

EDITORIAL



On the 23rd of April I celebrated the 25th anniversary of my ordination as a bishop. The people were planning a very big celebration but this was not to take place because of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, we were only 9 of us at the small chapel of the Men's House for the early morning mass. I

PERSONAL REFLECTION

want to share with you all some of my thoughts as I celebrate this anniversary.

I did not thank God because I was ordained a bishop as that was a very big cross to carry during the last 25 years but I was blessed to carry it with my people. I thanked him for all the blessings he showered upon me and my people during those long years. And these blessings were many and they enabled us to keep on moving forward on our Journey of Faith despite the failures, the untimely deaths of some priests and missionaries, the difficulties for transport, the poor delivery of services from the Government, the loss of good benefactors, etc.

I am the second bishop of the diocese. Our first bishop, Mgr. Gérard Deschamps and the first missionaries have established a solid diocesan church. I had to be the pastor of a people growing in faith, hope and love, a people who had a very good shepherd before me.

I was ordained bishop at a time when the diocese was planning to start the pastoral program for the renewal of the diocese. The main idea was to build up a Church of the Second Vatican Council, a Church of participation and communion. This had an impact on the choice of my motto as bishop. Finally, after discernment and prayer I chose TO BUILD UNITY IN DIVERSITY. And that is what I have been working on for the last 25 years.



I thanked the Lord for all the graces given to us in the diocese during those years:

- ✚ The four years of preparation and writing of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan with the active participation of all the people (1996-1999).
- ✚ The Diocesan Assembly of November 1999 when the Diocesan Pastoral Plan was unanimously accepted by the 95 participants.
- ✚ The Diocesan Assemblies we had in 2003, 2007, 2012 and 2016, each time approving as a people the moving forward on our Journey of Faith.
- ✚ The diocesan structure of participation with key teams for the running of the Diocese and the implementation of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan.
- ✚ The fact that we were always able to have a good Diocesan Team of Pastoral Animation to coordinate the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.
- ✚ We put in place the Diocesan Pastoral Advisory Board, the 'think tank' team to study the concepts behind our Diocesan Pastoral Plan and prepare materials for its implementation and the steps forward.

- ✚ The great celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the two first Canadian Montfort Missionaries in Kiunga in 2009, later in 2011 of the Daughters of Wisdom and again in 2018 of the Brothers of St. Gabriel.
- ✚ The Golden Jubilee of some Parishes (Daru, Bosset, Matkomnai, Kungim, Bolivip) uniting the people together, all of them proclaiming that the Word of God has brought them from darkness into light.
- ✚ The commitment of the Parish Teams to build up and live as Church of participation and communion with their people.
- ✚ The commitment of the priests and the good fraternity among themselves.
- ✚ The priests accepting to do ministry in very remote parishes where there is no religious to accompany them.
- ✚ The good brotherhood and sisterhood among all the religious in the Diocese.
- ✚ A solid Financial Administration Team looking well after the money and the properties of the Diocese.
- ✚ The Diocesan Services we were able to establish in order to serve our people, among them Education, Health, Pastoral and Social Services.
- ✚ The material development we were able to carry out with the help and commitment of our Project Office staff and our Trade employees.
- ✚ The on-going capacity building of our people in general, but especially of our employees at all levels, some of them receiving training overseas.
- ✚ The on-going efforts to have seminarians in order to have priests to serve our people.
- ✚ The Religious Congregations (priests, sisters and brothers) who kept on sending us valiant missionaries.
- ✚ The integration of the West Papuan Refugees into the life of the Parish where they are located.
- ✚ The fact that we were the first Diocese to have its own Policy for Child Protection.
- ✚ The Movement of Men that was started in 2009.
- ✚ The Callan Service to assist persons with disabilities.
- ✚ The Good Samaritan Centre to assist persons infected with HIV/AIDS.
- ✚ The construction of Peter To Rot Formation Centre.
- ✚ The construction of our new Cathedral in Kiunga.
- ✚ The establishment of a few new parishes.
- ✚ The faith witness, dedication and service of so many of our people.
- ✚ The immense grace of always having a few key persons to assist me in my shepherding of the people.
- ✚ The long walks in the jungle and the dangerous trips on rough seas to visit my people.
- ✚ In Canada the staff of the Mission Procure taking care of raising funds for the diocese and over the years the priests and Brother responsible for our Newsletter LES NOTRES, for our benefactors.
- ✚ Our many faithful benefactors in Canada and elsewhere without whom many of the things that happened over these 25 years would not have taken place.
- ✚ The on-going strong partnership with many Funding Agencies from overseas, mainly in Germany, Austria, but also elsewhere.
- ✚ The many Mission Appeals we were able to preach in the USA during many years.
- ✚ The convents and the presbyteries that we constructed in parishes.
- ✚ The new and bigger church buildings in some parishes and many new chapels in villages.
- ✚ The brave step to start St. Gabriel Technical Secondary School.
- ✚ The plantation of 'eagle wood' in order to become more self-reliant.
- ✚ The beginning of Emmaus Farm (a small agriculture school).
- ✚ The strength and growth of the spiritual groups and a vibrant devotion to Mother Mary. She is always walking with us our Journey of Faith.



- ✚ The love of the people for St. Louis Marie de Montfort.
- ✚ The Enthronement of the Bible in all the homes of the Diocese.
- ✚ The establishment of Small Christian Communities.
- ✚ The inspiring and life-giving liturgical celebrations with so many people.
- ✚ The on-going care of the sick, the poor and the needy.
- ✚ The strong sense of belonging of the people and their feeling of being one because we share the same vision of Church.

And it goes on and on. It is like a litany about people and events, all praising God for his goodness to our people and continually blessing us in so many ways. It is like the people who always proclaim loudly: GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME.

The bishop with his priests, his religious, his lay missionaries and his people have lived all this over the last 25 years, building unity in diversity, and together express their gratitude to God.

† Bishop Gilles Côté, s. m.m.



Covid-19 and Kiunga

Where is Kiunga ? it is in the North Fly District of Western Province in Papua New Guinea. Our Diocese covers the whole of the Western Province.

The province has the border with West Papua, so there are many villages along the border. These have interactions with the villages on the other side. Kiunga itself is some distance from the border.

In our place we are isolated from the rest of the world with access mostly by plane – we can get here by boat but it takes several days before we arrive. What about the road I hear you say – well we have a couple of roads but these are all to towns/villages within our province. They do not link to any other places. Our surrounding is basically jungle and swamps.

When we started to hear on the news that there was a virus spreading around the planet, this became the topic of conversation among the people. Initially it was a curiosity but as the spread became further the

reality of the consequences of this virus became real.

The central government took action that it saw fit by following the steps of most countries around the world – lockdown, social distancing, hand washing, etc.

Education would also need to feature high, as would communicating the message to wide and far. Fortunately, this isolation we have here in Kiunga has bred an incredible communication system because somehow everyone will know the news in a couple of days once it is released. Even the most remote of villages somehow get the message.

You would have thought that the isolation aspect of limiting the spread of the virus would be easy for us, you would be right and wrong. Right because isolation from the outside world would not be difficult for us, BUT wrong because the isolation within our villages and towns would be a lot more difficult.

Custom is that contact with people is central to the *wantok* system. Closeness and family are all important. So, the concept of social distancing has been a real challenge for the people. As the word spread around for the need to be careful, the people were feeling scared and afraid. Facts needed to be carefully presented together with the message that fear was not necessary, but certainly care with your health and that of others was needed. Maintaining social distance was always going to be a problem as these are people used to be at close quarters with each other, especially if family members are from the same village, your private space is also theirs.

A really bright outcome has been that the people have taken diligently to washing hand more frequently during the day. Like most parts of the world it has now necessitated the installing of washing facilities at the entrance way to public building before entering them.

At this time the Government has deployed about 400 soldiers along the border with West Papua where they have cases of Covid-19. They are there to give



awareness and most importantly to stop the people from crossing the border at this time of pandemic.

The good news is that right now (May 3) there are no positive

cases of Covid-19 in the Western Province. About 900 tests taken proved to be negative, which is so encouraging because our health system doesn't have the capacity to deal with many acute cases of the virus.

One difficult thing about the lock down is that we cannot have our religious celebrations as usual in the church buildings. Hopefully this will change soon but we will need to maintain social distance for the Church services and get the people to wash their hands before entering the church. We also

have to often clean the pews, door knobs, etc. with disinfectant.

Our poor people have been good in their efforts to deal with the situation. Many of them are struggling because they cannot make use of the little markets as usual. But in many families they are gathering together on Sunday for the family prayer with the help of a guide prepared by their parish teams.

Mr. Tony Jansen, lay missionary and Bishop Gilles

My Heart Praises God: (25 Years, Silver Jubilee of Bishop Gilles Côté)



Hi Bishop, today is a great day for the people and families of the Diocese, a time of thanksgiving for the love and mercy of God, as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of your ordination as bishop. I still remember the day when people made you a seat on the stretcher and carried you in procession from the mission entrance to the old Cathedral; it was a day of joy, of happiness and the whole Diocese was united as one family. God blessed that day with His Spirit and this has made it special for you till today. The feeling we felt on that day still dwells in our hearts as we are one with you in our prayers today.

We thank the good Lord for the gift of your life and your ministry as a Bishop in our Diocese for the last 25 years. God had a great Mission for you in our Diocese and he spared your life during the plane crash, Praise God.

We also thank the Lord for the gift of your parents because without your parents you wouldn't be here in this part of the world (in this periphery land), Praise God.

We pray that the Lord will shower His Grace upon you as you continue your Ministry in the Mission of Christ in our midst.

Bishop, today should be a great day for us as people of the Diocese with big a celebration with many people, expressing our joy and happiness together as a family. But because of coronavirus we

cannot come together to celebrate. However, our hearts are full of praise for the wonders the Lord has done through you in our Diocese.

As a pilgrim people on the Journey of Faith in our Diocese we saw and experienced the true attitudes of Jesus in you, your kindness, your love, your care, your humility, your readiness to listen, your acceptance and your encouragements to many people and families.

Bishop, you are a very special blessing for the people of Daru-Kiunga Diocese. We are most grateful to you for implementing with our participation our Diocesan Pastoral Plan that guides us as one people on this Journey of Faith.

You have tirelessly shepherded our Diocese in the way of Jesus for the last 25 years.

Happy 25th Silver Jubilee, Bishop.

Myriam D. Luke, Diocesan Family Life Coordinator.

Holy and Formed for Mission

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is our pleasure to share with you our experiences as lay persons working in the Church and serving the people through different ministries. The Diocesan Social Services consist of:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| ✓ The Diocesan Child Protection Service | ✓ The Diocesan Men Service |
| ✓ The Diocesan Youth Service | ✓ The Diocesan Family Life Service |
| ✓ The Diocesan Women Service | ✓ The Diocesan Caritas Service |

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands has dedicated three full years to the LAITY. In 2019 the theme was CALLED TO HOLINESS. This year it is FORMED FOR MISSION and next year will be LAY PEOPLE ON A MISSION.

The lay people need to encounter Jesus and develop a profound relationship with Him in order to become holy. And they need to be formed in order to play their roles fully in the Church and Society. The Church has to be concerned about the human, spiritual, intellectual, social and pastoral formation of its lay people.

Our Diocese has always been involved in the capacity building of all our people but more specifically of those employed by the Church and active in the various Diocesan Services. They all have to be properly equipped in knowledge and skills in order to work in collaboration with the priests and the religious and with them build up a Church of participation and communion. We can say that in our diocese that collaboration is very good and this creates a good relationship, strong team work and participation at all levels.

The lay persons responsible for the Diocesan Social Services attend a great variety of meetings and training session at Diocesan level and are often invited to join with the priests for some formative seminars. Some of us attend sessions organized at national level and some of us were sent overseas for special training. Some of us are now members of our various Diocesan Committees and Boards.

A few years ago, five of us attended a four months renewal program in Leadership and Mission at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila and recently one attended a Diploma course in Safeguarding of Minors and vulnerable persons at the Gregorian University in Rome.

One principle of the Diocese is that when we ask persons to play a role at village, parish or diocesan levels these persons need to be prepared to do so through a variety of training offered to them. Each year our Diocesan Pastoral Animation Team offers a three-week training to leaders in four parishes. Our Diocesan Pastoral Plan is in fact an on-going plan of formation for all our people, the bishop, the priests, the religious and the lay people.

We, members of the Diocesan Social Services follow closely the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and each year we plan our activities in line with the value to be lived and promoted. Each Social Service has its own Annual Target and its own plan of action. But we also have one target for our Services together and we plan some activities that we will lead together or in collaboration among ourselves. We have established the Diocesan Social Services Board and this Board makes sure we are all moving together in the right direction and that we give genuine support to one another.

In the Diocese we always try to think together, decide together and do together. The lay people are involved in these three actions and are not simply waiting for the priests to tell them what to do.

Yes, the lay people play a very active role in the Church of Daru-Kiunga Diocese and are constantly given training in order to be able to do so. We are all together Church alive in Christ.

Written by the members of the Diocesan Social Services.

MISSIONNARIES who served in our Church ; they passed away in Quebec (Canada) from COVID-19



Brother Gilbert Comeau, s.m.m.

At the age of 52, with courage and daring, he flew to distant Papua New Guinea to serve the Montfortian mission in the young diocese of Daru-Kiunga. There he carried out almost every kind of work (boatman, carpenter, mechanic, tinsmith, etc.), responding to a thousand needs first in Daru (1977-1988) and then in Kiunga (1988-1997). As the person in-charge of the sawmill, he was able to win the confidence and esteem of the workers with his smile and a few *motrus* (papuan cigarettes) offered at the right time. Always helpful, he knew how to be happy wherever he was. He liked to tell the story of the time when he worked hard in Papua with his boat; like the apostles, he experienced the raging sea. A Brother, in the residence where he ended his life said: "He was a religious saint who lived as simply as possible."

LES NOTRES
 revue éditée et publiée
 4 fois par année
 par les MISSIONS
 MONTFORTAINES
 4000 rue BOSSUET,
 MONTRÉAL (QC)
 H1M 2M2
 ENR. NE
 13190 8881 RR 0001
 Abonnement annuel :
 15,00\$
 ISSN-0029-4578
 Imprimé par LITHO MILLE-ÎLES
 Expédition par DXP-POSTEXPERTS

Brother Louis-Philippe Guimont, sg



From 1956, he was present in Singapore to serve the schools of this country for 10 years. A bit of re-training, some studies and there he is again, on his way this time (1971) to Papua. He teaches in the only secondary school in Daru and is offered by the Government the direction of a new school in Kiunga. In 1995, he left Papua and went to Thailand, to Assumption University, to teach ethics and morals. This course was very much in demand among the students because the professor was very open. In his career, he has also taken on the organization of religious renewal sessions, translation work and especially interpreting, during community sessions. A perfect religious EDUCATOR... Go and talk to his university students!

MAIL POSTE
 Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes
 Postage paid / Port payé
PUBLICATIONS
 N° 40007694

Brother Charles Gareau, sg



Born in Saskatchewan (Canada), he took a training that also directed him to schools, such as the Lajoie School (Outremont-Montréal), in its English section. He is a great influence among young school children because of his good humour. In 1969, after a stint in the United States, near Chicago, he worked in Papua for 25 years. Teacher, Principal of Daru Primary School, he became Director of Youth. He even built a Youth Centre with Mgr. Deschamps. For 7 years he also ran the Montfort Boys' Town in Kiunga. He teaches well, directs well, makes feasible plans. He even started a "correspondence" course allowing weaker students to finish their high school course. For his students he insists on a good school life that goes hand in hand with a good relationship with God. He returned to Quebec in 1994, continuing to serve in accounting and making close to 5000 rosaries to pray to Mary, his heavenly Mother. She was waiting for him!