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*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)*

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item 311

### I would say 'that it is our UAC'!

We have just celebrated our PNG Silver Jubilee, 25 years of a Pallottine presence and ministry in this country! It was an enjoyable event with our General from Rome, Fr. Jacob, as main celebrant of the Mass.



Our arrival in PNG came about following a visit to the country of our superiors. After a meeting with the Bishop of Wewak and some others they decided to open our mission. On 30 January 1990 the first two Pallottines arrived – Frs. Chris Morka SAC and Marian Wierzchowski SAC. They were stationed with two experienced missionaries for an introductory period and to learn the local language – *tok pisin*.

After almost a year, having finished their induction, they moved to Wewak and were given responsibility for Shalom parish, on the outskirts of town and near to the airport. Although there was enough work for two soon Fr. Chris left and went to the Sepik River area, to take care of a parish there called Marui. It was a different world altogether because Marui was a parish on a river and, as a means of transport, he was required to use a boat. All the villages belonging to this parish were on the shore of the mighty Sepik.

In 1992 two new men arrived to help them – Fr. Andrew Koźmiński SAC and Fr. Peter Czerwonka SAC. After a few weeks acclimatising to the new country they commenced the normal [for newcomers] introduction period. This usually lasts from a few months to a year. It depends on each particular missionary, some need

more time, some adapt very quickly due to their enthusiasm and eagerness, and want to start as soon as possible.

In 1993 a Pallottine who was in South Korea decided to come to PNG. His name was Fr. George Suszko SAC. Soon after introduction he was sent to the parish on the Keram River, a tributary of the Sepik. In 1994 two more arrived from Poland – Fr. Dariusz Wozniak SAC and myself. Two years later, in 1996, Fr. Jacek Bilik joined the rest of us.

For quite a few years after that there were no new arrivals because our new Bishop decided that he had enough missionaries. In hindsight this was a questionable decision because soon numbers working in the Diocese dropped. That was due to various reasons but the result was that there were quite a few parishes without priests. We Pallottines lost several potential new arrivals who had wanted to come, but changed their mind and went elsewhere to other countries.

In 2002 we welcomed Brother Janusz Namysłak SAC and in the following year Fr. Paul Kotecki SAC. In the meantime some departed – Frs. Marian, George, Andrew, Peter, and Chris. Sadly Fr. Jacek died of cancer. That left only four of us still there, joined two years ago [2013] by Fr. Sławek Majzner SAC.

Throughout all these 25 years we have worked almost exclusively in the Diocese of Wewak, though for four years also in the Diocese of Simbu in the mountains. Our ministry has been primarily pastoral work, looking after parishes. They vary significantly – on rivers, in so called *kunai* [grasslands], in coastal areas, on the sea and, as mentioned before, in the mountains. A mission parish in PNG has always a main church with a Catholic school and health centre and often a few outstations.



Usually every priest has to travel a lot to visit his parishioners. Depending on the quality of the roads he makes it by car or motorbike or on foot, or by boat if it is on the water. It usually takes a month to visit all the outstations and parishioners living in the various villages. After that we normally go to town for shopping and have a little break to see our confreres.

In each of the parishes we have various lay groups: Catholic women, charismatics, youth, Legion of Mary, altar boys, communion ministers. We support them to become actively involved in our parish network. Our town parish in Wewak has a chaplaincy in the nearby hospital, also in the local prison and also some involvement with the police force because their living quarters are located within our boundaries.

As Pallottines our charism fits well into the missionary scene here. We work extensively with the lay people and, without them, would not be very fruitful. Because the parishes, together with their outstations, are geographically huge, and have only one priest, many tasks have to be done by lay leaders:

- *sande lotu ministers* – ministers who lead Sunday worship in the absence of a priest;
- *pastoral workers* – who prepare people to receive the sacraments;
- *PST* – a steering team who, with the parish priest, plan and organise all parish activities;

- *Communion ministers* – who bring Holy Communion to the sick every Sunday.

I would say that it is our UAC!

Though not formally established it exists in practice when we work together and cooperate with each other at the level of our parish.

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**05.03.15**

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**item 312**

## **mission at the periphery**

The recent visitation to our mission in Papua New Guinea helped me to understand what Pope Francis intended by saying that our missionary efforts must ‘embrace the periphery of human existence’.

The mission in Papua will never see a strong Pallottine Province with a multitude of young members. Neither will it be blessed with many Pallottine institutions.

It will become more and more difficult to find young members to make that long journey to this island nation because they will know that hardships, loneliness and sickness await them. The daily dangers are many.

Why should we stay on then?



The most important answer could be that the people of God need us. There is a cry for help.

They await the good news of salvation, the fullness of life promised by Jesus.

It is a place where we learn to give without expecting much in return. They have neither silver nor gold to give us. But certainly they will give their heart full of gratitude. Some will also present ingratitude in return!

It is also a mission where we will be tested in our conviction that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. If our belief is based on any superficial or external factor, we will surely fail. We discover the truths of life when we look from the periphery to the centre.

The mission in Papua will provide us with an excellent opportunity for self-emptying, for kenosis. I wish many of our young confreres could enjoy such an experience. It would be also the right remedy for those who are afraid of being scandalised by naked poverty and other stark realities of life.

This mission at the periphery will confirm the paradoxical statement of Jesus, those who try to preserve their life will lose it, whereas those who are willing to lose it will find it.

Thanks to our brave missionary confreres for embracing the periphery!

God bless you.

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06.03.15  
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## sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #162 It was wonderful to know that the Pallottines are in the service of people in Antarctica. Some years ago, it was my understanding that Antarctica and Mars were places where lives couldn't exist. It is great to know that the times are changing...

VP 10.03.15

