent to consecrated life provoked honest discussions, with many sisters sharing personal experiences and seeking further clarification on key issues. For those new to this type of formation, the workshop was deeply moving, with participants describing it as both enlightening and inspiring.

"This was the first of its kind, specifically aimed at educating young women in formation in the Diocese of Aitape," said one of the organizing sisters. The workshop gave the sisters a platform to reflect on their personal journeys, including the struggles and sacrifices that accompany religious life.

The workshop also had two significant activities. First, participants reflected on the Gospel passage "I am the vine, you are the branches," emphasizing the interconnectedness of their lives in ministry. Secondly, a role play focused on creating a thriving network among religious sisters, illustrating the importance of mutual support in their communities.

The workshop concluded with the awarding of certificates, which left the participants overjoyed. "The spiritual and physical readiness we felt, and the joy that filled our hearts, was simply incredible," shared one sister. The event was an overwhelming success, leaving the participants inspired and prepared to continue their mission within their respective communities.

This workshop marks a significant milestone in the Diocese of Aitape's efforts to provide targeted spiritual and vocational formation for young religious women, ensuring they are equipped for the challenges of ministry.



Group photo of the participants with Right Relationships in Ministry Directress Sr Ancy John SCSA, back row right.

### Mary Immaculate Girl's Technical Secondary School Celebrates Graduation Amidst Challenges

- Sr Jenifer Arul SMMI

**Dirima, Kundiawa:** In a colorful and inspiring ceremony, 13 young women from Mary Immaculate Girl's Technical Secondary School celebrated their graduation on Friday, October 18, 2024. Despite a year faced with both natural and man-made disasters that led to a significant drop in enrolment, the girls persevered and succeeded in their education, making this graduation particularly meaningful.

Located in the Guminie District of South Simbu Province, the all-girls Catholic school offers both academic and trade skills National Certificate courses. The institution, run by the Sisters of the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (SMMI) and under the care of St. Anne's Parish, has remained steadfast in its mission to provide quality education to young women despite the year's adversities. The school is home to 20 teaching staff, 7 ancillary staff, and 12 board members, with students ranging from Grade 7 to Grade 12.

The theme of this year's graduation, "Perseverance in Girl's Education, Despite Obstacles," encapsulated the spirit of the event, as graduates, staff, and guests reflected on the strength and resilience that characterized the academic year.

Bishop Paul Sundu of the Diocese of Kundiawa, in his address to the graduates, emphasized the importance of valuing and respecting life, while Mr. Witus Geluva, Director of Nursing College, Kundiawa, commended the hard work of the missionaries and encouraged the graduates to remain steadfast in their journeys ahead.

Guest of honor, Mrs. Kutna Bepwick, Simbu Education Provincial Advisor, delivered a powerful and motivating speech that encouraged the young graduates to embrace leadership as women. Her words ignited a sense of potential among the attendees, urging them to "fly high" and continue pursuing their goals with determination. Mrs. Bepwick also praised the staff for their tireless efforts in nurturing and guiding the students, despite the challenges faced by the school community throughout the year.

In her official school report, Sr. Jenifer SMMI provided an overview of the school's performance in 2024, acknowledging the struggles brought on by the disasters but also highlighting the success of the 13 Grade 12 graduates. She reminded the girls that their educational journey, though challenging, had equipped them with the tools needed for future success.



Graduating students listening to speeches during the graduation.

### Ruavatu Catholic School holds 4th Graduation

- Leotina Akwai

Ruavatu Catholic Secondary their academic journey. She ensure that quality education is School in Guadalcanal on extended her gratitude to the Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> Oct 2024 church, Guadalcanal Province, and celebrated its 4th Graduation for the families who have contributed Year 9 and Year 11 students and to the school's efforts in providing Prize Giving Day Ceremony under education to the children.

The event was held at the Secretary, reflected on the theme of the school compound, marking a and emphasized the importance of Education Despite Challenges". Meke, Catholic Education Provider they handed over the school to the significant milestone for the school, education in shaping families and Catholic Church, confident that the which was reopened in 2021 after communities. He noted that every Church would uphold this mission. The ceremony concluded with a feast and entertainment provided by the students, marking a joyful end to the celebration of their academic achievements

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two Dominican Sisters: Sr. Veronica "Education is a shared Boki OP, the School Principal, and responsibility," Mr. Meke said. Sr. Stephanie OP, who teaches "Although there are many challenges, we can face them

In her graduation remarks, positively and focus on growth. school Principal Sr. Veronica Boki Have time for God and remain OP congratulated the graduating focused on Him as you reflect on students and commended their these challenges."

perseverance in overcoming Mr. Meke also discussed the new numerous challenges throughout Education Act, which aims to



Form 3 group photo...Picture supplied

### Workshop helps couples in Aitape Diocese to plan for healthy families

- Sr Maria Tongop PBVM

**Aitape:** Eighty-two participants from various deaneries in Aitape Diocese attended a six days a woman. The workshop gave them opportunity to "Natural Family Planning workshop" from October dialogue with an honest sharing because the space is their.

In the group were 21 couples who diligently listened and cooperated as Mr. Noel Langu from Family Life Apostolate office, and Mrs. Lucy Lavu from archdiocese of Port Moresby facilitated the workshop.

The attendees were encouraged to use the NFP method rather than artificial means to plan their families in order to have healthy children and a happy family.

"God designed the human body beyond human understanding and so we must understand the changes that take place in a woman's body to plan when to have children because they are God's blessings", said Mrs Lavu.

Menfolk were encouraged not only built resilience but also enhance self-confidence as they learnt to speak the language of a woman's body in order to

open to life and navigate challenges with the cycle of a woman. The workshop gave them opportunity to dialogue with an honest sharing because the space is their.

"The gift of Sexuality is something that is meant to be used to unite and pro-creative", said Mrs Lavu.

The workshop concluded with happy couples going back home able to openly communicate about planning to welcome God's biggest blessing in their union - Children.



Participant giving a personal reflection as others listen...Picture supplied.

## The Catholic Reporter Team

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

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