

Issue 239, March 2021

LES NOTRES

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Greetings of peace to all of you! I know that you are all going through a very difficult situation because of the lock down caused by Covid-19. I hope that with the vaccines available the situation will gradually improve for all of you, and among other things that you will be able to go back to church for communal prayers.

In Papua New Guinea we have been blessed and spared from the worst of the virus. So far, only 891 cases were detected, and the number of deaths is only 9. They are now doing some testing in the settlements in Kiunga and I do hope the results will all be negative as it was late last year. Practically all the cases in the Western Province were linked to the Ok Tedi mine. I am looking to

get vaccinated in a few months' time but vaccination has not yet started here.

Last year we had to postpone our Diocesan Assembly because of the virus but we now have planned to hold it in October this year. It gave us one extra year to live and promote the value of commitment and learn from Jesus how to be faithful to our duties in the same way he was faithful to his mission.

The Nuncio promised me that before he leaves Papua New Guinea later this month, he will send the final report to Rome for the consultation made to find me a replacement. If this is done now, I will have to wait a good four or five months to know the

name of the bishop elect. I really hope to be home for good during the last months of this year.

In this issue of **LES NOTRES** you will read about a new project of the Daughters of Wisdom, which consist in a Hostel for young girls. Fr. Francis Prashanth, s.m.m. is sharing with you how the repeated lock down in Tabubil Town have affected his ministry and prevented him to visit his people in the villages. Then, Fr. Masjon Kenedy shares with you about his visit to villages of St. Louis Marie de Montfort Parish in Daru. Finally, The Daughters of Wisdom will also share about the mass of thanksgiving that was held on Christmas Day at St. Berthila Parish for Sister Beata and Sister Berlinda who made their final vows a bit earlier. Both are from West Papua. Feel part of us as you go through these pages. Very grateful for your prayers and your generous donations.

May the good Lord continue to make his loving presence felt to you in many ways and may Mother Mary protect you and bring you to Jesus!

✠ Gilles, Bishop of Daru-Kiunga Diocese

**... a home to live...
a place to feel at home.**

I was not in Kiunga when our La Sagesse House became La Sagesse Girls' Hostel in 2018. But I remember very well reading the first article with the title: "*If we don't take risk for God, we will never do great things for Him.*" Moved by the words of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort's motto, the Daughters of Wisdom decided to have the first ministry of their own, so far, we had always worked in diocesan projects. La Sagesse Community was transformed and officially opened and blessed on May 7th, 2018, the Feast Day of Blessed Marie Louise, the first Daughter of Wisdom and named under the name of ' La Sagesse Girls 'Hostel' . We strongly believe that she is always guiding and protecting us as well as whoever lives in this Hostel.

This new ministry is helping us to continue living our Charism to love and care for the poor and the needy, especially the girls from remote areas who are selected to continue their studies but sometimes lose hope because it is not easy to find secure accommodation in town where the Secondary Schools are. The Sister in charge supervises and mentors these young girls who are completing their studies in lower and higher Secondary and Vocational Schools. These young ladies come from remote areas and hope to have a better future as responsible persons in their family and community in their villages.



Every year, few new members are welcomed to the hostel to fill the 10 places available. So far, four completed grade twelve moved to the Higher Education according to their choice, to the nursing or teachers' college. For these past three years, 15 young ladies made use of the accommodation for life education, human and spiritual development. It is always a pleasure to see them performing their rich culture into singing and dancing.

Beside their study, they are also concerned about their spiritual life. Five girls were prepared to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. They participate with the sisters in the different celebrations that occur during the year. They learn also many things from one another in cooking, cleaning, gardening, shopping and sharing their knowledge. They discover self-knowledge and understand differences in each other, learning to trust people as in a family. They pray together and attend parish celebrations.

It is not always easy for these girls to meet the expectations of the group in areas like self-discipline, self-giving and being responsible young women who can see a need and respond to it in the best way possible. Time management is another skill that is fostered and practiced during their time at la Sagesse Hostel...as a home to live and a place to feel at home.

With gratitude, we thank the benefactors who have helped us these last three years for the running of the Hostel, a place to feel at home.

Jeanne-Adeline Soavinjanahary, DW



JOURNEY OF THE HEART (In the midst of COVID- 19 Pandemic)

Life is a series of choices and we make choices to live every day in a better way. Some make their choices to live on the mountain, others prefer to stay in town, while few others choose to be in places where there is peace and serenity and some live in a world full of noise and confusion. But whatever choices we make, life continues for each one of us.

Since World War II, the world has never been through such tragic experiences as we are experiencing now. The end of 2019 is the beginning of the disaster for the life of the people and economy of the world. The World Health Organization declared a global pandemic. Many countries suffered the loss of their citizens. There was panic everywhere and the media updating news were only about this virus, deaths, lockdown etc.

Who do we need?

It is a question everyone has probably asked during this pandemic. The roads closed, neighbors seemed far away, family members distanced themselves and the world became gloomy and saddened. In everyday news, we see death. The doctors struggle to save lives, police to enforce the law of wearing facemask and social distancing and travels are suspended. Jean Paul Sartre a philosopher says, *'The other is hell'*. This must have been the feeling of some of the people because we do not know who carries the virus and who will die of this invisible virus. The increase of the death rate in the countries like America and India was bringing fear in many of us. We do not know if we will be alive to tell this story to the next generation. But there is always a space for someone who hears our cries - our Lord Jesus who was born in our likeness and who knows our pain and our struggle. It is the time we start praying in every hospital, every government starts invoking and every people realizes that there is someone who controls everything, and we should approach Him personally.



Whom to be sent ?

It is a missionary call to everyone. Who can say that like in the psalm: *«Here I am Lord I come to do your will»*. Pope Francis said, *«the measure of the greatness of societies is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty»*. It is a challenge to everyone to move to the enemy (virus) and fight without seeing the enemy. It is a challenge for us to go and meet the poor in the flesh. It is a challenge for us to reach out to our neighbors and share the Good News with them in persons. As a Montfortian missionary, I feel proud to say that we did this in our respective areas in Papua New Guinea. We know that we are living with the people and we are not exempted from virus transmission, and yet, we go to meet, speak and feed them. We are daring missionaries as Montfort always wanted us to be. And we will always be daring irrespective of deadly Virus or calamities. We are always for our God and People.



Suffer with the suffering Christ

Among the many places in Papua New Guinea, my little mission town suffered a lot. Total lockdown was imposed and it gave a shock to many local people. What is church without the people? This situation clearly taught everyone that church is not just a mere building but people. Even though the presence of God is there in the church, people have no access to come to church. The family house became a small chapel where the people pray. Every time I go inside the empty church, my heart is filled with sorrow because I am not able to serve my people whom God has entrusted to me. Whom to question, God or authorities or me? I remain silent and pray

for the healing of the world.

We thought it would not reach us because we are far away from the crowded cities and countries. But finally, it reached our tiny town, Tabubil. The alarm was given by the company and they imposed the total lockdown in the town. The movement of the people was cut off. The workers who live in the town found it very hard not to see their family. Some started jumping over the fences and escaped from town. I had pity of the village people because they found it hard to get some food from the town. And many were hungry. The school was suspended and everyone was asked to live in their houses and save their lives. I see poverty everywhere and day by day hunger is increasing in the villages. I know I cannot do much in feeding the multitude, but I follow the example of Mother Theresa who says, "If you cannot feed the hundred, at least feed one".

With this inspiration, we converted a radio room into a Charity Room to help the people who come to the Church with their empty stomach. As a parish we started to give food and clothing to the refugees, our prayer leaders and all the people who come at the door asking for help.

Today the world needs the hands and the heart of Jesus to help the needy and the poor. It is every one's job to help everyone. There is no one so poor that he cannot help someone and it takes a moment for the heart to move out from oneself to others, from our selfishness to being charitable. As Christians, we need to move not only with our legs but with our heart. And this journey of the heart can move anywhere without boundaries.

Let us journey together with one mind and heart to help the needy and those around us. Thank you.

Fr. Francis Prashanth, SMM



SURPRISED BY THE JOY

Moving towards the end of 2019, our diocese was gifted with the presence of a lay missionary from New Zealand, Mr. Tony Jansen. That was his third missionary visit to Kiunga. Equipped with a rich experience and skills in the financial field, the diocese was more than happy to welcome him.

Bishop's offering to go to Daru for a short period was a delightful one. At the same time, I filled the gap since Fr. Robert Peria SMM, went on holiday to India.

My first plan was to visit all the villages on Kiwai Island and Suki area during the Christmas season. Visiting Kiwai Island villages exposed me to the sea with rough waves. For this, I relied so much on "local genius", the skipper. He knows how to deal with rough seas. He was the master that demands my total obedience and trust.

Once we arrived at Kiwai Island, the stories and heroic actions of past missionaries flooded my head. All its glory and splendour decorated my imagination hoping to enjoy the same. The people of Samari and Iasa (Barasaro) told me all the legacy of the past, the sisters, fathers, brothers, schools and so on..... It was the best page 4 experience. Samari was the

centre for quality education and health services.

Things seem to be fading away. Daru becomes a new promised land. The small town is flooded by many people, but less job opportunities and basic infrastructures and Kiwai Island is deserted. Some villages have vanished, claimed by the sea. This condition obviously challenges the parish pastoral team to adjust the pastoral approach in order to have wider impact on both spiritual and social issues, especially the education and health services. Strengthening the local leadership and regular visits are equally important.

After spending a few days at Samari and Barasaro, I moved to the upper stream of the Fly River towards Sapuka in Suki area. It was high tide and suddenly the sea was boiling but it could not stop us. In the last 8 years the people of Sapuka invited the Catholic Mission. We can say it is a new centre for the Catholic Mission in the region. It is a vibrant Catholic community. The spirit is high, and the leadership is strong. From my conversation with them, I can sense that they are proud of themselves to be Catholics. That sense is followed by many aspirations for future and further growth. One common thing that many people perceive, even outside of the Catholic communities, is that the Catholic Mission will improve the social services, where education and health are the primary issues. I promised nothing on these issues every time they raised the point. I always say, "GO ISI ISI" (go slowly!).

Forty-five minutes from Sapuka, heading North East, there is Mirawa village. Located on the bank of Fly River but does not receive benefit because they migrated to the site in the last 25 years. It is a budding Catholic community with many more works to be done. Mirawa has a small church from bush materials. They are asking for the mission to assist with Iron sheets.. If the land is secured, confirmed with a written document, we may consider their request.

Guwaku, is another new Catholic Community consisting of few natives and West Papuan refugees. A small semi-permanent church was built. The challenge is the strengthening of the newly found faith.

Guwaku is much closer to the border with Indonesia. Most trades happen on the border via bush track. It is very common to see coffee, milk, matches, biscuits, noodles, sugar supplied from the border. In exchange, they brought deer horns, crocodile skin and fresh meat to the border.

Another newly established Catholic Community is Tapila. It is much closer to Daru around 2-3 hours by water. The Catholic Community is small, but they have a very nice permanent Church. The parish needs lots of effort to strengthen it.

At the end of this “escape” I found two things:

- Having visited and having direct contact with communities, I sense something happened to me. Encountering new people, enjoying the new atmosphere, eating new food, and speaking one piece of a new

language re-energizes and rejuvenates my missionary zeal. I always firmly believe that encountering people is the key element of missionary life. The meeting gives meaning and sense of fulfilment. On one hand I may bring new energy to them, on the other hand I absorb their energy, their holiness and wisdom. I was enriched and recharged. The **sense of joy overflows**.

For the first time in the past 8 years my body was at ease and relaxed. I search for the cause. Something tells me. This is the village lifestyle. The clocks run slower. Nothing is urgent. Time is not crucial. Take off your watch. Take some readings to stay sharp. Time may be racing somewhere else, but here time is of no consequence. I need to adjust to it. Village people live by day and not by the minute. The people give little thought to tomorrow and none for what may or may not happen next year. Each day seems to be a copy of the day before. I soon learned that hours meant nothing here. A day is not twenty-four hours and it is not twelve. It is simply a day or half day. So, enjoy the moment, just be happy to be alive and look forward to the rest of the adventure. Past and future are another world. The present is the importance. «*Stap isi*», stay relaxed and enjoy the moment.

This trip was eventually not to escape life, but it is for life not to escape me. As Martin Buber put it well, “*All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware*”.

Fr. Masjon Kenedy, smm Diocesan Financial Administrator

THE THANKSGIVING MASS FOR SISTERS BEATA AYOMBE AND BERLINDA YANDE

Our two Sisters Beata and Berlinda did their Perpetual Vows last year 2020. They were supposed to do it together in April but due to COVI-19 pandemic, they had to do it at different times.

On the 15th of August 2020, Sr. Beata, did her Perpetual Vows during the Saturday Mass, at the Cathedral with the restriction of the COVid-19 Protocol. Due to the restricted guidelines of the Government, we did it very simply with few people who usually come for the daily mass. Her family members were unable to come to



witness their daughter’s Final Commitment because of the lock down.

On the 15th of August 2020, Sr. Beata, did her Perpetual Vows during the Saturday Mass, at the Cathedral with the restriction of the COVid-19 Protocol. Due to the restricted guidelines of the Government, we did it very simply with few people who usually come for the daily mass. Her family members were unable to come to witness their daughter’s Final Commitment because of the lock down.

For Sr. Berlinda, unlike the other one, we did it differently because the situation of CoVid-19 was not as strict as earlier in the year. We had a good celebration in the Cathedral on Sunday the 22nd of



Sœur BERLINDA et Sœur BEATA

November and many people attended the mass, and some of her family members, especially her brothers and sisters came to witness her final commitment. The majority of the people were wearing face masks. It was the second time we could celebrate Sunday mass with many people since the beginning of the Pandemic of COVID-19. Many young people were present. Some expressed that they were touched by the Final Vows of Sr. Berlinda, especially the symbolic gesture of giving Sr. Berlinda totality by her family to the congregation for the mission of the Church.



all the liturgy was beautiful with hymns and dances by different groups. Fr. Andrew Moses, the Vicar General of the Diocese, was the main celebrant and his homily was based on "Thanksgiving" especially to God for giving us His son and he connected with the Vocation of the Sisters. During the mass, the two Sisters and I were given the time to talk to the people so all of us talked about vocation for our

Then on the 23 of December 2020, the Daughters of Wisdom in PNG were invited for the Thanksgiving Mass for our two Sisters at their Home Parish in Iowara in the refugees Camp. Five of us went for that celebration. Three Sisters, one Pre-Novice and one candidate. We started our journey from Kiunga to Iowara by dinghy, then by Tractor, which took us 12 hours altogether.

On the 24th of December, we had the Thanksgiving Mass and it was integrated with the Christmas Vigil Mass. The church was full with many young people and



Srs BEATA, VERONICA (superior), BERLINDA



Montfortian Congregations.

On the evening of 25th December 2020, we were invited by the family of Sr. Beata Ayombe, to their home for dinner. Most of her family members were present. They expressed their pain of not witnessing their daughter's Final Vows in Kiunga but they understood the situation of COVID-19. They were also interested and asked us to clarify their doubts on the meaning of Final Vows and we explained it to them.

What struck me in this Thanksgiving Celebration was that the family and the community were in full support of the Vocation of the Sisters. They were interested to know the things that they were not sure about in regards to Religious life, especially the Final Vows and what kind of life after the Final Vows in regards to their relationship, communication, where she will be buried when she dies etc... Sr. Beata's Mother expressed also that it was hard for her in the beginning but now she has let go of her daughter and accept her choice and was in full support for her to continue. Now we have five Melanesian Young women who pronounce their final vows with the Daughters of Wisdom in Papua New Guinea. Kindly pray that God will give us many more vocations.

Sr. Veronica Paison DW

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-ILES
 Expédition par DXP-POSTEXPERTS

Next issue, 240 in **MAY 2021**