

Neues aus Papua Neuguinea - Dezember 2017

Dear friends of Mariannahill PNG!

This edition was meant to be written in October but, as already in the past, time went faster than my typing. Sori tru!

We are nearing Christmas and we, Mariannahillers in PNG, are all in reasonably good shape, if this can also be said of **Fr. Anthony Mulderink**, who is just coming out of the hospital in Lae, recovering from a typhoid which left him dehydrated, now, after due treatment, certainly reenergized and “full of sap” again. (cf. Psalm 92,14)

Deacon Daniel Apas is recovering well from his intestinal TB, thanks to his faithful swallowing of the corresponding pills and capsules. He was again fully engaged in the Rosary month, accompanying daily the faithful at Bomana in their procession with the statue of Our Lady from house to house.

Bishop Christian Blouin has to carry the weight of another kind of suffering: the uncertainty about when his successor will be appointed. More than a year has gone since Bishop Chris presented his resignation as Bishop of Lae. It must feel like waiting for a bus on the beach. For Bishop Chris it may sometimes even be heavier to bear than the pain of his arthritis.

Some more suffering may be going on in our small community, but everyone is occupied in his pastoral task, covering up with hard work and happy face the cleaning of his soul by bearing his part of the cross, following in this the example of our founder Abbot Francis, who envisaged his multiple sufferings exactly as such.

In September there was a 21 day marathon of fasting and prayer in St. Stephen parish, where Fr. Brian is the parish priest, and special shape was given to the October month of the Rosary in the parish of St. Therese, where Fr. Roland is in charge. As the Catholic Radio in Lae, under the direction of Fr. Brian, is now in full swing, it irradiates the different pastoral activities into the wider Morobe world, well beyond the borders of our Catholic parishes.

The church of St. Stephen is also undergoing a physical renewal, made possible by joined effort of parishioners and benefactors.

Our two Fratres, **Alois Gende and Wilfred Salhun**, whose coming on home leave to PNG I mentioned in the Tanget of last July, were received in Lae with the traditional festive evening in the “haus win” of Mariannahill House at Eriku on the 23rd of July. Their stories confirmed that the experience of their integration in our Zambian CMM community has not only given them more physical but also moral and spiritual weight and strength.

On the 19th of August they said goodbye again and flew back to Zambia to finish their studies in June next year. We hope to see them soon back in PNG to reinforce our small community at least for a few years before living out their missionary vocation in other parts of the world.

A few days later, on the 22nd of August **Fr. Alfonso Voorn** flew to the Netherlands for homeleave and to celebrate in his home-village his golden priestly jubilee. He returned on the 13th of October.

Fr. Roland participated in a course on financial management in the Xavier Institute at Bomana from the 22nd of August till the 15th of September, while Fr. Ludwig took part in a 7 weeks course on psychology and pastoral care in Goroka in August/September.

On the 23rd of October Fr. Alfonso flew to Lae to join the confreres for some weeks and to organize a Regional Meeting which took place on the 30th of October. Main topic was the **Chapter Mandate Booklet**, fruit of the General Chapter of 2016 and distributed by our General CMM Government among all the confreres in order to facilitate an authentic renewal of our communities. The meeting should start off a process of reflection and discernment among us, actually quite a job for most of us because of the daily work load.

In October our people at St. Joseph's Mission, 8 Mile, had again – not for the first time - an opportunity to witness the activity of “raskals” who visited the Pastoral Centre three times.

On one occasion they were welcomed, whomever, with bow and arrow and one of them received an arrow between his ribs. This surprise action put them to flight.

In November **Fr. Krzysztof Zacharuk** returned from Lae to his beloved Siassi, where he is the only Mariannahiller. But it doesn't mean isolation. Eight communities and the welcoming atmosphere of the islands are waiting for him.

As to our **CPS Sisters**, they are finally again a community of four. After a year of leave, mainly sickleave with two operations, **Sister Henriqueta Muchate** returned at the beginning of August. Also **Sister Michaela Kim** is back from her holidays in Korea. The personnel of the Mercy Centre, the clinic where both Sisters work, is relieved, although, in general, Health Service remains in PNG a difficult task as the Government funding, officially due, is many times not provided or coming late.

It also remains an overwhelming task as the country runs short of health facilities and personnel. An occasional relief will come with a hospital ship, that will go all around PNG and be accessible even to people from remote areas. Israel will send in turns a total of 61 doctors with this ship.

The 1st of December was HIV/ AIDS Day. Cardinal John Ribat, Archbishop of Port Moresby and chairman of the Christian Leaders Alliance against HIV/AIDS pointed out that HIV/AIDS cases went up with 10,000 in the last two years; 25% of the new infections being of children and adolescents.

The PNG child mortality rate is still the highest in the Pacific. People flock from rural areas to town and the row of people you find every morning at the entrance of our Mercy Clinic in Lae is getting longer by the day.

Last time I wrote to you about the elections. They belong now to the past and we have a new government, while Mister Peter O'Neil remains in power as Prime Minister. He was elected on the 2nd of August. The new Government has many challenges you can find on Internet, among them the wide-spread corruption, meaning that for many government services you have – if you want “normal” service -to pay under the table the person who is attending you.

I see this kind of “corruption” as a prevalence of the way of life of the traditional small community which has ruled in PNG – and in most countries - for thousands of years: personal relations determine daily life, not a set of rules independent from the mood of your boss or neighbour!

Social rules, respected and applied independent from the mood of the other or the personal relationship with him or her don't have yet much weight in the social fabric of PNG. Nearly everything depends on the favourable or disfavourable attitude of the other. Thus the most important thing is to have good friends everywhere and be at peace with others! Not a bad side effect actually of social dependency!.

Dear friends, Christmas knocks at the door. It is a Child that knocks at our heart, making us uncover presents and treasures we had not even suspected would be there!

A Blessed and Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to all of you, also in name of all the confreres in PNG!