

Pater Alfonso Voorn berichtet aus Papua Neuguinea (ENGLISH!)

Dear friends of Mariannahill PNG, Christmas greetings from Lae! A Blessed and Joyful Christmas to all of you in name of all CMM and CPS here in PNG! We all hope that the dreams of the prophet Isaiah, so forcefully resounding during the Advent, may come true! The international panorama, however, seems to have a long way to make true just a little bit of those dreams. "Roadmaps" are outlined to show the way to that Promised Land of Peace. There must be already a small library full of these road maps.

Far from the "killing fields" of our time, here in PNG we tried to comply with our mission, while – as usual - some of us went on home-leave or came back. In September Sister Henriqueta Muchate, CPS, came back from her home-leave in Mozambique.

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy the Mercy Centre in Lae is a clear manifestation of the Jubilee message. In the Centre mercy comes down like a gentle rain on the the daily problems of families mainly living in Kamkumung, the part of Lae, where the Mercy Centre operates and where some 90.000 people are living. Due to lack of hygiene and other problems some sicknesses are on the rise, like TB, and AIDS. "The majority of AIDS survivors live off the streets and as such they do not take proper care of their medications." (So the Post Courier of 15 Dec 2015) Pregnancy and child birth are still high risk events in PNG. Only 40% of deliveries are supervised professionally. Around 5000 babies a year don't make it through their first month of life. The need for health service is well illustrated by a statement of the WHO, according to which PNG's seven million people have less than 400 doctors. That means one doctor for 17.500 people. The situation is in fact much more dramatic because of these 400 doctors only 51 work outside the capital Port Moresby!! It illustrates quite clear the lack of "missionary" doctors, who are looking for sick people before they look for the best paid job! Mercy over money, that is what we need! In the same month of September Br. Yvon Bourret, of our USA-Canadian Province, came to visit us. Br. Yvon has been living and working for more than 20 years in Africa, the last halve of it in Kenya. He came to see how is our life and mission here. He returned to Canada in December. Who knows, perhaps he fell in love with PNG and will come back us join for longer! Welcome, Brother Yvon!

In October we had two visitors from our CMM General Government, our General Superior, Fr. Damian Weber, and the General Secretary, Fr. Wenceslaus Kwindigwi. They came for canonical visitation and stayed for two weeks with us, time enough to have a good look at our mini-sized CMM community. Looking hard they may have discovered good sides of our community we ourselves are not even aware of. We'll see it in the Visitation Report which, to be written during the Year of Mercy, can't be too hard on us!

Wednesday, the 4th of November was a great day for the Diocese of Lae. Deacon John Nake was ordained a priest in his home-village Kampalap in Siassi.

As Kampalap is mainly Lutheran the celebration became nearly ecumenical, because everybody was interested and wanted to see how that is when a Catholic man becomes a priest.

The celebration must have been for the Lutherans especially impressive, because the Catholic Church permits a much greater presence of traditional dancing and adorning during liturgy than the Protestants. And the whole richness of traditional culture came to expression.

From Lae many people had come together with Bishop Christian Blouin. They took the boat already on Monday. Others came from West New Britain. Hundreds of them had to sleep and eat at Kampalap. Everything was carefully prepared. Houses had been built of bush material, and a special house for the 9 priests who were to concelebrate at the ordination Mass and at the first Mass of the newly ordained Fr. John the next day.

It were colourful and highly festive days. A severe shortage of garden products because of the months-long drought, caused by El Niño, was resolved with extra rice coming in by boat. The newly ordained Fr. John has already received from Bishop Chris his pastoral destination and is working as a parish priest at Bulolo. When Bishop Chris travelled back to Lae by boat he found out that he was accompanied by a live-pig the inhabitants of Kampalap had given him along as a farewell present and sign of their gratitude for such magnificent days. Bishop Chris gave the thanks on to the Lord and the pig to the people.

On December 4, Sister Soun Tzang, CPS, left PNG for Korea to be nearer to her mother who celebrated lately her hundredth birthday. Sister Soun has been a member of the CPS community in Lae for six years and has dedicated much of her energy and time to the local Church as a Diocesan Administrator. Sister Soun joined the CPS in the United States, was then working in Zimbabwe, was one of the Sisters who started off the CPS in Korea and came to PNG in 2009. On the 27th of November Bishop and Diocese said a thankful goodbye to her with a festive farewell-lunch in the same offices where so many projects and activities of the Diocese had to be formulated meticulously in numbers and ciphers as an inexorable part of today's pastoral care.

On the 5th of December Fr. Sido van der Werf came back from home-leave, just in time to meet still Br. Yvon. Fr. Sido had been in the Netherlands since the 10th of May. It was a long home-leave, due to a series of visits to doctors. On the 9th of December Sister Pascal Nyamadzawo, CPS, flew from Lae via Moresby to Hong Kong. From there to Johannesburg and finally to Harare in Zimbabwe, for a well-deserved home-leave after her first three years in PNG. In three months she hopes to come back to take up again her task at the Pastoral Center at St. Joseph's Mission, Lae.

Dear friends, there is more news, which I must leave for next time: there are our confreres who started postgraduate studies and have finished or are finishing, Fr. Matthew Kim, Fr. Ludwig Teika, Deacon Daniel Apas. There are our other PNG confreres Br. Alois Gen-de and Br. Wilfred Salhun, now pursuing their theological studies in Zambia. And there are the always pre-sent and pressing evolving issues in the country, with this year the great issue of the drought in many parts of PNG, with in some parts of the Highlands real famine as consequence. Next time more. God bless and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!