

#### ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES IN PNG (1848) REMEMBERED

In the context of the celebration of the 100 years jubilee of the Lutheran Mission on Umboi / Siassi Islands, the first Catholic missionaries, the French Bishop Jean-Georges Collomb and his companions of the Marist Fathers, who had arrived 63 years earlier (1848), was not overlooked. The Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Lae had courteously invited Bishop Chris Blouin to take part in the celebration and had marked a special day for the Catholics of Siassi to remember their first missionaries. Unfortunately Bishop Collomb died of malaria a few weeks after arrival and Fr. Villien died three months later. This first attempt to establish a Catholic Mission station in what is now Papua New Guinea did not come off the ground. A year later (1849) the 2 surviving missionaries left and the mission on Umboi Island was closed. A second attempt was made in 1952 by missionaries of the Milan Mission Society, but also turned out unsuccessful and the Catholic Mission in the region was abandoned. Only 30 years later a new begin of the Catholic Mission in PNG was made by the French Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in 1885.

Since Bishop Chris Blouin could not attend the celebration of the Lutheran Church because of the annual Bishops Conference in Port Moresby he had appointed a delegation of three former Siassi missionaries, the Fathers Sido van der Werf, Anthony Mulderink, and Frans Lenssen to represent the Catholic Church. A nephew of Fr. Anthony, Ben Mulderink, who had just arrived for a visit on the occa-

sion of his uncle's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday could take the place of Fr. Frans Lenssen who was not able take part because of other commitments in Port Moresby.

The Lutheran Church had chartered a passenger's boat to tour the Siassi islands for a week of festivities from 26 April to 2 May for celebrating in the various Lutheran villages. The celebration for the Catholics together with the Lutherans took place on 1 May in Masale, a village at the north/west coast of Umboi Island, somehow on the former place called Nuru where Bishop Collomb had founded the first station. From there he intended to penetrate the unknown mainland of what is now PNG at a later stage.



**The bay where Bishop Collomb went ashore on Umboi Island in 1848**

Fr. Sido van der Werf reports on this event: "On Sunday morning, 1 May, we sailed very early for the village of Nuru at the northern tip of Umboi, nowadays called Masale. For us this was the most important part of all celebrations because here Catholic missionaries had lived and worked in 1848 and again from 1852 till 1855. A beautiful and big village right at the beach with a perfect and protected anchorage for ships. Here we came to remember them, to honour them and thank them for the sacrifice of their lives. The village population,

now all Lutheran, had done their utmost to decorate the village and prepare the festivities. On a hill, overlooking the ocean, a huge white cross had been erected and a plague at the foot of the cross with the story of Collomb and early missionaries.



In a moving ceremony, Fr. Sido blessed the cross and the plague. In a prayerful silence we remembered these heroes of the early and first Christianization of PNG, Bishop Jean-George Collomb, Fr. Villien, Fr. Fremont and Br. Optat of the Marist Mission Society. We remembered also the members of the Mission Society of Milan (PIME), Fr. Reina, Fr. Ambrosoli, Fr. Mazzuconi (beatified in 1983), and Br. Corti. Three missionaries died here from malaria and exhaustion and were buried at the beach. Today nothing is left of this first Catholic Mission station. The tsunami of 1888 must have swept away any sign of this establishment and the graves and are now in the sea covered by sand and reef."



**A buoy in the shallow waters of the**

**bay now marks the place where the graves must have been.**

#### **FROM THE DIOCESE OF LAE**

**Bishop Christian Blouin CMM** has appointed **Fr. Arnold Schmitt, CMM** as Vicar General of the Diocese of Lae.

**Fr. Ignatius Bwalya** was appointed as parish priest of St. Michael's Parish, Lae/Eriku. He also remains the pastor of St. Stephen's Parish, 4-Mile.

**Mr. Louis Worealevi** was appointed as Catholic Education Secretary. On 27 March **Bishop Chris Blouin** travelled to Port Moresby to attend the Caritas Board Meeting on 28 March. From there he flew to New Zealand to pay a visit to Fr. Geoffrey Lee, diocesan priest of Lae. Fr. Geoff is not coming back to PNG and it seems that his health is not getting better. It was important to meet him and his family. On 28 April, **Bishop Chris** traveled again to Port Moresby for a workshop on Pastoral Approaches to Strengthen Right Relationships at the Xavier Institute at Bomana. Following this workshop he attended the Annual General Meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference which was held at the Don Bosco Conference Centre in Port Moresby from 2 May to 10 May. From 16 to 19 May Bishop Chris will participate as bishop deputy of Caritas Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby. From there he will travel to Rome to take part of the meeting of Caritas Internationalis from 22 to 26 May. He will be back in Lae on 29 May.

**Sr. Assumpta FMI** is happy to have a new companion with her at Bulolo. **Sr. Rosemary FMI** is to run again the sewing centre for women that has not been operating for many months.

**Sr. Michaela Kim CPS** is completing her training in the Melanesian Pidgin language.

#### **FROM THE MARIANHILL FAMILY**

The re-election by the provincial chapter of **Fr. Arnold Schmitt** as provincial superior was ratified by the superior general in Rome as well as the elections of **Fr. Ignatius Bwalya** as vice-provincial, **Fr. Alfonso Voorn** and **Fr. Sido van der Werf** as councilors. **Fr. Krzysztof Zacharuk** was re-elected as superior of the Mariannahill House.

**Fr. Matthew Kim CMM**, the brother of St. Michaela Kim CPS, got finally the required travel documents to enter PNG so that he can take up his assignment in Lae. After his home leave in Korea Fr. Matthew is expected to arrive in the near future.

**Fr. Alfonso Voorn**, rector of the Mariannahill College and lecturer at the Catholic Theological Institute at Bomana/Port Moresby left for a 3 months home leave. He first flew down south to New Zealand to visit his sister.

The birthdays of **Fr. Anthony Mulderink CMM** (80) and **Sr. Clearence Klever CPS** (75) were celebrated with a shared festive dinner of the CMM and CPS communities on 3 May. A great surprise for Fr. Anthony was the visit of his nephew Ben Mulderink who on Good Friday unexpected knocked on his door at St. Joseph's Station. His arrival was kept secret until the last moment. Fortunately Ben could accompany his uncle on the jubilee excursion to Siassi Islands on the occasion of the centenary of the Lutheran Mission in that area.

#### **BUILDING BOOM IN PORT MORESBY AND LAE**

At least one major hotel is being built and an existing one repaired or extended in Port Moresby every six months in recent years. Hundreds of new houses are also popping up regularly in suburbs, settlements and even on customary land. That is to cater for the anticipated influx of workers entering Papua New Guinea during the realization of the billions of Dollars project, the Liquid Natural Gas exploitation (PNG LNG) project. Huge

super markets have also pinned their presence in the increasingly populous city.

Intense construction is also underway at the multimillion grand casino hotel complexes at Boroko suburb. There are other major developments at the seaside in the harbour area.

All these latest developments are supplemented by the never ending beautification program initiated by NCD Governor Powes Parkop. Mr. Parkop has funded street lights, fountains, carvings, pavements, recreational parks and other public utilities to lift the city's image.

LAE city, the second city and industrial hub of Papua New Guinea, is also currently experiencing the impact of the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in the Southern Highlands Province. Within the last 12 months - starting June last year, the physical appearance of Lae city has changed very much and there are talks on the streets that the LNG project will have a great impact in Lae within the next few months.

As the gateway to this much talked about multi-billion Kina project, Lae Main Wharf and the Lae old airport are amongst other sections in the city which are crammed with containers earmarked for the project. Heavy equipment is being shipped into Lae from Dubai in the Arab Emirates. All that material has to be transported by heavy trucks over a distance of 750 km to the Highlands. To complement the project, there is a massive building boom around the city with the obvious multi-million kina eight story building coming up in the heart of the city just opposite the Lae Post Office. At Eriku and the Top Town area, construction of residential buildings especially double story flats are mushrooming at every street and sections around both vicinities. There are more than five building constructions underway every month with a completion rate of one building per month.

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