

Neues aus Papua Neuguinea - Juli

Dear friends of Mariannahill PNG!

Greetings once more from our little community in Papua New Guinea. Here comes some news about our life and work and the country, still centred on the Elections and their outcome.

First the news about our own members and the CPS Sisters.

On the 8th of May **Fr. Sido van der Werf**, cmm, took the plane returning to the Netherlands after 53 years of missionary work in PNG.

A summary of Fr. Sido's CV in PNG you find in the Target of May 2014. Therefore I will not enter into this here. In April and May several farewell celebrations took place in different parishes of Lae and, of course, one in a more familiar CMM and CPS setting at Mariannahill House.

Fr. Sido is thankful for those years given to him to live and work here in Lae Diocese, and we all join warmly in his gratitude. It was good to have you here, Sido!

His going reminds us, however, also of the fact that a missionary period, that of missionaries coming from the Church in Europe is coming to an end.

In May our PNG confrere Deacon **Daniel Apas** returned to our community after a year exclaustation. Shortly after his return, however, it turned out that during his stay outside the community he had contracted intestinal tuberculosis. The treatment up to total cure takes normally half a year at least. Thus Daniel will live for the next half year the more contemplative side of our life, while we all wish him a complete recovery.

On the 12th of June **Bishop Christian Blouin** travelled to Canada for his holiday, leaving the diocese at the care of **Fr. Arnold Schmitt**. The Diocese is still waiting for the appointment of a new Bishop.

In the early morning of the 15th of June **Sister Salome Karara**, CPS, arrived at Port Moresby to fly on to Lae to reinforce the CPS mini-community. Sister Salome is by profession a clinical officer. She has been working as such in Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa and brings now her rich experience to PNG where she will be of great help at the Mercy Centre in Lae.

We are grateful for her coming. Especially so **Sister Pascal Nyamadzawo**, CPS, who has been for some time the only CPS Sister in the Lae convent, as **Sister Michaela** is on home-leave and Sister Henriqueta is not yet back from her medical treatment in South Africa. While Sister Salome is waiting for the recognition of her title in PNG, she is familiarizing herself with the people and with Tok Pisin.

On the 14th of July our **Fratres Alois Gende and Wilfred Salhun** arrived at Port Moresby for a holiday after having been more than three years in Africa.

They did their Novitiate in 2014. The Zambian Province was willing to take up the challenge to integrate them temporarily into their community, so that they could do their theological studies in Zambia. We are grateful for that and, talking with Alois and Wilfred these days, I have the impression that it has done them a lot of good. This year, June-July, both participated in an intensive course of a month in Nairobi, Kenya, preparing themselves for the profession of their perpetual vows. They have still a year of studies to go and will return to Zambia on the 19th of August.

In June died in Port Moresby a PNG woman related in a particular way to Mariannahill's history on the Siassi Islands. One of the original ingredients of this history was the marriage of Joost Hafmans, up to that time one of our missionary priests at Siassi, with a lady teacher of Mandok. The young Agnes Keke became Mrs. Hafmans. The family with four kids has always maintained cordial relations with our Congregation. Joost lost his life in the nineties while campaigning during election time. He was poisoned by members of a rival party.

His widow, Agnes, died in Port Moresby on Sunday, June 11, being remembered also as a Church member always active in and supportive of Church concerns. She may rest in peace!

The Diocese of Lae is planning to build new Diocesan offices. **Fr. Arnold Schmitt, CMM**, Vicar General of the Diocese, leads the organisation of the fundraising. In the promotion leaflet BUILDING THE FUTURE he writes:

“Our Diocese celebrates this year a Golden Jubilee. We want to mark the jubilee and prepare for the future, by building a chancery with guest rooms, conference room, radio station and new Diocesan offices to service the faithful and the people. FOR THIS WE NEED YOUR HELP!”

Therefore, dear friends, also your support is welcome. The easiest way to help the Diocese is through the Mariannahill offices in your own country. You find their address on the Mariannahill websites. Your support will be a blessing! Thanks beforehand!

Talking about blessings, in the secularized West blessings have become sporadic, but here they are highly appreciated. In Lae, the biggest port of PNG, our priests are asked to come to the harbour and bless ships and tankers. Lately Fr. Arnold was asked to bless a new facility at the Nadzab airport.

By the way, Lae's airport can't compete with its shipping port. Its modesty is well illustrated by the way the only gate it has and needs tries to be big, and announces the futuristic dream of 4 GATES.

As to the social political reality of PNG in the last months, there is only one topic: **the national parliamentary elections**.

Elections in PNG really show that this is the land of the unexpected. Your name has been on the roll for 30 years? It now may have disappeared. Your town should receive 20 ballot boxes? There may be 15 only. The election officers should be paid an allowance? Those of the latest elections of 2012 are still waiting for their payments. There are 800 eligible voters in your village? A miracle happens: 1100 ballot papers turn out to be signed.

Precisely because the people expect the unexpected to happen, they follow the voting and the counting of the votes from nearby, and the counting venues become overnight tent villages with hundreds of people camping in make-shift tents, ready to intervene in support of their candidate if it seems that he/she has been cheated off his/her seat in parliament. Thus elections are a great popular happening with people participating much more fully than in Western democracies. In this way they are actually much more democratic!! Democracy means "the rule of the people" and that's what the people of PNG want. If necessary they take up arms for it.

No doubt, the geography and the lack of roads make elections in PNG a difficult exercise. And the obstacles are, at the same time, as many opportunities to meddle with the system and turn it to your candidate's advantage. The transportation of the ballot boxes makes this clear. Anything may occur during the transport.

Greetings and best wishes from all of us and till next