

# ***Rempi to Rebiamul***

***Missions from  
Madang to Mt Hagen  
1896 to 2016***

***by***

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Mary Mennis is a well known author of many books dealing with Papua New Guinea. She has written extensively on the culture of the people of the north and south coasts and their canoes and trading. She has also written a number of books on the Catholic missions and missionaries and their work in the country. These include: *They Came to Matupi*, University of Papua New Guinea Press; *Hagen Saga*, University of Papua New Guinea Press; *Ferdy*, Lalong Enterprises; and *Tubuan and Tabernacle*, Lalong Enterprises.

This volume is her latest book about the missions.

In writing this book, Mary Mennis utilized many sources including existing publications, interviews and old documents acknowledgement of which is given in the text.

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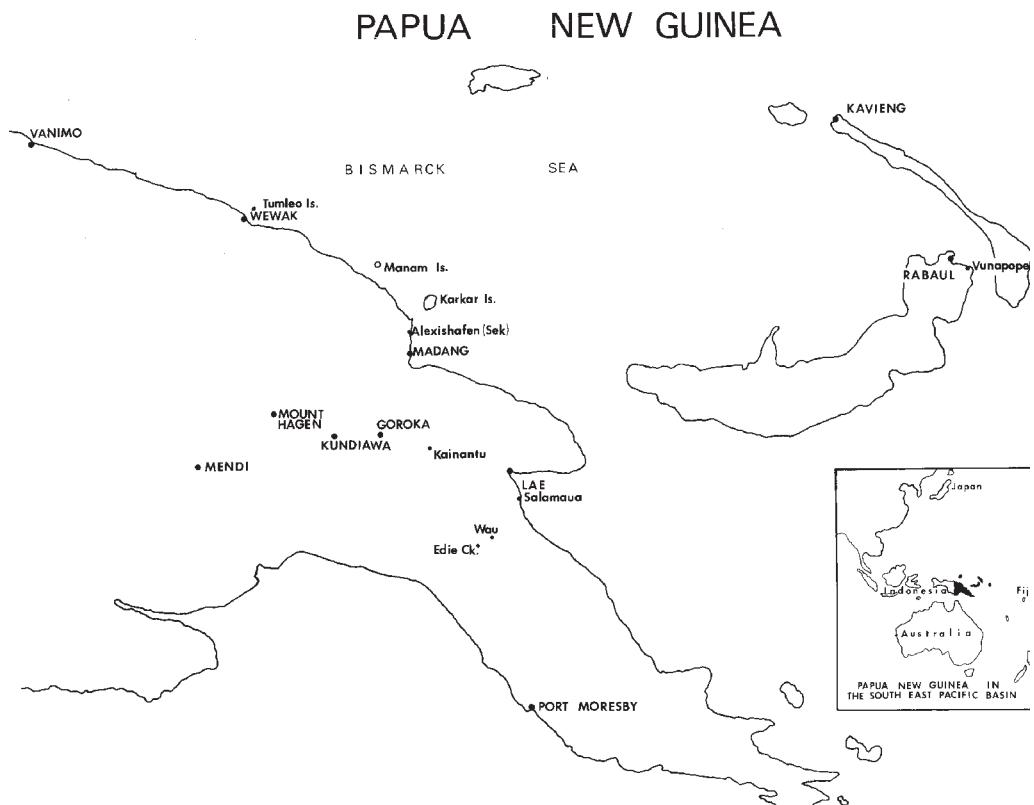
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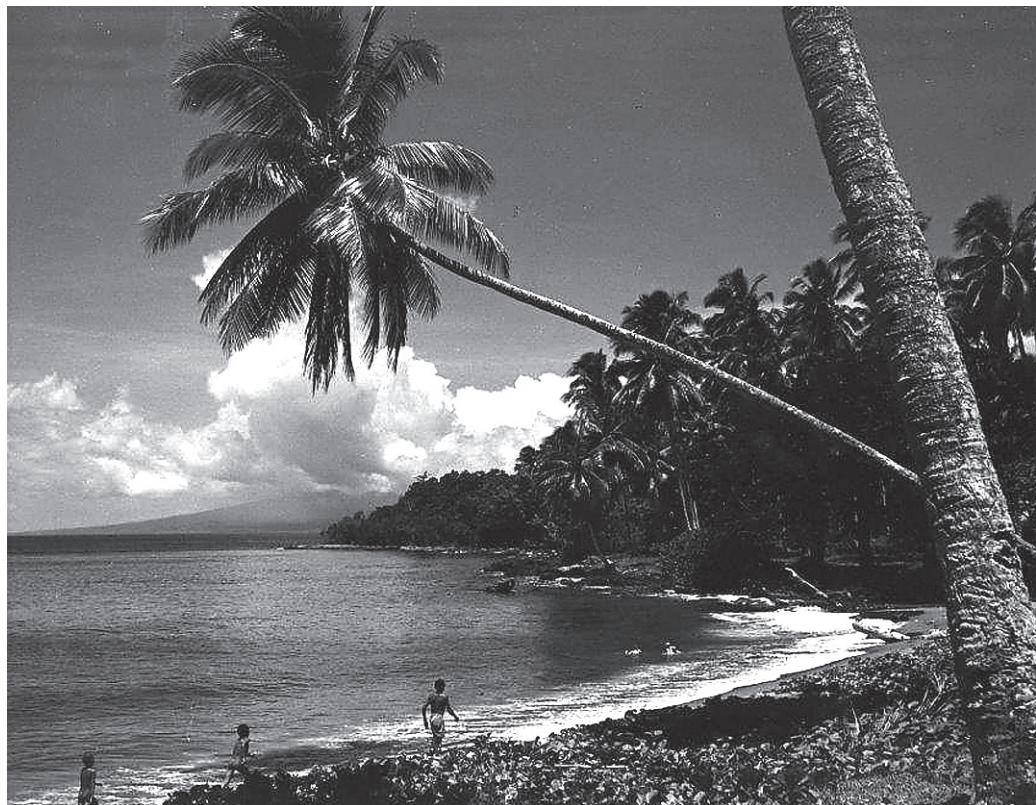
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*The north coast of Madang Province near Alexishafen.*

## Foreword

A historian who wants to write a history book must decide when to start and when to finish their account. Any starting point has many antecedents, and the end is not the end until the true end of history. Then the historian must select the threads to follow and to tease out and those to leave for others. Mary Mennis has done a wonderful job in selecting a good beginning, an open end and a series of interesting threads.

The ancient and modern history of North Coast New Guinea and the Highlands Region of Papua New Guinea is a history of migration and of welcoming newcomers. Of course a James Michener blockbuster would begin with the movement of tectonic plates that created the palm fringed coast and the primeval volcanic up thrusts which formed the seemingly inhospitable inland region. This was followed by the changes wrought by coral growth on the one hand and constant rainfall filling rivers in search of the sea on the other. The latter created vast fertile valleys, especially what is now known as the Wahgi Valley, hundreds of thousands of years ago.

The coastal areas and the Highland valleys welcomed the first non-Austronesian migrants by sea and by land possibly 50,000 years ago. About 15,000 years ago, their descendants or descendants of subsequent migrations to the Highlands were among the first human beings on the planet to practice settled agriculture. Possibly the inhabitants of the Wahgi Valley were the first in the world to practice silviculture, the deliberate planting of trees for firewood and for construction, and maybe just for the sheer aesthetic pleasure of hearing the wind in the trees!

Then came the plantation owners and the gold miners. Then came the missionaries, and then came the colonial government, at first the Germans on the north coast, then the Australians and the Japanese invaders. For the Highlands, they came not so much to colonize but to 'pacify' and to bring these hardy, self-sustaining and vibrant people into contact with the big wide world and to protect them also from the worst incursions of that world, not least the germs which could wipe them out in a generation without the benefit of modern medicine.

The arrival of the Catholic Church and its missionaries and co-workers has been one step in that great history of welcome. The people themselves describe that coming as a coming of light into darkness. These days we might like to say that there was a sufficient light of faith already here to be able to recognize the light when it came. Whether or not we might do things differently knowing what we now know, the fruit of that coming is for all to see in a vibrant local church with 180,000 believers in the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen alone not counting the Dioceses of Kundiawa and Goroka with their own history beginning about the same time, the Wabag Diocese which began in 1982 with the division of the Diocese of Mount Hagen into the new Archdiocese of Mount Hagen and the Diocese of Wabag; and the Diocese of Mendi, evangelized from the south.

We are very proud of our history and its pioneers, from the heroic, if sometimes flawed, missionaries who began the work, to the proud locals who welcomed them, and the descendants of both who carry on the great legacy.

I invite the reader to taste the enthusiasm which has been so much a part of this young church from its early days until now.

“They heard the word and accepted it.” (Mark 4:20)

Douglas Young +  
Archbishop of Mt Hagen.



*Archbishop Meier and newly ordained Auxiliary Bishop Young 2 July 2000.*

## Author's Note

Why would I just a lay person and a woman be qualified to write a story about the SVD missionaries in Papua New Guinea?

I have been interested in PNG since I first arrived there in 1962 with a BA and a DipEd and was posted to a bush materials school on Matupit Island outside Rabaul. I began collecting the oral history of the Matupit people and, as this was associated with the Catholic Church on Matupit Island, I found that the first Sacred Heart missionaries had arrived on this Island in 1882, 80 years earlier. This resulted in my first book *They Came to Matupit* (Mennis, 1972) and later *Tubuan and Tabernacle* (Mennis, 2007), both concerning the Sacred Heart missions. I continued collecting the oral histories of the local people, firstly in the Rabaul area and then in Madang. This interest has led to an academic career with several universities: firstly, the University of Papua New Guinea with an MA; followed by my Masters Degree in Social Science (Anthropology) at James Cook University in Townsville. For my work on the oral history of the Bel people of Madang, I was awarded an MBE from the government of PNG in 2008.

I lived in Papua New Guinea for twenty-one years and have been back for long research projects over the years in ethnology and archaeology since leaving at the end of 1982. My husband, Brian, was a surveyor in Rabaul, arriving in 1959, where we met. Having been in Rabaul for twelve years, he was transferred to Mt Hagen for six months in 1971. By this time, we had two sons, John 6, and Paul 4 and I was expecting another baby.

At that stage, Mt Hagen was very different from Rabaul as it had only been discovered by Europeans in the previous forty years. The people still wore their traditional attire which was quite colourful. The weather was so much cooler and we were welcomed by the other public servants there.

While Brian and I were in Mt Hagen, we met Fr William Ross. I took it for granted that his story had been recorded for posterity and was surprised that this hadn't happened. I asked if he would mind if I recorded his story and he said if I brought a tape recorder along, he would be happy to talk into it.

The following is part of a letter I wrote home to my mother in April 1971:

I have begun to get interested in Mt Hagen history and find it quite fascinating. There are not many places left on earth where you can still meet the first Europeans into the area. I have been talking to a little old man with a long white beard, Fr Ross, who was one of the pioneer missionaries here. He first arrived in 1934 and was the first white man many of the people had seen. The local people thought he was one of their ancestors returned from the dead. Although Fr Ross kept a diary and took photos, many were lost in a fire at the Techny seminary in Illinois, US. He has written a few articles about the people and early history of the mission but still has plenty of stories to tell and has never written them down.

Before coming here, I had made vague resolutions about not getting involved collecting bits and pieces of history. For one thing, we were here for only a short while and, for another, I had the new baby to occupy me. But I'm afraid

I couldn't resist recording Fr Ross and I felt I would never forgive myself if I heard later that he had died and many of his stories were lost. I have got another woman interested too – Marj Jamieson is the wife of the Lutheran pastor here. Yesterday we talked and taped some of the local people who came with Fr Ross from the coast.

The wheel has turned full circle! Catholic and Lutheran women researching the history of the Catholic Mission.

When I interviewed Fr Ross forty years ago in 1972, he told me stories that had happened forty years before, so that now that adds up to 80 years. Included in those old stories were descriptions of the trek the missionaries had made in 1934 from Rempi which were told to me by the carriers and catechists who were part of the group. From their information, a map was drawn with the names of villages and places traversed in their long arduous travels to the Highlands. This resulted in *Hagen Saga* published in 1982.

The number 80 has figured several times in this note and I, myself will be 80 years old in two years time. It is now over 50 years since I started writing about the Catholic Missions in Papua New Guinea. When I returned to PNG in 2015, I was sometimes greeted with surprise, “*Yu stap iet?*” (“You are still here?”).

In my time in PNG, I interviewed many missionaries and other people on the old reel to reel tapes. While some of these tapes have deteriorated I had fortuitously copied the tapes of interviews by hand into large notebooks. Recently, I typed those on to my computer and they have been the backbone of this present book. This material can be treated as Primary Source material along with diaries and letters. These interviews included: Bishop George Bernarding SVD; Fr Ross SVD; Fr Noss SVD; Fr Dowd SVD; Mick and Danny Leahy; Bro Gerhoch SVD; Sister Vinciana Engberink SSpS; and Hagen people Sir Wamp Wan and Peter Manui; and government officers Jock McKay and Nep Blood. Most of those interviewed are now deceased but can speak through their recorded stories.

In 1964, Fr Hanson of the Catholic Education Office in Rabaul approached me to teach Latin to a young Tolai, Benedict To Varpin. I agreed as I had majored in Latin at University. So for two years I taught the young Benedict Latin and English in our house in Rabaul. Later he became Archbishop of Madang, and is featured in my book *Tubuan and Tabernacle* (Mennis, 2007).

Missionaries have been bringing the Good News to the people on the Coast and in the Highlands since the late 19th century, answering the call of Jesus when he said to the apostles: “Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation” (Mark 16: 15).

In 2015, I spent time in Madang helping at the museum and was able to catch up on the mission scene there and met Archbishop Reichert OFM Cap. The church is thriving with ordinations of new priests and deacons. The church is also taking a leading role against domestic violence. Rempi Village Catholics are very devoted to the church and are carrying on the religion taught to their grandparents by Fr Ross. There is still a close connection between Rempi and the Rebiamul mission in Mt Hagen where the descendants of Fr Ross's mission workers from Rempi Village still live.

During my recent visit to Mt Hagen in December, 2015, I interviewed Joachim Kerua whose father had been one of Fr Ross's original students and the three Holy Spirit Sisters: Sister Davida Strojek, Sister Mary Jeanette and Sister Valsamma Kurean. The Sisters were very kind, particularly Sister Jeanette, who drove me around during my recent visit to Mt Hagen. I give my thanks to them for their assistance.

In doing this work, I have many other people to thank: First and foremost, my husband, Brian, who has helped with the manuscript and illustrations; the present Archbishop of Mt Hagen, Douglas Young SVD, who gave me unstinting assistance and access to some of the records in the archives of the Rebiamul mission, permission to use certain photographs and to take information and photographs from *Sent by the Word (Brumm, 1995)*; former Archbishop of Mt Hagen, Michael Meier SVD, with whom I had an extensive exchange of emails; Sr Maria Awa fmic in Madang, who introduced me to the Rempí people; Fr Gary Roche SVD; John O'Brien, the architect for the new cathedral; Sir Peter Barter and Patrick Matbob of Madang; Joe Palimi and John Evans of UPNG in Port Moresby; posthumous thanks also to Mick Leahy for his permission to use his diaries and to both Mick and Dan Leahy for their permission to use photographs, this permission was extended by Bernard Leahy of Madang in 2015; and many other persons, too numerous to mention, who assisted in various ways.

Mary R Mennis MBE

July 2016



*Dinner at Rondon Ridge Hotel to raise funds for the new Cathedral, December 2015.*

*From left front: Mike Willesee, Paias Wingti and Mary Mennis; Centre: John O'Brien, Sr Jeanette Matela SSsP, Ellen Gambala, Mayumi Rodis and Dr Daisy Sonza; Back: Ray Wallbank (Project Manager), Archbishop Young, and Ken Sale.*



# Introduction

This present book describes the progress of the Catholic SVD missions on the coast and in the Highlands from 1896 until 2016. Two places of significance in this story are Rempi Village on the coast and Rebiamul which is now the centre of the Mt Hagen diocese. In recent years, pilgrimages have been made from Rempi over the mountains to Rebiamul to honour the first missionaries who made this trek in 1934.

How did it all begin?

In November 1884, the German flag was officially raised in the harbour of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) claiming the area as a German colony. In 1892, the Lutheran Mission came to the Madang area. Many of the German Officials were Lutheran, including von Hagen, the German Administrator. They adhered to the church's rigid attitude of the value of work and keeping regular working hours. When village men were employed to work on the roads and plantations, they found it difficult to adhere to this work ethic and wanted to return to their old way with activities regulated by the seasons. Traditionally they had their times for gardening and hunting and rested in the heat of the day. Their festivities might last for weeks.

The local Madang men, in particular, wanted to continue with the *meziab*, the secret society which kept the women under male domination. Both the Lutheran mission and the government saw the *meziab* as subversive and disruptive to the general peace in the village and it was banned (Mennis 2006; 141). In 1904, the Madang people revolted against the Germans and many were shot and others were banished from their villages. After this they became more subdued and accepting of the Lutheran missionaries who supported them in their exile on the Rai Coast. Through the efforts of the missionaries, the women were liberated when they entered the *meziab* house and saw the sacred images without fear of being killed. Eventually, the people accepted the new beliefs but within their own perspective. There was often mutual misunderstanding between what was taught and what was understood, sometimes leading to cargo cults.

Meanwhile, German officials encouraged exploration up and down the coast. In 1886, Hugo Zoeller set out from Bongu and followed a river upstream for six days. When he climbed a mountain for a better view he saw many high peaks ahead and named them after Bismarck's children, Mounts Wilhelm, Otto, Maria and Herbert (Souter, 1963: 76). The large mountain Range had already been called after Bismarck, himself. In 1896, Dr Carl Lauterbach, while exploring the Yuat River, a tributary of the Sepik River, climbed a mountain and saw the ranges edging the Wahgi Valley. He wrote, "to the south lies a striking mountain". He named it Mount Hagen after the Administrator of German New Guinea. These mountains were to become strategic points of interest later for the Catholic missionaries travelling into the Highlands of Mt Hagen.

When the Divine Word Missionaries arrived in 1896, they first established a mission at Tumleo Island near Aitape. Then in 1906, their headquarters was established at Alexishafen, near Madang, with workshops, shipping yards, schools, convents and priest quarters as well as a church. Their presence near Madang was not appreciated by the Lutheran missionaries

and for many years the Lutheran and Catholic missionaries were at loggerheads with each other.

Later during the long months spent together in prison camps during the Second World War, they learnt to work together. In more recent times, they co-operate in an ecumenical spirit with institutions like the Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service in Goroka. These days, missionaries are at the forefront of bringing peace between warring tribes both on the coast and in the Highlands.

The first leader of the Catholic Mission was Fr Limbrock who set about establishing plantations to make the mission independent. He had many arguments with the German government, as the Neu Guinea Kompagnie wanted the mission land for its own plantations.

The First World War brought an end of the German rule and the German missionaries were then seen as enemy aliens by the new Australian Administration. In 1922, Bishop Wolf SVD became the new leader and requested an English speaking missionary to help communicate with the Australian officials. Enter Fr William Ross from America in 1926 to be the Bishop's secretary. However, his lack of German proved to be a hindrance and he settled in Rempi Village as the Parish Priest. He was an adventurous young man eager to explore the nearby mountains behind Alexishafen. He made short treks to the mission stations of Halopa and Sigu. Then he ventured further in 1927 with Jock McKay to the mountains at Saruga, where they were attacked. These treks gave Fr Ross a thirst for exploring far into the mountains to find distant tribes.

The first explorations of the Highlands from the east and the north began with the first flight over the Wahgi Valley on 8 March 1933 by Mick and Dan Leahy and Jim Taylor. Details can be found in Mick's diary. Following their amazing discovery, Frs Schaefer, Cranssen and Brother Anton ventured to the Bismarck Mountains at the end of that same year, coming in from the north.

In 1934, Fr Ross was keen to explore beyond the Bismarck Range and trek as far as Mt Hagen where his friends Mick and Dan Leahy had set up an alluvial gold mine. He selected over 70 able-bodied young men from Rempi and the surrounding villages as mission workers to accompany him to Mt Hagen and their descendants live there yet. Five missionaries made this original trek: Frs Ross, Schaefer, Tropper, Aufenanger and Br Eugene Frank. It took them nearly forty days travelling over the Bismarck Ranges and through country never seen before by outsiders. In Mt Hagen, they were welcomed by Wamp Wan and Ninji Kama, two chiefs of the Mt Hagen area.

Frs Schaefer and Aufenanger returned to Bundi and later they were joined by Fr. Karl Morschheuser, who was killed by tribesmen in 1934 over the shooting of two pigs. Fr Nilles also came to the Chimbu and lived there for over fifty years.

The narrative follows the work of missionaries, Fr Ross and Bro. Eugene, who established the Catholic mission in Mt Hagen. After Br Eugene's death in 1935, Fr Ross continued on his own, setting up the first school in the Highlands.

By now, aircraft were used and flights to the highlands could be accomplished in a matter of hours instead of the many weeks. The Leahy Brothers, Mick and Danny, again

showed the way. They were the first to use small planes and cleared airstrips for them. Bishop Wolf realised it would also reduce the distance between mission stations and relieve the loneliness of isolated missionaries.

In 1940, Fr George Bernarding arrived at Alexishafen on the *Macdui* greeted by Bishop Wolf and a crowd of missionaries who showed him the beautiful new cathedral. After working at several mission stations, he was appointed to Mt Hagen in 1941 to help Fr Ross. This probably saved his life because soon afterwards Madang was bombed by the Japanese.

During World War II, many coastal Catholic and Lutheran missionaries had harrowing experiences when so many lost their lives. Although the war, did not reach the Highlands, apart from periodic bombings, the missionaries there were all evacuated.

A chapter on Madang has been included as I had first-hand experience of the work done there when, in 1994, I accompanied Archbishop Benedict To Varpin on his missionary rounds to Bundi in the mountains, Bogia on the coast and the inland Ramu River. It was the same work that all Bishops and Archbishops do year in year out: visiting far flung parishes for meetings or to administer confirmations to the young students, greeted with decorated archways and colourful garlands and accompanied by *singsing* groups thus bringing the culture into the rituals of the church.

This chapter also gives a summary of the Bishops and Archbishops of Madang since the beginning of mission there. Mention is made of the Divine Word University which was established in 1996, a hundred years after the first six Divine Word Missionaries arrived at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) in 1896. The University library houses the Archbishop Noser Memorial Library containing thousands of books and manuscripts on theology, local religions, *Tok Pisin* and mission history.

The re-establishment of the Highlands missions after the war when Frs Ross and Bernarding were permitted to return is described. Some of this chapter has information already covered by my other book, *Hagen Saga*, but is included here to prevent large gaps in the story.

Interviews I had with Bishop Bernarding in 1973 now make interesting reading covering the daily routine of the mission life in those days. It also covers Fr Ross's work up to the time of his golden jubilee and then his death in 1973. His good friend Wamp Wan died in 2007 and is buried near him in the Rebiamul cemetery alongside many of his Rempi mission workers.

There have been three Archbishops of Mt Hagen: Archbishop George Bernarding; Archbishop Michael Meier; and the present Archbishop, Douglas Young. One of the highlights of Archbishop Bernarding's term was the visit of the Pope, John Paul II, to Mt Hagen in 1984. 180,000 people crowded into the town to see him. It was the biggest crowd ever in Papua New Guinea. The Pope loved the Hageners and years afterwards if ever he heard someone was from there his face would light up with happy memoires of that occasion.

The Pope had come to Papua New Guinea to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of the Sacred Heart Missionaries on Matupit Island, outside Rabaul, in 1882. This was where I had taught in 1962.

In 1965, Fr Michael Meier joined the staff at the Holy Spirit Seminary at Kap, near Alexishafen where he taught Church History, and Fundamental Theology. While at Kap one of the pioneer students was Benedict To Varpin who later became Archbishop of Madang, Archbishop Meier remembered him well. He was happy to work in the seminary garden clearing the jungle and creating a lawn. Fr Meier became Archbishop of Mt Hagen in 1987 and Benedict became Archbishop of Madang in the same year. In 1993, the two of them went together for their *Ad Limina* visit to Rome. It was an exciting time for both of them.

When Archbishop Meier retired in 2006, the Auxiliary Archbishop, Douglas Young, became the next Archbishop of Mt Hagen. He was born in Brisbane, Australia in 1950; he was ordained a priest in 1977 and ordained a Bishop in 2000.

Archbishop Young has become well known for his work on bringing peace between tribes. He had firsthand experience of tribal fighting before modern weapons were used when fighting was restricted to traditional weapons. It is a matter of teaching the people negotiation skills as peace made that way has more chance of succeeding,

In 2009, when the mission celebrated its 75th anniversary, Archbishop Young erected a large cross at the Wilya site where the first mission was established before it was moved to Rebiamul.

In 2014, the Highlands people thought to repay the sacrifices the early missionaries had made to bring the Gospel to people who appeared to live at the ends of the earth. They planned to follow the long and arduous walk taken by Fr Ross and his party in 1934 to Mt Hagen. This planned pilgrimage was called “From Rempi to Rebiamul.” Some 500 people went from Rebiamul to Rempi where the people there still feel connected to Fr William Ross. After they prepared for their trek there, the pilgrims travelled to the Ramu and thence over the Bismarck Range into the Chimbu valley arriving at Rebiamul at Easter 2014. Among the group of pilgrims were some Rempi people.

My visit to Mt Hagen November/December 2015, provided me with an up-to-date view of Mt Hagen since we had lived there in 1971. I had not been back for over forty years and it is very apparent that the Catholic diocese is flourishing with a long envisaged new Cathedral of the Holy Trinity under construction.

I present *Rempi to Rebiamul* in the hope that these past stories may be of interest to present and future readers.

# Chapter 1. Time Before Mt Hagen

## St Arnold Janssen SVD, founder of the Society of the Divine Word

Arnold Janssen was second of eight children of a farming family at Goch in north-west Germany. His father, Gerard, and mother, Anna, were very devout and each night their family faithfully said long family prayers. His father was particularly devoted to the Holy Spirit and loved the prayer, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." He would say this often even when out ploughing in the fields frightening the crows with his loud appealing voice. It was this particular prayer that stayed with the young Arnold Janssen as he was growing up. That and a great devotion to the Holy Spirit passed on from his parents.

Despite his farming background, Arnold received a good education studying science and mathematics and could have had a brilliant academic career. He took his degree in the year when Darwin published *The Origin of Species* and witnessed the beginning of a decline in faith in Europe. He was offered a post at a university but declined and decided to become a priest. Arnold Janssen was ordained as a diocesan priest in the seminary at Munster in 1862 on the Feast of the Assumption. For the next twelve years, he taught mathematics at a local Catholic college.

During all this time, he dreamt of being a missionary in foreign lands. After many setbacks, he bought a run-down inn in Steyl, Holland, to begin his order in 1875. With his father's prayers still ringing in his ears, he called it The Society of the Divine Word, SVD for short, *Societas Verbi Divini*, for the *Verbum Divinum* (Divine Word) stands for Jesus Christ our Lord, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Fr Janssen became the Superior-General of the Society of the Divine Word. Now the order has grown to thousands of priests, brothers and sisters in many countries around the world. Arnold Janssen was canonized in 2003 (Broderick,1947).

## Fr Eberhard Limbrock SVD

In 1896, when the first Divine Word missionaries arrived, New Guinea was a German Colony. Previously, the Catholic Missions throughout German New Guinea were all under the Rabaul Vicariate of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at Vunapope. However, they lacked personnel to evangelize the mainland. The Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, in Rome, Cardinal Ledochowski, wanted to separate the mainland of New Guinea from the Vicariate of Rabaul. On 28 May 1895, he asked Father Arnold Janssen if he were prepared to send missionaries to the new independent mission. He accepted at once, and on 10 February 1896, the 'Prefecture of Wilhelmsland' was canonically erected (Broderick,1947).

Because Fr Janssen had studied science and mathematics at University in Germany and was aware of Darwin's new book on evolution, he neutralized this theory by encouraging his missionaries to study ethnology and



Fr Limbrock, 1858-1931

anthropology as part of their vocation. From their earliest years in New Guinea, the SVD fathers produced some renowned scholars like Frs Kirschbaum, Tschauder and Nilles.

In 1896, Fr Limbrock SVD, who had been a missionary in China for thirteen years, was appointed the first Prefect Apostolic in New Guinea. He was a blacksmith by trade before becoming a seminarian and had a practical turn of mind. He knew Fr Janssen personally as he had trained with him at Steyl in Holland. Fr Mihalic described Limbrock as “a wiry Westphalian farmer, by nature practical and not easily discouraged. The years in China made him a well-balanced judge of men, not afraid to call a spade a spade” (Mihalic, 1971).

Fr Limbrock’s companions were Fr F. Vormann SVD, Fr J. Erdweg SVD, and three Brothers: Canisius, Eustachius and Theodulphus. It took three months for them to reach New Guinea. They went first to Rabaul where the MSC missionaries helped them and lent them 10 native labourers. They arrived at Madang on board the *Stettin* on 18 August 1896.

The only trouble was the Lutheran mission had established mission centres on the coast near Madang and they did not want the Catholics missionaries to come. They had the ear of the German District Officer, von Hagen, who advised Limbrock to explore the coast to the north-west. “Something might be found up there which would be suitable for a mission station and headquarters.” Von Hagen agreed to sell a small block of land to them in Madang so long as it was only used to store cargo. “Von Hagen said he was making this request on behalf of the Rhenish Mission Society, a Lutheran mission group who had begun work there nine years earlier --- fearing they might be pushed out by the Catholic mission” (Wiltgen, 1971: 331).

So Father Vormann set out on a reconnaissance trip by boat to the north-west of Madang with Fr Erdweg and Brother Canisius. They stopped at Seleo where a plantation owner helped them. He advised them to try Tumleo Island (off Aitape). The Superior and other Missionaries were unable to make the trip, as they were in the grip of malaria but they soon joined them on Tumleo Island where they established a station. Later more stations were built all along the coast with churches and schools. Fr Kirschbaum went up the Sepik River and found Marienberg meaning the ‘Mount of Mary’. He was a famed explorer of the Sepik River and wrote about the people and their customs.

The first of the Holy Spirit Sisters arrived at Tumleo Island in 1899 and took over the school enabling the SVD fathers to do more missionary work on the outstations. By 1907, the sisters also ran the printing press providing hymns sheets and prayer books (Brumm, 1995).

In 1901, Limbrock bought land at Bogia for a plantation and mission centre. But he was also searching for land closer to Madang as the shipping companies had decided not to go to Aitape any more forcing the missionaries to go to Madang to get supplies and mail. It was not until September 1906 that Limbrock was able to buy land at Alexishafen, near Madang.



*The first shelter in Alexishafen, 1906 (M. Kastner)*

Fr Noss had the story of the start of Alexishafen on good authority:

Fr Limbrock went around the villages [near Madang] seeing where he could settle. He gave goods to the local villagers but the Lutherans from Nobanob came and told the villagers to return the goods.

They all did this except those at Sek and this is how the mission began at Alexishafen. A local man, Thomas Kui, who was a policeman, was hiding from the Lutherans. They were against him as he was supposed to have stolen a woman from Kananam near Alexishafen. He said, "I don't need Lutherans. I'll invite the Catholics in". That's how it started. He got his clan on Sek Island to become Catholic. The Lutherans had been the first mission in the Madang area and they regarded the Sek area as part of their area as their language was the same as that at Kranket Island (Interview by the author, 1973).

A similar account of how Alexishafen was started was given by Fr J. Tschauder SVD:

Father Limbrock did not have far to go. Ten miles from Madang, he came upon one of the best harbours in New Guinea, a natural area of water, swamp and jungle, but sheltered from both the north-west and the south-east monsoons. The long narrow Sek Island almost closed the entrance to the harbour. The island was populated whereas there were few signs of human life around the harbour on the mainland, except a few gardens belonging to the Sek Islanders, who were the owners of that land.

The Sek people readily ceded all the land around the harbour to the mission. They were paid with trade goods as was customary. Axes, jungle-knives, loincloths, saucepans, beads and other useful articles were given in compensation. Soon, however, fierce opposition arose against the Catholic Mission. The Sek people, instigated by a group of white residents, [Lutherans and government officials] all but cancelled their contract and were ready to hand back the articles they had received in payment for their land.

Alexishafen, as it is known to-day, would never have become the headquarters of the Catholic Mission and Seat of a Bishop, had it not been for one native of Sek Island. That native was Futol, whose name could be translated into 'Hard Hitting Talk' or 'Three Strokes'. Be that as it may, Futol's talk to the assembled natives must have hit their heads extremely hard, for it was he who succeeded in making the natives stand by their contract. The trade goods were not handed back, and the mission began the development of Alexishafen. It was natural that Futol should henceforth regard himself as the 'father of the Catholic Mission.' Often in later years, he would paddle across from Sek to Doylan and watch with keen interest the progress of 'his mission.' He was part and parcel of the mission. All he asked as his life-long pension was *kas-ti panag* (Give me some tobacco). He was actually known as 'Kas-ti panag' (Broderick, 1947).

It is not known why Thomas Kui, or was it Kas-ti panag or Futon, had fallen out with the Lutheran Church. Was it because he had taken a wife from another area which was quite a common practice? Anyway, it meant that he welcomed Fr Limbrock and gave him land. The mission at Alexishafen was officially called Saint Michael's and it was placed under the patronage of Saint Michael, the Archangel, one of the principal Patrons of the Society of the Divine Word. It was opened on 22 May 1905.

The first shelter at Alexishafen could only be described as a *haus win* as it was just a roof without doors or walls. Fr Eberhard Limbrock together with Brother Canisius Hautkappe and Brother Sylvester occupied this shelter for about ten weeks. They used a crate as an altar but the same crate was also used for meals and as an office table.



*Sister on patrol in a coastal village.*

A more substantial house was built and they moved in on 3 July 1905. Soon the Divine Word Missionaries established their headquarters at Alexishafen with a church and accommodation for the priests and brothers as well as a convent for the Sisters. A sawmill and plantation were set up to provide needed materials for the many mission stations. The centre became larger than Madang in size.

Fr Limbrock brought in new seeds of all kinds and set about making the mission self-sufficient. He also collected horses, buffalo, goats, and chickens. The coconut plantations provided financial support as the ships bringing goods to Madang could leave with copra in their holds. The sawmill provided materials for more buildings in out-stations. Through administering to the workers on the plantations, the Word of God was spread to their villages in the bush when they returned home and, when missionaries turned up at their inland villages, they were welcomed. Fr Heinrich Buschoff SVD taught a group of schoolchildren on Sek Island in 1907.

The squabbles that Fr Limbrock had to endure with the German government were legendary, as the Neu Guinea Kompagnie wanted the land at Sek for its plantations (Wiltgen, 1969: 330–332). Furthermore, there was the friction between the Lutheran and the Catholic missionaries. To prevent this friction escalating, the German Administration, under instructions from Governor Hahl, directed that each of the major denominations have their own areas of influence. In Rabaul, it was the Catholics and the Methodists who had their own specific areas.

In the Madang area, the line of demarcation between the Lutherans and the Catholics was just south of Alexishafen on the North Coast road, with the Catholics to the north and west, and the Lutherans to the south and east. The line went inland near Sek and through to Nobanob in the hills and beyond. Part of Riwo Island was divided by the two denominations and a fence installed. Although it was the local adherents and not the missionaries who caused this cleavage, it caused trouble in Riwo Village. Until the late 1920s, most missionaries kept to the areas specified by the German Government.

## **World War I**

After war was declared in 1914, naval ships headed from Australia to Rabaul and then Madang to take over the German colony. Interesting details of this time are found in the diary of Lieutenant Clarence Read, RANR, who arrived in Madang on board the HMS *Berrima* on Thursday 24 September 1914.

Lieutenant Read wrote:

At 8 o'clock in the morning I was notified that I was to land at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) in charge of the Naval Guard. About three hours later the *Berrima* dropped anchor off Madang and here I am. --- Under gentle persuasion of the Encounter's guns, the town surrendered and the troops took possession. The Naval Guard consists of 32 all told and our duty is to take charge of all boats and regulate all shipping trading to the port (Read, 2016: 33).

The Germans surrendered peacefully on orders from the German officials in Rabaul and met the Australians hat in hand on the wharf. On paper, this appeared to be a very significant date in the history of the town but, in many ways, life continued normally.

However, one of the Australian sergeants decided to put the telephone exchange out of action to ensure there were no hidden spies. Later, when they followed the line, they found it connected Madang with various houses and the mission at Alexishafen (Townsend, 1968: 80).

Read wrote:

Saturday, 10 October 1914: Today I took an armed party up to Alexishafen which is the next harbour of any size north of Madang. It is one of the ports of call for the steamers of the N.D.L. who visit there after leaving Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. The party, consisting of myself, one P.O. and 8 men, went up in the *Lili*. On approaching the harbour, we hoisted the white flag, being desirous of making a peaceful entry. We found that news of the occupation of Madang by the Expedition had reached the inhabitants by native runners, consequently we encountered no opposition.

Almost the whole of this district is controlled by the Catholic Mission who have a very fine machinery plant established. It is the Central Mission Station of German New Guinea, and there is a small army of boat builders, mechanics, engineers, etc, besides innumerable Malay, Chinese, and Kanakas engaged in almost every conceivable occupation. We took possession of about 30 rifles and shotguns and also the motor boat *Ramu*, and the island schooner *Penguin*. Instead of proving hostile, the Fathers of the Mission treated us with the greatest hospitality and showed us all over the immense plant and store-rooms. After some little trouble, our engineering staff got the *Ramu* into working order and we returned to our depot quite satisfied with the results of the trip. We are thinking seriously, however, of transferring the engine of the *Ramu* to another of our prizes as she leaks rather badly (Read, 2016: 43).

Wednesday, 21 October: Today I went with the Major and his interpreter, Sergt Munro, to Alexishafen where the Mission Father and his associates took the oath of neutrality. At the same time, the Major made enquiries into the case of a native who had been well nigh hacked to pieces by savages at Dampier Island, (Karkar) which place is about 40 miles north of Madang and about 10 miles from the coast. The man had eight wounds, any one of which would have killed a white man instantly. Marvellous to relate, however, he still lives though it is probable that he cannot last long. It is quite likely we will dispatch a punitive expedition, as having taken over the Government of Deutsch New Guinea, it becomes our duty to look after all classes and to punish evil doers (Read, 2016: 48).

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After 1921, the German colony was placed under the trusteeship of the League of Nations and became the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. As a result, the Expropriation Board was set up to oversee the confiscation of German plantations; the German planters lost their plantations in the 1920s. We see what happened through the story of Caroline Swartz. She was not a German national although married to a German planter who had several plantations on Karkar Island. A couple of officials of the Expropriation Board

approached Caroline with the idea that if her husband, Otto Schwartz, signed over the two plantations on Karkar Island to her, she could keep one of them, but Schwartz refused. Caroline could see all her work being wasted, all those years of planting and managing the labour lines on Karkar Island. She was close to despair.

Where would they go? At that time, the Catholic Mission at Alexishafen had established a small school for mixed race children. The mission agreed to accommodate the family in a house near the school where her sons were enrolled. The community at Alexishafen welcomed Caroline and gave her a job teaching the school girls sewing and cooking. She also got a permit for fishing with dynamite in Sek Harbour and was so successful she provided fish for the missionaries and workers. At one stage, Otto Schwartz tried to take the children off her, but the Administration supported her.

Caroline's story illustrates what life was like after the First World War for the German planters. Their plantations were expropriated as part of the War Damages Act at the Treaty of Versailles. It was a sad time for the German planters; many suffered the same fate as Caroline, going from being successful plantation owners to a life of relative poverty. Many of them returned to Germany.

In 1921, the Australian Government ordered that all German missionaries were to leave the country within two years. However, three years later they were allowed to stay until 1928 but by then it was never enforced and they were allowed to stay permanently.

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Because they brought a message of peace, the missionaries helped in the pacification of tribal enemies. They also set up the first schools and hospitals for the people. With their dedication and caring they helped the village people to adapt to the new changes that were being introduced. Generally, the missionaries had a profound affect on the people's lives. Their lack of materialism, as opposed to the goods owned by Government officers, was seen as a common ground for the villagers who for centuries had survived in a subsistence economy. Furthermore, the missionaries were prepared to take the people's side against the government if there was a case of gross injustice like when they lost large parts of their land to plantations as had happened in the 1880s in the coastal Madang villages.

Missionaries of both denominations, Catholic and Lutheran, soon found themselves with a heavy workload of learning the new languages, preparing translations of hymns and the gospels and establishing schools for the children. There were new buildings to be organised, and local builders needed to be taught the necessary skills, church services had to be prepared and catechists to be trained.

The SVD missionaries were also interested in learning about the culture and beliefs of the people so they could try to understand the people's spiritual position. They were following the instruction from their founder Fr Arnold Janssen. However, this was where the problem lay. While the missionaries of both faiths tried to bring Christianity to the village people, there was mutual misunderstanding in many cases as to what was being taught and what was being heard. The people often misinterpreted the new messages and cargo cults developed. Catechists were often the backbone of the missions as they could

live on distant stations and provide instruction for newly visited villagers. They held positions of authority but, if they had not been instructed properly, they preached quite unorthodox teachings and this complicated many issues.

In *Readings in PNG Mission History*, Fr Mihalic had a definition of a cargo cult: “Basically a cargo cult is a belief in a period of heaven on earth. People expect their ancestors to shower them with all kinds of goodies sent from the heaven that the ancestors now occupy. The term, cargo, implies all the foods, tools, luxuries, equipment, furniture and means of transport which Europeans have - these will all come for free – though only to members of the cargo cult” (1999: 19). There were many cult leaders in different areas: Mambu held sway in the Bogia area; Kamdong was a cargo cult leader between the Sepik and Ramu Rivers; on the Rai Coast, Yali held sway in the 1960s.

The authority of these cargo cult leaders was unquestionable. Most people, Catholics included, flocked after these prophets and followed them blindly. Cemeteries were kept spotlessly clean and decorated, for that was where the ancestors had left this earth, and where they would presumably return with the cargo. Sometimes followers were asked to renounce their Catholicism and get back to ancestral ways. Sometimes schools were outlawed – or again encouraged.

People would stop planting gardens or harvesting sago and starve while waiting for their ship, or plane, to come in. Piers were built as well as airstrips. But nothing ever came. The fact that prominent catechists succumbed to cargo cult charms crippled the growth of the Church for half a dozen years in large coastal areas and on the offshore islands. With the demise or the jailing of the cult leaders, the movements slowly subsided and went underground, where they still smoulder (Mihalic, 1999: 20).

Fr Limbrock just wanted to develop mission stations to make them independent. In letters, Fr Janssen upbraided him for this and asked him how many converts he had made. To this he replied, “Of course only a few, but then I am not interested in pushing anyone into the pool of Bethsaida. I am sure that when the hour of grace comes, and the missionaries have done enough spade-work, the Lord will take care of the statistics.” He did. In Limbrock’s time the number of converts rose to 20,000 (Mihalic, 1971b).

Fr Limbrock remained Prefect Apostolic of New Guinea until the German Colony surrendered. After this, Fr Blum became the new Father Superior and Fr Limbrock became a pastor at Boikin near Wewak. Here he carried on as a simple missionary administering to the people there until the Australians removed German missionaries to Australia as enemy aliens. Fr Limbrock then lived in Sydney where he died on 31 May 1931 (Nilles, 1989: 16). He is buried at a cemetery near the Divine Word Seminary at Marsfield-Epping. He was the founding father of the Divine Word Mission in New Guinea and is well remembered (Mihalic, 1971b).

## **Bishop Wolf**

In 1922, Bishop Wolf, a German, was appointed to New Guinea and took up residence in Alexishafen, which became the Vicariate Apostolic of East New Guinea.

It was not long before he saw the necessity of having an English-speaking priest as his secretary to act as liaison officer between the mission and the Australian officials. Bishop Wolf could not speak English so he wrote to the American branch of the Divine Word Mission and Fr William Ross of Techny was sent out to New Guinea in 1926. With him were three sisters of the Holy Spirit – Sister Alexis, Sister Antonia and Sister Ehrinrudis.

Fr Ross and the Sisters were given a great reception at Alexishafen when they arrived. Bishop Wolf and many missionaries gathered on the pier to meet them. Fr Ross was happy to meet everyone but had difficulty communicating with them. He knew no German and the missionaries knew little English. He began to learn German but sometimes made mistakes and just laughed.

During the 1920s, Fr Ross was the Bishop Wolf's secretary only for the English correspondence and Brother Gerhoch or Fr Hirsch did the German correspondence. Fr Ross never made a fuss about being secretary to the Bishop.

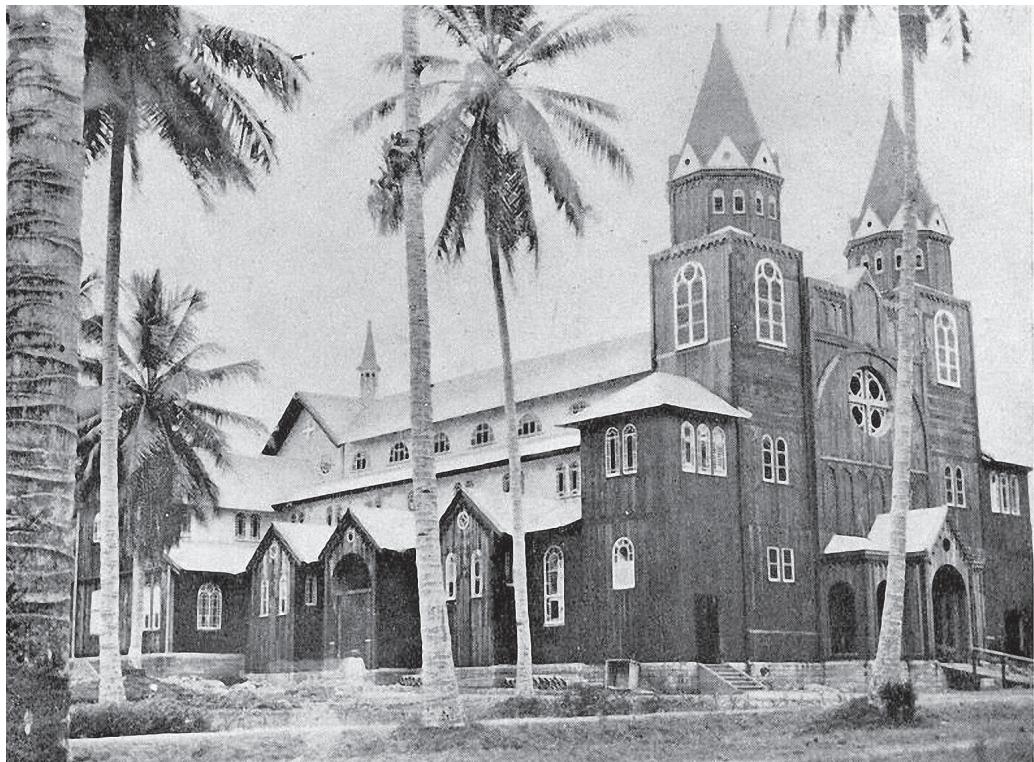
Brother Gerhoch knew Bishop Wolf well:

Bishop Wolf had a very good character. If he was cross with some one, in five minutes time it was all forgotten. He never brought it up again. He used to be friendly with everyone outside the mission no matter who they were. "We are a mission and we must do everything to promote friendship with others." Everyone was invited to sleep and eat here and he was always anxious to make people feel at home. If we had a birthday, he was always anxious to get beer or wine etc. when we had a family feast, he would join us and watch the festivities.

He was very sorry for sick people and always gave them what they needed. Once they recovered, he made sure they got food and drink. In times of retreat, he gathered everyone from the mountains and everywhere. We made retreats twice a year. The Bishop was always down on the wharf to welcome every missionary. The same thing happened when we had to do a trip in the bush or somewhere else. He was always there to meet us and anxious to get reports from anyone about their trip. When Fr Ross and I went off on their trip inland, the Bishop was there on our return waiting for a report. He could get angry if people came into the mission without his permission. There was the case of one priest who came in and the Bishop saw him and sent him back to his parish as soon as he had had some breakfast. Bishop Wolf was thoughtful with the village people and was ready to hear their complaints and wishes. He tried to visit all the stations once a year to administer confirmations. He was not very strong and had to be careful because of his heart (Interview by the author).



*Bishop Wolf, 1876-1942.*



*Alexishafen Cathedral, 1939.*

When Bishop Wolf wanted to build the new cathedral, he went to Germany where his nephews were builders and contractors and they made plans which he brought back for everyone's approval. The corner stone was laid on Easter Monday 1932. However, some of the missionaries felt that Bishop Wolf spent too much time organising the cathedral's progress and did not visit the outstations enough. When the Bishop asked one priest how his mission was going, he replied that it would be going much better if the Bishop managed to come and do the confirmations! (Nilles, 1989: 69).

Fr Nilles described how Bishop Wolf's attitude towards the Lutherans played against him. "The Bishop always advised against bringing quarrels and troubles between the two mission bodies, Catholic and Lutheran, to the government officers or magistrates for settlement". He wanted to have friendly relations with them and would never accuse them of wrongdoing to the government officials. But then there was the time when Fr Ladener arrived at a certain village. The Lutheran teachers "turned very nasty and pushed him down the slope of the hill - despite the contempt shown and the gross humiliation of the Father, our mission did not appeal to the government" (Nilles, 1989: 76). However, when a situation developed in Guyebi against Fr Cranssen in 1935, the Lutherans appealed at once to the government. It was a case that ended up in the High Court of Australia as we shall see.

Usually the two missions weren't such bitter enemies as Dr Braun, a Lutheran doctor, said:

The people in the headquarters of the Lutheran and Catholic missions got on well. For example, they exchanged cattle. Also if one or other mission bought copper sheeting the other put in an indent too. They agreed on a line of demarcation but, on the outreaches at the back of Madang, these were not kept so well. Nobanob, Halopa would get into arguments. They might both sit in one village and the people would play one side against the other especially when building a horse track. One side might decide on a road and get permission from the District Office to have a road cut through. The other side would say, "look at that mission making you do all that work." Sometimes there were personal friendships though (Interview by the author).

The Lutheran hospital was at Amele near Madang. In 1935, they had x-ray equipment and also an airstrip. When Bishop Wolf got sick he was taken there to see Dr Braun. Bishop Wolf and Dr Braun were good friends and sometimes met socially at Alexishafen. Once Bishop Wolf invited the Brauns to Alexishafen for a holiday. He promised that there would be no work. It was OK for the first 5 days but Dr Braun worked for the last two days. The hospital at Alexishafen did not hold many patients. Brother Gerhoch had been a medical assistant and he helped Sister Barbara besides doing his work of being secretary to Bishop.

In 1932, Jock McKay came to Alexishafen and told the Bishop that the village people down at the Rai Coast wanted the Catholics to take over some of the mission stations. The Bishop said, "we'll have to think carefully about this". [It was in the Lutheran area]. He asked Fr Aufinger and Brother Gerhoch to go down there and see. They got a very great welcome from the villagers. When they came back from the Rai Coast the Bishop was there to meet them to get a report on the trip (Gerhoch, interview by author).

### **Brother Gerhoch Eder SVD**

I was born in Germany in Undorf. I was the eldest of eight children in the family. It was mostly farms and had a nice market place. If my mother was sick or something, I'd do the cooking. Later, when we ran a hotel, I helped a bit with the cooking. I was home until 1916 when I went to the war. I returned home after being prisoner of war for months in Italy. I was sick for a long time. After that I helped in our hotel and went to a winery to get more practice in wine. The manager and his wife were good but the sister-in-law and her husband were no good. They had no religion. When I wanted to go to Church, they gave me work. So I left.

In 1923, I joined the SVD seminary. After training for 5 years, I arrived in Alexishafen on 6 March 1928 and everybody was on the wharf to meet us - the Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and the Bishop himself. We can never forget that memory. The Bishop was very pleased to welcome us as we were the first to come from Europe for a long time. [That was because of the ban on German missionaries coming to New Guinea].

At Alexishafen there was just a chapel which was falling into disrepair. No cars, only buffaloes and donkeys. The house of the priests was on the same

foundations as now. The store was not very big. In 1926, Alexishafen was bigger than Madang with plantations and a coconut factory. The Sisters' building was on one level. In 1926 an earthquake hit it and knocked it off its posts so it just sat on the ground. The sisters lived like this until 1934, when the new convent was built. It was two-storeys high and was finished by the time of the war. Among the sisters were Sister Alexis, Sister Eurista, Sr Mathilda. There was a school for the boys and Fr Hesse was the school master. Sister Barnabas was the matron of the hospital. I was lucky as I was always satisfied with mission life, especially in the first years when Bishop Wolf was here and many German nationals and Fr Ross (Interview by the author).

### **Rempi Mission**

Fr Ross was at Alexishafen for a while and then he went to live at Rempi in the late 1920's. Sometimes he would come into Alexishafen for a few days and return home. He looked after the whole Rempi area including Baiteta, Balbe and Badimok. He asked the Bishop to get someone to help with the religious instructions. Bishop Wolf asked Brother Gerhoch, "Do you think you can do this?" He agreed and went to Rempi and got on very well with Fr Ross. They would speak German together so Ross could learn that language. However, when Fr Weyer and Fr Hirsch came, they wanted to practise their English. It was necessary for Brother Gerhoch to learn English for correspondence and contact with government officials. In 1932, when the Bishop sent him into Madang to pay the labourers etc, he really felt the lack of English.

Gerhoch remembered:

I said to the Bishop, "I don't know enough English"



*Fr Ross with Rempi schoolchildren.*

“Oh,” he said “You’ll be all right just swim with the water” and I did and I got on well with them all. There was Alf Hunter, Jock McKay, and Ward Oakley. Fr Ross liked Jock Mackay in Madang but he didn’t like the town much.

Brother Gerhoch would bring the workers into Madang and sign them on. Later, when they had finished their contract, he would take them in and sign them off and pay them. Fr Ross helped him with his English just by talking and the Administration Officers were surprised at how good his English was. These work boys were from Bogia, the Sepik, and the bush and up and down the coast. Brother Gerhoch would have to go to town once or twice a week with different labourers. Later there was a sub-district officer in Bogia but, until then, they all had to come to Madang. He had to get a boat and bring the labourers in, then walk down and get them examined by the doctor and have them put their mark on the contract.

Brother Gerhoch went with Fr Ross in 1929 on a baptismal trip. They went to Badimok and Baiteta and Sigu and baptised 80 to 100 people and from there came down again. Each day they baptised ten people. It was a very good trip and Fr Ross was good company.

Brother Gerhoch:

The people in the bush really liked Father Ross. They were rather unhealthy and full of sores and he and I organised medicine for them and looked after their sores. The bush people were always ready to carry for us and always helpful. There were no roads there in those days only small bush tracks so we had to carry the cargo. When we went up to the bush, we got many carriers from Rempi. Some of the Rempi people moved down from the mountains behind, but others had always been there. The position of the villages changed from time to time and sometimes villages became completely deserted.

The Rempi Church was built in 1932. There was also a small house for the priest, enough for two or three people. If I stayed overnight with Fr Ross, there was usually just the two of us. There was the school also and catechists who had been trained by Fr Hesse in the catechist school. The catechists he later sent to Sigu and Badimok were mostly Rempi boys who had been to the catechist school in Alexishafen. Saimon at Sigu was a good catechist. I went twice a week to Rempi to take catechists’ lessons at the school. While at Rempi, Fr Ross still had a room in the Priest’s house at Alexishafen and often used to come back and stay for a few days.

When someone was with him, Fr Ross liked to have a good meal. When he was by himself he did not worry what he ate. He used to get supplies from the mission of course: tea, coffee, sugar and flour but, for the rest, he lived off the land. He liked coffee more than tea. Brown rice was grown locally at Alexishafen but he did not use it very much as he preferred taro and yams. Father liked to give taro to the cook-boy to cook in the fire. They would cut it and put butter on it. He also found the yams particularly nice.

After Fr Ross was stationed at Rempi, Brother Gerhoch became the Bishop’s secretary and Fr Ross was only called on if an English speaker was needed. Brother Gerhoch also

helped Sister Barnabas at the hospital, did the accounts, looked after the labourers and accompanied the Bishop on his travels.

According to Brother Gerhoch, Fr Ross mainly wore long white trousers and a white coat the same as the other missionaries but when he went bush he wore khaki. Sometimes he used a stick when he went tramping through the bush. He only carried his breviary. He would say, "you put your things in sacks and let the boys carry them. They can do it far better than us." It was too hard to carry the stuff, particularly if you began at Baiteta and then you had to go down the valley to the river then cross it several times and then the track starts to go up to the high mountains. From there you go down again to Sigu and Badimok.

### **Trips to Sigu by Fr Ross and Brother Gerhoch**

They would leave Alexishafen at 7 o'clock in the morning and arrive at Sigu at three in the afternoon after eight hours' hard walking from Vidar Plantation. Next day from Sigu to Badimok was three more hours and then Balbe was four more hours walking. Mostly they walked only from one place to another in one day as they wanted to stay in each station for a while.

At Sigu, there was a church built in 1931 or 32 - a wooden church with good timber. It is still there (1970s) as it was not destroyed in the war. They rarely rode horses to these places. The tracks just followed around the edges of the mountains. Once Brother Gerhoch had an accident with a horse. It fell 50 metres down a ravine. They almost had it up again but the ground gave way and it fell again. Using horses had its advantages and disadvantages.

Between Rempi and Alexishafen, they often walked rather than take horses because, even though the road was flat, they had to climb over trees that had fallen across the road particularly in bad wet seasons. It would be too difficult if they were on horseback. They



*Rempi Church, 1974 (Author).*

sometimes went across to Vidar Plantation by boat to get to Rempi. On the return trip to Alexishafen they would call into Vidar to pick up a boat or a canoe or signal the boatman to come across and pick them up by flashing a mirror. They could not see Rempi from Alexishafen, but they could see Vidar.

### **Jock McKay, government patrol officer in Madang**

*[The day I interviewed Jock in the 1970s, he was an old man in the Madang hospital suffering from diabetes. When I first walked in, he looked as if he was about to die. I was excusing myself, ready to leave when he whispered. "Hang on a minute." The Sister came in and gave him a shot of insulin and within minutes he was sitting up cheerfully in bed ready to talk. Jock was in Madang pre-war as well after the war.]*

Jock McKay:

I arrived in Madang in September 1930. There were three main stores – Burns Philip, Carpenters and a Melanesian Company which was the Expropriation Board. Along the main streets, on either side there were deep drains to take away the water. They were six feet deep and two or three feet wide. One night, a man left a house and fell into a drain and broke his neck. They buried him up in the cemetery.

There were probably a dozen or more Chinese stores in those days and maybe 7 or 8 *kiaps*. There were very few white women – the *kiap*'s wife, chief clerk's wife. Alf Hunter was the DO at that time and lived on the point. Jack Reid [later a famous Coastwatcher] was up in the Sepik and was then transferred to Madang when he fell ill from Blackwater fever. The old German houses were still going in Madang. Later, the Australian Administration built some more houses and a hospital down near the wharf. Some of the old German houses were owned by BPs, Carpenters and the Administration. The army took over the German houses in 1914 at the time of the First World War.

The ships came in every three to six weeks – there were mainly BP's ships in those days: the *Malaita*, the *Matuka* and the *Macdui*. When a ship came in, we would all go on board and the passengers would come ashore. We would go to the bar on the ship where the beer was cheap at sixpence a glass and of course men would come in from the plantations from Matupi, Siar etc. We would all go aboard the boat and have a few beers and a meal,

The ships would bring freezer and other goods for the town and would leave at about four to six in the afternoon. Rarely did they stay overnight. The people would go to the ship to collect their freezer order – legs of mutton, chops etc and we would get no more for another three or four weeks. Copra boats or Bank boats came from London for the copra although BP's boats did this as well.

Then the boat would go up to Sek (Alexishafen). They would unload the cargo and load mail there, come back down to Madang and then leave. It was a great day when the BP boat arrived – you couldn't get the near the Post Office that day. There would be a dance up at the pub and the odd fight. Every Saturday night at the hotel, we used play bridge, whist etc to fill the evening. We had no electric

light – just kerosene lamps. There was a curfew for the village people of nine o'clock at night so we hardly saw any locals around.

In the 1930s, the lighthouse was just a kerosene lamp lit at five or six o'clock. It was 20 or 30 feet high and was visible for four or five miles from sea. Later on, I built a cement base for an automatic light. It had a big cylinder of gas and the light came on automatically at sundown. The gas lasted six months. At the beginning of WWII, the Japs probably dismantled it. There was also a light on Kerosene Island and Kranket Island. They were rather primitive, but did the work.

While Fr Ross was at Alexishafen [pre-war] he always wore long white trousers and was not allowed to wear shorts. I used to see him when he came into town and we sometimes had a meal together. He would come into the office and all you would see would be his mouth. His beard would be down below the counter, as he looked up at you. He was a short man, not that I'm much bigger. He always wore a black helmet as he reckoned it was more heat resistant. He painted it black himself. Black hat, black beard streaked with grey.

He would come and have a beer or a whiskey with me. I lived just near the office. I was a PO, a patrol Officer, and I would have to type a report out. They were very strict in those days. We got 300 pounds a year. Every 21 months we got three months leave. We had to pay our own fare out with BP's giving us 10 percent discount.

Fr Ross fancied smoking and used to smoke on the quiet as the Order banned smoking. There was one Father (Fr F) there at Alexishafen who used to smoke then he gave it up. Afterwards, he was always on the look-out for anyone seen smoking. I remember Fr S smoking one day in his house; he was just about to put another one in his mouth and in walked Fr F. You should have seen Fr S, he took the cigarette out of his mouth and hid it in his hand where it burnt all his fingers. I said to him afterwards, "You silly fool, he used to smoke. What's good for the goose is good for the gander" (Interview by the author).

In 1927, Jock McKay was planning to carry out a patrol into the mountains behind Rempi and Fr Ross obtained permission to accompany him. In the mountains at Saruga, they were attacked by a tribe firing arrows at them. McKay retaliated by firing over their heads with his rifle and was able to make contact with them. Fr Ross saw that the people's health was in a pitiful state and planned to return with Br Gerhoch, who was an expert on tropical medicines.

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On Christmas Day 1930, Fr Cornelius van Baar was up at Uligan near Bogia when a tsunami struck. He ran for his life and there was quite a bit of damage.

Fr Ross helped Father van Baar write an article for the *Catholic Times*. When Jock saw Fr Ross, he was rather cynical, "Did you write this?"

Father Ross said, "Well, I put it together for Fr van Baar."

Jock commented wryly:

The article would bring tears to your eyes. The tsunami made a mess that's for sure, but two pages in the *Catholic Times*? They got money – money and letters by the bagful. The church at Uligan was just a grass hut; you wouldn't give five shillings for it. Fr Van Bar sure got carried away when he wrote about the church and the tidal wave. I saw some of the damage up the coast including large boulders carried 300 yards inland. Fr Ross didn't get any damage at Rempi where there is a big reef and also islands protecting the coast (Interview by the author).

The fact that the missionaries were eating Christmas lunch at Alexishafen when the news came through about the earthquake and tsunami shows Madang was not affected by the tsunami, although they may have felt the earthquake. This event has recently been noted by earth scientists around the world when trying to investigate how widespread the 1930 earthquake and tsunami were. From the evidence of the missionaries eating lunch, unaware of it, this led to the conclusion that Alexishafen and Madang weren't affected at all.

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Meanwhile more and more SSpS sisters arrived. As mentioned, three sisters had come with Fr Ross in 1926 – Sister Alexis, Sister Antonia and Sister Ehrinrudis. Each time a



*Fr Ross and Br Gerhoch on horseback near Rempi in the 1930s.*

new group arrived they would be welcomed by Bishop Wolf, priests, brothers and sisters as well as crowds of school children wearing red laplaps. The new missionaries would then process to the timber church where everyone sang the *Magnificat*.

Sister Arsenia remembered when she arrived in 15 January 1929 on board the *Heidelberg*. When the ship docked in the afternoon, Bishop Wolf stood in front of many missionaries on the wharf wearing his tropical helmet, his long beard and dressed in a soutane with his Episcopal cross. He approached them and extended his hand in welcome. He said in German, “Most welcome all of you new missionaries from Germany, to our New Guinea mission. This is the chief station, Alexishafen. Today the 15 January 1929 is the twentieth anniversary of the death of our founder, Father Arnold Janssen. Now let us all go into the chapel and sing a *Magnificat* to Our Lord and our Blessed Lady Mary in thanksgiving for your safe journey from Europe to our New Guinea mission.”

### **Ramu River expedition in November – December 1931**

Bishop Wolf was anxious to open up mission stations on the Ramu River which snaked around the foothills of the Bismarck coastal plains behind Alexishafen. In November 1931, a group of missionaries investigated the area including Fr Ross, Fr Shebesta and Brothers Symphorian and Bernardine. They set off up the coast to the mouth of the Ramu River where the engine broke down. After engine troubles were fixed, they continued 180 kilometres up the river and camped with the Atemble people who were quite friendly. The return trip down river was much easier (Mennis, 2016: 34–36).

Fr Ross wrote:

I remember when we got back to Alexishafen at the end of 1931, a big typhoid fever epidemic had its grip on the mission. Some 30 people died including Br. Bernardine, 19 January 1932 and Br. Hyginus, 28 January 1932, some sisters including Sr. Eurasians and some of the local people. I was laid up for two months with the typhoid. Because of the epidemic, I can imagine that some of the data on the Ramu river trip was shelved and forgotten (pers comm).

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In the early 1930’s, when Bishop Wolf returned from Europe, he called a meeting in Alexishafen of all the missionaries from different stations. He told them of his meeting with the Pope who had advised him against building up the main station but rather put efforts into extending into other areas. Bishop Wolf was then supportive of any exploration of the Highlands when it was discovered (Nilles, 1991: 32).

And so the mission advance to the Highlands began.

## Chapter 2. Missions in Bundi and Chimbu

### Early Explorations

There is some debate as to who first knew about the existence of the Wahgi Valley. Dr Lauterbach, a German botanist who was working in the Sepik back in the 1890s, wrote in his diary that looking to the east he had sighted a vast valley. That is the first known statement that there was an inland valley or large plateau but he did not realise it was occupied by thousands of colourful people.

Around 1929 or 1930, Fr Kirschbaum also sighted the valley not far from where Dr Lauterbach had seen it. Fr Kirschbaum wanted to form an expedition then and there and go into this valley. Bishop Wolf approached the government and asked permission but the government refused and said it wasn't feasible at this particular time so that was the end of that. Those who had been nominated to go were Fr Kirschbaum, Fr Novak and Fr Ross. Until 1933, that was how matters stood and no one knew what was in the inland.

In 1933, Mick Leahy, while prospecting for gold in the vicinity of Kainantu and Goroka, walked up the valley and climbed a hill which probably was Umbati and saw this great wide valley; beautiful country.

Mick immediately went to the Wau Headquarters of the New Guinea Gold Dredging Company and put the proposal to them that it would be worthwhile for him and his brother Dan to go into this area and see what was in there. Maybe they would find gold which was worthwhile. Major Harrison, who was the head of the New Guinea Dredging Company agreed. He said, "it looks like a golden opportunity." He said, "You get your supplies together and we'll finance you and see what's in there" (Interview by the author).

### The First flight over the Wahgi Valley, 8 March 1933

Mick Leahy wrote:

With veteran pilot Ian Grabowski at the controls, Major Harrison and I and my brothers, Jim and Dan, flew over the new valley and laid to rest for all time the theory that the centre of New Guinea is a mass of uninhabitable mountains. What we saw was a great flat valley possibly twenty miles wide and not telling how many miles long, between two high mountain ranges with a very crooked river meandering through it. Below us was evidence of a fertile soil and a teeming population – a continuous patchwork of gardens, laid off in neat squares (Leahy, 1937: 162).

The results of that flight made headlines around the world. The first real expedition into the Western Highlands began on 28 March 1933 when Mick and Danny Leahy, surveyor Ken Spinks and patrol officer Jim Taylor set off from the Bena Bena camp, travelling from the eastern end up the Markham Valley, Kainantu, and Goroka.

Our column of four white men and nearly one hundred natives made quite an impressive show as we marched out from the Bena Bena camp early on the

morning of 28 March 1933. Early in expedition some of the people signed to us that they had seen the plane flying over on 8 March (Leahy, 1973: 164).

As the column of carriers and white men progressed through the country, thousands of people gathered to watch on each side of the column yelling and shouting. They saw the white men as their resurrected dead and wanted them to stay in their villages. Two children recognised Jim Taylor as their dead father. "Each took me by the hand and brought him to their uncles to look into my eyes. And the uncles said, 'Yes! Here is your land, here are your wives and children, and here are your pigs and dogs. -- Now all we ask is that you stay'" (Connolly, 1987: 90). Jim Taylor was very moved by it all.

Everywhere they went, they looked for traces of gold. They built an airstrip and when the plane landed, the people brought along pigs for it. Mick wrote, "Evidently they reckon the plane is something out of the ordinary, they are always on the spot to see it come and go. ---- They were very excited over the assortment of sea shells that came in the plane."

Mick Leahy:

1 June 1933: [We] camped at 1.30 in one of the local park-like camp sites. There were big oaks on either side of a lawn about 25 yards wide and 100 long with bamboos in between the oaks and a house at one end and a tree kept in a big pot and a row of sticks about 18 inches above the ground to tie the pigs up to on the occasion of a *singsing* (Diary).

2 June 1933: We passed the sites of burnt out houses recently burnt by hostile tribe who evidently came up the valley and wiped out the locals. Those who remained were fairly timid (Diary).

Ken Spinks measured off another airstrip 640 yards long 80 yards wide near their base at Mogeи on top of old garden drains.

30th July 1933: The local Mogeи are very enthusiastic and I think will assist in clearing and levelling it. ---- They were dead anxious to make friends and we never sighted an axe or a spear. --- they showed the track through their gardens down onto the head of Wahgi. The wash is just a shaley mudstone stuff --- could not raise a colour. On 4th October Tom [O'Dea] arrived in the DH50 with his wife Mrs O'Dea. The locals put on a great show for the white woman. -- the first to come this far into New Guinea. --- The locals were dumbfounded but not a bit shy (Diary).

### **Snowy, the dog**

Dogs were an important ally for missionaries, explorers and goldminers when setting up camp in the highlands. They could alert their owners of trouble but also be on the attack. Mick Leahy's faithful dog, Snowy, went everywhere with him. Crossing rivers on rickety bridges, he would be tied around the shoulders of one of the carriers.

Once Snowy took on a mob of fierce tribesmen, who were bent on firing arrows at the Leahy camp. Before this, Mick Leahy was on a ridge taking photos of the fight between two opposing tribal groups, thinking he would not be involved in the action. Suddenly arrows began to fall at his feet and he reached for his gun. Just then Snowy rushed at the

attacking men, barking and growling furiously. At the unexpected fury, the tribesmen turned tail and fled with Snowy at their heels. Mick thought that he would never see Snowy again. Surely he would not survive all those armed men. However, about an hour later, Snowy was back, exhausted and panting up to the ridge. Behind him Mick heard the chanting victorious warriors whose enemy had been routed by Snowy. "The next morning a long procession of men delivered a big pig and the biggest yam I have ever seen to the camp for Snowy-- He received the offering like a Prima Donna" (Leahy, 1991: 232). [A photograph of Snowy can be found at page 59 in *Hagen Saga* where he is sitting in front of a group at Mingende].

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While they were camped in Hagen, Mick Leahy wrote to Fr Ross whom he had known for several years, telling him what a marvellous country it was. "It is a tremendous population, good climate, everything in favour of Europeans settling in this area." Fr Ross showed this letter to Bishop Wolf of Alexishafen who was very keen to send missionaries there. In fact, he asked Fr Ross to go in there. "Go down to Salamaua and fly into the area and see the possibilities of sending in an expedition from the mission there".

Fr Ross went to Salamaua in September 1933 hoping to make a quick flight into Mt Hagen to look at the area and maybe buy a block of land. At this stage, the responsibility for the exploration and development of the new inland areas lay with the District Officer in Salamaua, which was the headquarters of the Morobe District. This is why the initial treks into the Chimbu had been made from the Bena Bena.

However, when Fr Ross arrived at Salamaua, the ADO [Assistant District Officer] explained that the Leahy Brothers were leaving Mt Hagen and advised him against going into the interior as he had no supplies or carriers. Fr Ross agreed that it would be impossible to go into the interior when there was no one there to meet him. So he decided to fly up to Wau and wait for the Leahy brothers to return.

Mick and Danny Leahy and party flew out from Mt Hagen. Not for them the long column of carriers they had used to get there. Now it was easy to fly over the mountains and valleys. They landed at Wau, glad they had survived the many dangers.

Mick wrote:

22 October 1933: Wau was a welcome sight after being away. Fr Ross, Jim and Mick Dwyer were on the drome at Wau. Bill Tracey came along shortly afterwards. Mass had just been said and there were quite a few Catholics amongst them -- Everything ready for the trip south (Diary).

When they arrived, Mick and Danny Leahy and Jim Taylor had plenty of stories to tell Fr Ross of their adventures in the Highlands. Mick had developed a large number of photographs of the Wahgi Valley and the people. He had done a course in photography and had been able to develop his own films even while on camp. As they had to wait for the arrival of the *Macdui* in Salamaua, Fr Ross helped mount the photographs in albums. They showed various stages of the life of the Highlands people: customs, dances, singsings, houses, family life and everything.

When the *Macdui* arrived on 27 October 1933, Fr Ross went along with Mick and Danny Leahy because the ship was going via Alexishafen, where Fr Ross introduced them to Bishop Wolf who was keen to meet the now famous Leahy brothers.

Mick said of Bishop Wolf:

27 October 1933: A very charming person and intensely interested in the interior country. He is going to send along a party including Fr Ross as soon as I get back. Had morning coffee with him served by a good-natured Brother whose only purpose in life was to keep our cups full and the eats up to us. Left the Hagen boy [Rebier] and was sorry to part from him. He is such a nice little chap. The *Macdui* left about 1 pm for Kavieng (Diary).

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### **Fr Schaefer, missionary of the Bismarck Range and beyond**

Alphonse Schaefer was born in Westphalia in Germany on 10 May 1904. His family was very devout. He entered the seminary and was ordained in 1929 at age 25 and went to New Guinea a year later. He stayed there, apart from the war years, until 1958 when

he returned home on leave. Unfortunately, he had a heart attack in Germany and died on 19 August 1958 at age 54. In the years that he spent in New Guinea he was a warrior for the Church, setting up mission stations in and beyond the Bundi area.

He wrote about his arrival in New Guinea in 1930. When the boat he was in approached Alexishafen, he could see “hundreds of burning torches along the sea shore”. As soon as they reached the wharf Bishop Wolf and a number of Fathers and Brothers welcomed them and shook hands. “A great number of indigenous workers, students and school girls, waved their torches, shouted and stared at us with amazement. Indeed, we missionaries were welcomed” (1991: 15).

His first posting was to Halopa where he stayed until 1931. There he wrote: “I realised clearly that a missionary has first to learn to know the people and their language. These two conditions are the most essential requisites for a solid Christian

structure. In later stations, I always thought, ‘Go slowly, first learn to understand the people and then convert them’” (1991: 16).

In July 1931, Fr Schaefer made a trek towards the Ramu River with Fr Weyer. After visiting many villages, they sat on the banks of the Ramu. It was a memory that was to stay with him:

All my life long, I have never forgotten that short hour when I sat on the sandy bank of the Ramu, my eyes fixed on the high mountains of the Bismarck Range. I imagined the people in and beyond such a fantastic range, but I could not see even one clearing in the dark green virgin forest that stretched up to the clouds in the sky. My eyes and my heart burned. In my excitement, I wanted to persuade one of the Sepu men to take me across the river in a canoe, but there was nothing we could do (Schaefer, 1991: 20).

The mountains he was viewing were to become his mission ground for the rest of his missionary life. As mentioned already, when Bishop Wolf returned from Europe he called a meeting in Alexishafen of all the missionaries from different stations. On the following day, Fr Schaefer had a chance to speak to the Bishop about his dreams of making an expedition into the Bismarcks taking Brother Anton as his companion.

The Bishop answered: "Father you come just at the right time. When I had an interview with the Pope in Rome, he particularly advised me not to emphasise so much the intensity of our mission work, but rather in the extensive aspect. You have my permission for the expedition. Go in God's name" (1991: 32).

### **Fr Schaefer's first trek towards the Bismarcks, June 1932**

Fr Schaefer's first plan was to make it as far as the Bismarck Range and return via Atemble. He and Brother Anton Baas set out with a lot of carriers to Sepu on the Ramu River where they had been before. Here some of the carriers returned to the coast. The two missionaries waited and waited but there was no one there to help them cross the river. So the next morning they cut a large log to make their own canoe. Soon a man called out from the other side and dragged his canoe down to the river and paddled across. Then more canoes appeared and soon they were all across. But now their guide, Kibur, had not appeared. They sat and waited and said they would wait until he arrived. Suddenly Kibur appeared. Why the hesitancy? They did not know. They set out the next day and had their Saturday lunch on the Marm River. From there they walked on level ground through high kunai grass. In the afternoon about four, they called it a day's trek and put up their tents for the night in a pleasant spot on the bank of a creek. The calendar showed the end of June 1932 (Schaefer, 1991: 32).

Next day was Sunday and most of that day they were climbing the side of a mountain. Late afternoon their guide, Kibur, called a break and went on by himself. Soon he returned with a local man from Ivam. It was an exciting time for the missionaries.

Fr Schaefer commented:

This was the first mountain man we had seen, and Brother Anton and I were most probably the first white men in this area of the Bismarcks to meet his people. After an introduction to the mountain men, we continued our walk until we met other men making a garden. They called themselves Wakirai. Several of them approached us and welcomed us with embraces. They started yodelling excitedly and shouting the news around the mountains that spirit men had appeared in their region. Yodelling echoes came back from the mountains (1991: 33).



*Bundi people in 1994 (Author).*

It was a great day for them all. They then walked down the other side of that mountain and continued along towards the base of Mount Kuyamba. It was quite cold here during the night. Next day, they began to climb up the slopes of Kuyamba to two settlements, Guyebi and Kolio where the people brought them food and pigs to barter. The rain kept them sheltering there overnight. The next day they were off again climbing higher up Kuyamba. After many hours, they came to a place called Gonebona where hundreds of people met them. “Their wild and unrestrained behaviours kept us cautious, but nothing happened.” They camped there at an altitude of 1600 metres.

Setting out early the next morning, they climbed further up the mountain and at the top were “rewarded with a wonderful view of most of the Ivam Mountains, particularly the gorges and ravines of the Umbrum River as far as Mount Otto.” Brother Anton joined him there and they were both inspired by the view and the hundreds of people they met. “We had chalked up a great achievement with our trip into the Central Highlands. We had been up to the Bismarck Mountains” (1991: 33).

They had achieved what they wanted to do on this trip and turned back. Anyway their guide, Kibur, refused to go further as it would have been foreign territory to him. They returned to Alexishafen via Utu. The expedition had taken five weeks. Fr Schaefer gave his report to Bishop Wolf who listened very carefully and finally agreed that Fr Schaefer could make further explorations of the Bismarck Mountains.

### **Fr Schaefer's next Advance into the Bismarcks**

One day soon after this, Fr Schaefer received a *tanget* message stick from the Guyebi people inviting him to come back to their area. It consisted of 'an arrow with tobacco leaves attached.' He sent it on to the Bishop. At this stage, there were a few negative comments in Alexishafen about setting up a station in the Bismarcks, including questions about getting supplies in there or medical assistance that might be required if the missionaries became ill. Some thought it was complete madness to even think of going there. However, the Bishop had decided to support the project and preparation with carriers, catechists and mission staff was begun (1991: 39).

Again, Fr Schaefer and Brother Anton travelled to Sepu on the Ramu River where they crossed the river. They took a different track this time to a place called Enei, a small village at the base of the Bismarcks. This place was in a strategic area for any mission work in the mountains. However, several *tulatula* (protestant men) had arrived there a few days before. This did not deter Fr Schaefer with his usual forceful nature.

He wrote: "We met them in their main house and told them we had come to settle in Enei too, and it would be better for them to move. During the next weeks, the *tulatula* did in fact give up their foundation. Later it was to be an important stepping out centre for our missions in the Highlands". Schaefer befriended Dori, one of the two headmen in the area. He had three wives and was appointed the friend of the Catholic Mission. "Without his strong influence, we could not have made the progress we did. Dori spoke a little *pidgin* English as well as the languages of Ivam and Sepu" (1991: 40).

After being there three days, they continued on to Guyebi from where the *tanget* message had been sent. At the Baia River, they met up with Mopu and his brother Bonogo, the two men who had sent the message. Nearby was Gonebona Village which was Mopu's home village. He invited Fr Schaefer to set up a station there. The people seemed friendly and there was some good flat ground and it was not far from Sepu. They decided to settle there and Brother Anton immediately began building houses while Fr Schaefer began learning the language and, within six months, could carry on a conversation. They were the first white men in Gonebona.

Shortly after they arrived, Dori invited them to a big *singsing* at Orokari at an altitude of 1000 metres above the Ramu River. Only Fr Schaefer went as Brother Anton was too busy building houses. It was a long, hot climb and not without its dangers. The view from Orokari was just wonderful and on a clear day Karkar Island off the coast of Madang was clearly visible. Crowds had assembled for the *singsing* but many of them were protestants.

That night in the moonlight. Fr Schaefer was awakened by a large man carrying a cane and yelling "Get out, get out!" He tumbled out of bed and recognised the man as the

*tulatula* from across the river. Schaefer's five companions threw the man out of the hut. However, two hundred Ramu men were outside continuing the shouting. Next morning, the confrontation continued but Fr Schaefer had already met up with some of the village elders and they promised to sell him a piece of land. After this everything was settled from his point of view. Schaefer then asked the *tultul* [government representative in the village] to tell the Ramu men to leave. They turned and left. That same day Schaefer paid for the land at Orokari and assigned some catechists to the village. He killed some pigs and they had a celebratory feast.

This interchange showed the competition between the people of different religious organisations. It was to continue for the rest of the history of the Highlands. Once the Lutherans and Catholics had become friendly after WW2, the area was besieged by smaller religious groups with their own agendas.

Schaefer wrote:

We left helpers at each place who would live among the people and make our mission and work known. These were not trained catechists, and at times, they were not even baptised Catholics. But they were in constant contact with the nearest mission station. They were also supposed to protect the people against the tricks of the protestants and make sure they maintained a friendly attitude towards us. This was only for a time as a measure of expediency, but what else could we do in the situation?

As far as I know, such a missioning method had not been used until then in our mission. Later on in the Highlands, this method became the normal way of keeping in contact with newly discovered groups in areas where we had started with insufficiently trained catechists. In fact, we learnt this method from the protestants who practised it from the beginning as far as the Ramu River (1991: 44).

Fr Schaefer was probably the first European to hear of the Wahgi Valley. The people in Bundi told him – “On the other side of this mountain (The Bismarcks) is a tremendous big valley. We know about it because we visit that area. Some of our wives come from there and some of our women are married over there. This year we will make an expedition why don't you come with us?” That was in 1932. Fr Schaefer was very busy building up the station and he said. “It'd take a lot of time. Later on we will go but not now.” If he had gone at that time he would have beaten the Leahy brothers and would have been the first white man to go into the Wahgi valley and meet the people. The following year, he was ready for the challenge and left on 6 November 1933.

### **Fr Schaefer and team crossed over the Bismarck Range, November 1933**

The whole trip from BUNDI to the Danga Mountain and back took seventeen days. Fr Schaefer wrote that his “long cherished hopes to cross the Bismarck Mountains became a reality.” Chief Kawagl was a strong, highly respected man in BUNDI but he was actually from Koruguru, a place in the Chimbu Valley on the far side of the Bismarck Mountains. He lived in BUNDI with several hundred of his *wantoks* but he encouraged Fr Schaefer to travel to Koruguru with him. The three missionaries, Fr Schaefer, Fr Cranssen and

Brother Anton, left Bundi on 7 November 1933 and walked as far as Amekui. With them were about three hundred and fifty men from Koruguru who had been living in Bundi with Kawagl who was the main leader of the group. They camped the next day at Bononi. Then, on 9 November, they crossed the Bismarck Range through the Mondia or Bundi Pass, and so became the first white men in that area (1991: 86).

We camped near the upper Chimbu River at a place called Engremambuno on the land of the Denglagu clan. The next day we walked southwards along the Chimbu River as far as Gongrume. The following day we reached the Cinkare River (Koglai) and camped on the Nime clan land. Here we found the first traces of white men, gold miners, who had passed through some time ago.



*From left to right: Frs Aufenanger, Schaefer, Cranssen and Br Anton Baas.*

### **Huge Cross erected on the Kunabau Mountain**

They rested for a day with the Nime people and during this time Brother Anton erected a huge wooden cross on the highest peak of the Kunabau Mountains. The following day they crossed the Kerowagi River and stayed one night with the Dagl people. In this area they found the women rather shy and frightened.

Years later, Fr Nilles spoke about this cross which has been renewed ever since. "The wooden beams of the cross were of the yar tree. They had to be renewed every twelve to eighteen months whenever the beams were rotten. But since 1973, the wooden cross was replaced by an iron one made of pipes six inches in diameter. The cross reaches into the air fourteen metres and has a width of seven metres. That iron cross overlooks the whole Wahgi Valley, that is from Mt Hagen to Elimbari" (Nilles, 1984: 22).

On 9 November, Frs Schaefer, Cranssen and Brother Anton reached the mountain pass at an altitude of 3300 m. What a magnificent aspect! They could gaze at the peaks of Mt. Wilhelm at some 5000 m, the highest mountain of New Guinea. Before them lay a narrow valley cut into the high mountains, the Chimbu Valley. Far away to the south was another mountain chain, the mountains of the Wahgi Valley, an overwhelming view.

Fr Schaefer said:

We paused for a snack and then picked our way down into the Mondia Brook Valley. Here we met the first Chimbu men, tall with birds' feathers in their hair. Brandishing their stone axes, they greeted us with strong yodelling voices, they threw their arms around our shoulders in welcome. These were the Korugurus and they accepted us as friends.

We three missionaries were the first white men who had ever been seen in this area. The people looked upon us with the respect and awe they reserve for spirits. When I entered the stream for a wash in the ice cold water, the men became very excited, because they themselves never bathe in cold water. Besides, my ability to swim caused great admiration and amusement. Meanwhile more and more people crowded up to see us. They offered food, sweet potatoes, sugarcane and bananas, and tethered pigs we could slaughter. By evening, there were a thousand people around our camping place. We paid for everything with small shells (1991: 60).

Fr Schaefer asked for some war shields and stacked them in front of a tree. He faced the shields and pulled the trigger of his rifle. This was supposed to demonstrate the power of his gun but it did not always do so as the people did not always believe in the power of the guns against themselves even though the bullet went through the five or six shields. Kawagl, the big man, explained the power of the gun to the warriors. His words made a great impression upon the people (Nilles, 1984: 7).

The missionaries found the countryside very picturesque with steep hills rising on either side of the Chimbu River with paths and villages of the Denglagu people. They were greeted by hundreds of men and women shouting and yodelling. So they continued down the Chimbu Valley for four days until they came to the Koruguru clan. From here they could see to the distant valley of the Wahgi River. Here the leader, Kawagl, stayed with his clansmen while the missionaries went on as far as the Wahgi River and returned up the Chimbu River, over the Mondiage River gorge and back to Bundi which they reached on the 23rd November.

On 26 November 1933, Fr Schaefer sent two workers to Alexishafen with a report of the trek for Bishop Wolf. In the report he said: "I think the first thing to do is to get started in Denglagu. Shortly after that we must go to Merane and Tema which so far has only two bush houses. Ground there should be purchased officially because this is the spot for the central station" (Schaefer 1991: 61). After hearing the account of Fr Schaefer's expedition and after speaking to Mick and Danny Leahy about the discovery of the highlands, Bishop Wolf decided that he couldn't wait. He started organising an expedition right away to Mt Hagen. He appointed Fr Ross as leader and told him to take Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene with him.

Fr Schaefer reported:

A conference was held on 17 January 1934 during which plans were discussed. The final results of the discussions were: Fr Ross should go to Arawa and start working in that area where the Chimbu River flows into the Wahgi. From there, he should extend his influence towards Mount Hagen; I was to take Ross via Bundi to the region where he was to work, and Mick Leahy was to be informed that Fr Ross could not meet him on the Purari, but rather where the Chimbu flows into the Wahgi; I was to return to Alexishafen to prepare myself for Inafu in the Goroka area (Schaefer, 1991: 62).

### **Fr Ross's expedition to the Highlands 1934**

In January 1934, Fr Ross's expedition was ready. The three missionaries, Fr Ross, Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene Frank went by launch to Bogadjim. The track from there was over the Finisterre Range and down to the Ramu River. This was a trade route used for centuries by the coastal people to trade with inland people and in more recent times was used by government patrols. The missionaries camped on the Ioworo River and next day they were able to ford the river without incident in spite of the fact that there were crocodiles there. They walked on to Kwato and then up the hills to Yaula where they camped. Next day, they continued the climb to Moto where they camped and the following day, they descended to the Ramu River.

Fr Ross wrote:

The last few hours before we reached the Ramu River we were travelling over a corduroy road. The banks of the river apparently had flooded and this road had been just like a swamp. Whoever had used it had put down trees from time to time and we were hopping from one log to the next for a couple of hours, until we reached the river. There were a few natives on the other side and they came over. We negotiated with them to carry us across in two dug-outs. We had seventy carriers plus cargo and it took the whole day to get across (Mennis, 2016: 44).

They made camp there on the banks of the Ramu at Yolapa. They were plagued with mosquitoes and the carriers were given quinine as a precaution. Next day they walked as far as the Tauya River. It was river country and they did not meet any people. As the line of carriers stretched a long way back, one of the missionaries led the way and the other two brought up the rear in case of attack. They next came to a small place called Wau where a storm was brewing and they just managed to get camp set up before the deluge came down.

This was the last night before Bundi where they were to meet up with Fr Schaefer and Fr Aufenanger. There was another storm that night. The cold, wet night was again followed by a hot steamy day with little shade. They got sunburnt on their legs. After a stiff climb they reached the Bundi mission which was an established mission centre with a church and mission house. The mission boys hurried down the track to meet them and carried them up the hill which was tortuous on their sun-burnt legs. Fr Schaefer had waited for the party to arrive but had given up and gone on a tour of the out-stations. As soon as he heard Fr Ross and the others had arrived he hurried it back to Bundi.



*The first missionaries into Mt Hagen, March 1934. From left: Fr Tropper, Br Eugene Frank, Frs Schaefer, Aufenanger and Ross*

Bishop Wolf had nominated Fr Ross as the leader but the forceful Fr Schaefer took the lead as he had already traversed part of the course and was a friend of the headman, Kawagl, who was going to take them to the Chimbu valley. After a few days rest, Fr Ross and his party were ready to go. There were five missionaries in the party: Fr Ross, Fr Schaefer, Fr Tropper, Fr Aufenanger and Brother Eugene. They crossed the Bismarck Ranges and followed the route which Fr Schaefer had followed the year before.

On the first day after Bundi, the track went up and down gorges and sometimes up steep cliffs or down slippery descents with Kawagl and his people leading the way. Their first stopping place was at Nambugi where it was cold and the coastal carriers shivered as they were unaccustomed to the cold. The following night at Bunoni was even colder at two thousand feet six hundred metres above sea level. Next morning, they were treated to beautiful views in all directions. Behind them, the many ridges fingered down to the mist-covered Ramu Valley and beyond were the Finisterre Ranges and in the distance was the ocean. They were on a spur of the Bismarck Range. Towering above them was Mt Wilhelm and ahead was the Chimbu Valley where tumbling rivers cut through deep gorges.

That day they descended to Denglagu, the source of the Chimbu River which they crossed over on two large logs and then climbed 500 metres to Inau where they camped. That night some Chimbu warriors appeared in the dark and the watchmen scared them off without waking the missionaries. They were probably after the many shells which were being carried as trade items. Next they camped at Goglme and the carriers were warned to be careful as it was unfamiliar territory. This did not stop them gate-crashing a local courtship ceremony. Next morning, some of the villagers complained and Fr Schaefer dealt with the offenders in front of the villagers to their satisfaction.

Next stop was Kamanigl where a big *singsing* was being held. The people were all colourfully dressed in feathers and headbands made of the green scarab beetles. The drumming and dancing continued all night. Some of the people were frightened by the appearance of white men but others had seen Fr Schaefer and his party the previous year. They thought they were spirits of the dead until they saw them eating.

The last camping ground on the Chimbu River was at Merane near present day Kundiawa, being the most southerly part of the trek. From here they turned west for the final 100 kilometres to Mt Hagen. Next place was Koruguru area where Kawagl was the headman. He offered them a site at Dimbe for a mission but they preferred a site at nearby Mingende which was still in his area.

The people of Koruguru were so welcoming that both Fr Ross and Fr Schaefer decided the area would make a suitable headquarters for the whole Western Highlands. They continued on to Kerowagi, Nonugl, Banz, Kilua and then Wilya where the Leahy brothers were busy mining for gold. They reached Mt Hagen on 28 March 1934. Mick Leahy had built a small airstrip at a place called Moge.

Mick Leahy:

Wednesday 28 March 1934: Big excitement amongst the natives and a crowd of them on a ridge on the road along from Kaduwere. --- through the glasses we could make out a couple of white men and a long line of carriers. Went along the road to meet them having a pretty fair idea that it was the missionaries from Sek which it turned out to be - five of them altogether including Frs Ross, Schaefer, Aufenanger, Tropper, and Brother Eugene. They had had a good trip and brought back Rebier the little *monki* whom we took out with us last year and loaned to Fr Ross to learn the language. He looks well and has grown 50% since I last saw him. All the white men of the party look well and are enthusiastic about the country (Diary).

Mick mentioned that Fr Schaefer would return to his station on the Bismarcks, while Frs Ross and Tropper and Brother Eugene were going to make a station at a place called Koruguru, near Mingende and gradually work inland up the valley. Mick thought this would be, "an effective barrier to any other mission as they would be in the pick position for aerodromes etc which will be about the only means of working in this valley for some years to come".

On Friday 30 March, Mick and Dan were expecting a plane to fly in. The only trouble was the pilot might not have known about the new airstrip so Brother Eugene and Dan went to the old airstrip in case the pilot landed there by mistake. Beside the new airstrip Mick stationed boys with four stacks of grass ready to light as soon as the plane appeared. There was no sign of him all day. Fr Ross counted the approximate number of people waiting near the airstrip and got up to 1480. Mick Leahy commented: "they were coming in all the time and 1800 to 2,000 would not be an exaggerated count. They went home very disappointed that the *balus* never showed up and I suppose thinking we tricked them".

Mick Leahy:

Saturday 31 March: A beautiful clear morning. [Mount] Hagen being clear almost the whole day, but no sign of the damn plane. The locals are very hard to deal with for pigs. Jim Taylor having spoilt them in the early days and these people want the same payments as he gave them which would be impossible if we are to make the small area of gold pay here. Fr Ross had three special brazier shells and when he produced them there was a rush to bring in the pigs, but such lousy little ones that we would not buy them. Eventually Metar brought along a really good pig and we gave the shells to him. Fr Ross thought that the mission at Sek would get an aeroplane right away and once that is going it will service all the interior country. Dan and Brother Eugene came back from the other drome also disappointed. Poor Brother Eugene; he missed his opportunity for a trip in an aeroplane.

### **The first Mass in Mt Hagen.**

I rigged the tent on the drome and Fr Ross celebrated Holy Mass in it using our table as an altar. There were about 40 boys, the priests, Brother Eugene, Dan and I. We went to confession and communion. Father Schaefer sang the Mass with the boys in *pidgin* English and the whole service was a good effort for Mount Hagen (Diary).

About 10.30, the Fox Moth was sighted and they got the smoke signals going. He flew right over Giluwe, circled the drome then made a very good landing. Their brother, Jim Leahy, was on board having a free ride with Bob Gurney. They were full of southern news and were amazed to see five Europeans besides Mick and Danny Leahy at the airstrip. The Leahy brothers were getting ready to set off across the country fossicking for gold and then back to the Base Camp.

Monday, 2 April 1934: Bob and Jim got away as soon as it cleared up --- The missionary party got away about two hours later. They are taking the track on this side of the Wahgi which will not be so boggy and swampy and will probably be hung up for a day or two crossing the river lower down. The vine bridges being very insecure and require a whole lot of reinforcing before a long line of boys and cargo can be got over (Mick Leahy Diary).

Fr Ross was often asked what the reaction of the people was to the first plane when it came into land:

At first they considered the plane which came roaring out of the sky as a ghost. They viewed it as a terrible spirit come to destroy them. Some people lay face down on the ground and did not look up for an hour. Others who were more adventurous rushed to their houses and killed the first pig they could lay their hands on as a sacrifice to this awful monster. Today these same people roar with laughter when they describe how many pigs they gave to this metal ghost (Ross, 1956).

The day the plane left was Easter Monday 2 April 1934 and the five missionaries returned to Mingende, where they intended to open the first mission station. Bishop Wolf had

continually emphasised the importance of no big gaps between stations. The only station established so far was the one at Bundi and the distance between Bundi and Mt Hagen would have been over 100 miles. Bishop Wolf had impressed on the missionaries that they should start the first station in the Chimbu area which is not too far from Bundi – thirty miles. From there, when they were established, they could go further west towards Mt Hagen. So they set about establishing a mission at Mingende while Fr Schaefer returned to Denglagu.

Fr Schaefer's day:

What do I do the whole day? In the morning a little before five I am up and doing my meditation. At six, I wake my workers and assign their tasks. Then I celebrate Holy Mass, make my thanksgiving for it and sit down to breakfast. Then I go to the people and record as many words and phrases as possible. That takes me to noon. There is a midday break till two o'clock when people take up work till six when work stops. In this time, I have gotten another hour or two with the people and my phrasebook.

In the evenings, by lamplight, I memorize or read things. That I must also say my breviary and my rosary goes without saying. When sitting down and learning the language makes me restless, I take a little corn and feed my hens or the puppies. I now have seven of them on the station. I avoid other jobs lest they take me away from my study of the language. The holy pictures that you sent me cannot be used at present. The people here have no idea at all of God and the saints. They would wonder at the pictures and glue them to their foreheads or pin them in their hair.

I have already attempted to tell them something about the dear God, that He is a totally rich and good person who has given us human beings everything and who wishes to gather everyone into His house. The people were very pleased to hear this. They asked me whether I had already visited Him that I should know all about Him so exactly. I told them that this great person has a son who has come from heaven to earth and told us everything. That is why I know so much. They believed me and said they too wanted to go to heaven (Schaefer Diary, 18 November 1934).

On 7 September 1934, Fr Schaefer and Cranssen returned to Denglagu where they found the fence around the house had been torn down and the house had been somewhat damaged, as well some of the shells used for trading were missing. They asked the people for three pigs, in compensation but they were only scrawny small ones. Fr Cranssen was insistent that they should insist on a bigger pig! But no bigger pig was forthcoming! So Fr Schaefer told the people he would select the three pigs.

Men from the Wandeke clan were the main thieves and so we made for their area; I had planned to catch only three pigs, but the workers shot six. We left three where they had fallen and took three with us. The people were rather upset because we had shot their pigs; I told them to straighten out the matter among themselves. They remained neutral towards us, but started a fight among themselves.

This shows that shooting pigs to cover costs of damages was an acceptable way of compensation but this practice was later to end in tragedy on another occasion. On 10 September 1934, Frs Schaefer and Cranssen headed for Koruguru where they received the news that six Lutherans had passed Gogolme and were on their way to establish mission stations in the Wahgi Valley and were probably heading for Tema and Merane. The two of them hurriedly left Koruguru and headed for Merane, where they bought some land. Here they heard that the Lutherans were camped at Tema so they went on to Tema in order to purchase land there too.

### **Meeting between Fr Schaefer and Rev W. Bergmann**

When Fr Schaefer and Fr Cranssen arrived at Tema they saw tents pitched at the upper end of the valley. As they neared the tents, four white men approached them: Mr. Bergmann, Mr. Vizedon, Mr. Helbig and Mr. Harold. They were Lutheran missionaries.

Fr Schaefer recorded the meeting:

They told me that I had come too late. Mr. Bergmann explained: "We have made up our minds to stay here and we have already forwarded an application to the government for the land, about 320 hectares." I told them that we too would forward our application for a piece of land. We talked about the borders between the Lutheran and the Catholic missions. I advised Mr. Bergmann to move on from Chimbu towards the east and I would see to it that no Catholics extended their activities from Chimbu to the east. The plan seemed to gain some sympathy from Mr Bergmann.

Then he made his own proposal: within a radius of three hours distance from one mission station no other mission station should be established. I said to him: "Your proposal is acceptable to us because Koruguru is not three hours away from Tema and Merane is only twenty minutes from Tema; we already have a house there." I suggested that he move three hours east of Merane but Mr. Bergmann insisted that Koruguru was five hours walk away from Tema. This was typical of him (1991: 74 – 75).

Bergmann and Schaefer were from Westphalia in Germany and could communicate in their own German dialect but this did not help them solve differences in beliefs. There was outward animosity between the Catholics and Lutherans in those days.

### **Rev Wilhelm Bergmann, Lutheran missionary of Kundiawa**

Wilhelm Bergmann was born in 1899, on a farm in Westphalia, Germany. He was one of eleven children. The family were poor and there was little money for education. When Wilhelm was twelve, his father, Johann Heinrich, died. Eventually, in 1921, Bergmann entered the Lutheran seminary at Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, which prepared missionaries for the Neuendettelsauer mission in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

After six years' study, Wilhelm Bergmann left for Queensland, where he was ordained on 11 November 1928 and arrived in Finschhafen in December. Within two years he married his German fiancée Marie Luise, a nurse. In 1933 they established a station at Onerunka, near Kainantu. They had seven children and devoted forty years' missionary

work in the New Guinea Highlands. (Biographical note on the web) In October 1933, Bergmann made a flight over the Wahgi Valley with fellow missionary Henry Foege. They set out from Kainantu on a hired plane and flew over the area for three hours (Wagner, 1986: 195).

On 14 May 1934, the first Lutheran expedition set out into the Wahgi Valley. A group of 106 men including six European and American missionaries started from the evangelistic station of Rabana, high over the Bena Bena valley. Dr Braun was one of the group from the Madang Church including Rev Foege and Rev Schoetler plus sixty carriers. They walked in from Bogadjim and up the Bismarck Mountains; they rested at Rehma and then followed the Purantina and Bena Bena Rivers and came to Rabana where there was a Lutheran station. The people in that area had headbands of green scarab beetles and cassowary tail plumes. Some of them wore abbreviated grass skirts, but most of them had the traditional tapa cloth. Here they waited for the Finschafen group to arrive.

As soon as the Finschafen delegation arrived at Rabana, the party began their journey westwards. They used a small map which Bergmann and Foege had made of the area over which they had flown. They were following in the footsteps of the Leahy-Taylor expedition of the year before and most of the people had seen this expedition going through. As they walked westward over the hills, they came to the Asaro Valley and tentatively decided to start a mission there at a later date. Then they came to the side-streams of the Chimbu River and picked out the site of the present mission station of Kundiawa and also a good site for an airstrip. [This is near where the Bergmanns eventually settled.].

As they approached Mingende, their Chimbu guides indicated by signs that the party take a side track. They were so insistent that the Lutherans decided to investigate. Unwittingly they were being led to the Catholic missionaries who, the Chimbu reasoned, must be very close friends of the Lutherans. After all, were they not the only white men in the whole of the Chimbu area?

Fr Ross, Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene were very surprised when they found the Lutheran party on their doorstep. But their surprise was nothing to the embarrassment of the Lutherans at having stumbled on the Catholic mission. The meeting has been described as cool. Fr Ross was the first to collect himself and politely invited them in for a cup of tea. The Lutherans, however declined the invitation and hastily moved on up the valley. The following day the Lutheran party walked to Kerowagi, where they decided they might set up a mission. From there they turned south, crossing the Wahgi River on a shaky rattan bridge which managed to take them all.

Mathias Kin wrote how Rev. Bergmann first came to the area which is now Kundiawa. In 1934, Bergmann met Chief Bongere of the Kamaneku tribe and bought some land off him for a Lutheran mission. When Bergmann returned, Bongere killed a pig in front of his tribesmen and rubbed *tangat* leaves in the blood of the pig to signal that the land belonged to the Lutheran Church. Bergmann and his wife Marie Luise, established a station at Onerunka, near Kainantu (Web).

## Fr Karl Morschheuser, the first missionary to die in the New Guinea Highlands

Fr Morschheuser had been in the mission for only two years in 1934, when he was killed by the people of the Chimbu Valley. It was said that the casual slaughtering of the young and gifted priest in circumstances that resembled martyrdom sent a shock wave through the whole mission. He was just thirty years old.

Karl Morschheuser was born 18 January 1904 in Muenster, Westphalia, Germany. His father was mayor of the city. Like other boys of his time, he thought about the priesthood but initially there were other options. He attended a minor seminary at Steyl and in 1925, joined the seminary at St. Augustin-Bonn. He wrote home, that when he took his vows, he called it, “a life exclusively for God! I am now a member of the Society of the Divine Word and write joyfully behind my name the letters SVD for *Societas Verbi Divini*. With the taking of the vows, I wish to suspend, so to speak, living for myself and put myself entirely in the service of God.”

He attended the major seminary in St. Gabriel’s, Moedling, near the Vienna Woods. As well as study, there were times for skiing in the winter time. He described the mission house with its beautiful church, in a letter to his parents: “a great Romanesque chapel. Here significant moments of my life will take place, the vows and the holy ordinations, up till the great day of my ordination to the priesthood. Pray for this intention: that all this will come to pass in my regard, pray for my studies, for my health and my definite admission to the holy state.”

After ordination the newly ordained priests received their placements in the world scene. Fr Karl Morschheuser had listed three choices: New Guinea, the Philippines and Western India. When he was given New Guinea, he described his joy in a letter to his parents, dated 18 February 1932. “God be thanked!” he wrote. He leapt for joy. He went to the church and made a short act of thanksgiving. There was again a great stir in the study hall and refectory. Seven of them were going to New Guinea.

Karl wrote to his parents:

My first and greatest love is for the people of New Guinea. --- I am so happy that you have a real understanding for true joy. I am convinced that you rejoice in your heart that one of your children has been called to preach the Word of God to the pagans. ---- In my thoughts I am already roaming about in the jungles of New Guinea (1991).

Fr Karl said his first Mass in his hometown, Muenster, on the feast day of Peter and Paul shared by relatives, friends and neighbours who all then went to Steyl where he received his mission cross. His father, Joseph, the mayor, wrote: “There were 90 fathers and brothers taking part. Emotion clutched us all when the ninety sang together: “Let us go forward in peace!” And the community answered: “In the Name of Christ. Amen,” and sang the unforgettable, “Hail, the Star of the Sea” before the Marian altar.” When his ship, the *Koblenz*, left from Rotterdam on 11 August 1932, his father saw him off. It was the last time he saw his son.

Before boarding, Fr Karl wrote to his mother, “Dear Mother, I must once again thank you with all my heart for all your love and goodness and care of me. Your work has

helped me through all the beautiful days of my past life and enabled me to face a beautiful future. No decoration could give me greater pride than the mission cross. With all my love, Karl". When he reached Hong Kong, he and six other priests boarded the freighter *Bremerhaven* being the only passengers. After 14 days they reached New Guinea, two months after leaving home. It was October 1932.

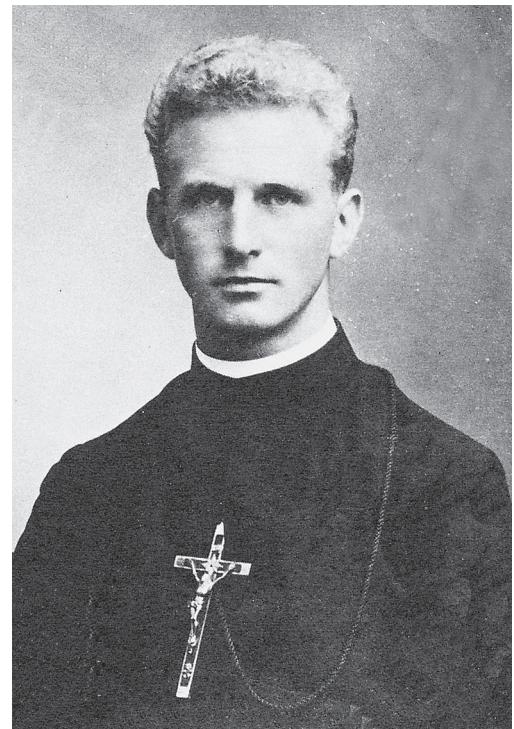
When Fr Morschheuser arrived at Alexishafen with the other priests, he was impressed with Bishop Wolf's residence with its splendid view of the Pacific Ocean from the verandah. "We live with the Bishop in one house and eat with him at table – I do not know yet whether I shall go to the mountains, the coast or to an island". His first post was to Ulingan on the coast.

Fr Morschheuser wrote from Ulingan on 30 November 1932 about his new mission life. He was helping another missionary on an extensive area. Climbing a mountain, they looked out over the whole of the Ulingan area and backed by more mountain ranges. He was caring for 23 villages on the coast and inland. He said it took him two days to ride a horse from one end of the coast to the last village on the other end and three days to reach the last village in the mountains. Some of the villages he named were: "Moire, five hours to the south east of Ulingan; Kowaki, three hours more; from there, another six hours to Humahuma; from Moire in another direction, two hours will bring me to Asimbin; three more to Ahon; and still two and a half more to Inapum; in another direction from Ahon, three hours to Aregrek!"

Beside these seven hamlets there are a number of coastal villages. He had a horse called Kaselok, a powerful beast that carried him up the mountain tracks slippery from rain. Sometimes they rode along the beach to some villages and then turned inland up jungle paths and across streams.

Fr Morschheuser wrote:

I take to the road with joy. Nature here is simply splendid. The people are good and obliging. So I feel fine in this wilderness. The dear Lord has taken satisfying care of this neighbourhood and sent plenty of wild birds to my hunter, doves, kokomos, cockatoos and bush fowl. The reality here, is jungle, terrible roads, many rivers, trackless mountains, hidden villages, genuine heathen. But this is just what I like; I am very happy here.



*Fr Karl Morschheuser.*

At the end of May, the two of us were together in the mountain district of my pastor. 200 people were baptized. The people made a gigantic celebration of the event. Guests came from neighbouring villages. They butchered twenty pigs for the feast. In two weeks, we shall have confirmation. Our Bishop [Bishop Wolf] will come. Beforehand we shall visit all the villages for last instructions. All Catholics will be invited to Ulingan. About 1500 will be confirmed. Two days have been allotted for this (Fisher, 1991).

After he had been at Ulingan for six months, he received a letter on the *Stella Maris*. It was from Bishop Wolf saying: "After mature deliberation I am recalling you from Ulingan and appointing you to the inland mission, probably to the Bismarck Mountains. I shall be able to speak more precisely when you have arrived here. Please come here on the next boat."

So on 20 July 1933, Fr Morschheuser stowed his belongings on the *Stella Maris* and went to Alexishafen to hear more. He said: "my feelings barometer stands at sunny and bright"!

Call to the Highlands:

I ended my last letter with the remark: my barometer stands at sunny and bright. This has not yet changed. I had to take a quick leave of my first field of priestly work. I felt some grief at departing from the dear scamps, the school children. Over all, though, I am glad about the new appointment since it fulfills a wish I have long held in my heart: to be a travelling missionary, a pioneer. Not a single Christian there! But the best thing is to let the superiors make decisions and acquiesce and control myself, thereby preserving a peaceful disposition (Fisher, 1991).

Fr Morschheuser left for the Bismarcks with Fr. Schaefer and Fr. Cornelius van Baar. They travelled by motor launch from Alexishafen south to Bogadjim, a coastal village. From there six days walking brought them to Bundi. Approximately seventy carriers accompanied them carrying everything they needed: flour, salt, tins of food, axes, hatchets, saws, tents, camp beds, everything needed for Holy Mass, clothes, trade articles for buying pigs and for salaries, six nanny goats, one billy goat and eighteen chickens.

Fr Morschheuser continues:

It will be an interesting life, part missionary, part farmer, part gypsy. Or, if you prefer to say, all missionary, then also farmer and, because there is no other way, a little gypsy. The important thing is this: we wish to announce the Good News to the very poor people behind the mountains. Whether they will be really friendly to us, we must wait to see.

From Bundi, Father Superior [Fr Schaefer] and I will trek four more days to Koruguru. From Koruguru I am to explore the neighbourhood farther to the south and determine what kind of people live there and how many. I am immensely exhilarated at this, the greatest expedition of my life. In Koruguru, I shall be with Father Superior for a time at first to learn something of the language. We are well equipped to face "pestilence, famine and war."

To shorten things, we call the whole area south of the Ramu River "Bismarck Mountains" although we were already behind the Bismarcks. We spent five days reaching the Ramu and in the afternoon of the fifth day we were at the foot of the mountains. Then began the climbing to 3000 meters past Mount Herbert which reaches 4000 meters. We took four days to cross the Bismarcks and, on 11 September, reached Koruguru.

I am sitting here in Merane [near present day Kundiawa], three hours from Koruguru where Fr Schaefer lives. Till Christmas, our main job is to establish how many people live around here and which languages they speak. Here there are, in contradistinction to the coast, certainly language groups with twenty thousand speakers. That will surely make the mission work much easier. Till Christmas, then, we must be walking west, east and south. Not to the north as we came from there! (Fisher, 1991).

Fr Morschheuser employed twelve local youths who have pledged themselves for three years service. This was a good idea as in this time span the boys could give their service, enjoy many adventures and see new places. They helped with buildings houses, a school, and a separate kitchen at Merane, but also made furniture and an altar for the Holy Mass.

In the new kitchen made of bush materials, the cook boys baked quantities of bread to last several days. Each Friday, they butchered a middle sized pig to last through most of the week. Their food consisted mainly of pork and sweet potatoes. The people had great numbers of pigs so there was always enough pork in stock.

Fr Morschheuser:

You see, with such nourishment, a man lives well: bread, pork and sweet potatoes. In the morning I have bread, butter, roast pork or marmalade. I find this good. At noon a stew of pork, potatoes and cabbage, as well as cucumber salad and fried bananas. In the evenings there are bread and butter, roast pork and optional sweet potatoes. I thrive on this diet. My strength is good. I can do physical work and hike as though I were home.



*Fr Morschheuser with Chimbu people at Dimbi.*

The pleasant mountain climate helps. I am comfortably warm during the days, sometimes painfully cold at night so that I put on a knitted jacket in the early morning and a cape for meditation. Here in Merane, I farm too. Friday I planted a very large piece of the ground we have bought. I have acquired 250 young banana plants with more sugar cane and many more sweet potato vines. Who can plant this in a short time? My lads undertook to put in the bananas and sugar cane. I summoned local women for the potatoes and in a trice had 50 working.

Last week the gold miners, the Leahy brothers, were both here as guests. They were the first whites here in the interior. They are good people and well intentioned towards us.

In this well-populated district one quickly gathers more than a hundred locals around him. Today when we bought food at Koruguru, we counted 900 people. We pitched our tent and bought sweet potatoes, sugar cane, greens and two pigs from the people. We had twenty carriers and as many Koruguru men who had accompanied us. Towards evening some youngsters came in with mail. You would not believe what an event it is when mail arrives. By the light of a hurricane lantern we sat on our bed frames and read and read until we had headaches.

How we shall fare in our wanderings and tent-living will appear in the sketches I sometimes make. I recommend myself and those who accompany me to your intercession. I need your prayers. I have good grounds to recommend myself to my Guardian Angel to let nothing befall me on this trip (Morschheuser Papers).

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### **Mops, the dog, helps Fr Schaefer on three occasions**

In June 1934, Fr Schaefer had difficulty with the people when they stole his best pig. He told his workers to look for it without success. Next he told the villagers to tie up their own pigs because he was going to let his dog, Mops, and the other dogs free. They could follow any pig.

There was a pause and then an onset. Bellowing wildly Mops went over the fence at them. So they brought me another pig in exchange for the lost one, and I gave a little compensation for the wounds the dogs had given them. Now the people know that they should not steal again. These people are not much impressed by exhortations but if they feel your firm grasp, they will pay attention. Their own rule is that a detected thief should be killed. I went travelling again. They were fighting in one village. They showed me an arrow with which they had killed an enemy. The village itself had lost a teenager. Everyone here is involved in the war except the very old and the children. The women carry arrows and prepare food during the battles. But while we missionaries are here, things are considerably quieter (Schaefer diary, 17 June 1934).

Another day, Frs Morschheuser and Schaefer went on a tour of the Wahgi Valley. They took some men from Koruguru with them. One evening the Korugurus tried to capture a village girl who was standing outside the perimeter of the tents. They seized the last girl, and dragged her behind a bush; Fr Schaefer leapt after them and grasped one Koruguru

man while the others ran away. Fr Morschheuser and the workers caught two more. They got some blows to make them realize what happens to louts who molest girls. It was a bad situation as the missionaries were trying to make friends. Assaults on their girls were likely to stir villagers to war.

We were in a dangerous situation. In spite of the heavy rain, I posted guards immediately. Then I set out with some workers, two guns and Mops to take the goods back. I came to the first houses and called out, but got no answer. Mops barked but all in vain. I must go back. Eventually a man turned up who could and would interpret. We met people and I promised to restore everything to the girl that had been stolen from her. They could come in the morning. I told them I had thrashed the Koruguru men and that satisfied the people. I could return to my tent without worry. The Korugurus had received their lesson; they would not easily do that again! (Schaefer diary, 14 October 1934)

Mops and the other dogs helped Father Schaefer when he tried to bring peace between two warring tribes. A few hundred people from Bundi and Nambre were enjoying a *singsing*, but just as suddenly the celebrations turned into “crying and raving”. One of the Bundi men had been killed by the Nambre men and the fight was on. Fr Schaefer armed himself and fired into the air to try and stop the fighting.

I could see about fifty fighters on each side. I posted myself between the two groups in front of the Nambres. There was a moment of stillness. Then a leader, a big, strong warrior swinging his stone axe came rushing up and attempted to pass me. With all my strength I gave him a shove and shouted, “Go back.”

Then speaking softly, I called, “Come here” and embraced him. Embracing is a sign of friendship. “If you call me friend, then tell your men to step back.” The mighty man was hanging in my arms and staring at me with rolling eyes. He fought to control himself, finally he said: “Very well, Father.” I let him go and he joined his fellows (Schaefer diary, June 1934).

Fr Schaefer almost succeeded in establishing a peaceful solution between the two groups but suddenly the Bundi women came out from the village shouting and roused their men:

“Are you old women who have lost their teeth? Do you have no more strength to fight on? Your muscles are flaccid, soft as rotten sticks.”

The Bundi men, who had been sitting peacefully on the ground now grew angry, their tempers boiled in their breasts incited by the women.

They sprang to their feet again to take up the fight once more. The idea came to me to whistle for my dogs, including Mops. I sent them against the enraged women who disappeared into their huts. After that, I was able to pacify the two parties and they gave up the idea of fighting. It was not renewed during the days to follow, so I was able to prevent a new feud (Schaefer Diary, June 1934).

At one stage, Mick Leahy camped near Merane and met Fr Schaefer and Fr Morschheuser whom he described as “a fine-looking dedicated young priest just out from Europe, enthusiastic and delighted with every aspect of the country and people in these Highland

valleys. He looked forward to years of labour among them and prayed that his principals would assign him to the area for life" (Leahy, 1991: 232). This was not to be, however; the young priest was dead by December 1934.

### **Fr Morschheuser's last letter home:**

With our Brother Builder [Brother Anton], I have wandered two days southwest on the far side of the Wahgi River to Minj where I was to build a further station for another priest who will arrive from the coast in the coming weeks! We put up a four room dwelling for him plus a big kitchen and a house for his helpers. Then we laid out an airstrip nearby. Our own airplane will be in Alexishafen in a few weeks. Yesterday we came back. We shall not remain here long, though. Today, we await a priest from the Chimbu Valley and on Monday the whole society moves out. Our superior goes with the Brother westward towards the Hagen Range to find and buy ground for schools and immediately to build them. The other two of us go one day east to Kogo, one day from Merane, to build my station at last.

All these experiences seem to make the time race by furiously. When I have finished Kogo, it will be about Christmas time. We will probably celebrate the Christmas feast in Denglagu, two days to the north of here. We seven missionaries will then be together on a station that is central for all of us. That is certainly Denglagu. The father there lives at peace with his people. One needs only to show the indigenes that we have no fear.

The station lies at an altitude of 2300 meters. It is very cold there. On the highest mountain peak there is snow sometimes, a lively reminder of our German Christmas. If the records for the grammaphone come, I shall again hear music for the first time here at Christmas. You see, I am already considering Christmas. This letter may reach you for the feast. I send you heartfelt good wishes for the feast of Christmas and for the New Year.

You will certainly think of me a little in the coming feast days. It keeps me zealous and helps me in the work I have been appointed to. What we do here cannot remain human work or it will fail like the work of men. God must render this work fruitful and bless it to bring the people here eternal profit. At Mass on the feast day, pray for us missionaries here in the wilderness. We do not forget you at home (Fisher, 1991).

Alas, Fr Karl Morschheuser never got to spend Christmas with his fellow missionaries as he was killed on 16 December 1934. When he heard of his son's death, his father, Joseph Morschheuser wrote: "Now our Karl is no more. He lies buried high in the Bismarck Mountains in former German earth. But we know that he is still with us."

### **Fr Morschheuser's death 16 December 1934**

Fr Morschheuser and Fr Cornelius van Baar were walking at Womkane near Denglagu when they saw that a building they had constructed had been burnt down. The Fathers decided they had to do something about it. They gave the people a warning that they had to re-build it or they would shoot some pigs.



*Merane mission in the 1930s (M. Leahy).*

When Fr Schaefer heard about the building being burnt, he was told that it was an accident as several buildings were burnt at the same time. He knew the people could not do the roof as it was a coastal style building and they needed help from Brother Anton. The villagers were in the process of re-building as several mat walls were lying on the ground. Fr Schaefer advised against killing pigs but his advice was ignored.

Fr Cornelius van Baar had expected the house to be finished on his return and decided the villagers had not done enough so he shot two pigs in retaliation. When the local people saw this they wailed as if a man had died. Fr Morschheuser and Fr Van Baar were frightened in their camp.

Van Baar said "I'm leaving for Denglagu."

Fr Morschheuser wanted to stay. "We should stay and pay for the pigs and explain the whole thing."

But Fr Cornelius van Baar got his things together and packed up. He said, "I'm the culprit. Nothing will happen to you. I shot the pigs and I'm afraid for my life."

Fr Morschheuser went with him, Fr Cornelius was in front and Fr Morschheuser was in the rear. Running towards Denglagu, they became separated. One boy got shot in the leg by an arrow and ran out of shells for his gun. Fr Cornelius was carrying the bullets. There were gaps in between Fr Morschheuser and the others and he was shot by an arrow in the mouth and the neck. Salip, the mission worker did not leave Fr Morschheuser.

As soon as the local tribe realised the white man had fallen down, the shooting stopped. Some boys ran on and told Fr Cornelius what had happened and he turned back and held something over his head to stop the arrows which were still shooting where he was. When they got near to Fr Morschheuser, there was a group of local people weeping beside him. Fr Van Baar gave him Extreme Unction and he died in his arms. They buried him there.

Fr Schaefer went down to Alexishafen to report his death. Fr Van Baar stayed there at Denglagu for a while but the shock was too much and he followed Fr Schaefer down



*From left: Frs Cornelius Van Baar and William Ross, and Br Anton Baas.*

to the coast. [This is the story as told by Salip, who was there, and told to Fr Noss who recorded it in an interview by the author in 1977].

When Fr Cornelius returned to Alexishafen, he received a cold reception by the other missionaries and even from Bishop Wolf. It was thought that if he had not shot the pigs nothing would have happened and Fr Morschheuser would be still alive. “The people at Alexishafen had learned the details from Fr Schaefer – and knew that Fr van Baar by his unreasonable aggressiveness had provoked the attack by the Womkane men” (Nilles, 1989: 115).

The government officials sent in a contingent of police and 40 Womkane men were arrested and jailed in Salamaua. Later, on Fr Nilles interviewed one of these Womkane prisoners who said only three of the forty returned home after their sentence. “They felt the heat of the coast very much and often felt sick. They were not able to eat the food provided in the prison either.” Later, some were taken to Madang to a jail which was bombed during the war (Nilles, 1989: 130). According to Fr Nilles, the man who actually shot the arrow into Fr Morschheuser was Merua, a Kugl Kane man from Womkama. He was not arrested by the *kiap* who rounded up the local tribesmen.

Fr Nilles mentioned that, in 1960, Fr Cornelius van Baar went back to the place where the murder had occurred and gathered the people who brought pigs and vegetables and had a feast of reconciliation so that the peace of Christ would come. The wife of the man

who speared the priest in the mouth was at the party and Fr van Baar shook hands with her as a token of peace. He also presented her with a gift of pork (1989: 131).

A story was told from the people's point of view in 2014. Kela Sil Boikin wrote of the time a pig was shot at Womatne, near Denglagu in 1934. The village people thought Fr Morschheuser had killed the pigs. The result was Fr Morschheuser was killed by the people of Kugl Kane. The story goes that the young boys and girls, who were working at the station that morning, were frightened by the gun shot and ran in fear back to their hamlets. One girl fell and broke the gold-lip shell she was wearing. Her father, angry at the lost shell demanded to know how it had happened. When he heard about the gunshots and the dead pigs he decided to take action. He collected his bows and arrows and ran after the missionaries. Thinking it was Fr Morschheuser who had shot the pigs, he turned on him and he became the target (Kela Sil Bolkin, 2014).

The Kugl Kane people eventually sent one of their own sons to study in the seminary. The young man completed his studies and was ordained as a Catholic priest on Christmas Eve in 1968. The young Kugl Kane man was Fr Ignatius Kilage. The Kugl Kane saw his ordination as a symbolic gesture to recompense for the murder of Fr Morschheuser in 1934. However, the Kugl Kane people were still not content. In 2004, seventy years after his death, the Kugl Kane people invited Fr Morschheuser's relatives from Germany to Kangre and in a remorseful ceremony, gave thousands of kina [PNG currency], some 200 pigs and a mountain of food stuff to them as compensation for the killing of Fr Morschheuser by one of their tribesmen. The relatives of Fr Morschheuser who came to Kangre saw that the Kugl Kane people were truly sorry and graciously accepted the apology and the compensation (Kela Sil Bolkin, 2014).

Before Morschheuser's death, the people did not know if white men could die. They had seen guns being fired at a stack of shields by Fr Schaefer but could they also be used against people? If they were under attack the missionaries only fired into the air. No-one got hurt. What would happen if they pointed the guns at people? Would it kill someone? On the other hand if they used their arrows against these white men would they die? Now they had their answer. Fr Morschheuser was buried in the Chimbu Valley. When the people were asked should he be re-buried in a Catholic cemetery they answered: "No. Father is resting peacefully in our ground now and he has forgiven us for killing him. He is in heaven praying for us and we do not want to lose him. Let him stay among us!" Surely he is praying that priestly and religious vocations will be offered to the young people of this land so they can lead their own people to God (Fisher, 1991).

Fr Morschheuser was such a promising missionary. After all the years of training he had done to become a priest and missionary he was so happy to be in New Guinea to bring the Good News to the people. Had he lived, he would have instructed and worked for many years among the thousands of Chimbu people. At the time Fr Schaefer was bereft as he knew the young missionary and could see that he had great potential as a missionary. It was a big loss.

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## **Fr Schaefer in Mingende**

Fr Schaefer was great singer and sang hymns in a forceful voice. At first he taught the people the traditional Catholic hymns. However, the Mingende people did not understand them. Their own songs were very lyrical and Fr Schaefer decided to try and write words of the hymns in the local language using their folk tunes, alternatively he used German folk music combined with vernacular words with great success as they were very musical. He was trying to incorporate the local culture as much as possible into the church programmes. But first, he had to get this accepted by Bishop Wolf.

Communications with Alexishafen could now be made by radio. Using his radio, he sang these new hymns over the air and even made a plane trip to Alexishafen to promote his idea. At first the Bishop was sceptical, but others present at the meeting thought some of the music was akin to Gregorian chant. The result was that “Bishop Wolf asked his secretary, Fr Hirsch to set up for this occasion a special church document stating that for the first time Episcopal permission had been given to the Mingende Church to introduce local melodies into Christian Church hymns and to sing these during Mass” (Nilles, 1989: 75).

Over the years, mistakes were made because interpreters either misunderstood what had been said, or generalised in a way that subtle details were overlooked. Seminarians from the Chimbu Province like to tell the story of Fr Schaefer when he announced to the people that he was going away and would return with an SVD brother and some Holy Spirit Sisters. The interpreter mistakenly said that the missionary was going to fetch his wife and her family and that the people should be prepared to contribute to his wife’s bride-price!

## **1935, Guyebi Station and Fr Cranssen**

The story of Fr Cranssen is interesting and needs some clarification. Most accounts mention that he caused several huts of the Lutheran helpers to be burnt down and for this he was imprisoned. He was under duress at the time and thought there was nothing else he could do. Fr Cranssen was a young Dutch priest, not long out from Holland. In 1932, he was sent to the mission at Alexishafen and later sent to the Iwam area of the Bismarck Mountains. Here he worked at the Guyebi station where he had built up the Catholic mission. This was an important station as the people here had initially sent a *tangat* message stick to Fr Schaeffer to come to their village in 1932.

Fr Schaeffer had much praise for the young priest: “Fr Cranssen, who has been appointed to that area, is a zealous and practical missionary. He took care that the children school regularly. The people went to Holy Mass on Sunday and he also visited his people in the district. His area reached as far as Enigari and Karisoko inclusively.”

According to the West Australian newspaper: “In June, 1935, a man named Rev. Welsch, who was connected with the Lutheran Mission in Madang, entered the area with some native boys. Rev. Welsch remained in the area for one or two days and then went back to the coast, leaving three or four native boys without supervision”. They began to spread gossip amongst the Catholic people saying that when the Lutheran “boss” came the natives would get more money for their work and they began inciting the people to take

action against the missionary and his boys. About November, Fr Cranssen warned the Lutheran men that they must leave but, on December 15, after more warnings had been given, evidence reached Fr Cranssen that plans had been made to attack him" (West Australian, 1936).

Cranssen said that it appeared to him that the most effective method of causing certain Kekeru boys to leave the district was to burn their huts. Three huts were destroyed. The smallest was about 8ft. by 6ft. and it had no walls and consisted merely of sapling posts supporting a grass roof. The other two huts were slightly larger. [These huts were made of bush-materials and could be erected in a couple of days]. Judge Wanliss was anti-mission and, at the trial in Rabaul, said that the offence was one of gravity and in sentencing Cranssen to five years' imprisonment pointed out that he could have imposed a sentence of imprisonment for life.

Fr. Schaefer explained the situation:

The Ivam and Bundi areas belonged to the restricted, uncontrolled Highlands and no strangers, that is, no more white men, were allowed to enter. The Lutherans, despite the regulations, made a trip through the Ivam area and assigned three coastal workers at Gegeru. We informed the government about this but nothing was done about it. The three Lutheran mission workers settled in Gegeru and built themselves houses. It seemed their main work consisted in rousing the locals against the Catholic missionary at Guyebi.

After a short time, on a Sunday morning, Cranssen was greatly surprised when he saw the Guyebi men, all heavily armed, coming to Mass. Father had heard rumours the day before that the Gegeru men would make an attack on the mission station during the Mass on Sunday. Their thinking was that during that time the Father and his workers would be unarmed and they could surround the church and house in great numbers, kill the Father and rob the station of all its goods.

Father then asked some of his men to take their rifles, go to Gegeru, send home the Lutheran workers and burn their houses. His workers followed his orders and were back next day with the Lutherans. Cranssen told the coastal men to go home to the coast and stay there. They returned there with their side of the story. The Lutheran missionaries in Madang prevailed on the government to indict Fr Cranssen.

Consequently, Mr Nurton, a patrol officer, was ordered to arrest Cranssen and take him to Madang. Mr Nurton got as far as Ramu; felt tired and sent police constables to Guyebi to invite Fr Cranssen to meet him at the Ramu. It would have been better if Mr Nurton himself had gone to Guyebi and Gegeru to investigate the whole matter himself. As he did not do this, he could not get a clear picture of what had happened (Schaefer, 1991: 96 – 97).

Jock MacKay, who worked with Nurton in the Madang District Office, said:

Before the war, Fr Cranssen was sentenced to five years jail. He had burnt two huts. The Lutherans probably reported him. It was hard to get to the bottom of what had happened. Nurton was the patrol officer at that time. He was very vindictive

and wanted to get promoted. He told me, “The only way to get promoted and get on in this place is to court as many people as possible.” He would have put his own mother in jail if necessary. Nurton got promoted and became ADO and I suppose he was satisfied. Then he lost a leg [in an attack by village people on the Rai Coast] so he went back to Phillip Island to his goat farm. During 27 years service, I [Jock] put two white men in court. One was fined five pounds the other two pounds. I preferred to remain where I was (Interview by the author).

These comments by Jock McKay show how unlucky Fr Cranssen was to score Nurton as the patrol officer as he was on the lookout for anyone he could take to court. After spending some time in jail in Rabaul, Fr Cranssen was sent to Australia in prison garb. He was met in Brisbane by Archbishop Duhig who gave him a black clerical suit in which to travel to Sydney. Here he spent time in a prison farm near Sydney where he looked after the prison’s chickens.

Bishop Wolf wrote to the Apostolic Delegate in Sydney, “to engage lawyers to take Father’s case to a higher court. This was the only case from New Guinea up to that time taken up by a higher court in Australia” (Schaefer, 1991: 97). The case was reported in a number of Australian newspapers: the *Advertiser*, Adelaide; the *Argus*, Melbourne; the *West Australian*; the *Courier Mail*, Brisbane; the *Sydney Morning Herald*; and the *Canberra Times*. All papers spoke against the sentence which was considered too harsh. Admittedly, Cranssen should not have burned the huts down but then he was stirred on by the actions of the opposing religion. Little mention was made of Rev. Welsch and his actions which began the trouble.

Cranssen had pleaded guilty at the trial, but in an affidavit to the High Court had declared that he had an imperfect knowledge of English, and when his plea of guilty was entered he was led to believe by his solicitor that he would emerge with a fine of about £5, and that there would be no publicity in the newspapers. The Crown allegation against Cranssen was that he was resentful of the encroachment of a Lutheran missionary named Welsch with a number of teachers and followers into his district, and the establishment by them of a Lutheran mission station at Gegeru, not far from Guyebi.

Mr. O’Gorman submitted that there was no jealousy between Cranssen and Welsch. There was no trouble between them until about November, when Cranssen heard that Lutheran mission boys were creating difficulties and inciting the local people to take drastic action against Cranssen and his mission. The Lutheran boys were ordered to leave the district, and when they ignored the warning, three huts were destroyed. Cranssen’s affidavit stated that the natives of the area were treacherous and revengeful and it was necessary for a white man to travel well armed in order to impress the natives of his strength. On 13 December, he heard a native say that two Lutheran boys “had made a plot against the Father.” He also heard that when the Guyebi natives were in church, the natives intended to kill them.

Cranssen stated in his affidavit that he considered a show of force was essential. His native boys had burnt down the huts, not in any aggressive spirit, but to protect themselves should they be attacked.

The result of the High Court appeal was that Fr Cranssen's sentence was reduced to six months jail. After this, he wanted to return to his post in the Bismarcks but Bishop Wolf decided that under the circumstances he should leave New Guinea. He was appointed to a mission in Timor and did great missionary work but he never returned to New Guinea. Brother Gerhoch mentioned that this trouble in Bundi increased the antipathy between the Catholics and Lutherans. He said, "Fr Ross didn't like getting into arguments. He got on quite well with the Lutherans in Mt Hagen, especially with the American Lutherans. However, everyone did his best for this own religion and will get his reward. Now there is little trouble – look at the Melanesian Institute meetings where everyone gets on".

A Lutheran writer, Wagner, commented:

The Church or those who played a role in the Church may also be blamed for the way in which people have come to view other Christian denominations around them. The church has brain washed the simple minds in such a way that people have become so traditional in their thinking about the church and its teachings. There are obvious implications that Lutherans, both in urban and rural areas have the idea the Lutheran Church is the only and ideal denomination that upholds the real truth of the Good news (Wagner, 1986: 500).

This was part of the problem in those days and the Catholic Church had similar attitudes as well.

### **Fr John Nilles (1905 to 1993), *Papa Bilong Chimbu***

Nilles was the first missionary to move into the area after the tragic deaths of Fr Morschheuser and Brother Eugene [see next chapter] and the departure of Fr Cranssen. Nilles became an authority on the culture and beliefs of the Chimbu people with whom he worked with great compassion.

John Nilles was born in Kerprich-Hemmersdorf, a small town in Germany. He was the eldest of five children. As a young boy, he was captivated by stories about missionaries in faraway places. At the age of eighteen he joined the SVD seminary of St Wendel's, Germany, in 1923, fulfilling his childhood dream and became a priest. After many years study, he was selected to go to New Guinea. He left Germany in 1936 with Frs Hiller, Beharnd, Kuppers, and Fuchs and four Brothers. He wrote about the reception at Alexishafen:

Fr Nilles:

There was a sizable crowd of people on the wharf at Alexishafen. As we drew near, we could distinguish the white from the brown faces. The Bishop, Fathers, Brothers, Sisters were in white with tropical helmets. There were school boys in colourful loin clothes, young girls in long dresses of gay hues and local people in traditional attire.

In front of the priests we could make out a short man with a long, grey beard and a pectoral cross. Surely this was the famous Bishop Wolf, once of Togo, now of New Guinea, who would be our Bishop. All the people were waving to us and

we found ourselves waving back in delight. As soon as the *Michael* was tied to the iron capstans of the wharf, we left the boat – the Bishop came forward to give each of us a solid handshake. We genuflected and kissed his ring as was the custom in those days. – Then the Bishop invited us all to the church to sing a *Magnificat* of thanksgiving and greeting to Our Lord and Our Lady in this new land (1991:22).

The next day they were shown around the mission settlement at Alexishafen and told about the organisation of the West and East Vicariates of New Guinea and the functions of the various departments (1991: 23). After six weeks of language study learning *Tok Pisin*, Fr Nilles was sent to Bogia to be with Fr Schebesta and await a permit to go the Highlands (1991: 260).

Bishop Wolf told Fr Nilles, “Father, I have planned to send you into the Eastern Highlands of our vicariate as soon as new missionaries can get government approval to go there”. Because of the deaths of the two missionaries almost two years earlier, no more missionaries had been allowed into the area and those who were there were confined to their mission stations. Fr Nilles was the first to receive permission to enter that area again.

The Bishop shook hands with him and with a pleasant smile said, “God bless you! Father, you are flying into the Highlands” (1989: 49). By this time travel to the area from Alexishafen was by the new planes, the *Paulus* and the larger *Petrus*. The airstrip at Alexishafen was cut out from part of a coconut plantation and a hangar had been built.

From Alexishafen, Fr Nilles flew to Mingende in the *Petrus*. “It took an hour to climb over the Schrader Range, the Ramu Valley and the Bundi Gap at some 2,900 metres”. He mentioned that, when he arrived, he was confronted with the terrifying vision of a group of warriors running at him with poisoned arrows. As it turned out, they were rushing to greet him.

Then he met up with Fr Schaefer who was stationed at Dimbi further up the mountain. The mission station had a rectory and a small chapel as well as two classrooms. On the other side were a carpenter shop, a timber shed and quarters for the workers. All made from local timber.

He also met Fr Tropper whom he had known earlier but hardly recognised as he had shoulder length red hair and full red beard. Fr Nilles first job here was to learn the

Kuman language which he achieved in less than one year, speaking fluently. He also trained catechists who could help spread their mission work into the rural areas.

While in Dimbi, he attended an initiation ceremony of 18 young men into the Yagl clan



*Fr John Nilles, 1905-1993.*

which included the letting of blood and also the slaughter of several pigs. Although he was reprimanded by Fr Schaefer for attending another ceremony concerning women, he still attended the second part as he was very interested in the culture of the people. He said that he felt privileged to observe the culture and the customs of the Chimbu people before any influence from outside.

During World War II, Fr Nilles was interned in Australia with other German missionaries. Before the Australian soldiers took him away, he arranged with local believers to hide all his work and books in the villages. He spent four and half years in Brisbane: the first few months were behind barbed wire but later he was allowed to do pastoral work in the Australian countryside. Fr Nilles also studied through Sydney University on the culture of Chimbu and earned a Diploma in Anthropology. His thesis was entitled *The Kuman of Chimbu* (Nilles, 1950).

When his internment ended in July 1947, he returned to New Guinea and came straight to Chimbu and his people at Mingende. There was great joy and, in the true Chimbu way, feasts were made for him and the other missionaries. Now as missionary and anthropologist, he had greater sensitivity towards the traditional values and beliefs of the Chimbu people and tried to introduce them into the liturgy if they were compatible. He taught the people to preserve their good aspects of their culture and do away with the bad. He strongly discouraged tribal fighting.

Overall, Fr Nilles lived in the Chimbu for fifty-four years. He lived with the people, learning their language and way of life and introducing them to his God and Western culture. He explained to the people who the missionaries were not: "We were not miners or businessmen. We were not Government officers or recruiters. We were missionaries".

There was some friction between Fr Nilles and Fr Schaefer described by Fr Nilles:

Towards the end of 1953, Fr Schaefer returned [to Chimbu] from his home leave. He was so upset that I had not carried out his plan to move the school to Kondiu, he broke down the houses at Kumbu and used the pieces to rebuild at Kondiu. [After this] I went home [to Germany] and Fr Wald assumed command of the school. I was not to return to Chimbu till 1958 after the death of Fr Schaefer (1991: 47).

In the end, it was Fr Nilles who translated Fr Schaefer's autobiography from German. Called *Cassowary of the Mountains*, it was printed in 1991. Fr Nilles always regarded Fr Schaefer as a great missionary, even though they did not always see eye to eye and this book gives many insights into Schaefer's contribution to the Missions in the Bismarck Ranges.

In 1970, Fr Nilles stood for election which he won, representing Chimbu in the Third House of Assembly. He justified his election and stood firm for his people of Chimbu. In his first speech in parliament in June 1970 he challenged his critics saying, "I am not ashamed to be called a Chimbu man, --- I shall be responsible to my conscience and my God." In the next election, Iambakey Okuk won the seat.

Before he left the Chimbu area, Nilles said that he had given the best part of his life to the people who called him 'Papa of the Chimbu'. He said, "My life has been long,

and I think fruitful. I am very grateful to God for my religious, priestly and missionary vocation and to the people of Papua New Guinea”.

Looking back on the early days in New Guinea, Fr Nilles wrote:

The early competitive attitude between the European members of the two mission churches never developed into a state of quarrelling and hatred. That can be seen in various happenings. I, myself, met Rev Bergmann for the first time around July 1937 when Fr Schaefer and myself, with the permission of the government officer at Kundiawa, Mr Keyl, paid a courtesy visit to the Bergmann family. We both enjoyed their great hospitality (Nilles, 1984: 18).

Rev Bergmann retired from active missionary work around 1970. Before he went down to Australia, the people at Kundiawa gave him a great send off in the sports club hall. Fr Nilles wrote, “I attended too. During his farewell speech he mentioned that during all the years at Kundiawa he had never had a competitive clash with the Catholic Mission, and that they always got on very well. Well, I can say myself that I often met him in Kundiawa where I had been posted since 1967, so I took this remark with a certain smile” (Nilles, 1984: 18).

Fr Nilles took part in the Chimbus’ cultural activities and lived as one of them. He enjoyed *mumu* food and took part in compensation and other cultural activities. He was a great orator and attracted great crowds to his public speeches. This is a quality that the Chimbu people identified with in their leaders and in Fr John Nilles they found one.

One Chimbu parishioner remembers that Fr Nilles sometimes paid the bride price for the men who worked in the timber yards so they could get married. Many women got married with the payment of *kina* shells, salt, steel axes etc which were worth a lot in those days. This way, some of the prettiest girl went away with the *palang bois* (timber boys) (Web site). That is just like the traditional story of St Nicholas the forerunner of Santa Claus. St Nicholas was born in the third century A.D. in Greece where it was the custom for women to provide the dowry before marriage. One story was of a poor man with three pretty daughters who would be sold into slavery without money for a dowry. When St Nicholas heard about it, he threw gold coins over the wall of the man’s house for his daughters’ dowry payments. Just like that! Fr Nilles was a Santa Claus for the Chimbu!

The people trusted and followed Fr Nilles and he was accepted as one of their own, a Chimbu and not a white man. The people named him Kawagl after the first Kawagl who brought the Catholic mission to Chimbu from Bundi. He wanted to be buried among the Simbu people where his soul would be forever and his grave would be looked after by them. However, in the end he returned to Germany in 1989, after he was diagnosed with a bone disease. He died in 1993 and was buried in Germany.

## Chapter 3. Early Days in Mt Hagen

### Mission in the Mt Hagen area.

By the time Fr Ross and the other missionaries arrived on 28 March 1934, the Hagen people had seen the Leahy brothers, Mick and Danny and Jim Taylor. They knew what white men looked like, but where had they come from and what lay beyond those mountains? “They had seen distant smoke down the valleys but had never ventured there. This was because they were surrounded by enemy tribes who would not let them pass” (Connolly, 1987:14).

Michael Leahy wrote about the Hagen range:

Mt. Hagen is one of a group of extinct volcanoes which centuries ago enriched the Highlands with thick layers of lava and covered the surrounding ranges above the lava level with thick layers of a soft, soapy deposit impregnated with black sand. Even today, the people recount a legend of dust coming from the sky which accumulated on the roofs of their grass houses and eventually caused them to collapse (1991: 94).

This ash has recently been identified as having come from Long Island (Arop) off the coast of Madang in an eruption occurring the 17th century (Blong, 1982). The ash had covered the countryside but eventually gave good nourishment for the gardens which were built up in squared patterns, apparent from the air. For thousands of years, these people had survived growing sufficient food for themselves but also enjoying celebrations like the *Moga* and the *Kur* ceremonies designed to appease the spirits. The Hagen people believed in an afterlife and in good and bad spirits. So where did these new white men fit into the equation? Surely they must be spirits even spirits of their own dead come back to life again.

Fr Aufenanger collected myths and legends on the north-east part of New Guinea. He was interested in the culture of the people in the Bismarck Mountains area, particularly their beliefs in the supernatural as well as traditional beliefs in the soul. He found the people prayed when they were planting crops or at the birth of a baby or when they were going hunting. The sun was like a god to them. They had a thanksgiving prayer to the sun. “Oh Sun! Come and see the vegetables that I have planted. Oh Sun! You came and looked at me, according to my request. I am pleased.” Again on the birth of a child: “Oh Sun! Our Father! You see this baby. Take care of it”. This is a common formula, which a magician addresses to the sun, as the Heavenly Father, to protect a small child (1962: 31).

In his early dealings with the people Fr Ross was anxious to understand their spiritual beliefs. He ended up calling the devil *kur wag* the name the people had for the leader of the bad spirits.

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After Fr Ross’s expedition reached Mt Hagen in March 1934, as described in the previous chapter, the five missionaries re-traced their steps. Frs Aufenanger and Schaefer continued

on to Bundi and Fr Ross, Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene returned to Mingende. Here Brother Eugene was soon building a station and everything began to take shape: "living quarters, kitchen, laundry, workers' quarters, tool shed and a small church." They had help from hundreds of local people who were paid with a few small shells. Pigs could be bought with the same shells or a knife or a green snail shell. Most of the buildings at Mingende were completed by the end of May 1934 (Ross, 1971: 322).

That was how matters stood but there were rumours that a party of Lutheran missionaries was heading to Mt Hagen. Fr Ross and the two others did not want to lose Mt Hagen particularly when the Leahy brothers had offered their station and the buildings near the airstrip at Wilya. They could visualise it falling into the hands of the opposition. Then, at the end of May, rumour became a reality when a group of Lutheran missionaries arrived at their doorstep. As mentioned earlier, their guides thought these two lots of white men would be happy to see each other but they were mistaken.

When the Lutherans headed off towards Mt Hagen, the Catholic missionaries were very concerned over their site beside the Mogei airstrip. Yet they remembered Bishop Wolf's advice not to have too much distance between stations. Fr Ross was in a dilemma. But Brother Tropper and Brother Eugene urged him to go despite the fact they had no permission from the Bishop.

In the end they decided to return to Mt Hagen. Fr Ross had the confidence of the natives in Mingende and many of the headmen wished to go to Mount Hagen to buy new wives and were happy to accompany the missionaries. So this was part of the reason for the visit. They packed in a hurry and left the Mingende mission. They passed the Lutheran party while they were resting at a river near Ogelbeng. Fr Tropper could no longer stand the suspense and took off and ran from Ogelbeng to the Leahy Brothers' Wilya camp and arrived quite out of breath. Dan Leahy was delighted to see him again but could not see what the rush was about - it was not as if there was a gold rush on. The Leahy Brothers learnt that Fr Tropper was anxious to claim ownership of the area near the Wilya airstrip as it was crucial to the Catholic Mission. [Interesting that Fr Nilles described Fr Tropper as a real red head with a fiery beard, which does not show up in the black and white photographs of the day. His fieriness may have been part of his temperament leading him to make impulsive actions like running towards Wilya Station].

It was just as well they did claim the Wilya site as it is recorded in the Lutheran Church history that this was the spot that had been chosen by the Lutherans. It was stated: "Bergmann and some evangelists proceeded to set up the station at Hagen. When this group reached the spot that had been picked out on the exploratory trip [from the air], they found it was now occupied by the Roman Catholic mission - it took till the end of November before they found another place considered suitable" (1986: 197). This was at Ogelbeng and the Lutheran mission began there on 21 November 1934.

An article describes the beginning of the Lutheran church in the Highlands:

In 1934, the Church of Christ started her work in the central Highlands of Papua New Guinea. On 21 November, in Ogelbeng, a small native village north of the township of Mount Hagen, land was chosen to be the Headquarters of the Church for mission work in the Highlands. From Ogelbeng station, the missionaries

enrolled men and women from nearby villages in order to teach and preach the Word of God and even preparing some to become evangelists to other parts of the Highlands region. The Gospel played its role, touching the hearts of these people, preparing them for the baptism in order to become the first Lutheran members in Mount Hagen. The first baptismal ceremony was held at Ogelbeng on 6 June 1938. A total of 125 adults and 40 children, a total of 165, were pioneers of the first baptism. Rev. Doring and Dr. Kuder were the main celebrants for the first baptism and Dr. Kuder also preached the sermon in the Melpa language. This was seen as the birth of Melpa Lutheran Church as these people were all from the Melpa speaking area. The Church extended its work to other parts of the province in the teaching and preaching of the Good News and a total of eight thousand people were baptized in subsequent years (*History of Lutheran Church in Mount Hagen*, on the web).

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In 2015, Archbishop Young wrote:

By Easter time 1934, Fr. Ross and Bro. Eugene had begun their mission among the Mokei, a Melpa-speaking people who live in the shadow of the towering Mount Hagen. A Melpa saying describes the people's first reaction to the partnership of the very tall Br Eugene and the very short Fr. Ross: "*Wu etemb e ken wu rulg eken kung wantpent*", which literally means "A short man and a tall man can't work together to carry a pig tied to a pole on their shoulders." This saying is often used to describe and even mock two people trying to do something that they cannot do together because of a physical or mental difference. It was strange for the Mokei people to see a very short and a very tall man working together to establish the first mission station at Wilya. However, the two missionaries dismissed this observation by the people and worked together very well (Interview by the author, 2016).

### **The Catholic Mission in Mt Hagen, May 1934**

Mick Leahy described how the Catholic missionaries, "came along to sort of plant the flag of the Catholics in this area before the Lutherans could get going". Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene were delighted to see them and were overjoyed when Mick told them the plane was coming back on Sunday as they might hear from the Bishop and also get their cargo in (Diary). Mick Leahy again asked them to take over Wilya and this time he offer was taken up. Fr Tropper agreed to return to Mingende and live there, while Brother Eugene and Fr Ross would remain at Wilya and open the first Catholic station in the present Western Highlands. Brother Eugene with 15 coastal boys and hundreds of local volunteers, began to build the main station at Wilya where Mick and Dan Leahy had built their Mogeи airstrip. House, church, kitchen, workers' quarters, fowl house, piggery were begun made out of native material – bamboo walls and kunai grass roofs.

Mick Leahy described the first church in Hagen:

Brother Eugene had built the first church, a *pitpit* and *kunai* structure lashed to round timber with strips of bark. Round logs laid on the earth floor were a bit

hard to kneel on so most of the congregation sat on them. Those in attendance were mostly locals consumed with curiosity about the church ritual. The church was packed right out to the open back awning (Leahy, 1991: 220).

To keep in touch with Fr Tropper, there was road contact every couple of weeks. The missionaries would meet in the middle of the Wahgi Valley and discuss experiences in long conversations so it wasn't a case of isolation.

Fr Ross and Fr Schaefer were both bold crusaders for the faith and determined to advance the Catholic mission area in the Highlands; however, they had some different opinions about the methods of establishing mission stations at that stage. The following excerpts from Fr Schaefer's diary throws some interesting light on the situation. Fr Schaefer did not want Fr Ross to begin a mission at Mt Hagen then. He thought the station should be closer to Bundi. It was all because of the distances between mission stations. In those days there were no horses to ride in the mountain stations. All had to be done on foot. If Fr Schaefer had his way, Fr Ross would have stayed in the Chimbu area and left the Mt Hagen area until later.

Fr Schaefer was also worried that the Lutheran mission would flood the area with their mission helpers if there not more Catholic missionaries in the Chimbu area. Patrol Officer, Jim Taylor, said as much in his report (Richter, 2016).

Fr Schaefer wrote in his diary:

Fr Ross gave the following reasons for his move to Mount Hagen:

1. The people in Hagen have a higher culture;
2. Their language is much easier to learn than that of the Chimbu;
3. The population is much denser than at any other place and the people have become used to white men;
4. Hagen is a better centre for the highlands and there are only sporadic fights.

This was Fr Ross's reasoning; here are my [Schaefer's] observations which I made regarding his proposed approach to the Hagen people:

1. If it is easier to learn the Hagen language, then Ross should have allowed the young Fr Tropper to stay there and should have taken it upon himself to learn the Chimbu language. Why did he send the new missionary to Chimbu without any introduction, and without an interpreter?
2. Used to white men? The people in Hagen got used to white men who were very different from missionaries. About those men they told horror stories! In those white men's camps, the workers were used to uncontrolled free living. Local men brought their daughters and even their wives in for the white men's pleasure. Used to white men? It is easier for us to start mission work among indigenous people who have had no contact with that kind of white man.

3. Mission centre? Hagen as a centre for the main station of the Highlands? This is unbelievable! Hagen is in the west at the end of a large district, the Wahgi Valley. [Comment: He was wrong in his estimation of Mt Hagen which is now a very large Mission centre]

4. Fr Ross was willing to deliver provisions for Fr Tropper every six weeks at the Jimbunar Bridge. From there Tropper's carriers would take them to the camp. Ross also promised to visit Koruguru sometimes. I was really shocked by Tropper's report. I thought to myself: "This is a rather dangerous situation and, above all, it's against the Bishop's arrangement".

I tried to persuade Fr Tropper to come back with us to Guyebi. Tropper did not want to go with us and went instead to Koruguru. We three went home to Bundi very disappointed. We arrived at Bundi on 29 June 1934. I gave Fr Ross my exact opinion of the situation in a very clear letter (1991: 70- 71).

Fr Schaefer also wrote to Bishop Wolf with all these arguments. He really did not think Fr Ross should be in Mt Hagen. However, on 7 July 1934, Fr Schaefer received a letter from Bishop Wolf with the following message: "In God's name, leave Fr Ross in Mount Hagen; let him work in that area. Brother Anton should go soon to Koruguru (Mingende)." The Bishop was obviously tired of Fr Schaefer's meddling (1991: 71).

When things got tough and he had to make big decisions, Bishop Wolf often invoked God and brought Him into the equation. How could Fr Schaefer argue against Him? And so it was that Fr Ross was left in Mt Hagen and allowed to begin the great mission that it is today.



*Br Eugene buying building materials at Wilya (M. Leahy).*



*Workers at the Wilya mission (M. Leahy).*

It shows that not only were the missionaries contending with people of other faiths and with the government officials but also with each other and their different personalities and goals. Over the next months, the distance between the Hagen Station and where Fr Tropper was at Korugu weighed heavily on Fr Ross and he would continue to meet him. The people of Mt Hagen had never been outside their own area. They had never seen the sea and probably a lot of them had never travelled more than an hour's walk from their own villages. They knew nothing about the mission.

The first station in Mt Hagen opened after official permission was given by Bishop Wolf who officially sanctioned two districts, Chimbu and Mt Hagen. The bishop added that it was the right time to commence missionary activity in Mt Hagen, and this should go ahead in parallel with that in Chimbu. At this time, five missionaries worked in Chimbu, and only two in Mt Hagen, Fr Ross and Br Eugene Frank, at the foot of the Mt Hagen range, where they set up the foundations for the future church of this area.

Fr Ross wrote:

On 15 June 1934, a letter arrived from Alexishafen in which Bishop Wolf authorised Fr Ross and Bro Eugene to reside at Mt Hagen and be responsible for the establishment and development of the Catholic Mission in the Mt Hagen area. The Catholic Mission then opened its first official residence in the Western Highlands. Brother Eugene was a tireless worker. From June to September 1934, the Catholic Mission had built up the main residence at Wilya and also nine

outstations in every direction – to the west 12 miles; south 15 miles, east 24 miles and north 20 miles.

The nine outstations were as follows: to the west was the station of Mundika; to the south were Ulga and Anggil; east it was Kuli and to the north were Kelua, Remdi, Kumdi, Mandila and Ruqi.

The station at Anggil was completed in one day of 13 working hours. It would seem almost unbelievable. Some 2000 natives, men women and children, like an ant-colony, kept busy bringing in kunai grass, ropes from the bark of trees, wild sugar-cane for walls, and saplings. For each bundle brought in, a few small cowry shells were considered adequate payment by the Ulga. From 6am until 7pm, residence and kitchen, house for workers and workers' kitchen and a number of latrines; for this one day eleven houses were completed and ready for use.

At Wilya we planted gardens. The soil was poor, light and volcanic and was crying for fertilizer. But the staple crop, sweet potatoes, flourished. We bought pigs with mother-of-pearl shells and with bailer shells. A large bailer shell, costing in those days about 25 cents would buy a 200 lb pig. Meantime, we were busy dressing wounds, cuts and sores and giving aspirin for fever. We visited the hamlet areas to get acquainted with the locals and estimate the population. Daily, we purchased the food brought in and everyone had more than enough for his own use.

We had a working team of twenty Mount Hagen men beside the 15 coastal boys, and while they needed a lot of food, it was cheap. A ton of sweet potatoes cost no more than about 25 cents. We had a small church at Wilya where every Sunday, Mass was celebrated but very few attended services, not knowing what it was all about. Finally the turning point came.

We contacted the local people to explain the work of the mission and this was quite a problem. So for the first six months, all we did was to help the people medically, bandage their sores, take care of their sick babies and help them generally while the station was being built. It was then that headman Ninji came and asked what the tribesmen could do in return for all their help. Fr Ross answered that he would like to set up a school with fifty boys and Brother Eugene was keen to build the school - the first school in the western Highlands (Ross, 1971).

Fr Noss said:

Fr Ross took coastal workers along with him when he went into the Highlands, but they could only go under contract. Although he allowed marriages between these workers and the Hagen women, there was no hope that these women would be able to leave the Highlands and live on the coast with their husbands or vice versa. Because every three or four years the workers had to return down the coast to renew their contracts, it was not possible for them to remain indefinitely. This would have been a big strain on the finances of the mission if they had to continue doing this all their lives until old age (Interview by the author, 1974).

[When the author visited Hagen in December 2015, many of the descendants of these families had married locally and still lived in Rebiamul in the area Fr Ross had set aside for them].

Fr Kruczak CSMM wrote about this time:

Fr Ross and Br Eugene, both from USA, understood their daily tasks very well, and supported each other in their religious-missionary vocation. Therefore, in response to the circumstances, they found themselves in three ministries – of the Word, of grace, and of charity – that were successfully exercised, and this was the form of the first evangelisation.

In the programme of Fr Ross and Br Frank, it is easy to recognise two characteristic elements: spiritual and material. Although the spiritual dimension was not neglected, more visible were the material aspects of their missionary work. These were: erecting the main mission centre at Wilya, with the church building in the middle; establishing other mission stations and their outstations; Samaritan assistance; organising the school; and concern for the daily needs and existence, both for themselves and their co-workers as well.

This style of the primary evangelisation that took place at the main stations, which was a way of coexistence with the locals, allowed the strange newcomers to form stronger relationships with them, be more secure and established. The second advantage was that the missionaries had more time to organise a proper programme for schools, which they had to establish, in order to teach children and first catechumens, the very basic parts of the Christian faith, catechism, prayers, singing hymns, and reading the Bible. Fr Ross spent a lot of time translating the necessary texts into the Melpa language. At the same time (1935-1938), he deepened his knowledge of this language, studied the local culture, and learnt



*Cricket team at Mt Hagen 1934. Back, from left: Fr Ross, Mr Fox, Br Eugene, Dan Leahy, Mr Fox (twin). Sitting at front: Rempi men who came to Mt Hagen with Fr Ross (A J Bearup, National Library).*

something more about the traditional religion of the people from the Melpa area (Kruczak, 2007: 46 -47).

One day when Mick and Danny Leahy were about to go off on a plane trip, Brother Eugene walked up the range (from Wilya to Kuta) in the evening to loan his most treasured possession – a true relic of St. Therese – a sure protection from violent death.

On 6 June 1934, the two Leahy brothers noticed that the native-material mission house built by Brother Eugene was nearly finished with a grass thatched roof. Fr Ross was sick that day with a low fever. Mick concluded, “If any men deserve a reward in the next world it sure is these blokes. We took the small gramophone down together with a few records and Fr Tropper just sat down right alongside it and played the lot. I hope he does not get jazzy after hearing all the records which are of that ilk.”

On Saturday 9 June 1934, Mick mentioned that Fr Tropper baked a loaf of yeast bread under the guidance of Porte their cook boy who was a champion bread maker. This was because he was shortly going to be on his own at the Korugaru station [near Mingende] and he will be batching there and roughing it in a camp. “He camped with us – the bread being too slow on the rise for him to get away before dark and he had a nice evening here. He is terribly interested in anything which will assist him to make his work in their country a success. He loves music and is enchanted with the view of mountains and green valley to be obtained from our camp here”.

Fr Tropper at this stage was worried about the behaviour of some of the mission boys who would be going with him to Mingende where he would be on his own. They might even attack him to get the shells he used to buy food and other things. Most of this line was from Aitape and Madang. Mick Leahy witnessed a worker hit Brother Eugene and lift up a big stick to hammer him so Mick dealt with him and some of the other bigheads.

On Sunday 10 June 1934, the Leahy brothers went down to Mass at Wilya which was said under a tent fly. Four forked sticks with a top of rushes formed the altar. Mass was said by Fr Tropper and the congregation was all the Catholic boys, Brother Eugene, Fr Ross, Dan and Mick. Later on that morning a plane arrived with pilot Ross and Mr Mustar on board.

A month later, Brother Eugene had finished the buildings at Wilya and was making a station at Kelua. He walked up to the Kuta gold mine and talked about progress. The local people were welcoming and happy about the building. However, they were still “very hard to deal with and want the same prices for native foods and pigs as when we were over there, but they will have to knuckle down and accept the new prices.” At this stage Fr Ross has gone down to Korugaru to see Fr Tropper and stay with him for a week or so. When he returned he also visited Kuta and stayed the night with the brothers but next day went over to Kelua to be with Brother Eugene.

Mick Leahy:

29 July 1934: Fr Ross and Brother Eugene came back to the drome yesterday and sent us a note to say Mass would be celebrated at 9 am so we got up early went down but arrived just as it was finishing. I am sure poor Fr Ross was scandalised at our apparent laxity but I apologised and assured him it would not happen

again. Brother Eugene is his same old self, full of business and enthusiasm. He has almost completed the Kelua station and is in a panic for fear the Bishop will recall them to Korugaru. He says the people here have a much higher culture than the mob at Korugaru and the outlook for the old drome is wonderful. Fr Ross is going to go for a week's walk around the foot of Hagen and down into the Nebilyer to get an idea of the population so as to be in a position to give the Bishop any particulars about the locality he may want (Diary).

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Brother Eugene spent the week-end with the Leahy brothers. He was very excited over a letter from Bishop Wolf, appointing Fr Ross and himself to the Mt Hagen District.

Brother Eugene was enthusiastic and hopeful for the future success of the mission and was happy for the opportunity to spend the rest of his life among the people. He had no thought of any comfort or remuneration other than the privilege of serving God and the Catholic Church and saving his own soul.

When a person sees educated men who could easily earn a very satisfactory income in almost any country and live on the best willingly giving up everything to give isolated and humble lives out here it makes one realise how paltry and cheap the unstable joys of life are (Mick Leahy, Diary).

Mick Leahy thought people must be born with such an outlook and he knew that he would not last long as a missionary and he was amazed at how excited Brother Eugene was to be appointed to the newly established Mt Hagen district. "One would have thought he had won the lottery." At this stage, Fr Ross had gone down to Korugaru to see Fr Tropper and tell him the good news.

### **Brother Eugene Frank SVD**

Bro. Eugene was born in Mount Carmel, Illinois, on December 21, 1900. He joined the SVD Order at Techny in 1921 where he worked at the bakery in the seminary. He also served at the Sacred Heart Mission House, Gerard, Pa. He professed first vows as a Divine Word Missionary on 1 November 1924, before coming to New Guinea.

Fr. Ross wrote highly of his assistant mentioning his good health; his work ethic; his building skills and his ability to put up with any hardship:

Brother Eugene made an excellent helper to the lone American priest who lives with him. He was instrumental in the establishment of the first few stations in Mount Hagen. Here he devoted his life to the people of New Guinea and dwelt in isolation with no white neighbours. Brother Eugene was six feet of bone and muscle and had the distinction of being the first New Guinea Brother of the Society of the Divine Word to start work beyond the distant Bismarck Mountains. There were no governments posts to make it safer and no white neighbours to call on in an emergency. He lives among a stone-age people earning their respect and affection (1935).

Sadly, at the end of December 1934, Brother Eugene was looking around the Wilya Station for the last time. He was about to make a fatal journey on his way to Denglagu.

Mick Leahy:

Brother Eugene came up in the evening to borrow a rifle for his yearly trek to mission headquarters on the coast at Alexishafen [he was in fact only going as far as the Chimbu Mission] --- I gave him a .22 calibre Walther and bullets to shoot pigeons on his way out. He refused a heavier rifle in case of attack. He was sure he would have no trouble with the natives and refused to take it (Diary, December 1934).

News of Fr Morschheuser's death had not reached Mt Hagen before Brother Eugene set off for Bundi on 2 January 1935 to be with Fr Aufenanger and make his retreat. Before he left, he asked Fr Ross to let him build the first school in the Mt Hagen area when he returned. The school site at Wilya had already been cleared and native material for its construction was piled up ready. Fr Ross was supposed to go too but he didn't want to meet up with Fr Schaefer after the arguments they had had. However, Brother Eugene was determined to go. Sadly, Fr Ross never saw Brother Eugene again as he left with his carriers.

Fr Ross described what happened:

It took Brother Eugene and carriers six days to reach Mingende and it was here that they learned that Fr Morschheuser had been killed and that Fr Schaefer was on his way to Alexishafen to report to Bishop Wolf on the tragedy.

Friendly natives warned the Brother not to go through the Chimbu River area, as the clans were at war. It would be dangerous entering any area where war was raging but the Brother thought he might get through safely to Bundi. He started up the Chimbu Gorge; at Goglme, the warring natives armed on the heights overlooking the Chimbu River, swarmed down on the party, surrounded them and began pulling the rucksacks and packs from the carriers; the boys all fled in panic. Savu, who was from Rempi, asked Brother to give him the gun but Brother refused. He said "I didn't come to New Guinea to kill natives" (Ross, 1971: 324).

Around 7 January, they were surrounded by armed men from the Anganere tribe, whose descendants still reside in the Goglme parish of the Kundiawa Diocese, and who attacked Brother Eugene and his carriers. The mission party found a cave and were all hiding in it. One of the carriers then said, "It is dangerous, If they light a big fire at the entrance, we will all suffocate, so they ran out of the cave and down towards the Chimbu." Brother Eugene got hit the first time. Getting to the river, they all wanted to cross. but Brother was hesitating to jump into the water and there he was hit twice again. When they saw Brother falling down, the boys jumped into the river and on to the other side where they were attacked. Savu ran to the river and was wounded but was able to run away. Arrows were flying from all sides. The Brother was struck eight times with bone-tipped arrows, some of them puncturing his lungs. Weak and exhausted he was helped by a friendly group of natives of the Barengigl people who carried him up the mountainside to a small hut, 8,000 feet above sea level inside of which a fire was burning. Two faithful native boys stayed with the Brother and helped him all they could. His only food was green bananas. His wounds were treated with traditional medicine.

On the morning of 15 January 1935, yodelling was heard. “*Yalomba, Yalomba*” (a white man is coming). Pati, the cook, who had remained with Brother Eugene told him a party of police led by a European officer was walking along the trail. “Fire in the air with the shot gun to attract their attention,” Brother Eugene told the boy. As soon as the officer heard the shot, he sent a police constable up to investigate. Pati told him about the Brother lying in the hut. Soon the entire police party was in the hut. The officer was Robert Melrose, DO from Salamaua. He had his cook make some hot coffee, built a stretcher and within an hour they were at the Kundiawa airstrip. There a single-engine Junker was parked. This plane had brought the DO’s party to Kundiawa to investigate the murder of Fr Karl Morschheuser. Mr. Melrose flew Brother Eugene in the Junker to the Salamaua hospital where he lived for another week while his lungs rotted away. He was only 32 when he died on 23 January 1935 (Ross, 1971: 323-324).

Since no priests were in Salamaua, Mr. Melrose performed the funeral service and Br Eugene was buried there. Later his remains were transferred to Alexishafen.

Sometime before, when the Leahys heard the news that Bro Eugene had been attacked and probably killed, they went looking for him. On 12 January 1935, they were within a few hours from where Bro. Eugene was eventually found when they received orders from the Australian Administration to turn back.

Later, on 26 January, they heard that Br Eugene had been found alive but badly wounded, four days after they had turned back. Mick Leahy wrote: “The news (that Eugene had been found alive) shocked Dan and me, as we had been so near to him.” Mention was also made by Fr Nilles that Rev Bergmann and wife Marie Luise, a nurse, kindly attended to Brother Eugene at the Kundiawa airstrip before he was flown out.

The year 2010 marked seventy-five years since the death of Brother Eugene Frank and his anniversary was appropriately remembered. The Archdiocese designated it as a time to reflect on Christian servant leadership as Brother Eugene is remembered as “as a model of servant leadership and a guardian of all the church leaders.” He is also credited with beginning the Mt Hagen mission alongside Fr William Ross. A new elementary school at Anganere in the Kundiawa Diocese was named after Br. Eugene. (This was the site where Brother Eugene received his ultimately fatal spear wounds.) On 27 January 2010, Archbishop Young, visited the village of the Anganere tribe and had a reconciliation service with the people. Previous to his visit, a monument had been constructed to remember Brother Eugene and it was suggested that Anganere could become a site for a regular pilgrimage so that “young people would always be reminded of the great sacrifice made by missionaries to bring the gospel to the Highlands of Papua New Guinea”.

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After Fr Karl Morschheuser was killed in December 1934, and Br Eugene Frank in January 1935, the Administration sent in patrols led by ADOs Alan Roberts and Jim Taylor accompanied by Patrol Officers John Black, George Greathead and others. Danny Leahy was sworn in as a special constable and accompanied the patrols. In the end, the

area was subdued and Taylor walked some seventy odd prisoners out to Salamaua. Alan Roberts remained and established a station at Kundiawa, adjoining the Lutheran airstrip at Ega. (Geoff Burfoot on web)

Newspapers in Australia were questioning the security of missionaries in New Guinea and, as a result, the Administration in Rabaul brought in many restrictions. Fr Ross listed these: no new missionaries would be given permits to enter the Highlands; missionaries already in residence would not be permitted to leave their main stations. This applied to all Europeans and remained in force until January 1936.

Modifications were made in 1936: 1. No new missionaries would be given a permit to the Highlands before four years of experience on the coast; 2 No missionary would be given a permit to enter uncontrolled area unless his party had four rifles and members of the party were familiar with the rifles; 3. Restricted station residence was modified to extend to a radius of 5 miles and the native clans that could be visited were marked on the permit of the individual missionaries (Ross, 1971: 323-324).

### **Aircraft for the Highland missions**

Once the Leahy Brothers, Mick and Danny, showed the importance of planes and making airstrips for them, it became obvious that this was the way forward for the missionaries. Fr Schaefer found the trek by foot from the coast to the inland very arduous and hazardous. He argued that aircraft would reduce the time spent trudging from Alexishafen up to the mountains to a few hours flight even as far as Mt Hagen. It would also help reduce the distance between mission stations and help visiting priests relieve the loneliness of isolated missionaries. The Bishop weighed up the costs of such a project including the building and maintaince of airstrips and the time needed for priest/pilots to be trained.



*The Paulus with, from left: Br Gerhoch, Willy Schaffhausen, Br Anton Baas, and Br David Brunner.*

In spite of some opposition, the Bishop wrote to MIVA, “an organisation that supports Catholic mission stations in various countries with means of transport including motor cycles, cars and airplanes. The vehicles were supplied gratis.” --- “The Bishop was still mulling over this answer in 1934, when one day two huge boxes came in by ship to Alexishafen together with a young pilot, a layman by the name of Willy Schaffhausen. These boxes had been dispatched by the Klemm factory on the order of MIVA and contained parts of one small airplane” (Nilles, 1989: 48). The Bishop had had his mind made up for him.

The first Catholic mission plane was an open two-seater, named the *Paulus* and was one of the German designed Klemm Swallows. Based at Alexishafen, it reduced the travel time to Mt Hagen to 80 minutes. It had two cockpits. The front one was for the passenger and the rear for the pilot. There was a windscreen in front of each cockpit and both passenger and pilot sat in the open being protected only by the windscreen from the wind and the rain. The engine was in front of the passenger and there was a little cargo hold at the back.

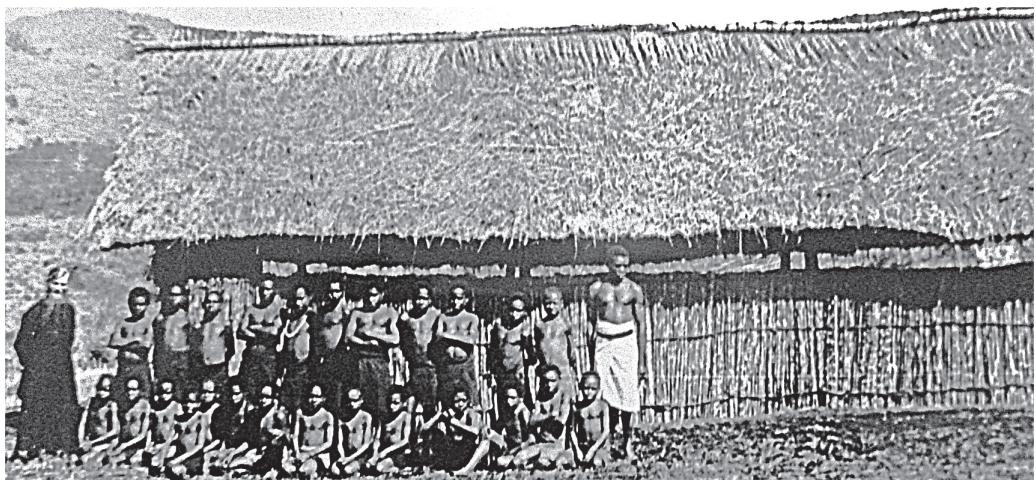
Fr Ross recalled that on the flight from Hagen to the coast: “When the pilot saw something interesting down below he’d reach over and tap you on the shoulder and point it out. Then you would peer over the side and see a new building or perhaps a group of people.” Fr Ross remembered his walk into Mt Hagen in March 1934. The trek took forty days as they had to cross the Bismarck Range over some of the roughest terrain in New Guinea. The little *Paulus* reduced this to less than two hours flying from Alexishafen. On the route in from Alexishafen “the highest pass was 9,000 feet. The *Paulus* could go up to 16,000 feet so we had no difficulty over the passes.” Of course, Mt Wilhelm was 15,000 feet but the pilot would skirt around the mountains and fly up the valleys and over the passes. Unfortunately, unpredictable weather conditions made flying in New Guinea extremely hazardous. If cloud came down it could reduce visibility to nil (Ross, 1971: 324).

Fr Ross remembered flying through more than one thunderstorm and was amazed that the little plane came through safely. He must have been praying hard. Another thing he could remember was it could glide for miles because it had long wings and a short body. Sometimes in the Ramu Valley it was difficult to get the plane down as it kept lifting all the time.

Mission stations could be contacted by the planes so it was a blessing the Catholic mission by this time had the use of small planes and airstrips had been laid. Now that planes were introduced the distance between mission stations did not matter so much. Later roads were developed and the first cars appeared in the highlands.

### **Fr Ross at Wilya**

After Brother Eugene died, Fr Ross was left by himself for nine months in Mt Hagen without any other Missionaries to help him. Before this happened, the pilot on board the *Paulus* had flown supplies into Hagen and told Fr Ross, “See you in two weeks”. Then, unbeknown to him, the *Paulus*, the only mission plane, later crashed near Alexishafen. Fr Ross waited and waited and wondered what had happened. He waited for nine months.



*The first school/church at Wilya, 1935 (M. Leahy).*

There was no way of letting him know it had crashed on a reef near Madang. The pilot was unhurt but the plane was damaged and took a long time to be repaired. Mick Leahy's planes arrived from Salamaua on the other side of the country.

During this time, Fr Ross continued with his work at the Wilya Station. The first school in the whole of the Mt Hagen area was opened in March 1935. Fr Ross was helped by his offsider, Peter Karagu, who could read and write and had been a teacher at Alexishafen. Fr Ross chose fifty of the bright local boys recommended by Chief Ninji. The boys were taught reading, writing, a bit of Geography, Social Science, Agriculture, reading the Bible, hymns and prayers. School was going quite well in 1935. The boys persevered although there were a few dropouts. By the end of 1938, after four years of daily instructions, these boys were considered ready to embrace Christianity. On Christmas Eve, the first group who had persevered (28 out of the original 50 boys) were baptised and that was the beginning of the Catholic Mission in Mt Hagen (Ross, 1971: 325).

The restrictions imposed by the administration were of some benefit as the missionaries could concentrate on building up a knowledge of the culture and learn the local language and could translate hymns etc so the people could participate better in

*Hagen couple in 1972 (Author).*



the religious celebrations. A prayer book and hymnal and a bible history were composed and introduced into the boarding school.

While Fr Ross lived alone at Wilya, he began to learn something of the Hagen people. He listed the various tribes around the area: Mogeи, Jika, Kenjiger, Yamkar, Menembe, Nenga, Munjiger, Kumdi, Kimmi, Uga, Runga, Kuga, Kauger, Kulyi, Rogaka, and Kope, comprising a total of about 18,000 people living in 500 or 600 settlements. These settlements were small family groups living up to a hundred metres from each other, near their gardens. Each settlement might have up to 40 houses in them.

Joe Palimi is a member of the Kope Tribe in the above list. He has studied in Australia and the UK and, in 2005, co-authored an article entitled *Information Behaviour in Pre-literate Societies*. In particular, he wrote on his Kope people who number about five thousand Melpa-speakers. This clan is located along the Kuta range behind the Mogeи area. It was on his traditional land that the Leahy Brothers did their prospecting and alluvial mining. The Kope and the Mogeи are traditional friends and Joe's mother is a Mogeи.

Joe Palimi:

Traditionally, the Kobe were hunter-gatherers and subsistence farmers, with a technology based on tools made from materials derived from plants, animals and stones. The Kope tribe is divided into clans which comprise a number of settlements based on extended families. Polygamy was traditionally a common practice, so extended families can be very large. Family settlements may be several hundred metres apart (Palimi, 2005).

Palimi also described a special meeting house in the middle of each Kobe settlement which was also the clan leader's house. Called the *manga rapa* or round house, it was the centre of community life where important meetings were held and decisions made. Although women were generally excluded from these meetings, there were times when their opinions were sought (Palimi, 2005).

If any decisions required expenses, they had to be cleared with the women of the tribe, who were custodians of the men's wealth which usually took the form of pigs. The *manga rapa* was built at the end of a rectangular field, *moka pena*, the size of a football pitch. This was used for open air meetings, dances, trading etc. Leadership amongst the Kope has never been hereditary: leaders were chosen on merit. The main role of the tribal leader was to represent his tribe in inter-tribal negotiations. In consequence, the most important skill for a chief was oratory. He would need to be well versed in local history and politics, but not only was his knowledge important, so too was the skill with which he presented it (Palimi, 2005).

In their traditional life there had been little room for specialisation as the numbers of active people was too small. All the women had to contribute to gardening, looking after the pigs and child rearing. The men did the heavier work of tilling the ground, making their weapons and fighting to protect the tribe when necessary.

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*Wamp Wan behind his shield in 1972 (Author)*

Fr Ross described the men's clothing particularly the wide belt "through which is drawn in a double fold, a net protection in front, and a bunch of croton-like leaves behind. These leaves are put into the belt, stems upward. The belt is tight and hence the leaves are held firmly in place. The leafy back covering, *kaia*, is usually changed every two days. Belts are of bark, cord or fibre". On the other hand, the women in traditional times wore a *kan kral* flattened fibre on both sides of the ordinary *gil* making it some 5 or 6 inches wide. One feature of the Mt Hagen area natives distinguishing them from the rest of the Wahgi valley is "the wearing of head coverings by the men. The usual hat, *woinia*, is made from the rope called *kan ku*." In times of war, the men carried their large shields made of a wood called *rebia*. The large shield is 137cm high, 65cm wide and about 2cm thick. The top is bordered with plaited cane. "The wood is scraped, put over the fire, flattened out by pressing it on the ground on hands and knees, decorated with various designs, and rope grips fastened to inner side at top and centre" The battle axe "has a beautifully shaped and sharpened flint, *rui*, and is about 12.5 centimetres wide at its sharpened edge, tapering to 6 centimetres at the shaft, and being about 10 inches long" (Ross, 1936).

Fr Ross was particularly interested in the religion of the people:

Their religion was animism and they took the worship of these spirits very seriously. Spirits were supposed to have taken up residence in stones near the river and the power of the ghosts resided in them. These spirits could be of their dead ancestors or just spirits. Each morning the men go down to the riverbank looking for these stones which they collect and bring them back to their hamlets. When enough stones have been gathered there is a great *kur* celebration.

The *Kur* begins with the wives and daughters of the men walking slowly between two rows of spectators. They wear pearl shells belonging to their husbands or fathers to show how wealthy they are. In the dance that follows, only men can take part and it is held behind a stockade. Their shuffling feet are supposed to imitate the invisible ghosts. The men worship the spirits in this dance and are rewarded. The great *Kur* dance is held every five years. Thousands of visitors come to see it. The men stay in long communal houses and say solemn prayers to the ghosts, and many pigs are offered to the spirits. Cooked pork is carried to rickety platforms and divided up for people standing underneath the platform. The ghosts are satisfied with the souls of the pigs and the people can eat the



*Man showing the sacred stones for the Kur ceremony* (M. Leahy).

sacrificial pork happily. The people say, “Now we are blessed and we shall have many children, our pigs will grow and the ghosts will be happy” (Fr Ross interview in the U.S. 1956).

*Kur* is their name for a spirit so the *kur* ceremony is to appease the spirits by the offerings of pigs. Among other spirits is *kur wag*, the water ghost, a bad spirit of a former man. Fr Ross gave his name to the devil in his religious classes when teaching the first group of boys in the Wilya School (Ross, 1936). During this time, he was able to witness a *Kur* festival at first hand.

### **Wamp Wan at a *Kur* Feast in the 1930s**

Fr Ross:

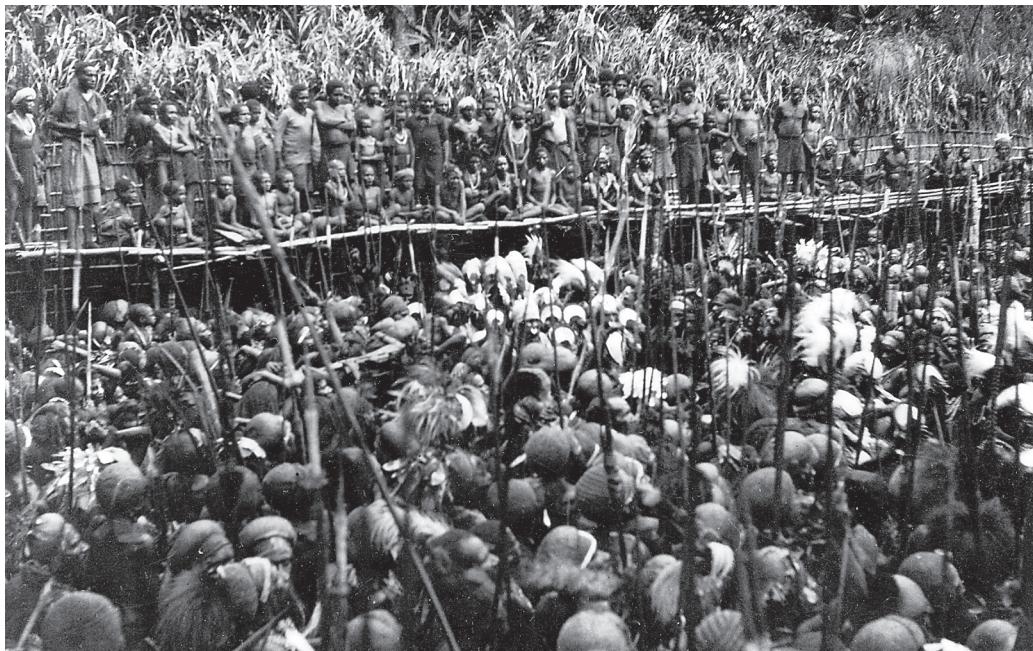
Wamp Wan, young headman of the Moge Nampagas was there with Tetsip, Ninji, Wundakai and Korubu. The picnic park was long and narrow, with a bamboo stockade at one end. Behind this stockade the dancers were being decorated for the grand entrance. Wamp acted as my escort. We passed down the long line bordered on both sides with shrubs and flowers while in the center large casuarina trees were growing out of mounds six feet high. The lawn was dotted flowers and small flowering shrubs, a restful sight for the eyes after hours of walking through high grassland to get there.

The roads leading to the park were swarming with brightly coloured natives, some wearing ropes of cowry shells, others wearing the large baler shells, while nearly all the big men had cassowary-plume headdress surmounted by one or two flaming red bird-of-paradise plumes or the more familiar yellow variety. A few blue bird-of-paradise plumes, smaller and more finely veined. One or two of the old men in the grounds were smoking short bamboo pipes with a wad of tobacco in one end. The natives here are non-smokers, and these old lads were exceptions to the rule. There were about 3,000 natives crammed into this grove, milling around looking for their friends and relatives (Mennis, 2015: 192).

There was a series of dances with people shouting and milling around. After the dance, the speech-making began. The people were famous for their orators with speech after speech. Hundreds of pigs had already been slaughtered and their souls had already been offered to the spirits, and then followed the distribution of the pork. Men stood on a platform in front of the bamboo stockade and placed pieces pork onto the ends of the upraised spears of their friends below (Mennis, 2015:194, 195).

Fr Ross knew the Melpa language and said the gist of these speeches was to, “Let all Moge tribesmen unite in one great effort to show its wealth and power. The feast today is to invoke the help of the spirits. The rest is up to you men of Moge.” In a later tribal feast, the Moge roasted 700 pigs and the name and fame of the tribe had gone to the uttermost parts of the earth.

During those nine lonely months between 1935 to 1936, Fr Ross had ample time to learn the language and customs of the Mt Hagen people.



*Men receive pork at the Kur ceremony (D. Leahy).*

The newly purchased Klemm Eagle aircraft, the *Petrus*, eventually flew into Hagen mission in 1936 and the lonely time was over. Fr Ross had been reduced to eating just *kaukau* and pork. The only other Europeans there, apart from the Lutherans at Ogelbeng, were the Leahy brothers up at Kuta. Later on the wrecked *Paulus* was repaired and once again began regular flights into remote mission stations.

At the sound of the engine, the people called out, “*Paulus i kam, Paulus i kam*” but it sounded like *balus i kam* and the people would gather at the airstrip and wait for the plane to arrive. Some argue that that is how *balus* became the *Tok Pisin* name for all planes in New Guinea but Fr Mihalic says it comes from a Tolai word *balu* meaning a bird. Perhaps it was a little bit of each.

In 1936 and 1937, Fr Meiser came in from Denglagu for a few weeks now and then so Fr Ross was not quite so lonely. In about 1938, Fr Fuchs was appointed to Hagen to support Fr Ross who had been living in a native material house made of kunai and pitpit. The school itself was also a large native material building. Fr Fuchs was there when there was a big fight between the Moge Kominigas [also known as Komungas] and the Nampagas. Fr Ross’s workers joined in this fight because they were living amongst them and had married into the Nampagas. His workers were in the party that found Mak, the big leader of the Kominiga tribe. They tied him up and mistreated him while he was lying on the ground. They hit him with the butts of their rifles. Then Fr Ross arrived and stopped them. Mak was unconscious. Fr Fuchs and Fr Ross carried him back to the Wilya station and looked after him for several weeks until he was better. Then they sent him home. The Kominigas then sent word that Fr Ross was not welcome in their area. They said he was responsible because of the actions of his workers. When Fr Fuchs went up to give a peace offering to the Kominigas he took Savu along because he was one of

the boys who was not involved. They were given permission to go to that area, but not Fr Ross. Later on Mak died and there was a big *singsing* for him (Fr Noss, interview 1973 ).

### **Establishment of the Rebiamul Mission**

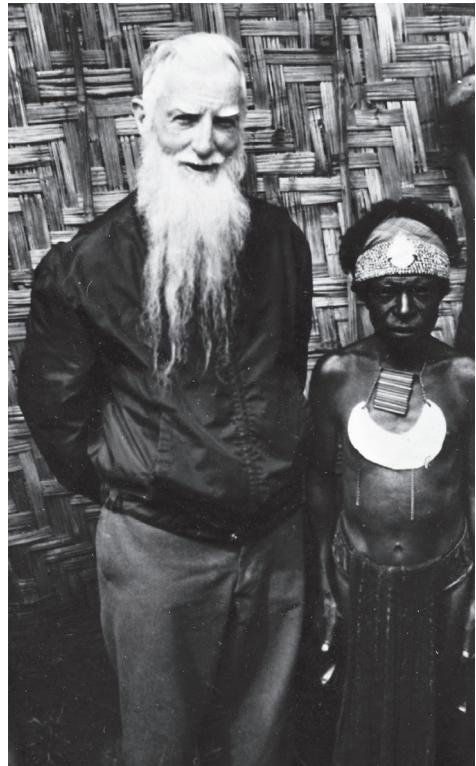
Fr Ross wanted to find a better site for the mission than Wilya. He found a place about a mile away at Rebiamul and, it was while Fr Fuchs was with Fr Ross, that the Hagen mission was shifted from Wilya to Rebiamul. Brother Bonaventure, a builder, arrived to take over the project. Fr Fuchs took over the pit-saw with a team of 24 boys working 6 pit-saws, while Brother Bonaventure had 24 workmen planing, edging, and tongue and grooving the planks.

Fr Ross told how he purchased the land:

We paid the owners of the land, [at Rebiamul]. By their standard of values they were very well paid in axes, spades, knives, cloth and shells so that to this day there have never been any complaints or repercussions. The transfer from Wilya to Rebiamul was carried out in slow stages throughout the year 1938. At Rebiamul, two timber residences were completed, a kitchen and a dining room, three timber school houses and finally, towards the end of the year, the large timber church. This church was still standing in 1966 when, with much hard labour, it was torn down and the timber used to build three small outstation churches. After thirty years, it was as solid as the day the church was built (Ross, 1971: 326).

The new church was duly opened on Christmas Day 1938. Brother Bonaventure also built the new administration office for the government officials when the patrol post was opened there in January 1938. Murray Edwards was the first government official and he was soon replaced by George Greathead.

In 1939, when the Bishop had his jubilee, he was very anxious for all the missionaries to come in from the outstations, so he sent the *Stella Maris* out right up to Aitape and brought back as many missionaries as possible to Alexishafen. Fr Schaefer brought a lot of villagers down from the mountains and, as they walked down the tracks, they were very afraid as they had never left their mountains or seen the sea. Thousands of locals were there. The cathedral was full with 4,000 people. Fr Ross came down by plane but he missed the celebrations as he had to board a ship taking him home to America on leave.



*Fr Ross and Hagen parishoner.*

The people from Madang were all invited. The radio officer had no transport and couldn't come so Bishop Wolf sent the plane into Madang so he could be here for the festival. The radio officer was very grateful when he arrived. He had tears in his eyes and said, "I never expected to get such a friendly invitation as I did from you."

### **Fr Noss SVD**

Fr James Noss was born in 1906 in Saarland, Germany. He entered the St Wendel's Mission House in 1921 and nine years later joined the St Augustine's major seminary and was ordained in 1936 (Mihalic: 1999: 46). The following year he was sent to New Guinea. After two years at Mugil on the coast he went to Mt Hagen to take Fr Ross's place when he was going on leave.

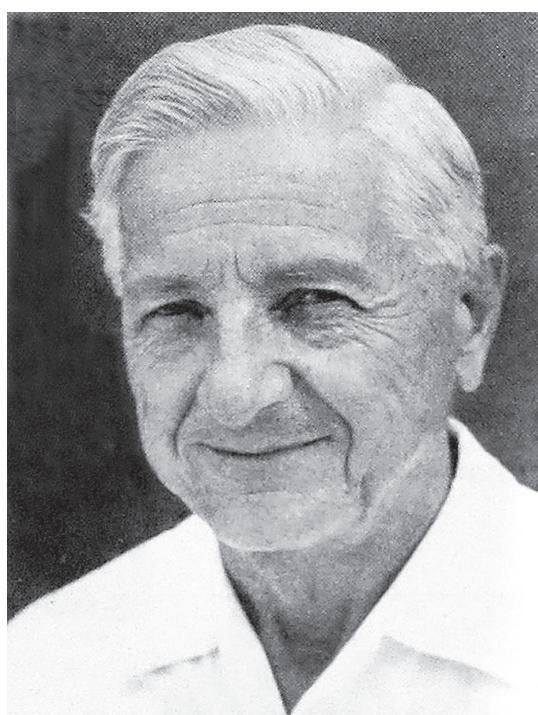
On the coast, Fr Noss met up with Fr Ross in 1939 to learn something about the language and the customs of the Hagen people. Then he flew up to Hagen with Fr Fuchs and Mr Greathead in the *Teresia*. They had trouble getting enough height before they got to the Bismarck range and it almost nose-dived. The pilot told them to shift the cargo to the rear. They did that and, when it was better balanced, they were able to land. The plane was a Fokker which had been brought to Lae and refitted with a Wasp engine which made it nose-heavy. It was too heavy for the plane.

Sometime after the Jubilee on 6 August 1939, the *Teresia* crashed at Alexishafen killing Fr Kirschbaum, Fr Otto Baden, Fr Weyer, the pilot Willy Schaffhausen and a local catechist. The pilot had not wanted to fly the plane and he was angry. Someone put a carton of beer on the plane and he kicked at it to show his anger but it remained on board. Towards the end of the airstrip were some coconuts and Willy thought he couldn't make it over them so he turned the plane, but it nose-dived straight down. It was a mistake to

do this as he should have crashed into the sea or the coconuts. Bishop Wolf was standing on the strip and so was Fr Nilles. The plane was overloaded by one person and the carton of beer, and it crashed. Fr Ross lost many of his friends in that crash.

Brother Gerhoch went into Madang to send a telegram to the parents and the radio officer sent the telegrams right away without any delay. It was obvious that their deaths affected Bishop Wolf very much.

There were now three personnel at the Mt Hagen mission: Brother Bonaventure, Fr Fuchs and Fr Noss. Danny Leahy still ran the Kuta goldmine but had difficulty getting on with the  
*Fr James Noss (1906-1980).*



new German missionaries. They had language problems and often had to revert to *Tok Pisin* to communicate. Danny also missed Fr Ross's bright personality and camaraderie.

One day Danny turned up at Rebiamul and shouted at Fr Fuchs in *Tok Pisin* who shouted back at him. Fr Noss came out and said "Don't shout at each other in *Tok Pisin*. Let's go into the house and talk it over. So Danny went inside the house – the little house with a dining room on one end and a kitchen on the other.

Fr Noss, trying to defuse the situation said, "Danny, you stop talking. First we drink a bottle of wine and after that we will talk."

So the four of them, Brother Bonaventure, Fr Fuchs, Fr Noss and Danny drank the bottle of wine and then Fr Noss said to Danny, "You are upset. What have you against us? Start with me."

So Danny started with Fr Noss. "Firstly on Sundays you don't join us at breakfast. [That is with Greathead at the office]. If you do come to breakfast, halfway through you run off. Secondly when I came to the station once, you were in your room and you didn't come out to greet me."

"Right," Fr Noss answered, "I can easily explain that to you: firstly, the breakfast. On Sundays, it is my main work with the local people. I organise a soccer match between the various clans and I umpire these games so they do not fight each other. I put different tribes against each other; secondly, the time I did not greet you I was saying my office in my room and Brother Bonaventure was there so he could take your horse and afterwards I would join you."

Danny Leahy was satisfied with that and Fr Noss said, "Let's go over and ask Greathead to come and join us and make peace", but Greathead refused. He wanted no negotiation. This was when the relationship was breaking down between the German missionaries and the administration officers since the war had just started in Europe; all German missionaries were suspect. The administration officers were also angry with Fr Fuchs who was building roads out of the mission for miles. They were all centred on Rebiamul not on the government station.

Fr Noss:

Greathead made war on the tribes after some disturbance. He went from one tribe to the next and destroyed their bananas, their gardens and their pigs because he wanted to get the ringleaders of some disturbance. These ringleaders always ran on to the next tribe if they had wives from that tribe and the people would not betray them. So these fights went all around from north to west to south. During this time many of the pigs which had been farmed out by the mission and by Danny Leahy were accidentally killed because Greathead's men did not know whose pigs they were. Fr Fuchs asked for compensation and he mentioned that Danny Leahy got a big compensation because a whole herd of captured village pigs were taken up to Kuta. Fr Fuchs was only given scrawny pigs so he was not satisfied with them (Interview by the author, 1974).

On another occasion, Fr Fuchs said to Greathead that he should permit him to go to the Yamuga Tribe further down the valley because he had many workers there and he wanted to visit them and farm our pigs there. Greathead refused and Fr Fuchs tried to pin him down.

Greathead answered, "I can show you the reason in black and white" So he showed Fr Fuchs the letter from Melrose that said "no white missionaries were allowed to go down the valley."

Now Fr Fuchs said, "Look at the date. You permitted Danny Leahy to go into the valley why is there a different justice?"

Then there was a big clash between them.

Fr Noss:

I stayed in Mt Hagen until I was thrown out. The reason, or at least the official reason, given was that I went into an uncontrolled area near where the airstrip is to-day. We went down to that area on a government errand. Fr Fuchs wanted to go there to look for timber so the government could start a saw line and cut timber for themselves. Because Fr Fuchs was looking for timber I went too. While we were this request came to see a sick woman. We went down there and I inquired where the woman lived and how far would I have to go. In the end I decided that a woman was dying so I better go and I followed the people in. I found she was very ill with pneumonia but not dying. I had some sulphur medicine with me and gave it to her and told her how much to take.

The general ruling was that from sunrise to sunset we could be out and after that we were not allowed. That day we got back in time, but the next day we got a letter saying I was arrested. I was not allowed to go anywhere except the mission and the Gomis airstrip.

Fuchs was even more confined and he protested this action of Greathead in a letter. The plane was due to take me out to Madang so I waited at the airstrip to give the letter to the pilot to take down to Madang. The pilot then came back from Greathead's house and he had Jock McKay with him. I handed Jock the letter, but Jock said, "Father I have to inform you that in 40 minutes you have to be ready to leave - both of you."

Forty minutes? It is at least ten minutes walk to the station at the other end of the airstrip. I called all the pupils and catechists together and talked to them. Fr Fuchs called all the workers because they had to be paid. I removed the Blessed Sacrament from the church. As we were busy the police escort came along the main road to take us prisoner. Fr Fuchs said, "We don't want to give them the idea that we are being escorted by the police. So give your last instructions to the *boss boi* and then we will leave."

We left by the little gully and went to the airstrip where we had to sign some papers that we made this trip on our volition. We left Hagen with Jock McKay and the pilot. We were brought to the Madang and the plane circled the District

Office we could see Ward Oakley and Danny Leahy on the door step. Fr Fuchs said, "Now I know how things fit together." We then landed at Danup airstrip and they just dumped us there. Stan Johnson came out in the mission car and took us to Alexishafen. We found Bishop Wolf at noon and I said to him, "By the way it was my fault" and I explained about the sick woman. He said, "If it was like this, don't worry about it."

Later they made a court case out of it down in Madang and it was decided that nobody was allowed to go back up to Mt Hagen (Interview by the author).

Fr Fuchs blamed Mr Greathead for the closure of the Mt Hagen mission and when it was opened again, he sent a letter to Greathead saying, "I give you my regards and I ask God that you shall never have any luck until your wrong doing and calumnies against the mission are put straight again."

Fr Noss:

When I heard about this letter [wishing him bad luck] I sent Mr Greathead another letter to offset the first. I said "There were mistakes on both sides both by us and by you, but I will bless you." Greathead was studying for an exam just then so I wrote about this and wished him luck in his life.

And I consider this letter and this attitude of mine was what gave me a chance to come back to New Guinea right after the war. I was told by the Australian Embassy in the United States that I was free to return to New Guinea. I was a prisoner of war at the time at Techny, Illinois. Fr Fuchs did not get permission to return to New Guinea but went back to Germany and later to Brazil. Then he returned to Germany and became a secular priest where his character harmonised more and he did excellent work. He died doing his duties. There was an epidemic and he caught the illness and died.

As a result of all this bad feeling, when Fr Ross came back from America with Fr Bernarding and Fr Kotrba, they were not allowed to return to Mt Hagen and Fr Ross was understandably upset. He appealed to Mr Oakley but at first without success. Then at last, in January 1941, he finally received permission to return to Mt Hagen and resume mission activities.

### **Fr George Bernarding SVD**

George Bernarding was born in Carrick, a Pittsburgh suburb, in 1912. He was attracted to the Divine Word missionaries and entered the junior seminary at Girard, Pennsylvania where he completed the last years of High School and then College before going to the major seminary at Techny Illinois. Here he met Brother Eugene who was the baker in the kitchen. He sometimes gave George and his friends cookies. Fr Bernarding never saw Brother Eugene in New Guinea as he was killed four years earlier.

Fr George Bernarding:

I first met Fr Ross back in 1939 at our major seminary at Techny shortly after I was ordained a priest. At that time Fr Ross was attached to the seminary as

assistant to Fr Bruno Hagspiel the mission procurator. His intention was that Fr Ross would be his successor so we fixed up an office for him.

News came of an aeroplane crash at Alexishafen in which several priests were killed: Fr Kirschbaum, Fr Otto Baden, Fr Weyer and the pilot Willy Schaffhausen and a local. Not being able to get any more missionaries from Europe because of the war, Bishop Wolf appealed to the American Province for missionaries and two of us were chosen. We volunteered for the missions and were appointed to NG. Prior to this Fr Ross had given us a talk on conditions, climate, way of the people and their dress etc. He was very interesting. I thought this would be my place if I was ever fortunate enough to get to the islands. So I actually spoke to Fr Ross. Later on when the appointments were made, the provincial told me I had been chosen for New Guinea; Fr Ross had encouraged me in every way possible.

I remember Brother Eugene too. In the days before he went out to New Guinea. We were just kids in training and we used to dress up as hoods and go into the kitchen where Brother Eugene was the cook and beg for cookies He always gave us some. I did not see Fr Ross again until we left for Vancouver and then Sydney. That was with my classmate, Fr Joseph Kotrba, who lost his life in Bogia Station to which we were both appointed when we arrived in NG in September 1940.

I was at home for a while with my family and one of the conditions we took when we went to the foreign missions was that we gave up hope of ever returning. Well, we took that as a sacrifice although both my parents felt bad about it. I said, "Oh well, you never know". I was home for about four weeks and Fr Kotrba and I both got telegrams telling us to report to Chicago, so we went there and were handed our tickets and took the train via the northern states and then to Vancouver where we stayed three days. We then boarded the *Aorangi* to Sydney. The voyage was without incidents except for drills for blackouts and changes in the course. The beer was very stale as it had been picked up in Auckland and they were not able to change the casks in Vancouver,

Fr Joseph Kotrba came out with us and also took a chance of never seeing his parents again. We met Evelyn Waugh's nephew and niece. Fr Ross used to have fun with the little five year old girl and called her a tomboy. "Not if you knew her properly" said the six year old brother. The girl and her brother used to play ping-pong on board and then Fr Ross used to have a turn. They were evacuees as, at the time, many British families were sent overseas to Australia. Our boat had to change course repeatedly because the *Niagara* had been sunk only a couple of weeks previously. We called into Fiji and Auckland.

1940, Bernarding:

From Australia, we took the *Macdui* to Alexishafen and arrived there late in August 1940. The local people, sisters and brothers and priests were there to greet us. The mission made their own bricks for the floor of the Cathedral which was Bishop Wolf's pride and joy. It was a delight to walk inside a place like that and see a beautiful Cathedral when you heard so much about the primitive

conditions of the place. A new organ had just been installed. One of the priests who could play the organ would sometimes give a concert and the people off the *Frederin* or the *Macdui* would come in and be entertained. They had quite a day.

I learnt *Tok Pisin* and learnt to drive a car, a little Ford Prefect, which had been brought out from Holland by Willem van Baar. I was the only one who could drive and I'd take it out to the little aerodrome at Alexishafen.

Anyway, the time passed and Bishop Wolf called Fr Kotrba and me in and said, "I want you to go to Bogia and help Fr Schebesta who is an old priest who came in 1910." The younger priests were being sent to him to learn *Tok Pisin* and bush work. So after a month in Alexishafen, Fr Kotrba and I went up to Bogia and I stayed there until Christmas for about a month. [Later in the war, Fr Kotrba was called in by the Japs, put in solitary confinement then brought down to the station and beheaded. A map was drawn of where his body was buried and it was taken back to the States].

In Bogia, the mission station was up on a hill about 500 metres above sea level and we got a marvellous view of the surrounding country and of the ocean and especially of Manam Island. At night the top of the volcano gave out a deep red glow and, at times, one could see large boulders being ejected from the cone's top. The Station consisted of a Father's house, Sisters' convent and the girls' school. The girls were being taught to cook and sew. The boys had their own school and dormitory. Fr Schebesta was in charge.

Bishop Wolf then appointed me to Josephstal where Fr Lucidius had a tropical ulcer on his leg and was unable to get around. From Josephstal, I went back to Alexishafen again. This was just before Pearl Harbour. I had brought my Hallicrafter transceiver with me and when I heard about the attack on Pearl Harbour, I told the Bishop that the war would be over in a few weeks because of the might of the American navy, little realising the damage that had been done.

The Bishop wanted me to take over the job as procurator or business manager and be his secretary as there was no English speaker to act as a liaison between the mission and the government in Madang. I went with Brother Gerhoch to Madang in case we had to speak to the Australian officials. At that time they looked down on Germans who could only speak *Tok Pisin* and not proper English. We used to end up for lunch at the hotel which was run by Roy Hart. We also went to see the Cheggs, a Chinese family who were good friends of Brother Gerhoch.

Mark Pitt was the Assistant Commissioner and I used to go in occasionally and say Mass at the District Office on Sundays. During the war there was an interesting incident. There was a blackout in Madang and Brother Berchmanns was the captain of our boat, the *Joseph*. He came into Madang Harbour which was in darkness so he put on his lights. District Officer, Oakley, had a bicycle and he came roaring down to find out who was violating the restrictions. His bicycle hit an obstacle and he fell off into the mud and he was madder than before. Brother was taken to court because he had come into the harbour with his lights

on and they didn't know if he was an enemy or not. Brother got fined 100 pounds which was a lot of money in those days. The Brother took it as a joke. I tried to intervene on his behalf but was told it did not concern me at all. In April 1941, I did parish work on Sek Island

Fr John Glover was an Australian priest from Albury in NSW. He was a diocesan priest and he volunteered to come to New Guinea. He wanted to do some flying but, before the war, Johnson was the mission pilot. Fr Glover got his chance every now and then. We used to pad around together because he was the only other English speaking priest at Alexishafen and we were about the same age.

I remember one day when we went out to the river, I had a 38 revolver with me and he put a hair trigger mechanism on it. Glover was very keen on shooting coconuts etc. I remember once I pointed it and the gun went off before I had a chance to control it and it just went past his ear. Fr Glover nearly jumped out of his pants when he watched this thing go by. I took the gun and after that I wouldn't use it anymore. I thought it was a bit risky and dangerous. Fr Glover and I used to sit near Bishop Wolf at meals. He would sit beside the Bishop and I was just opposite and the Bishop was quite keen to strike up an English conversation. He was quite good at English and never had much of a problem holding a conversation. When we spoke he was right with it.

December 1941, Fr Bernarding continued:

Fr Ross wrote to Bishop Wolf and asked for someone to help him in Mt Hagen. The Bishop summoned me and said he had just had a letter from Fr Ross asking for someone to assist him with some baptisms of his first catechumens. On 23 December 1941, I flew in the Fox Moth into the mountains. The pilot was Stan Johnson. It was a glorious day and we first landed at Mingende and then on to Hagen. From the air Mt Hagen resembled a huge flower garden. Mr Greathead had planned the layout of the station and he had also planted large numbers of cannas along the roads and in big flower beds. They were of every colour and description.

Greathead's successor, Mr Dal Chambers, together with Fr Ross, were on hand to greet us as we landed. After refreshments at the *kiap*'s house, we saw Mr Johnson take off and then we walked over to the station. Hundreds and hundreds of people were on hand to welcome us. The people showed their appreciation with cries "*ai ya – ai ya*" and wringing their hands as was their customary gesture of welcome.

They were busy decorating the church with flowers and *tangat* leaves with about ten arches or *bogans* as they are known already prepared. Getting ready for Christmas there were thousands waiting and sitting around the station. The baptism ceremony at Rebiamul went well. About twenty men were baptised.

Danny Leahy was doing well with his gold and sometimes I went up there and just for fun I'd pan a bit of gold. I must have written a letter to someone and told them because it was reported to Bishop Wolf that I was mining gold. He wrote to me that he hadn't sent me up to mine gold but to do mission work. Well, we were

so confined to the mission station, we couldn't do much and we were restricted to working only with the people who actually came to the mission station.

We were not allowed to leave the station except to visit Dan Leahy who had a small golf course – four holes – he was quite a golfer. Fr Ross and I would go up there and have a game. The grass was about 18 inches high in places but we rarely lost a ball because there were so many kids around to retrieve them. Fr Ross and Danny would compete and neither was terribly good. I remember one day when Danny had beaten both of us and when he finished the fourth hole he threw his hands in the air in triumph and said *Kundi Dan* which meant Danny, the master. It was most enjoyable for us because Danny was lonesome with no companions and I would stay at night with him and walk back to the station next day.

Later on when, I opened the station at Ulga, I would make the trip around towards where he had a house at Palagu and then come the back way to Kuta. I would stay the night and we would exchange news and all the local gossip and it was as good for me as it was good for him. We could listen to the news on the radio. He had a transceiver and made sure to keep it going. I would return to the station to work. At that time we had no carpenter so I got interested in that and used to build the tables and chairs for the outstations. This was before Mr Chambers and Danny were ordered to report to ANGAU (Interview by the author, 1974).



*Jubilee celebrations for Bishop Wolf at Alexishafen, 1939.*



*A Japanese tank stands on the site of the pre-war Alexishafen Cathedral (Author).*

## Chapter 4. World War II

### 1941 to 1945, Hagen and Madang during the war

On 21 January 1942, when Dan Leahy heard on his radio that Madang had been bombed, he notified Fr Ross who sent a letter to Ed O'Brien inviting him and other evacuees to come to Hagen. They walked in and it took weeks. The evacuees in the war were mostly civilians, including Dr McQueen, Nurse Taffy Jones, Mark Pitt, Ned O'Brien and others from Madang. The majority of the civilian evacuees stayed over at the government station including soldiers and quite a few government people. Eight or nine civilians stayed at the mission and Ninji helped by building a conglomeration of buildings where people were housed.

Fr George Bernarding:

Our boys learnt quite a bit from these evacuees especially Nurse Jones who taught them how to make pies, especially pumpkin pies and they are still pretty good at it. The old cook-boy here was only a lad when I arrived. Now his family has grown up and one of them is married [1974]. He used to help in the smokehouse and can remember Miss Jones well. We used to roast our own peanuts too so we lived pretty well. We had some cattle which we slaughtered and made our own sugar from sugar cane; our flour was made from corn.

In the months before the evacuees arrived, the airstrip had been closed because it was feared the Japs might come in. Trenches had been dug across it every 30 or 40 feet and stakes were put in the ground so the Japs would crash if they landed. After ANGAU moved in and before the landing of the de Havillands, we had to open up the strip again and fill in the ditches. The surface wasn't solid enough for the planes so the natives of the area came and stamped the ground up and down to make it more solid (Interview by the author).

Among the evacuees mentioned was Nurse Taffy Jones, the matron of Madang Hospital. She was the only woman amongst them and often wished she had been evacuated earlier. Taffy had vivid memories of her trek from Madang to Hagen and of Fr Ross's generosity at the end of it. She wrote her experiences in a letter to the author in 1973.

Taffy Jones:

It is long, long ago since I stayed with Frs Ross and Bernarding at Mt Hagen [in 1942]. There were so many who were so good, but dear Fr Ross was king.

Before we left Madang, when the Japanese were already in the war, Dr McQueen organised medical supplies – we had just got our six months supply. We packed kerosene tins with quinine, bandages, morphine, scissors, dressings, syringes etc. to leave at different places en route to Kainantu. The army officer in Rabaul told us to take these if necessary. Everything else he gave to the Catholic mission except for one large case of bottles of quinine which Ron Chegg and I took and buried on Pig Island in Madang. Pre-war this island was a staging place for lepers who were collected from Wewak and Kavieng areas. It was reasoned that



*Rebiamul mission in wartime. Priests' house on left and kitchen/dining room on right* (Taffy Jones).

the Japs would hear that and not go near the place. After the war Ron and I went back and dug it up. The bottles were intact but by that time quinine had been superseded by atabrin.

I had bought golf shoes which lasted the whole trip. I also had two pairs of khaki slacks and shirts made in Chinatown just in case. And pretty soon I cut them off to make them into shorts as they got wet from walking through the kunai grass.

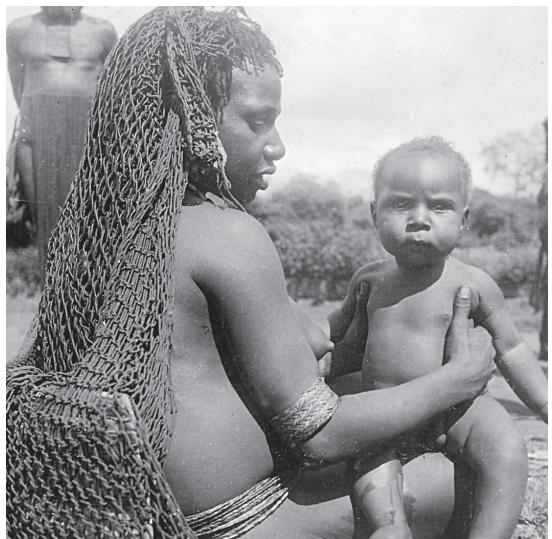
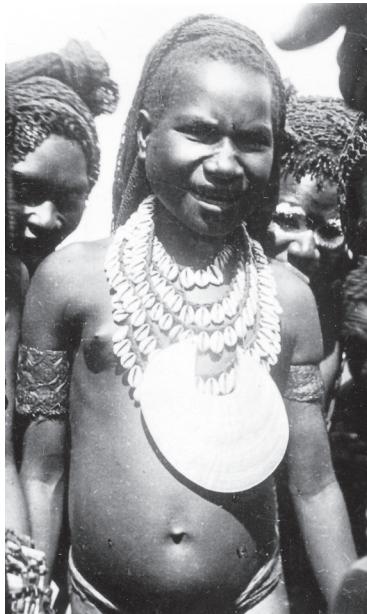
When we set off from Madang after the second bombing raid, Dr McQueen sent me to the Lutheran Mission at Amele where I stayed a week. I can never forget the kindness of Dr Braun and his wife when I stayed with them. After this week, other men caught up with me. Quite a few of the younger men including Bill Cahill and Ron Chegg stayed behind as Coastwatchers. Eventually we set off in parties of three or four from the Lutheran Mission and trekked over the hills. Dr McQueen and I were the last as Doctor said, "If anyone gets sick we can go forward to them and not retrace our steps to those behind" (Jones, 1973).

They stayed six weeks at Kainantu, near the Seventh Day Adventist Mission where Mr Campbell was in charge. Dr McQueen, Mr Oliphant and Taffy shared one house on a hill and Ed O'Brien and Max Middleton were in one nearby. It was three hours walk from the mission to the airstrip. Ward Oakley, the DO of Madang, and Mr Kensitt lived in the officer's house and the rest of the men stayed in a gold mining place about four hours on the other side of the station. The idea was that if the Japs came some of them could get away.

Taffy Jones:

While we were waiting, Fr Glover flew in from Wau with Carl Nagy an Austrian engineer from New Guinea Airways. He had evacuated many people in his single-engine plane, made of paper and canvas. I was then put onboard to fly to Hagen but the plane could not get over the range and turned back. Meanwhile those behind had put wires across the airstrip in case the Japanese flew in. The plane tripped on the wires and was a write off.

With the plane wrecked, it was decided that Fr Glover and Carl Nagy should walk down to Alexishafen to try to get another plane, while the rest of the party walked on to Mt Hagen where there was a larger airstrip. Mick Leahy arrived to guide them and all along the route the people greeted him. “*Kundi Mick, Kundi Mick*”, they repeated over and over. Along the way, the evacuees called into mission stations for a meal and slept each night at a village.



*Mt Hagen women, one on left with bailer shell* (Taffy Jones).

Meanwhile, when Carl Nagy and Fr Glover got to Alexishafen to fetch the other plane, they found the airstrip had been destroyed and the plane dismantled and stored. At this stage the Japanese had still not arrived at Alexishafen, although Madang had already been bombed. Some of the missionaries were opposed to Carl Nagy taking their only plane but Bishop Wolf only said, “They may as well take it as the Japanese will take it anyway when they arrive.” They put the plane together again but it was missing a fuel pump so Carl had to hand pump the fuel all the way. They arrived in Hagen before the rest of the party. Fr Glover and Carl stayed in Hagen for a few days and then flew off to Thursday Island. Nothing was heard from them for weeks and weeks. They were forced down in Maurauke and were arrested. The Dutch people there did not know what to make of them. Fr Glover had no back-to-front collar to show that he was a priest and Nagy was thought to be a German. Eventually they sent them by launch to Thursday Island and from there were flown south by the air force.

## The evacuees in Mt Hagen

Taffy Jones:

When we arrived in Mt Hagen, Fr Ross and Fr Bernarding were on hand to welcome us and did everything to make us feel welcome. They moved out of their rooms for us

The church was quite big. Men all sat on the right side and women on the left with children going back and forth at will. There were very low wooden platforms for seats. While we were there, a few chairs were brought in for us to sit on in the front. I don't think any of us in our advanced party of twelve men and me were Catholics, but I for one went to every Mass and enjoyed it too. The church was crowded each time.

Fr Ross and Fr Bernarding were great friends but used to tease each other. Fr Bernarding came from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania (very pleb) and he was also from a wealthy family to boot and Fr Ross from Boston (very posh). Also Fr Bernarding had the added disadvantage of having a sister married to a Lutheran pastor. It was all good fun and helped us keep cheerful when spirits were a bit low.

While we were there I met the paramount *luluai*, Ninji, who was a *big man tru*. Fr Ross used to say that he had baptised all his family but Ninji would have nothing to do with these new-fangled ideas. Fr Ross used to say "Never mind we will creep up on him when he is dying." He had a wry sense of humour. There was a big *singsing* while we were there.

Every day, Fr Ross had the locals bring in supplies of food – *kaukau* plus, plus, plus and then pumpkins and a few tomatoes and beans and of course pigs. One of the first things Fr Bernarding asked was, "Can you make pumpkin pie?" I never had but did do so with mixed success, although I must say my pikelets made out of ground corn were a great success - - we had plenty of lard from the pigs. After we had been there for a few weeks (we were there about six altogether, I think) word came that there was a big party of men coming.

There was the DO from Manus Island and a platoon of the 1st Australian Independent Company from Manus and some of the 2/22 battalion that CoastWatchers had rescued from the Rabaul area. Ron Chegg, the medical assistant from Madang was one of these Coastwatchers. There were about sixty or seventy of them. So Fr Ross got Ninji and his mob to put up houses for them. They built a whole village in a few days and Father organised all the food for them too, a whole platoon.

Ned O'Brien and Max Middleton from Karkar had been wireless operators with the Australian army in World War I in New Guinea and had expropriation plantations. Mr Oliphant went to live with Danny Leahy who lived on a hill at Kuta. It was about five hours walk. They had a battery wireless and used to hear the news once a day and send a runner down to the mission. At last in Hagen they heard that two DC3 planes were on their way. They were too big for the



*Fr Ross with tribesmen having a singsing on the Wilya strip.*

airstrip so Fr Ross again got literally thousands of natives in for a *singsing* to stamp down the kunai – and stamp down they did – the planes came in at last. (Jones, 1973).

Fr Bernarding:

The planes that came in were two four-engine de Havillands, Tommy O'Dea piloted one of them and Orm Denny was the other pilot – he had been a pilot in the early days at Bulolo and was quite well known. They had to fly so high coming in here that there was ice on the wings. I remember them talking about it. They were big planes and could take 15 evacuees at a time and eventually got everybody out. Later, Fr Glover notified Red Cross who flew in salt, sugar and other supplies for us.

#### **Ninji's Kur Ceremony, observed by Fr Bernarding:**

Reference has been made to the big *singsing* and *Kur* ceremony held while the evacuees were here. This was at Ninji's *singsing* ground at Palimp and was one of the major events of his tribe. They brought pigs from far and wide and cooked them in pits. You could see the smoke up on the hills from these pits. The meat was brought into the *singsing* grounds eventually and carried up to the platforms which surrounded the *singsing* ground. The men would cut pieces off the pork and put it on the ends of the spears of their friends. The preparation for this went on for months of course and the barricades were considered sacred and no-one could go there except the married men and some of the unmarried ones.

In the months before, they would discuss who they were going to invite and who would get so much meat. For the actual *Kur* ceremony, the spirit stones were brought in from the Kaugil area. Fr Ross said that the spirit men in this area, and they were called spirit men because they were the only ones allowed to conduct the ceremony, had a lease on the ceremony. If anyone was going to have a *Kur* ceremony, they would come in and conduct it for them and, in return, they would be given so many pigs or pearl shells or things of that nature and when the *singsing* was over they would go back to their place again. It was something they kept to themselves and none of the Hagen people had the right to conduct the *Kur* ceremony on their own. They would have to get these people in and be given secret instructions.

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### **A big tribal fight in Hagen**

Everything went well at the Hagen mission until Chambers had to report to ANGAU. This must have been about February 1942. Danny Leahy was at Kuta and then left to join up with ANGAU. Dan had some good boys up there and he left things in their hands. They watched his property well for him.

Fr Bernarding:

Chambers got his police together and they all marched off towards corn farm. The people were farewelling him, some weeping etc and then they rushed to the house as soon as he was gone and tore down the curtains etc. There was no possibility of stopping them. There was a lesson there – externally they were showing grief and yet planning what they could get out of this situation. One of the policemen had to stay behind. The next morning it was Sunday and we were in church. Fr Ross was at the altar and I was at the rear. There was a cry that the Kominigas [now called Komunkas] were on the warpath. The church just simply emptied. The people were all running around cutting limbs off small trees and sharpening them.

Anyway it was a bit of a false alarm in so much as the Kominigas were not coming in full force. I had a bicycle at that time and I rode into Wilya, the original mission site, and as I got near the old airstrip I saw the people bringing this man on a stretcher. He was in an awful mess. His lungs were exposed and his spinal column was broken in about six places. He didn't have any feeling. So I baptised him with water and he died shortly afterwards and I returned to the station. About noon I was talking to Fr Ross and he said, "This is going to be bad, no *kiap*, and no police."

As we were talking another group of Nampagas came up and said one of their young chiefs had been butchered near the end of airstrip. Well, this chief was waylaid there and butchered. They just took him apart limb from limb. That was the signal and then the people began to sing out to their allies to get help. They were mourning and crying. Two days later their allies came all decorated for war with plumes, axes and spears.

When Dal Chambers was still there, he had got all the chiefs together and they had had a big ceremony and had burnt a large collection of spears and weapons in a bonfire. Chambers wrote in his report that peace had been established in the Hagen area and there would be no more warfare as the big chiefs had come to the event. Fr Ross had rescued some of these spears and shields and stored them and these were the ones that the Nampagas came and claimed. Fr Ross didn't stop them. We figured that if there was going to be an all out war we couldn't do much about it. He gave them what he had and it was amazing how many other weapons appeared from everywhere in spite of the fire they had had.

Anyway they came through the station and went down to their old *singsing* ground and battle ground which is where the Holy Trinity Teachers' College is today. In the old days, because it was no-man's land, we managed to get a large piece of land there. No-one wanted it as they were frightened of the spirits



*From left: Mrs Chalmers, Mr Dal Chalmers, Fr Ross, Dan Leahy, unknown, unknown, George Greathead (D. Leahy).*

and the fact they might be waylaid. It was a natural buffer ground between the Nampagas and the Kominigas. That was where the fight was going to be.

Fr Ross told me that, in the old days when there was just Danny and he there, the people would just have a few skirmishes but no-one got hurt. They would sit down and have their *kaukau* and at night they would go home and brag to their wives of how they had thrown their spears and nearly got hurt. That might have gone on for weeks and no-one would get a scratch.

This time there was a difference. One of the policemen, Burri, had been left behind as he had a venereal disease and could hardly walk. He was living with a Nampaga girl and identified with that tribe. He lined up with the Mogei Nampagas dressed in a traditional manner. But unlike them he was not armed with spears but with a rifle. When the Kominigas lined up, he let fire and killed fifteen of their warriors. Some Kominigas were also wounded and the Nampagas finished them off quickly. It was a terrible time for the Kominigas who retreated out of range. The story of this fight travelled everywhere.

Apart from this tragedy, we felt this was a good time to get out amongst the people. This was when I got established at Ulga and I remember the first time I saw this area. I was up at Danny's place where there is a good view of the Nabilyer valley and Mt Giluwe in the distance. It was like a dream. A beautiful day and you'd love to experience it. I said to Dan, "One day I'm going to go down to that place." A lot of his workers came from that area and I got to know some of them. I got friendly with Maip, the big chief, and this helped.

In 1942, when Danny left he said, "If you need any help, my boys would be available." And they were too. After I picked out a site at Ulga where Fr Krimm is these days, [1974] the boys helped me and within a month I had a church, a house for myself, a house for the catechist and these were the foundation of the Ulga parish. I studied the customs of the people and tried to learn their languages etc. This is one of the biggest missions today.

Once the government left, there were no restrictions: no one to report to and we went about at our own risk. The administration in Rabaul had gone out and there was no other administrator since Mr Chambers had left and the Japanese had landed on the coast. At that time, we started our missionary effort which has grown and grown until today when most of the people in the Hagen area are Catholics. The whole southern area from Mt Hagen - most of these people are Catholics.

From that time on, Fr Ross and I were more or less on our own for a while at Rebiamul. Dr Kuder was on his own over at Ogelbeng – his wife and children had gone out several months previously. We were the only white people here. At no time did we fear for our lives. The people around the mission were quite happy to have us here because they felt that if they were attacked by their enemies we would be here with them. It was mutual – we needed them and they needed us. If we wanted any food, we could buy it with our snail shells.

We had got large bags of these brought in from Alexishafen. Fr Ross sent carriers down and they returned with them. From 21 January 1942, there was no plane and I got a letter from Bishop Wolf telling me to stay in Mt Hagen. The only thing I had managed to keep of all my belongings was my ordination chalice. [Fr Bernarding would have left most of his belongings behind down at Alexishafen as he was only expecting to be in Mt Hagen for a few weeks.] However, the ordination chalice had been sent in by Brother Gerhoch – he arranged it and I still have it. My passport etc was completely lost (Interview by the author).

Bernarding reports on Kyngdon:

Sometime after Chambers left, Kyngdon came up from the Chimbu and was in charge here. During the war, the Red Cross had brought in flour and foodstuffs for those who were left behind: clothing, cigarettes, sugar and tea – all the main things we think we need and we were well provided for. Kyngdon was working for ANGAU and heard rumours that Fr Ross and I had a cache of flour. We had eight big bags of flour which hadn't been used because the evacuees had all left. He demanded that we turn it all over to him – we had quite a hassle over that as Fr Ross wouldn't turn it over.

Then Kyngdon threatened to send the police over to get it and so we decided that rather than argue the point we would send the flour over to him. He was supposed to distribute it among the other Europeans but there were no other Europeans there – he just wanted to get his way. We weren't on friendly terms with him at all. On several occasions we used to get aeroplane fuel and kerosene – it was also taken over by this fellow Kyngdon and put in the house which had been built by Brother Bonaventure – the sub-district office. It was all stored in one of the rooms. Kyngdon did not stay at his house because he was afraid the Japanese might come in there at night. He had a little hide-out in the bush nearby.

Fr Ross and I decided we needed some of that kerosene so we went over there one night with some of our boys got in the house and filled up several containers with kerosene. We always talked about this afterwards. How we two priests went over and got this stuff. We didn't steal it because, well, we thought we were entitled to it and we got the kerosene that we needed for lamps. Bloxham was the one who marched us out. Later on Kyngdon came back with Doug Parrish who is active in the Police Force today. Captain Kyngdon said it was war time and he had his orders - if I could only dig out the correspondence and telegrams. He had been sending telegrams to Moresby and they were contacting him. He said he had orders that everything sent in by the Red Cross should be commandeered.

About December 1942, we had hearsay evidence from the ANGAU men who passed through Hagen, that Alexishafen had been bombed but we did not know what had happened to the people. We presumed they had been taken prisoner. We did not know definitely until we got to Australia and met some of these missionaries.

Danny had an AWA set and a wind charger. I didn't know much about it but later did because I regarded it as a lifeline with the outside world. I was able to repair

the batteries. Later I took it down to Ulga and got it going and I would come over to the mission and report the news to Fr Ross and tell him what was going on in sport in the U.S. We always wanted to know about the basketball etc (interview by author, 1974).

It was one of the many things Fr Ross and Fr Bernarding had in common - listening to the scores of the games. Fr Ross was a Giant fan in New York and Fr Bernarding from Pittsburgh barracked for his own team, it did not matter that they did not barrack for the same teams as they seldom won. It was something for them to talk about when Fr Bernarding came back from Ulga.

When I first arrived here at Rebiamul, Fr Ross had arranged a room where we could sit down and talk. But it was uncomfortable – no chairs - so he invited me into his room. He only had one chair and a box. In those days he smoked those horrible cigars with half green tobacco and he would roll them there. The windows would be closed and the next thing I knew I was becoming dizzy and my eyes were watering so I said, “It must be your cigar smoke” he got quite a kick and years later said, “you know when the Bishop [Bernarding] first came here he couldn’t tolerate my cigar smoke. That was true too.

Before the war, Fr Ross and I would go up to Kuta once a week to see Danny or he would come down to see us and we kept up this contact that way. After Danny left we didn’t go up to Kuta. The time came when the area was opened up and we met some commandos who came through. From them, we got the idea that there were big plans afoot. Macarthur had plans of coming back into NG and he issued orders that all civilians would have to leave. The first missionaries to leave were the German ones in the Chimbu area. [Including Fr Nilles and Rev Bergmann] They were all brought out to Port Moresby and some of them were interned behind barbed wire in Port Moresby and then Brisbane (Interview continued).

### **Evacuation from Hagen 1943**

Bernarding:

Our turn to evacuate came on a Sunday in 1943. A plane had come through just two days previously with Mick Leahy on board and a Major Ellis of the medical staff of the US navy. We could have gone with them but we did not know in time. Bloxham, who should have notified us, knew about it before the plane arrived but did not tell us until later. We said. ‘Why didn’t you tell us yesterday and we could have flown out’ He didn’t have an answer to that or at least he said he didn’t know but we found out later that he did. So we had to walk out from Mt Hagen to Bena Bena – Fr Ross, Dr Kuder and myself. On the way we stopped at a place called Asoroka which was the headquarters of the German Lutherans in that area. It was here that I shaved off my beard. Fr Ross was unaware at the time and when he saw me he burst out laughing and said, “Oh you look so funny.”

I said, “Well I look funny with it on and I certainly couldn’t look any funnier with it off.” Anyway I had made the break. I had decided to get rid of it before we



*Group of European men with a Mt Hagen man and (probably) a coastal man. From left: Dan Leahy, Rev Kuder, Dal Chalmers and Fr Bernarding (D. Leahy).*

went to Australia. But Fr Ross kept his beard until the bitter end when Archbishop Gilroy demanded that he shave it off when he got to Sydney.

On the way out we were joined at Kundiawa by Mr Doering, a Canadian who had been stationed at Kerowagi. Doering took over at Hagen after the war and left three years ago [1971]. We were in Bena Bena for a week waiting for a plane to take us out. Bloxham accompanied us on the way out with his police boys. I had my bike and got ahead and Bloxham thought I might try to escape or something. In Bena Bena they had their own commandos who were a trigger happy group. We didn't dare go out at night as they might shoot us.

Finally, we flew out to Moresby and we had quite a bit of trouble identifying ourselves. The fact that we were missionaries coming out of the Highlands made them think we were Germans. I had no passport and even our Yankee accents did not help us very much. We were brought up to the headquarters and interviewed and questioned about our loyalties and our backgrounds etc.

I was sitting outside the office and we were tired of the interviews. Fr Ross and Revs Kuder and Doering were leaning on the banisters when this man came out all in uniform. He clicked his heels together and saluted. He said, "Gentlemen I represent intelligence."

I had never heard the word used in that consequence before and I quipped 'Well Sir you certainly look intelligent' The bloke gave me a real scathing look as if I was a show-off. We laughed at that many times.

Several times when we were there, the Japanese flew over and bombed - usually early towards dawn. It was a glorious sight to see our Lockheed fighters lighting up and go up after them. Everything was blacked out and the sirens would go and you could see the planes in the searchlights. Now and then you would see a flash and a glow and next morning they would announce how many planes had been shot down.

In the beginning in Port Moresby, we didn't have any opportunity to say Mass. We were confined to barracks but not interned. Fr Macincroe MSC, who had been a parish priest there and was a chaplain in the army, heard about us and came and gave us the opportunity to hear confessions and say Mass. So we had a chance to say Mass from that time on.

We were moved to a room in a bombed out hospital. There were four of us: Kuder, Doering, Fr Ross and me. The room was only eight feet by eight feet so we got to know each other pretty well. Being Lutherans and Catholics, we discussed our differences but got on very well. We just slept on the floor.

### **March 1943**

Later on we were shipped out on a troop ship. We were way down on the bottom; the lowest part of the ship, near the hull. We had to go down numerous companionways to get there and we were in one little cabin with two bunks. Two of us slept on top and two down below. It was terribly hot and we were not permitted to go into the officers' mess or the soldiers' dining room. They used to bring the food down to us in pannikins. We'd eat the meal and go up on deck where we spent a lot of time to get the fresh air. We landed in Brisbane in March 1943.

Also on the boat were Koreans who had worked for the Japanese. They were coolie labourers and used to carry ammunitions for the Japanese. We could see them down in the hold but we never got to talk to them. They seemed to be healthy enough and received their rations of rice and water. There was no attempt to maltreat them.

When we got to Brisbane, the church hierarchy was notified and Monsignor English came down. He took one look at us and handed us over to the Redemptorists whose superior was Fr Bird. We were there for three days and then we were told Archbishop Duhig wanted to meet us. We went to a store and bought clerical outfits. They were out-of-date and too large and we looked like a pair of penguins. Duhig was very tolerant of Fr Ross's beard and he didn't mind if he wore a beard or not. Then we went to Wynnum parish and we took care of the hospital for the aged.

In Sydney, we were at Epping for a while and then I was helping Fr Darby at Willoughby. Next I went to Broadway to St Benedict's. Later I assisted at Burwood Heights where I spent twelve months at St Joseph's, Enfield, a beautiful church which included the western suburbs hospital and orphanage. Fr Ross went to Kogarah and Mondays was always the day off. We couldn't go back to the presbytery because it was the housekeeper's day off as well.

Some Mondays we would meet in town at the Central Railway Station or Wynyard and then to the Montero or to one of those eating places and we'd have a meal. One of them used to get in American coffee and became a hangout for the American service men there. Later we would take in a movie. We went once to a Gilbert and Sullivan opera at the Theatre Royale in Pitt Street but we had to get permission from the Chancery to see this opera. Fr Ross loved skating and he borrowed or rented them and would go just for fun. It was quite a sport for him in spite of his size.

Sometimes we went out to Ryde and Parramatta and met some of the young Sydney priests. I met up with the present Cardinal Freeman who was a close friend of mine. On Fridays we went off to Kempsey – there was a family there who had their own private tennis court and we'd meet some more of the priests there. They used to kid me about being a dumb Yank but it was all in fun and we got on well (Interview by the author).

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### **The War on the Madang coast 1942 to 45**

When the Japanese landed in the Madang Harbour on 18 December 1942, the Riwo village people were amazed at their power and the size of their cargo. A whole convoy of ships, submarines, minesweepers and troop carriers suddenly appeared. The locals tried to interpret all of this in their own belief system. When they were paid in occupation money for services, they studied it in detail. It was the first tangible evidence of the Japanese they could take away and ruminant about. The strange money was handed around a group of elders. They noted that, in one corner of the note, was a group of coconut palms depicted on a point of land similar to the point at Budup just near Riwo Village. "Maybe it is Kilibob and his men returning!" Kilibob and Manup were part of their basic myths.

Long, long ago these two mythical brothers had lived at Budup near Riwo and were always fighting. Kilibob took off in a large boat and promised to return bringing lots



*Japanese occupation money.*

of cargo with him. The people seeing the dozens of large Japanese ships in the harbour tried to fathom how this phenomenon fitted into their belief system. Was all this cargo for them? Was Kilibob at last fulfilling his promise? This led to a cargo cult. However, the villagers soon realised that the Japanese cargo was not for them. The Japanese did not give any cargo to the people and any disobedience was punished severely. After the war, these Riwo men were described as cargo cultists and were punished for fraternising with the Japanese and for their disloyalty. But as we have seen maybe they were being loyal to a far older set of beliefs that had been passed on through the generations. Furthermore, they had little choice but to co-operate when faced with the might of the invasion force.

One old headman explained:

The Japanese were just another set of masters to be obeyed. First it was the Germans and we had to obey them and then the Australians came with their new rules. The Australians were only there thirty years and along came another set of masters – the Japanese. You had to do what they said or you could get shot. So we climbed coconut trees for them; grew vegetables; unloaded boats and let them take our pigs and chooks. When the bombing got severe, we villagers fled to the mountains behind Madang and many suffered from lack of food.

Dr. Lucy Mair wrote in 1948, “in the absence of the conception of a regime to which loyalty was due, there could be no question of disloyalty, or of co-operation with one side or the other” (Mair, 1948) [See Mennis, 2006, for more information].

Fr Noss:

When the Australians were evacuating Madang [to go to Mt Hagen] with the Japanese advance, Ward Oakley and others brought their personal effects to the mission at Alexishafen for the missionaries to care for and return them after the war. One priest who had been at Alexishafen at the start of the First World War remembered that the German people brought stuff out to Alexishafen and the new Australian Administration made a lot of difficulty for the missionaries over this.

Bishop Wolf didn’t know what to do with these personal effects. He said, “If I say ‘no’ I’ll be seen as hostile to the Australians; if I say ‘yes’ I’ll get into trouble with the Japanese who are not here yet.” So he decided to be in trouble with the Japanese. These personal effects were in Alexishafen for a while. I was stationed at Alexishafen at this stage. Bishop Wolf was still worried about all these things in the shed so he appointed Fr Jischke and me to find radios and weapons in the boxes and get rid of them. We opened all the boxes and went through them, and we found a few weapons – revolvers etc and we threw them into the sea at Sek. One of the boxes I opened had all the insignia of the Lodge in Madang and, on a serviette, were written all the names of the members of the Lodge. The leader of the Lodge was Mr Oakley. I took this and showed it to Bishop Wolf. “See here are the people who were friendly to your face but now you know who they are. We knew a bit more about Oakley then. Fr Wiesenthal got into trouble with the Japanese over these boxes.”

Brother Gerhoch asked Bishop Wolf what they should do with the Church records. In the end it was decided that they should be burnt. The missionaries made a large fire of their precious diaries, documents and photographs. The Japanese landed in Madang on 18 December 1942 and the following day they came to Alexishafen in the middle of the night banging on doors and ordering everyone out with their hands in the air. The missionaries were made to register their names and told to stay there, if anyone tried to escape they would be forced to dig their own graves.

Then Bishop Wolf was summoned to the presence of the Japanese Commander who demanded to know if he was the captain of the mission. Bishop Wolf smiled, "Not really the captain" The commandant shouted, "you laugh and I'll shoot." Bishop Wolf turned pale. He had a weak heart and from then on he didn't want to have anything to do with the Japanese. Brother Gerhoch and Fr Jischke took over the running of the mission and the interviews with the Japanese. Brother Gerhoch got on quite well with the Japanese Captain and when some Lutheran missionaries were interned at Alexishafen, he requested that they be given the same treatment and food as the Catholics.

The Captain said, "OK, if the Bishop wants them to and you want them to, they can have the same food and treatment as you have." After this, the Lutherans were no longer restricted to house arrest. Thus began a mixing of the Lutheran missionaries with the Catholics, something that was rare before the war. The Japanese did not ask whether the missionaries were Catholic or Lutheran, but put them all together in the same prison camps.

During the war, Fr Lipman was appointed by Bishop Wolf to take charge of Alexishafen when the others had fled to the bush. He cleaned the cathedral several times a week and said Mass there everyday. The Japanese saw the respect he had and they respected the cathedral. If they wanted to have a meeting they would ask if they could go inside and hold the meeting and when they went in to the church they bowed, but it was never used for military purposes.

Brother Gerhoch:

The air attacks were getting worse and worse all the time. The Bishop was concerned for everyone and wanted them to stay in the shelters as much as possible. On 9 April 1943, Alexishafen was bombed and the Sisters' house was burnt down. The poor sisters had nowhere to go. After that, we got permission to go into the bush at a place we called Maria Hill and here we planted hundreds of yams. You could imagine that the Japanese wanted these yams for themselves so they took us away over to Manam Island.

In the meantime, I got Blackwater fever and the Bishop was very anxious about me and did his best to look after me. As soon as I was strong enough, he sent someone to take me out to Maria Hill as well. I was so ill I could hardly do anything. We had no medicine. Okasi was the interpreter and he was good to us. We were satisfied that he tried to do as well has he could (Interview by the author).

In August 1943, the whole station was bombed again. They could do nothing as they were out in the bush. The Australians and Americans bombed the Alexishafen mission including the cathedral. The beautiful cathedral was no more. The bombing got worse and worse.

Brother Gerhoch continues:

Up on Maria Hill we were safe in the bush. On 25 January 1943, the order came to leave our place in the bush. Soon after we were in Manam and the locals there helped us as much as they could. As we landed on Manam, the Japanese told us there was a nice hospital and everything there. Yes there was a hospital. The interpreter there was a cruel man. He came up to me and I was so weak I could not carry my rucksack. He wanted to give me a good hiding. Our previous interpreter gave him a good telling off. In Manam, we could have food from the local people but we had to be careful. If the Japanese saw us, then we would be in trouble.

Sister Kasbauer on the war in Mugil:

In March 1943, the first [allied] bomb fell in Mugil. It was like a signal. Some Japanese soldiers came to Mugil, looked around and left again. In April, the Japanese occupied the station, shooting and shouting everywhere. The Japanese soldiers are not good gunmen. Wounded cows and pigs flee into the bush where they perish. The smell in the air gives this fact away. A couple of soldiers make firewood of school and church furniture. As if there aren't enough trees. Coconut trees are cut just for the sake of one *kulau*. And still they have discipline. The interpreter was sent to ask if the soldiers were allowed to enter the church in their muddy boots. In Japanese custom, they would never enter any house in Japan with street shoes, how much less a sacred building. Fr Kemmerling gave them permission.

Every morning, the Japanese have a special church service with prayers and songs. And during this service they present a fourfold pledge: 1, obedience to the superiors; 2, contentment with the existing situation of war; 3, abstinence; and 4, faithfulness to King Nippon, the son of heaven (Kasbauer, 1953: 15-21).

One of the priests tried to hide the mission horses which kept coming back to the mission for a feed. The Japanese found out what the priest was doing and he was arrested. It took them three hours with all the Japanese officers present to decide what to do with him. The priest was pardoned and restricted to house arrest. The Sisters were determined to let the invaders see God's love and kindness. They mended and darned torn garments and cared for the sick if needed.

One young man, named Michael, seemed different and the Sisters found out he was a Christian when he asked for rosary beads and medals. Father was suspicious as many Japanese soldiers asked him for medals and used them as talisman against gunshots. But Michael proved that he was a Christian. He knew the Hail Mary and all the Latin Mass Prayers. He had studied for four years in a Jesuit college.

From now on, Michael comes to Mass every day. More Catholics are found among the soldiers, but they were not supposed to show their faith. The Japanese soldiers were very kind to the children. They respected women. No crime in this line was ever committed. The native women were at first worried, but soon they realised they had nothing to fear. It was said that there were severe penalties on such crimes, even death penalties. Sister Siglinde tried to keep the school going since the classrooms in Mugil were occupied, but it was a difficult task. The younger children were afraid of the bombers. The older boys had to help the Japanese to build houses. On Sundays, many natives came to Holy Mass showing considerable courage and conviction. The soldiers would tease them as 'Amen-boys' and 'Christ-slaves'. The Japanese couldn't stand the good relationship between the native people and the missionaries.

One day, the convent was raided by Japanese looking for radios. And what did they find? An old battery, which ceased to work in 1938, as the date on it showed, and an old apparatus used to cure rheumatism. The Japanese last hope of finding the hidden radio was the tabernacle. The Sisters and Brother didn't know where the key was (Kasbauer, 1953).

On the 13 August, the Japanese forced them to leave Mugil. The five sisters and the two priests were put on a truck and the brothers walked. The native people cried all along the road to see them go. When the truck broke down, everybody had to walk, guarded by soldiers. In the evening, local people came to help to carry the sisters' bundles till they were chased away by the soldiers. Next day, passing through Alexishafen, they joined up with the other missionaries. It was a sad but also joyful occasion as they had been greatly concerned about each other wondering if they had survived the bombing (Kasbauer, 1953).

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In November 1943, the Catholic missionaries were shifted to Manam Island where many Lutheran missionaries joined them. The old rivalries and antagonisms between the Catholic and Lutheran missionaries were broken down through suffering and sharing. Dr Braun, from the Lutheran hospital, tended to everyone aided by Brother Gerhoch and some of the Sisters.

On Manam Island, Dr Braun asked the Japanese why a German Brother was being maltreated and he was told: "These Germans did not think we could read the first Chapter of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* - that was very demeaning about the Japanese race, but now we are supposed to be honorary members of the Aryan Race". The Japanese took watches from the German missionaries and gave them paper money. When they gave us lectures, the Germans had to sit up the front. Brother Gerhoch said that they arrived on Manam at the beginning of November 1943 and stayed until the beginning of February 1944.

Charlie Kramer, a mixed-race man, remembered Manam Island:

We were lucky to have Dr and Mrs Braun; the whole family call them Papa and Mama. Lots of us would have died if it hadn't been for him. Mrs Braun used to say to us, "If you find a rat give it to me, I will cook it", but we said, "not a rat,

bandicoot yes, but not rat". My brothers would go hunting and kill pigs. The Japanese would take the best parts and we would cook them and give the Brauns some. On Manam, Mrs Braun lived with us, the women stayed together. At one time, they killed and ate a horse. It was very hard. If the natives brought us food, they must go to the Japanese first and get permission but, sometimes, they would sneak it. The Japanese fed us rice, but dry rice is not good. You had to make soup to put the rice in so it would fill your belly up (Interview by author, 1994).

Dr Braun:

It was after this, while we were being transferred to the mainland from Manam Is, that the boat the *Dorish Maru* was strafed on 6 February 1944. As we lay on the deck one beside each other the American planes strafed us. We were told to take everything white off and lie face down. They were machine gunned and there were bombs in the water. 27 sisters died right away and 7 died later on. Sister Elreda was shot through the foot. The Japanese soldiers who died were identified by the disc on their fingers which was cut off and sent back to Japan. I was shot too but was saved by a cigarette lighter in my pocket.

The *Dorish Maru* then put into Wewak and the missionaries took their dead and wounded off the ship onto the beach. Later, they were forced back on board carrying their wounded and leaving the dead behind. At Hortikan Beach in Hollandia, they were put ashore and shown an old shed which was to be their new home. The Japanese made a platform at one end and guarded the prisoners 24 hours a day. Here Bishop Wolf became weaker and weaker.



*Fr Hemplemann, Br Januarius, Br Aventinus at Hollandia after being rescued.*

Brother Gerhoch:

The Bishop had a very big wound but he was always anxious about others and not himself. The Fathers gave the last sacrament to everyone they could. On 22 February 1944, the Bishop called me and said "Please Brother. I don't feel so well." I stayed for a long time and the Bishop said, "Go to bed you must be tired". So I went off and saw Fr Jischke to see if he could take over and then I would come again in the morning. Anyhow, Fr Jischke went first to a Sister who was very ill, then he went to the Bishop, but the Bishop was dead already. He passed away without any of us being there. The funeral was very poor. We had only a couple of blankets to use. We had to carry him on a pole like the locals carry their pigs. We carried him over to where we had buried the other missionaries. He offered his life completely for the mission and the missionaries. Yes, I must say we can never forget him as the great organiser, a good Father to the whole mission and everyone here would agree. As long as the Bishop was nearby, we were under the best care. (Interview by the author).

Later the missionaries were moved inland to Koya where they lived very poorly. While there, the Japanese made Dr Braun the spokesman for the group. While they were there in Hollandia, the missionaries were quite miserable and useless. The nursing staff took care of the people and most of the severely wounded. Sister Kroeger and some Catholic sisters died one by one and were buried there. Finally the Japanese moved them miles inland where they stayed. The saltless rice that they got went down and came right up again. They got one tin of bully beef to mix with the rice and divide amongst 120 people.

Suddenly, the American bombings became more severe and they had about given up all hope of surviving. One day there was a very severe bombardment. The Americans had landed in Hollandia at Hotagan Harbour, cutting off the Japanese from their supplies. The rocket fire was so severe that the forest looked as if a tornado had gone through it. Sister Elreda was in bed and she noticed Dr Braun acting like a little boy throwing his hat in the air. Sister thought he had gone off his head until she heard that the Americans were coming.

Dr Braun:

We could hear the American patrols throwing hand grenades around in the bush. Fr Hagen, Fr Kroeken and Brother Januarius tried to contact an American patrol. It was very dangerous as they could have been shot. They were fortunate and American troops and scouts came to the camp and rescued us. That was almost the end of the war

*Archbishop Pimico visiting Camp Cable.*



for us. I would say that the Japanese in general were quite impressed with us. We didn't have people who went psychotic and they could see we weren't filled with hate and that was one thing they found hard to understand.

The missionaries were transferred from Hollandia to Finschhafen; they were all nearly dying from exhaustion. They landed in Brisbane on 13 May 1944 and army trucks were there and reporters to take pictures. They were taken to an American hospital at Camp Cable, three hours drive away, near Mt. Tamborine. American doctors cared for them until 1944. In Australia, the German missionaries were classed as enemy aliens, but since most of them were very ill they spent the first months at Camp Cable. When the Catholic missionaries recovered from their war wounds and became healthier, they were taken to Marburg where they were free to move around.

While the missionaries were at Camp Cable, Archbishop Pimico looked after them. Stationed at North Sydney, he was a Vatican diplomat and was exempt from being interned. He was able to travel and do a lot of good work, particularly for the Italian prisoners. Dr and Mrs Braun were at Camp Cable too. Men and women were separated so there was not much contact.

Other prisoners-of-war were not so lucky. On 18 March 1943, the Japanese vessel, the *Akikaze* was the scene of a war crime. The crew of the *Akikaze* evacuated some Catholic missionaries on Kairiru Island and 38 missionaries from Wewak including Bishop Joseph Loerks. "Between Manus and Rabaul each of the adults was strung up by the hands on a gallows in the stern of the vessel, shot dead by rifle or machine-gun fire, and thrown overboard." The deaths of Bishop Wolf on the *Dorish Maru* and Bishop Loerks on the *Akikaze* meant that the Madang and Wewak mission centres had both lost their Bishops in the war.

Bishop Bernarding:

After we were evacuated from Mt Hagen and landed in Brisbane, we went out to visit the German missionaries who had been interned before the Japanese had arrived. They told us their story of how they were evacuated. These were the ones from the Highlands: Fr Nilles, Brother Prisilanus etc. The ones from Alexishafen came later when they were rescued from Hollandia. We met them eventually. Each one had their own story of what had happened. It was more a question of, "Thank God I got out of that alive"; because so many did not, rather than the question of "how we had escaped".

Brother Gerhoch and two other companions had been taken care of by the American Medical group and any sickness they had had been fixed up. They were screened pretty well before they left Brisbane and by the time we saw them [in Sydney], they were in pretty good shape and able to help clean corridors etc at the school. Everyone seemed happy to have them there.

On several occasions, we were told that there would be a good chance for us to go back to the Highlands and that is why we didn't get back to the U.S. I had the opportunity to go back to the U.S. on a troopship but Monsignor Hannon of Melbourne told me to hang on as he thought he'd have me back [to Hagen] in a

short time – it lasted 16 months and I never did get home then. So Fr Ross and I didn't get back to the States until 1956. So I came out in 1940 and 16 years later we were able to return to the States (Interview by the author).

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### **SSpS Sisters evade the Japanese and escape to Mt Hagen**

Before the Japanese came, the SSpS Sisters at Marienberg, Sr Helena, Sr Antionella Haandel [the oldest], Sr Vinciana Engberink, Sr Arnoldine, [the youngest], and Sr Auxilia thought they would be safe on their mission station on the Sepik River. Their gardens of bananas, yams and corn made them self-sufficient for a long time. There was enough food for the house girls and mission workers as well. The Japanese arrived on 20 January 1943 and warned them that they would return with a large army. So the sisters decided to leave, packed what they could, collected vegetables from the garden and piled them on a pinnace.

They left Marienberg on 31 January 1943 and headed off up the Sepik as far as Timbunke where they were welcomed by a brother and Fr Laumann who had always wanted sisters on his station and gave them his house to live in. The sisters thought they would be safe there and began to teach and garden. There were so many mosquitoes they could not work outside without a smokey fire going. Some local girls were being trained in the house, but soon their parents came and took them away. One wrote a letter, "We will see your faces again in Heaven."

After two weeks, the missionaries ran out of food, so they returned to Marienberg to get more food from the gardens. They killed a cow and cooked it in the kitchen. On the way back the pinnace broke down and they were late back to Timbunke (Interview by the author, 1971).

Sister Vinciana:

We could no longer carry out mission work because of an edict issued in Rabaul which forbade baptism and stated that the Japanese religion had to be taught in schools. We had always hoped we could carry on our missionary work but now there was no hope. We packed our things together in cases. We had the pinnace back so we packed that. I grabbed a calendar before we left and this enabled us to keep track of time and the saint's days. After two days we came to Kanningra where we met Mr Searson who told us that Mr Danny Leahy was on his way to meet us but he said we had to start out because the Japanese were too close behind.

A plane parachuted supplies for us. Fr Laumann and three of the sisters went on to the next camp, but Sister Helena became sick and Fr Laumann and I lagged behind with her. When we were still far from the camp, we heard Br Tiberius playing, "Holy God we praise Thy name" on his flute. This sounded like beautiful music to our ears. In this camp someone had left tea and other provisions. On the way there we came to the Kerawari River and the bottom of it was very slippery. We held one another's arms and helped each other across so we would not slip. We used the bark of a tree for our mattress and we had to wait in this place for

Danny Leahy. He arrived on 6 July and when he saw us he wondered how we would survive the long trek up to Mt Hagen. From then on our journey changed somewhat. We rose at 4 am and had Mass and then breakfast which was very rich from Danny Leahy's supplies (Interview by the author).

The first day after that Sr Helena and another Sister were carried in litters but Sr Vinciana preferred to walk.

We came to small rivers and many trees that had been blown cross the track. We walked on until we came to a large river with no bridge and had to jump from rock to rock and it was very dangerous. All the Sisters made it across. We came to a camp where there had been gold diggers. That night it rained and rained. Mr Leahy lined up all the boys and assigned them our baggage. We Sisters were not to carry anything. The boys just had to get us through safely. Mr Leahy told us the first five days would be easy walking, with a good track but I did not understand what he meant by a good track.

After it rained the track got very slippery, the way led up to the top of ridges and down the other side, on and on. We came to rivers without bridges and I was glad to have the help of Danny Leahy's boys. The second night had some huts at 1,130 feet above sea level. Our nun's habits were covered in mud and Danny radioed for more suitable clothing which was air-dropped to them; army trousers and heavy boots (Interview by the author).

At first the sisters were appalled. Nuns wearing soldier's trousers! However, they were more suitable for walking on the slippery tracks and crossing the rivers but they changed back into their habits in the evening.

They came to a river with a hanging bridge on 11 July 1943. They crossed one at a time and watched carefully where they put their feet. Sister Helena missed her footing, dislodged some of the wooden supports and half fell through. She was stuck there halfway across with the rushing water beneath. Danny Leahy encouraged her to pull herself up and get going. They had to hurry as the Japanese soldiers were closing in behind. Later, they found out that the Japanese followed them to this bridge and cut it down so no one else could escape this way.

Sister Vinciana:

19 July 1943: Now our five days of easy walking were over and we were 3,500 feet above sea level. I had two boys to help me get across deep rivers. I sat on their shoulders and another two had to support my carriers. Most of the time we managed quite well and I got new strength. Our camp was at 5,110 feet and we could buy food with shells. The local people we met had never seen white people before and they thought we were ghosts. They were very friendly and brought us food.

1 August: 6,600 feet high climbing up and down it was dangerous – after we left our camp the locals burnt our huts. We were now four months in the bush when we could have flown out to Port Moresby before.

2 August: We were stepping across large tree roots and came to a mountain which was all stones. One native pulled each of us up and another pushed from behind and then we were there. We crossed two big rivers but there were bridges. Now we did not use tents as there were *kiap*'s houses all the way.

7 August: We came near Wabag where we saw a plane but, not knowing if it was an enemy plane or not we hid, then continued on our way. The track from Wabag to Mt Hagen was in a terrible state.

11 August: 6,000 feet up Danny Leahy went ahead and made soup for all of us which he sent back with the carriers to give us strength. Sister Helena collapsed by the roadside and the men made a stretcher for her. We arrived five hours later at the camp.

16 August: We came to Mt Hagen but Fr Ross had already left. Only soldiers were there and they put us in the Father's house where we stayed for ten days. Danny Leahy organised the clearing of the airstrip but it was too dangerous. Enemy planes flew over and bombed the area but no buildings were destroyed. Some of the Mt Hagen people came in secret to hear Mass but meetings were forbidden as being too dangerous (Vinciana, 1973).

On 30 August, they had to move on to Bena Bena. The sisters said they were too exhausted so Danny organised sedan chairs to carry them. Danny and Mr Searson went with them but they were very tired. When they came to Bena Bena, a plane was waiting to take them to Port Moresby. Because they had to get on board quickly, they did not have time to thank Danny Leahy and Mr Searson for all their help and guidance. As they flew on their way to Moresby Sister Vinciana looked down on all the mountains and was very glad she didn't have to walk over them as well. Fighter planes accompanied them: one in front; two at the sides; and another behind. In one and a half hours they arrived in Port Moresby and were surrounded by journalists wanting to hear their story.

Sister Vinciana said:

The people took us to a house where a soldier was like a father to us. We could eat as much as we liked. They took photos of us which were in the papers. We stayed in Port Moresby for one week and then flew down to Brisbane. After two or three days there we went by train to Sydney and then Epping (Vinciana, 1973, and interview by the author).

In September 1943, Fr Ross came to visit them at the Mother house of the SVD priests at Epping and they told him their story. Later, Danny Leahy came with his sisters, mother and brothers to visit them and talked about the journey. Mr Searson's mother also came to hear about her son (Vinciana, 1973, and interview by the author).

### **The Sisters Return to New Guinea in September 1946**

The Sisters remained in Sydney until 1946. Here they gradually recovered their strength and were able to help in the SVD House. At last Sister Vinciana Engberink and Sister Antoniella Haandel were able to return to New Guinea. They sailed on the *Montoro* and arrived 22 September 1946 in Madang.

They bumped their way from Madang to Alexishafen on a surplus army truck which, according to one eye-witness, had to inch its way over 22 makeshift bridges. The Alexishafen of yore was unrecognisable to the Sisters. They moved into a galvanised iron shed at the water's edge. It had been a butcher's shop in earlier days. The former convent had been reduced to a rubble-strewn concrete slab on which an anti-aircraft gun was still pointing to the sky. Hearing of their arrival, the local people hastened to give them tearful welcomes, called them by name and wanted to know where the others were. They brought along heaps of yams, taro, bananas sweet potatoes, corn and greens as a welcome gift (Mihalic, 1999: 15).

J. K. McCarthy made one of the best judgements of the affect of war on the village people in his book *Patrol into Yesterday*:

Whatever the tide of war in New Guinea, whichever way it went at any particular time – it seemed to go many different ways – it was in the end the native people who were most affected. They were affected for good as well as evil, because the New Guinea war was not only the destroyer but a great teacher. The natives had seen their invincible white masters in defeat – driven from the country by the brown men of Japan – the fact that they were beginning to return, victorious, did not alter the knowledge that they could be overthrown (McCarthy, 1963: 214).



*From left in 1971: Sr Vinciana, Dan Leahy and Fr Laumann who made the escape from the Sepik. Fr Bus is looking on behind (Author).*

## Chapter 5. Madang since the war

### Madang Prelates

Bishop Stephen Appelhans SVD 1948 – 1951 (Alexishafen).

Bishop Adolf Noser SVD 1953 to 1966 (Alexishafen).

Archbishop Adolf Noser SVD 1966 to 1975 (Madang).

Bishop Leo Arkfeld SVD 1948 to 1975 (Bishop of Wewak).

Archbishop Leo Arkfeld SVD 1975 to 1987 (Archbishop of Madang).

Archbishop Benedict To Varpin 1987 to 2001 (Archbishop of Madang).

Archbishop William Kurtz SVD 2001 to 2010 (Archbishop of Madang).

Archbishop Stephen Reichert OFM Cap 2010 to present. (Archbishop of Madang).

### Rebuilding after the war

Fr Arkfeld, post war Rector:

When the war ended, we hurriedly made ready to go to New Guinea. We travelled on a passenger boat from Australia. We landed in Madang but moved quickly to Meilon, about 30 miles west of Madang. A temporary camp was already there. The site was very hot and there were plenty of snakes around. That is often the case when an area of jungle is cleared. We got busy killing snakes and learning *Pidgin English*.

The Australian Army Forces were still living in our pre-war mission headquarters about fifteen miles east of us on the coast, at a place called Alexishafen which had been a great place before the war. It once had a very large and beautiful cathedral and with workshops for carpentry, mechanics, plumbing and shipbuilding. Various schools had been operating successfully. Yet almost everything in the area had been destroyed during the war. When we eventually shifted back to Alexishafen, one large building still had a roof on it. We had a big roll of burlap which we had picked up from the American Army in Finschafen. We now strung this around everywhere and made rooms. It was pretty rough but we were happy to have a definite place to stay.

It did not take us long to get settled in Alexishafen. Only a small number of us, however, remained there. Most people in our group moved quickly to former Mission stations which had not had a priest for about three years. I remained in Alexishafen and acted as handyman in all sorts of things. I was also appointed Rector.

The town of Madang, and in particular its harbour, which is thirteen miles east along the coast, was our contact with the rest of the world. Our cargo all came to Madang by overseas boats, and we had to go there to get it by boat. There was a road, but it was crossed by a few small rivers that had no bridges, so if there was rain, the road was impassable. I took over the running of the boats and

almost every day I would go to Madang with one or more boats to get supplies or building materials and bring them back to Alexishafen. Everything in the whole Diocese had to be re-built.

The Diocese of Madang was very large at that time because it included what are now the four Dioceses of Lae, Mt Hagen, Goroka and Kundiawa. The missionaries were mostly American and Dutch. The pre-war Missionaries had [as yet] no permission to return to New Guinea (Arkfeld, 2015).



*Fr Arkfeld newly arrived at Alexishafen after the war.*

The young Arkfeld quickly went to work to help rebuild the war-torn coastal region. With the help of fellow missionaries, he built houses using palm leaves for walls and palm bark for flooring. In the early days of rebuilding, they didn't have the luxury of nails; they simply tied things together with vines. He also led the construction of schools and clinics while setting up mission stations.

In 1946, German and Dutch missionaries who had been evacuated during the war were given permission to return. Monsignor Willem van Baar was now the highest authority amongst them as both Bishop Loerks

of Wewak and Bishop Wolf of Alexishafen had died in the war. Because of the high fatality rate of mission personnel during the war, Monsignor van Baar had only 13 priests and two brothers to cover the whole of the Highlands region stretching from Goroka to Enga and Mt Hagen.

In 1946, van Baar appointed Fr Arkfeld to Lae where he had the mammoth task of re-establishing mission stations and supplying them with foodstuffs and building materials. At first, new churches and buildings were made of native materials until roofing iron, and dressed timber etc were made available. It was here Arkfeld decided that the best way for him to help the missions was to get a pilot's license which he gained in 1948.

From the moment he began his flying missions in Papua New Guinea, the people took notice. Unaccustomed to planes, they were impressed by this new priest's devotion to his work. Before long, they began calling him the "Flying Priest," and, later, the "Flying Bishop." Many people thought he resembled the legendary pilot Charles Lindbergh.

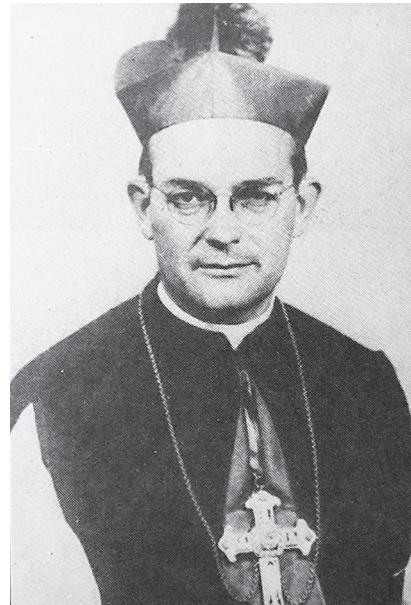
### **Bishop Appelhans 1948 to 1951**

After three years, Monsignor van Baar's term finished and he was succeeded by Stephen Appelhans as Bishop and was appointed Vicar Apostolic of East New Guinea on 16 July 1948. Bishop Appelhans was known as the reviver of mission stations and he began a seminary for local priests with 23 students on Pentecost Sunday at Alexishafen (Mihalic,

1999: 32). He also envisioned beginning an order for the local women and this idea was fostered after his death by Bishop Noser.

Appelhans was only at his post for three years when he died in an air crash.

Bishop Appelhans and Fr William Bacchus of New York died when a plane crashed into the sea 10 miles south of Lae in heavy rain. The plane, which had been on a flight from Wau to Lae with a pilot and six passengers, has been located in six fathoms of water half a mile off shore. It is feared that there were no survivors. Among those on board were Bishop Stephen Appelhans, of Kansas, Roman Catholic Bishop of Madang, and Fr William Bacchus, of New York, who was stationed at Lae. The priests had visited Wau to consecrate a new church there (News account, 16 July 1951).



*Bishop Appelhans.*

### **Bishop Noser 1953 to 1966**

Bishop Noser was known as an intellectual Bishop and educator, and founder of the Sisters of St Therese. Noser moved to New Guinea in 1953 to succeed Bishop Appelhans. He was Bishop for 23 years and was particularly known for his work in education. He was appointed Archbishop of Madang in 1966 and retired in 1975.

Bishop Noser kept up the tradition of meeting new missionaries as Bishop Wolf always did. Only this time they often arrived at Alexishafen by road from Madang which was now the main port. Fr Steffen remembered arriving at the Madang wharf and being driven to Alexishafen to meet Bishop Noser. At that time, the Regional Superior, Fr George Bernarding, had only recently completed building the new Regional House and he welcomed Frs Liebert and Steffen and set them to work varnishing the floors (Steffen, 2014).

Bishop Noser, a former novice master, was a quiet, serious, deeply spiritual man of great learning. He was a Roman trained canon lawyer; legalism fitted his character. He always had a firm idea of what he wanted to do and carried it out very methodically. By nature, he was aloof and retiring and could easily have become a cloistered monk; to him, faithfulness to duty at all costs was high virtue. He lived that conviction and expected his missionaries to do the same (Mihalic, 1996:21).

One of the first lay religious movements to start in the Diocese after the war was the Legion of Mary, at the initiative of the Bishop. The first group of the Legion of Mary was at Alexishafen among the station workers. Both Highlands pioneers, Frs Schaefer and Ross were devotees of the Blessed Virgin and by the mid-1950s, had already organised Marian processions with the Fatima statue of Madang. It spilled over to Rempi, Fr Ross's old station. By 1955, Alexishafen had a curia comprising praesidia from Rempi, Halopa,



*Archbishop Noser with sisters of St Therese and SSpS sisters Classens and Arsenia Wildenuns*

Talidig, Mugil, Megiar and Riwo. Mr Bill Morgan (later a SVD Brother) was the curia president.

During Bishop Noser's tenure, a new cathedral was built in Madang and opened on 10 September 1967. It was dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Noser wrote about the Cathedral: "While simple and functional in design, the Catholics are deservedly proud. It was solemnly consecrated in a most impressive ceremony with five Bishops present".

### **Archbishop Noser, 1966 to 1975.**

Bishop Noser became Archbishop in 1966 when Madang became an Archdiocese and there was a simple but interesting ceremony in the new cathedral. He wrote an article entitled *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* which describes the changes that happened in his time (Ruffing, 1969: 61). The Major seminary was shifted from Madang to Port Moresby and the St Fidelis Minor Regional seminary remained at Kap. There were changes in the liturgy also with the use of the local languages instead of Latin after Vatican II. Archbishop Noser advocated the use of the culture in church services wherever possible. He appreciated the finer points of the life of the local people and encouraged them to keep their culture where possible.

Noser said:

The people have their rites and ceremonies for gardening, hunting and fishing, their own music, singing and dancing; special birth, puberty, betrothal, marriage, sickness, death and funeral rituals; beliefs in their spirits in the souls of their ancestors and a host of others that are very real to them. There is much in them that is good, some that are neutral. Both of these must be studied thoroughly and Christianised so that they can be incorporated into the liturgy. Then the people will more readily understand and accept it and hold on to it" (Ruffing, 1969: 60).

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When our family lived in Madang in the 1970s, I met Archbishop Noser at Alexishafen and interviewed him. He was a kind man with a round face framed by round glasses. I had a photograph of him leaning against his bicycle which he loved to ride around the mission station at Alexishafen. The Sisters of St Therese used to look forward to his visits as he was the founder of their Order.

Archbishop Noser was looking back on the history of the mission from 1969 and also looking forward when he wrote:

The history of the past ten or fifteen years may be considered a prophecy of the future, for we have good reason to look forward with full confidence to what is in store for New Guinea and the Church. The future promises to be bright. Trying to read the signs of the times, to adjust ourselves to changing situations, spending ourselves in our work, we leave the results with filial trust in the hands of Divine Providence (Noser, 1969: 63).

Archbishop Noser retired in 1975 and died in 1981.



*Madang Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (Author).*

### **Bishop Arkfeld, Bishop of Wewak, 1966 to 1975**

Leo Arkfeld was born in Butte, Nebraska, USA on 4 February 1912. After a difficult birth, his grandmother promised the Lord that if the baby survived, he would become a priest and then the pastor prophesied that the baby would become a Bishop! In his childhood, the family moved to a farm in Iowa. Young Leo seemed to be destined for a

life on the farm until he accidentally shot two of his toes off when he was out shooting chicken hawks. This accident was the turning point of his life as it made him wonder where his life was heading. He wrote to the Franciscans and the SVDs. The brochure for the Franciscans was rather dull with a list of courses he would take before being ordained. The brochure for the SVDs at Techny had a photo of students playing sport and a swimming pool as well as the courses available. This decided him.

While he was on the farm, the family witnessed an early plane flying over; it seemed to be like a kite with an engine. His father told him the pilots were the Wright brothers. Looking up at the plane the young Arkfeld decided that that is what he wanted to do: just fly up there. These two ambitions of being a priest and a pilot were to be fulfilled in New Guinea (Archbishop Leo Arkfeld, SVD. Remembered @ Creighton on the web).

When Arkfeld joined the Divine Word Missionaries at the age of 20, he had to do the last three years of High School before joining the seminary. After he was ordained in 1943, he was assigned to New Guinea. Because the war was still raging there, he worked with Archbishop Duhig in Brisbane. He and Duhig became good friends.

Arkfeld was busy in Lae when he was told by the Apostolic Delegate that he had been appointed Bishop of Wewak. He was just 36 years old. It was said that he was the youngest Roman Catholic Bishop in the world at that time. The young Bishop quickly went to work to build up mission stations in Wewak with the help of fellow missionaries. They built houses using palm leaves for walls and palm bark for flooring. The construction of schools and clinics was another priority. In 1952, he set up St. John's Seminary on Kairiru Island to help build up a local clergy. In the early 1960s, he founded the region's first girls' high school, opening up the opportunity for hundreds of girls to go on to higher education.



*Avid readers of Wantok (Sent by the Word).*

As Bishop of Wewak, Leo Arkfeld, himself a Legion of Mary member since his seminary days, delegated Fr Jacob Blaes to develop the Legion in the Wewak area. Alois Kabaru on Kariru Island and Petrus Siaguru in Wewak were two of the pioneer members. According to Fr John Feeley, the Legion in Madang sagged for a while when the Charismatic Movement began, but was revived in 1982 after Bishop Arkfeld transferred from Wewak. He asked Fr Ernest Golly to finalise the *Tok Pisin* translation of the Legion Handbook. Today Madang is the centre of all Legion activities in the country.

In 1959, while on leave, Bishop Arkfeld, stayed in Sioux City, Iowa, his hometown. He was sponsored by the Cathedral Holy Name Society during his stay. He gave a talk in the Cathedral Hall on 16 September 1959 and included an hour-long film in Kodacolor entitled *Jungle Parish* which told of the dramatic story of opening new mission stations in the dangerous tribal areas of New Guinea.

Bishop Arkfeld began the evening with a few words of explanation of the missionary work being done in New Guinea. He spoke of the many emergency flights, which he had carried out to save lives. He had logged some 30 regular flights a week in the treacherous flying area of jungles and mountains and had built airstrips on shore lines and hillsides because of the necessity of ministering to the natives.

### **Wantok Newspaper**

While he was Bishop of Wewak, Arkfeld encouraged Fr Mihalic in his endeavour to begin a *Tok Pisin* newspaper, *Wantok*, which aimed at the grassroots level, that is people who had basic education but could not read English well enough to cope with the *National Times* or the *Post Courier*. This included villagers, young school leavers looking for work and others like drivers or *haus bois*. Arkfeld was at the launch of the first issue of *Wantok* on 5 August 1970. A school choir sang at the opening. Many years later, at the paper's 100th issue, it was noted that Mihalic's main objective was to provide a paper for *Tok Pisin* speakers who had been to school, taught to read but their education would be wasted unless they had a paper they could read.

Later, the Lutheran, Uniting and Anglican Churches joined forces in a joint venture with the Catholic-owned Wantok Publishing and the Times of Papua New Guinea. The Churches became shareholder in a new company called Media Holdings in which the Lutheran Church has a 20 percent holding. They acknowledged this was an important step in ecumenical movements in Papua New Guinea. In 1975, Archbishop Arkfeld oversaw the ordination of the first native priest, one of his proudest moments in missionary work because it signified that the church was beginning to take root.

### **Arkfeld as Archbishop 1975 to 1987**

In 1975, Arkfeld became Archbishop of Madang, and succeeded Archbishop Noser. Arkfeld founded



*Archbishop Arkfeld.*



*The Flying Bishop loading his plane at Ambunti airstrip, mid 1970s* (Brian Mennis).

two religious orders in Papua New Guinea - the Rosary Sisters and the Sacred Heart Brothers. He arranged for the Rosary Sisters to work sometimes with the Sisters of Mercy in their ministries of health and education. It was remarked that, "it is an inspiration to see the way the [Rosary] Sisters go about their duties" when they accompanied the Sisters of Mercy on their visitations to outstations. Sometimes they crossed raging rivers on log bridges (Flaherty, 2008: 85). The Sisters of Mercy had also responded to the call from Bishop Arkfeld to staff remote mission stations and address the needs of the village people in education and health (Ibid, 96).

In 1976, Fr Arnold Steffen, after many years in the Highlands was posted to Alexishafen as Regional Superior. Fr Bus was there also and began exploring different ways of Church Renewal, following Vatican II. His efforts brought him in contact with the Movement for a Better World.

### **Church Headquarters moved to Madang**

Alexishafen was seen to be too far from the main centre of activity in Madang and a cluster of buildings near the cathedral now became the centre of the Archdiocese. One building was the dining and kitchen where missionaries congregated over meals. Most of the buildings consisted of units. One of these was given to Fr Bus as his living quarters and as the office for the Movement of a Better World.

When he became Archbishop, Arkfeld faced a great challenge with a vast Diocese to cover and rough terrain taking days to traverse to meet the villagers in the jungle or up mountains. But he was undaunted. He began a mission air service, which used a radio network to dispatch small planes to remote areas during health emergencies. One night he was running out of daylight and had to land at the Madang airstrip in the dark. At that time there were no lights to illuminate the strip. What was he to do? He radioed a message ahead about his predicament so several people drove out to the airstrip and lit the strip with their headlights, allowing Bishop Leo to land safely.

Patrol officer, George Oakes, remembered Archbishop Arkfeld's flying skills:

Probably the greatest thrill I had regarding flying in New Guinea was when the first plane landed on the airstrip I was constructing at Nuku. The Cessna came

through the gap and landed easily on the new airstrip and out jumped the pilot, Bishop Arkfeld, with the District Officer, Peter Kaad and an airport inspector. The airport was immediately opened to small aircraft and, after the fill had settled and some more drains had been put in, I was told it would be opened to larger aircraft (*Una Voce*, 2011).

Michael Hutchins SVD remembered as a fourteen year old in 1963, when he was in the junior seminary in the U.S. finding heroes in the ranks of the Divine Word Missionaries in many countries, but especially Fr Willie Ross, pioneer missionary in the western highlands of Papua New Guinea and Bishop Leo Arkfeld, “The Flying Bishop” of Papua New Guinea.

We learned of their achievements in our classes and spiritual conferences. We heard of their exploits from older members who knew them personally. We met them when they came to the seminary during home leave and vacation times. These were larger-than-life characters, pioneers and innovators, men of competence and courage, romantics too, all in love with the people they had been sent to serve. They bolstered our youthful aspirations. These characters were reawakened in my imagination recently, nearly fifty years since the time of my initial formation.

[Later] I discovered that, --- Archbishop Leo Arkfeld grew up on a farm in western Iowa and never lost this connection. During his home leaves, as he sought support for the growing Church in Papua New Guinea, and he readily assisted in area parishes and frequently administered the sacrament of confirmation. Local Catholics were attracted by his missionary idealism and practical “can do” attitude. Two priests credited the Archbishop for influencing their decisions to enter the seminary. Four others travelled at different times to Papua New Guinea to observe first-hand his work and that of other dedicated missionaries (Hutchins, 2012).

Hutchins mentioned a 1959 article in *Time* describing the Bishop:

To Airman Arkfeld, a trip from the coastal town of Wewak to one of the vicariate's 38 inland stations was routine; he logs an average of 30 flights a week, carries such diverse cargo as day-old chicks, bull calves, building material, engine parts, Australian beer, food, nuns, priests and mission helpers. Now and then he flies armed patrols, native cops or doctors to trouble spots, and he is always available to transport the sick or injured to the nearest hospital. Furthermore, says he, by plane “I am able to make many of my confirmation trips with less effort than a Bishop in the U.S. or England.” Air transport over the dense jungles of Papua New Guinea was an innovative tool in the reconstruction of the missions devastated during World War II (Hutchins, 2012).

When he retired, Archbishop Arkfeld, opted to stay in Wewak where he lived simply in a couple of small rooms. The mission compound overlooked the ocean and was backed by the jungle. He could have retired back in the States, but he took out citizenship of PNG and chose to remain in his adopted land.

When Archbishop Arkfeld died in 1999, thousands of people attended the funeral service in Wewak. Bishop Kalisz said: "They loved him because he was always a very kind person. People in general looked upon the Bishop as being their father." He was survived by three brothers, Clem, Vince and George Jr.; and four sisters, Sylvia Bissen, Rita Kelley, Sally Kohles and Florence Ohlinger.

Fr Vince Ohlinger, his nephew, said, "The Archbishop's main thrust as a missionary priest and Bishop was to build up the Catholic Church in central New Guinea. He was an ordinary farm boy who grew up in Iowa, but with faith and trust in God he responded in the best way that he could to the events in his life."

His obituary appeared in 1999 in the *Catholic Almanac Online*:

21 August 1999: Archbishop Leo Arkfeld, 87, died Wewak, New Guinea. He was a missionary and Archbishop of Madang, Papua New Guinea, 1975-87. He was ordained a priest in 1943 and was assigned to New Guinea; ordained titular Bishop of Bucellus and vicar apostolic of Central New Guinea, name of vicariate changed to Wewak on May 15, 1952. He was the first Bishop of Wewak, Nov. 15, 1966; He spent 54 years in New Guinea and was known as the 'Flying Bishop' after gaining his pilot's license in 1948."

Archbishop Arkfeld wrote:

My happiness rests on your happiness,  
My happiness rests in God's happiness,  
It starts with God's well-being,  
And goes with God's happiness.  
  
As much as anyone's life can spread and focus,  
God's light and love and happiness,  
God passes on his happiness.  
I am happy to have been involved,  
in that wonderful activity of Divine Goodness.

(Archbishop Leo Arkfeld. Remembered @ Creighton).

Many people described Bishop Arkfeld as "a kind, considerate, tolerant, forgiving, patient, relaxed, gentle, generous and approachable man with a vision and boundless faith in God and people" (Mihalic, 1999: 96).

Huber compared Arkfeld's emphasis on aircraft with Limbrock's emphasis on boats; the changes in transport assisting in the Church's missionary endeavours (Huber, 1988: 207)

## **Archbishop Benedict To Varpin 1987 to 2001**

### **The first National Archbishop of Madang**

Bishop Benedict To Varpin was appointed by Pope John Paul II as coadjutor-Archbishop of Madang in March 1987. Bishop Benedict was a Tolai from East New Britain. Born in 1936, he was educated by the Sacred Heart Sisters and later by the Christian Brothers at Vuvu. He joined the Seminary of the Sacred Heart Mission in Port Moresby but left after a year as his knowledge of Latin was holding him back.



*Ordination of Benedict To Varpin as Archbishop.*

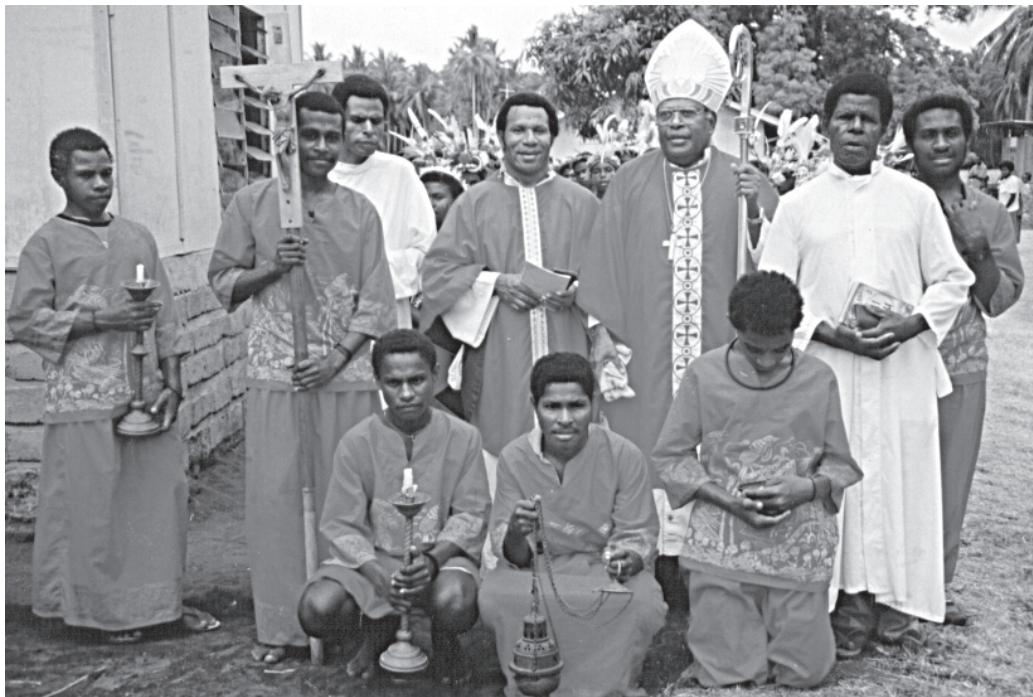
After improving his Latin with the assistance of the author, he joined the seminary at Madang. The rector at this stage was Fr Caesar, an African/American who encouraged the seminarians, and another of his lecturers was Fr Meier, later Archbishop of Mt Hagen. At one stage, Benedict developed swollen legs and his doctor was the famous Dr Braun of Yagaum hospital who advised him to give up competitive running. He had been hoping to take part in the South Pacific Games.

In 1971, Benedict was ordained in Rabaul and worked on mission stations in West New Britain. Nine years later, he was consecrated Bishop of Bereina. Our family were there for this celebration with the Meko dancers in their lovely headdresses. Bishop Benedict was in Bereina for the next seven years. He was a great worker and liked to do gardening in his spare time. Many were the times he was mistaken for the garden boy when people wanted to see 'the Bishop'. He would laugh and say, "That's me, I'm the Bishop, but I'm also a gardener." In 1987, when he was appointed Archbishop of Madang, the Church was already flourishing. Out of 300,000 people, there were 100,000 Catholics. One of the most encouraging signs of growth was that the congregations were full of young people at every Mass.

When he made his *Ad Limina to Rome* in 1993, he went with his old lecturer, now Archbishop, Michael Meier of Mt Hagen.

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When I, the author, visited Madang in 1994 for three months, I stayed at the mission headquarters. Archbishop Benedict took me everywhere: up to Bundi which was now



*Archbishop Benedict with altar servers (Author).*

part of the Madang Diocese; to the Ramu River where we crossed the River on a double canoe; to Utu and also up the coast to Bogia. It was wonderful to see how the Catholic missions in Madang were flourishing in all these places. Culturally, Bishop Benedict encouraged the people to include their colourful *singsing* groups in the Church liturgy. So everywhere we visited, we were greeted by large archways of flowers and *singsing* groups. Later the dancers led the procession into the church before the confirmation or ordination ceremonies. These were all treated as big occasions with traditional feasts and dances being held. Of course, this also attracted large crowds of people who were amazed to see a Tolai Archbishop. “He is one of us!” they said.

The 30 parishes in the Madang Province each had up to 10 outstations. Not all parishes had priests, and parishioners were being encouraged to take a more active part in the Church through the Movement for a Better World which was now run by Fr Bus. The Church has long had a stabilising effect in Papua New Guinea and proved a pivot for the lives of the people.

In 1994, there were 60 community schools as well as eight health centres. There are three Congregations of Sisters: the Holy Spirit Sisters in Madang, Manam, Mugil, Megiar and Bogia to name but a few and they now have many local vocations; the Order of Sisters of St Therese, started by Bishop Noser for local girls, also has many members; and the Sisters of Charity.

On 19 September 1994, came the news that the two large volcanoes Vulcan and Tarvurvur (Matupit) were erupting in Rabaul, Benedict’s home town. Over the following days, the eruptions proved so devastating they featured on the international news. There were only

five deaths from the eruption but 60,000 people lost their homes, including the family of Archbishop Benedict. Their village was covered in ash and their coconut groves were destroyed. Large amounts of dust and ash were deposited on the surrounding countryside and the town of Rabaul which had been completely evacuated. The old houses in which we had once lived in in the 1960s were also destroyed. Many people were evacuated to Madang, particularly the Sepik people who had lived in Rabaul for generations. How they managed to fit back into Sepik villages with which they were not familiar is a mystery. Lakunau airstrip near Matupit Island was completely destroyed, leaving only Tokua airport, near Kokopo, operational. Blown by the wind, the ash from Rabaul covered Madang airspace and over the following weeks, the airport was closed to small planes travelling inland as visibility everywhere was very low. The grey ash cloud over Madang town caused bright red sunsets.

Although Archbishop Benedict wanted to return to Rabaul to visit his relatives, he was advised against going by his doctor because of his bad asthma. Once he had contacted his people by phone and been reassured they were safe, he continued with his usual schedule around the mission stations. By accompanying him, I was able to get a wider glimpse of the whole province. The people in the Madang Province live in four distinct geographic areas: firstly, there are the mountainous regions in Simbai and Bundi; secondly, the coastal areas - the Rai Coast, the Bel area and north coasts; thirdly, are the people who live along the Gogol and Ramu Rivers; lastly are the people who live on the larger islands like Karkar and Manam.

### **Bundi: A Mountain Mission:**

Peter To Rot, nephew of Blessed Peter To Rot, told me about the Bundi people who lived on the slopes of the Bismarck Range. In 1976, when he was stationed there as a patrol officer, there were two sad accidents. First a volunteer from the New Zealand Peace Corps, Joe Campbell, who was working for the Local Government Council, was killed while trying to build the road to Brahman. He was crossing the area where they had been blasting earlier in the day and some loose rocks on the mountain above fell down and crushed him. He rolled thirty or forty meters to the river where he died. Peter To Rot had just put up a monument for Joe Campbell when the second tragedy occurred. It was a Saturday morning and the people were busy holding a market. The weather was bad, with low cloud and they could hear a plane trying to land. Apparently the pilot



*Bundi people* (Author).

could not see the airstrip so he circled around. Finally he found a hole, through which he dived, but he was already half way along the strip and didn't have enough space to land. As he was still trying to pull up, he hit a tree at the side of the airstrip. The plane crashed, killing the pilot and all eight passengers. In their wisdom, the Bundi people decided that the *masalai* that killed Joe Campbell was also responsible for the plane crash.

The Bundi airstrip is one of the most dangerous in Papua New Guinea. It had been built in the 1950s using bullocks to flatten an area on the top of a ridge, but other higher ridges surrounded it. To approach the airstrip, the pilot had to land uphill. Because it was one-way strip, the plane was then turned for take off.

I had Peter To Rot's words about the accident in my mind as I flew into Bundi with Archbishop Benedict who was ordaining Joseph Poga as a deacon. The airstrip was just visible through the thickening ash-clouds from the Rabaul eruption, but we managed a safe landing. A crowd of school children was at the airstrip to greet their Archbishop. We were escorted to the vehicles with children singing their rain song: "We need rain to wash ourselves. Our gardens need water to grow". The area was experiencing a long drought.

Although the ash clouds marred the view during our visit, the mountain air was fresh and invigorating. Each afternoon, mist and cloud come up the valleys silhouetting the trees starkly along the edge of the station. Everywhere, people walked about climbing down to collect water from the streams and then returning up their village tracks: their short stocky legs grew strong from the constant walking. The subsistence economy sustained them well and was supplemented with trade store food.

The Bundi Mission Station had been started in 1933 by Fr Schaefer, Fr Cranssen and Brother Anton Baar, and had now grown to a flourishing centre. Later missionaries journeyed around on horseback but, by the time Fr Anton arrived, there was only one horse left. He rode it before he got sick with epilepsy and had to return to the USA for treatment. When Fr Mike Morrison took his place, he did not ride so he shot the horse and the people had a great feast. The horse's skin was subsequently nailed to the kitchen wall in the mission house. When Fr Anton returned, his reaction to the death of his beloved horse has not been recalled, but the story was still being circulated.

When we went there in 1994, it was exactly sixty years since Fr Ross and his party had passed through Bundi on their way to Mt Hagen, and I was keen to talk to the oldest people to see if they remembered this occasion. I saw an old man at the edge of the veranda with his head down and chatted to him for a while. Then I asked him eagerly, "Did you see Fr Ross go past here when you were little?" He turned sightless eyes towards me, "*No missus, No, mi no lukim, ai belong mi i fas.*" The poor man had been blind all his life, and I felt foolish for having asked him if he had seen anybody. He just sits on the veranda at the mission centre and the Parish priest, Fr John, helps him.

Eventually, Rudolph Gandine Katekis, who was a small boy when Fr Ross and party passed through Bundi, was able to give some information about them. Many people thought they were spirits of dead ancestors. They were over-awed by the white missionaries and all the cargo their carriers had especially all the shells with which they used to buy food.

In 1994, the mission centre had a medical clinic and provided social services. The school was built of local timber. In his time, Fr Morrison had co-ordinated the various villages to come together for festivities. The mission station is well ordered with small buildings around a central oval, used for ball games and plays put on for visitors and we were no exception. Sadly, the youth and their new ideas were taking over from their parents who were no longer revered as the protectors or curators of the culture. There was a certain amount of breakdown in law and order. Not all people stay with the church and there is growing concern about smaller denominations which have come into the area and fragment the parishes, undermining the work of the mainline churches. The nearby government station and hospital had been opened in 1956 but it was still only a small outpost. The road up to it was scary: just carved into the hillside with a complete drop off to one side. There was a small house in the sub-district, a medical clinic and a small police headquarters.

Before the deaconate service on the Sunday morning, the dancers' feet thumped the ground, with grass skirts and headdresses swaying to the beat of the drums. Yes, it was time to dance and sing, as another local Bundi man became a deacon. Then the Archbishop with his tall red mitre joined in the procession with rows of altar boys dressed in red. They were preceded by two rows of the dancers who led the procession into the church and stood near the altar providing a very colourful background to the ceremony. Joseph Poga had a special seat built for himself on a litter and was carried into the church like a big chief. The Archbishop had reservations about this, but Joseph, flanked by his parents, looked very happy on this his special day. As a result of bringing the culture into the ceremony, hundreds of local people were attracted to it. That evening there was a very colourful *singsing* in the school hall followed by a great feast.

While we were in Bundi for those few days, the clouds and ash from the Rabaul volcanoes continued to billow into the sky and were carried across mainland New Guinea by the winds. By the time we were ready to leave, there was a thick build up of clouds and ash and we began to worry. The pilot flew over but could not see the airstrip and returned to Madang. Later, he tried again and managed to land. As we were taking off, Bishop Benedict blessed the plane and us. There were many dangerous moments as the plane taxied down the airstrip and took off into the clouded valley: enshrouded ridges and mountains surrounded us. At any moment we could have crashed. The pilot climbed as high as possible as quickly as possible and we were able to return safely to Madang. The pilot realised how dangerous the airstrip was under the ash cloud and the Bundi airstrip was closed to further traffic for many weeks after this. If the pilot hadn't come in, we would have had to walk down to the Highlands Highway to get back to Madang.

### **Malala, a Coastal Mission**

Sometime later, I travelled along the North Coast Road to Malala, near Bogia, with Archbishop Benedict and his secretary. The road was good and several bridges built in the 1970s by the Public Works Department crossed the main rivers. More recently, the road has been upgraded to a highway with overseas aid. However, recent attacks on people travelling on this highway gave it the reputation of a *raskel* zone.

We drove there by the mission 4WD and Benedict pointed out the worst *raskel* areas. The Bogia bank had been closed after a number of hold-ups and the people had to go to Madang for their banking. If this was not possible, they relied on the missionaries going to Madang to do it for them. However, word was soon out and then the missionaries were attacked so they had to cease being the local bankers. There is not much community activity in the area and the stores were run down. Brother Cassius, a builder and carpenter, operated a good store at the Bogia Mission. He used to go to Madang every week to do the mission business and finances, following a very close schedule. The *raskels* knew what his schedule was and they waylaid him and stabbed him several times, robbing him of the mission funds. He survived the attack. Many missionaries have been attacked or their cars stolen over the last few years.

Bogia had once been a flourishing centre for the North Coast. Peter To Rot had spent 6 years there in the 1970s, when it was the central meeting place for arrivals and departures of all the outstations in the area. There had been a primary school, a church and a large presbytery where the priests had their meetings. Bogia supplied meat to the outstations in those days but there is nothing there now. Times have changed; the schools have become localised and are run by boards. The VSOs (volunteers) have left and now one priest looks after three or four stations.

We were on our way for a confirmation service at Malala High School, which was this side of Bogia, and it was there I met the famous Sister Jane Frances Millane who had done wonders at the High School for many years. It was not long after the Rabaul eruption and despite the fact that he was very upset and worried about his family, Archbishop Benedict continued his missionary duties. I was amazed at the courage of the man as I knew how devastated he was about the eruption and its effects on his people. That evening, in private, he broke down and several of us talked him through the trauma.

### **The Ramu River Missions**

The Ramu River had always sounded fascinating. The culture is similar to the Sepik River people and there were probably trading connections between them going back hundreds of years. All these river people were famous carvers and artists and often came to Madang to sell their products at the market. I was able to visit their area for the first time in October 1994. Again, I had the privilege of accompanying Archbishop Benedict and his party to a confirmation ceremony. I was to learn that the people really appreciate the church these days and used cultural items in the ceremonies. The vessels used on the altar were carved wooden chalices and *singsing* groups took part in the procession accompanied by the drumming of the *kundu*.

The day we set out for the Ramu River, we left Madang at 9.30am and finally arrived at our destination the Kayan Mission Centre at 6.00pm. We drove along the north coast road under the coconuts, past Malala and Bogia and then turned off down a very bumpy track edged with kunai grass as high as the roof of the 4WD vehicle. The people were anxiously waiting to greet their Archbishop at Damur Village and what a welcome! Garlands were put around our necks and a band welcomed us. Then it was on to Gamai Village, where the car was left. Again more garlands and decorated archways to greet the Archbishop and a feast was set out. Six of us sat around a table in the middle of



*Kayan Villagers welcome Archbishop Benedict (Author).*

the village square and ate fish with rice and gravy over the top. Of course there was the inevitable yams and *kaukau*, which were good in small quantities. I was the only European within miles but at no stage did I feel intimidated. The people were caring and cheerful and all wanted to shake hands with us. The sights and sounds of the day were extraordinary, and the people were so excited that their Archbishop had come and he was one of them.

We were then sung down to the Ramu River where two canoes had been tied together for stability. Planks laid across provided support for the Bishop's chair garlanded with more shredded fronds. The Ramu canoes are very swift with pointed wooden crocodile heads and no outrigger. The single canoes are paddled standing up which requires much balance and poise. We watched several young boys paddling past with strong strokes in single canoes with crocodile carved prows. We were told that just here a canoe full of missionaries had overbalanced with nuns and priests in the water. Fortunately, they were all saved.

Our double canoe was paddled past many lagoons and inlets. We passed a wide fish trap set right across one inlet with only enough room for a canoe to get through. Later we were shown the special net placed half way along the trap. When we arrived at the village, the choir sang its song of welcome to the Archbishop with more garlands, more speeches and more hand shaking. Then the string band played and suddenly down the track came another *singsing* group surrounding us with their swirling skirts, stomping feet and bobbing chest decorations.

The Bishop's chair was then moved to the truck and tied on the back while I sat in the front next to the driver. Bishop Benedict was feted with the *singsing* group all the way to the village. It was growing dark by now and the drumming, the dust and the darkness could have been scary, what with the tall dark village houses now appearing on either side of the truck and the hundreds of people streaming past, and peering in but it was all great fun - one to be remembered for a long time.

Next day, I attended the confirmation ceremony in the village church. I noticed how the people enjoy the pomp and ceremony of the *singsing* and the procession into church and then how Archbishop Benedict did his part with his red robes, his shepherd's crook and his red mitre which towered over the people. The ceremonies show how the church has developed since Independence. For the big services like Confirmation and Ordination, colourful ceremonies were the order of the day.

Afterwards, in the presbytery, there were serious discussions about issues in the church and problems faced. There were other religions creeping in, leading sometimes to divisions between villages. These talks are a chance to bring things out in the open and discuss them. The results of these discussions will be mulled over in the village for weeks to come. Kayan has about 800 people in its parish and Bosman, across the river, has about 1,800.

The lower Ramu area has a lot going for it. The scenery is superb and there were endless lagoons to paddle around in. The water is clear and smooth and full of fish, *makau* etc. There were mangrove trees with large roots fingering into the mud. Most areas are too low and swampy for houses and gardens, so villages are few and far between. The people live by fishing, gardening and their coconut groves. They raise pigs and fowls. Stories abound of crocodiles taking dogs and other animals. A long time ago, a crocodile even tried to take a buffalo. Latching on to its hoof, the crocodile tried to roll it over but the buffalo was too large. Snorting and puffing, it tried to shake off the predator, but the crocodile's jaws had locked on the hoof. Little by little, bellowing out his plight, the buffalo dragged the crocodile into the village. The people rushed out when they saw what had happened, killed the crocodile and tended to the buffalo.

### **Kamdong, a cargo cultist**

Kayan and Bosmun have an interesting history. Not long after the war, in 1948, the Parish Priest there was Fr Hilarion Morin SVD. He built a large church from local materials: mangrove logs were bolted together for the frame; the floor was made of *limbum* from the outer rim of a palm tree; the roof was made from *morata* leaves. When completed the Church was 21 metres long and 4.8 metres high. He also built himself a house.

In those days, the Bosmun Villages had been following a cargo cultist called Kamdong who was opposed to the Church and tried to stop the people going to Church or even working in their gardens. Some children died during this time. Fr Hilarion went to confront Kamdong and was threatened by his henchmen.

Fr Hilarion tells his story:

Still standing close to Kamdong, I turned to the people around us saying that Kamdong was a fake and had no special powers. I bade them to abandon him

and warned them of the evil and harm he was leading them into, ruining their former prosperity, bringing disease and fostering trouble, but especially he was pulling them to hell. I then turned to Kamdong and repeated the same message to him. Then, with Kamdong's men holding clubs, some boys flexed their fists in fighting postures and surrounded me waiting to charge. Though they made as if to kill me, I made no resistance. --- Instinctively I stood in the sign of a cross with arms out-stretched awaiting the telling blow. – just then a tall, aged chief of the Bosmun groups appeared at my side, putting an arm around me in a protective, fatherly gesture. That was the end. No stick actually touched me, but as I later learned Kamdong was coming up behind me with a piece of iron to split my head open when he was stopped (1992: 44)

Sometime after this, Kamdong's private army was broken up with government intervention and peace once more reigned. The Bosmun people plied the missionary with loads of yams and taro to make amends.

### **Mission in Madang**

As Archbishop of Madang, Benedict To Varpin, became known as a great builder. He, himself, gave much of the credit to Brother Theo Becker SVD, his manager. "He is smart man and organises things well. There is a saying, 'The Germans live to work but the Americans work to live' and that is true of Brother Theo". The two of them made a good pair of workers. The story of how they built the Holy Spirit High school at Bogia is one example. It was going to cost a lot of money and critics were asking where were they going to get the money from, but they just went ahead and began clearing the land. They asked the Premier for some money and got \$33,000.

Bishop Benedict:

I got my council together to discuss it and they said have you got two million to start this? No one believed it possible. In 1994, there are four or five hundred students there. They went to grade 10 and then either went to Malala or St Benedict's Agricultural Training Centre.

After his appointment, Archbishop Benedict got busy fixing up old Church buildings as well as setting up new parishes. Some parishes which were improved were: Gusap, near the Ramu sugar factory, which is run by a German priest, Fr Hans Dapper; Kwanga Station which has a big health centre and new buildings with a new permanent church; Megiar has quite a large station with accommodation and training for catechists run by Sr Dominique; Mugil has a big Catholic health centre and this looks after people all the way to Bogia; Saidor on the Rai Coast has a church, and four outstations which Bishop Benedict visits by car in the dry season; Ariangon has a new health centre and house for the priest, new classrooms and new houses for the teachers and nurses; Banara has a big school; Biang, on Manam Island, has a church, health centre and school.

One of Archbishop Benedict's favourite projects was the St Benedict's Agriculture Centre in Madang. The motto is *Orare et Laborare* (to pray and to work). There the

students learn pottery, piggery, coconuts and agriculture so they can learn to cultivate their land. The mission obtained a loan of 3 million kina from the bank and over the years managed to pay it back. The school is named after St Benedict, a great saint for the youth (Mennis, 2007).

At that time Archbishop Benedict noted:

The ecumenical movement is strong in the Madang Province and in Papua New Guinea as well, especially between the Catholics, Anglicans, United Church and Lutherans. They are working well together and this could have been a trend that started at the time of the war. I am the chairman of an Ecumenical group to work with the other churches and was also a member of the local Council of Churches. When the World Council of Churches met in Geneva they invited me to go. Their building is near the United Nations building and it is a big organisation. There are 1.9 billion Christians altogether in the world and, of these, 1 billion are Catholics.

Archbishop Benedict, suffering health problems, retired on 24 July 2001 and returned to New Britain. In 2015 he was living in retirement at the Catholic Mission station at Vunapope when my husband, Brian, and I visited him there in February 2015 (Mennis, 2007).

### **Archbishop William Kurtz 2001 to 2010**

William Kurtz was appointed in 2001 after having previously worked in the Kundiawa Diocese. Originally from Upper Silesia which is now part of Poland, he arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1967 and was Parish Priest of Mai for thirteen years. Then he was Bishop Caesar's vicar general in the Goroka Diocese. Then, when Chimbu was split from Goroka, he became the Bishop of Kundiawa with 90,000 Catholics to be cared for. He was Bishop there until 2001 when he became Archbishop of Madang and became



*Archbishop Kurtz with newly ordained diocesan priests from Chimbu at Kundiawa. From left: Frs John Garia, Antol Bal and Luke Apa (Sent by the Word).*



***Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, at Goroka with Polish priests (Sent by the Word).***

known for his relief work with the people of Manam Island.

The visit to Papua New Guinea of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, in 1972 was a great occasion for the Polish missionaries in the highlands. There was a photograph of them surrounded by Highlanders in full traditional attire.

Arnold Mandua remembered Fr Kurtz:

Fr Kurtz was the parish priest of Mai Catholic Mission in the Yongomugl area in the 1970s and 1980s and I remember him as the priest who celebrated the final mass in Kondiu High School during my graduation in 1981.

His homily to us Grade 10s that year (and I remember every word) was “Education is like climbing a mountain and when you reach the top and look back you will see wonderful scenery around you.” (Web site).

Manam Island’s continual eruptions meant most of the population had to be shifted to the mainland. It was a joint effort between Caritas Australia and the Archdiocese of Madang to implement the Manam Island Relief Program. The eruption in 2004, forced the evacuation of about 10,000 people. Many of these people were Catholic and it became an endeavour of the church to help them. On 28 January 2005, there was another big eruption but, because of the Boxing Day tsunami, it received little media attention. As a result of these eruptions many people were moving permanently from the island some living in care centres north of Madang town, relying on aid assistance for food and medicine.

Archbishop Kurtz said:

The people are used to hardship, but this is real poverty. Caritas Australia will be working alongside the Archdiocese of Madang to implement the Manam Island Relief Program, which will see assistance given in education, health and the retrieval of canoes and fishing equipment for food sustainability.

We are now moving into the relief work very heavily. We are about to start on building classrooms and health centres and to retrieve canoes from Manam Island. The retrieval of canoes is going to be a much bigger task than we initially thought. We are going to end up bringing back 90 canoes. However, this will greatly help with the long-term sustainability of the people because they can fish again.

The eruptions destroyed school classrooms, which has disrupted schooling of the local children. The program will provide education facilities so that the children will have an opportunity to resume their schooling in the centres. Medication and health centres are also badly needed.

Justine McMahon, Caritas Australia's Pacific Region Coordinator added:

Through this program we are focusing on sustainability, in which we are assisting and encouraging the locals to become self-reliant again. Caritas is assisting the displaced people to build classrooms and health centres so that the Manam people can get some normality back into their lives. Caritas Australia is responsible for the monitoring of this program and has allocated \$200,000 as an initial support.

Archbishop Kurtz retired in 2010 on reaching retirement age.

### **Archbishop Stephen Reichert 2010 to the present**

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Madang is a Metropolitan Archdiocese in Papua New Guinea with suffragan Diocese of Aitape, Lae, Vanimo, and Wewak. The Metropolitan Archbishop-elect of Madang, appointed by Pope Benedict XVI on Tuesday, November 30, 2010, is the former Bishop of Mendi, Papua New Guinea, Stephen Joseph Reichert O.F.M. Cap., a native of Leoville, Kansas in the United States and a Capuchin. He succeeds Archbishop William Joseph Kurtz, S.V.D., whose resignation was accepted upon having reached the age limit (Web site).

Archbishop Reichert writes:

I was born into a good Catholic family on 14 May 1943, the third of seven children of Arnold and Louise Reichert of Leoville, four boys and three girls. We lived on a farm about a mile and a half from the tiny village of Leoville, Kansas, where we went to church at Immaculate Conception Parish. Leoville had a population of about 200 people in all, mostly farmers from the surrounding area.

While still in grade school, perhaps the fifth grade or so, a Maryknoll Sister from our little rural community, a missionary who was working in Africa, visited our

school and showed a short film about missionary work where she was serving. The film was intriguing and at the same time frightening, a clash between Christians and a witch doctor and his followers.

When I finished grade eight, the parish priest suggested that I should think about going to the seminary and becoming a priest. I was an altar server at the time. I entered St. Francis Minor Seminary, a diocesan seminary, at Victoria, Kansas, about a hundred miles from my home, run by the Capuchin Franciscans, where I did my high school years. My parents were very happy about this and supported me enthusiastically.

My best friends at the seminary were going on to a Capuchin seminary after high school, so I gave up the idea of becoming a diocesan priest and entered the Capuchin formation program. When Capuchin missionaries, who were working in the Southern Highlands of PNG, came home on leave and visited the seminary, we were enthralled by their many stories, wide-eyed as we viewed the slides and pictures they brought with them. Many of us were anxious to volunteer to join the mission in PNG. But I was the only one in my class to go there.

My college and Philosophy studies were done at St. Fidelis Seminary in Herman, Pennsylvania, a very small village in a very beautiful area in the western part of the state. Later, I did my novitiate and made my temporary vows at a Capuchin formation house near Annapolis, Maryland. I finished my final four years of priesthood training, Theology, at Capuchin College in Washington DC, near the campus of Catholic University of America. I also studied linguistics at Georgetown University and the University of Oklahoma which led to my ability to translate many liturgies into the local languages wherever I was pastor in PNG.

I was ordained in 1969 and the following year, I was told by my Provincial Superior that I was assigned to the Capuchin Mission in Mendi. I arrived in Port Moresby on 23 July 1970. My first nine years as a missionary were spent on the Nembia Plateau, a bush area between Poroma and Nipa. Here I was with people

*Archbishop Reichert (Author).*



who were entering the early stage of evangelization. I baptized the first group of people, 32 of them, about three years after I arrived at Pomberel. That village became the main station of St. Martin de Porres Parish a few years later. These were my favourite years as a missionary.

My second assignment was at the Capuchin College, a Capuchin formation house at the Bomana Regional Seminary near Port Moresby. I spent four and a half years there before being elected Capuchin Religious Superior, a ministry that took me back to Mendi for six years. In 1990, after finishing my term as Superior, I was assigned parish priest of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Tari, a wonderful five years of pastoral ministry with the Huli people.

In 1995, I was appointed Bishop of Mendi by Pope John Paul II, and ordained by the retiring first Bishop of Mendi, Bishop Firmin Schmidt OFM Cap. All the people who had gathered for the ordination stayed on to say their final farewells to Bishop Schmidt who then headed back to the United States to live with the Capuchins in Ellis County, Kansas where he was born and raised (Pers comm).

Bishop Stephen Reichert was welcomed by the friars, and the people of the Mendi Diocese. One of his first tasks was to find more priests and religious for the Diocese. Missionaries of the Holy Family came from Poland in 1996 to take over the Ialibu area with its three flourishing parishes. Other members of this same community worked in the Mendi district. When the Capuchins withdrew from the Kagua area, Bishop Reichert was able to get some diocesan priests from Poland to minister in that area. Bishop Reichert was the President of the Catholic Bishop's conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from 1996 to 2001.

On 30 November 2010, Bishop Reichert was appointed Archbishop-elect of Madang by Pope Benedict XVI and then he succeeded Archbishop William Joseph Kurtz a year later, becoming Archbishop of Madang.

One of his major interests was the new Family Center against Domestic Violence, promoted by the government of Madang. The Church gives immediate assistance to victims in order to break the vicious circle of violence at home. A team of the police will investigate promptly and promote a strong and decisive action in order to create confidence in the population on the work of the police in protecting all citizens.

As reported to *Fides*, Archbishop Reichert said:

Domestic violence in the family and sexual violence are of great concern in Papua New Guinea. It is a widespread and serious problem that we have to fight and we need to work all together. For too many years, families have hidden domestic violence. Horrendous crimes, such as rape and brutal and repeated beatings of wives and children have been covered up. Punishing the perpetrators and compensating the victims are not sufficient deterrents to stop the phenomenon.

The Church of Madang will work to help stop violence. First of all by convincing the population of the fact that these cases cannot be considered 'family matters', but should be reported. A change of culture and mindset, and a change of heart is needed. For this reason, all the components of the state, Churches, the

government, civil society groups, are called to unite to say: “No more violence in the family! No more sexual violence crimes! No more violence against women! No more violence against children! Let us work together to stop violence”.

On 29 November 2014, Archbishop Reichert, as Chairman of the Catholic Church Health Services said that health services in Papua New Guinea were suffering because the Government was not releasing funds promptly. He expressed his disappointment that the release of salary and operational funds to the churches is frequently delayed. “We welcome the government’s commitment to health care in the latest budget. However, we urge the government to release funds on time to churches who run health facilities in partnership with the government Department of Health (Website Keith Jackson and friends).

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I, the author, was back in Madang for a month in April 2015 to help in the museum but managed to catch up with developments in the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Madang is flourishing and is responsible for many schools, clinics, community centres and churches. It extends from the coast as far as the top of the mountains near Mt Wilhelm. There are 142,000 Catholics in the area.

On 10 May 2015, I went to Mass in the Cathedral and attended the ordination of two deacons by Archbishop Reichert. It was a great occasion with an overflowing church made more colourful with a local singsing group and a band.

The first deacon was Deacon Solomon Akawa from Malala near Bogia. He processed into the Cathedral with a singsing group wearing feathers and masks. He was also wearing a mask and was held aloft by the dancers. He took the mask off at the altar. His family are mostly non-Catholics. His father is dead and he was brought to the church by his adoptive parents.



*The crowded Cathedral of the Holy Spirit at the ordination of the two deacons, May 2015 (Author).*

The other deacon was Eugene Grengary from Taladig. He had an interesting path to the seminary. After his parents died, Eugene was head of his family and was trying to settle some of the debts and get some money through the courts. One day when he was going to a court, a prisoner ran out of the building and the police shot at him. However, they missed the prisoner but wounded Eugene instead. From then on he gave up searching for money and entered the seminary.

The ceremony was attended by a crowded church which gives credence to the fact that the church is alive and well in Madang. After their ordination, the Archbishop put his arms around the two new deacons and the large congregation cheered and clapped.

Later, when I met Archbishop Reichert, he repeated his views on domestic violence: “it is a widespread and serious problem that we have to fight and we need to work all together. Evangelization in and through the family is one of the primary cross-cutting themes which has come out of the recent General Assembly of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.”

Archbishop Reichert:

I have enjoyed all my missionary years in the ‘land of the unexpected’. Through the years, the pastoral emphasis of the Catholic Church has developed to meet the challenges of a changing situation. Today Christian marriage and family life, along with the care, protection, education and catechesis of children has come to the fore. This is a pastoral emphasis not only in PNG, but worldwide. Witness to this is the recent Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis called *Amoris Laetitia* – On Love in the Family. This is my greatest pastoral interest at this time.

### **The Secular Franciscans from Remp**

While in Madang, I, the author, also met Sister Maria Awa, mfic, a Franciscan missionary who, since 2011, has directed the House of Prayer at Alexishafen, running retreats for priests, sisters and brothers. A few years ago, she was approached by the local Rempi villagers who were anxious to join the Secular Franciscan Order. After she received permission from the Archbishop, she began a group with 29 members of whom 24 were professed in 2014. A second group of forty people will be professed in two years time.

This last group of fifty was attending a training meeting when I visited Alexishafen in 2015 and they are most enthusiastic. They were sitting in a *haus win* near Sek Harbour where once the mission boats were anchored and where Bishop Wolf had so often welcomed new missionaries to Papua New Guinea. The cement slab where the cathedral once stood is all that is left of that once proud building where the organ gave out the hymns: the *Salve Regina* or the *Te Deum* welcoming the missionaries to their life-time of work in bringing the Gospel to the people. Alexishafen has been partially rebuilt with accommodation, dining facilities and a Bishop’s house but it is quieter now. The main mission activity is in town now where the Archbishop lives and where the Madang Holy Spirit cathedral stands. (See inside back cover).

Sister Maria lives in the house of prayer with her own sister whose family has grown up. It is a long building with eight rooms along the veranda. Being near the water, there is

the possibility of thieves coming from the water, and each time they leave one room to go to another sister Maria carefully locks the door behind her.

She was anxious for me to meet the aspirants in the *haus win*. I had brought some rosary beads with me as gifts and these were given to those who arrived first. While I was there, plans were being made for a two week retreat in July. It will be attended by a large group of over one hundred who will attend daily from their villages. Most of the people at this meeting were from Rempi village a few hours walk north of Alexishafen. It was the old mission of Fr William Ross before he left for Mount Hagen in 1934. Many Rempi men accompanied him on this epic journey and their descendants are still living in Mt Hagen.

### **From Rempi to Rebiamul**

In 2014, the 80th anniversary of this trek was celebrated when 500 pilgrims from Mt Hagen followed in his footsteps beginning from Rempi village. A year later, the Catholics in Madang and Rempi were still talking about the large group of Mt Hagen people who were accommodated in Rempi Village before they began the trek. Interesting for me was that the pilgrims followed the map I had made of Fr Ross's trek in 1971 while living in Mt Hagen. At that time, I interviewed the carriers and catechists who had accompanied him forty years earlier. This map was printed in *Hagen Saga* as part of the story of Fr William Ross. [See page viii].

### **The Divine Word University in Madang.**

On 3 May 2015, the Divine Word University in Madang held an Open Day when the students vied with each other to have the best display of their work with colourful balloons and posters. The University has 3,000 students and is highly regarded in Papua New Guinea and overseas. Its faculties include Arts, Business, Education, Science and Theology and, as well, the university offers degrees and diplomas in business management and administration to meet employers' needs and resources. All aspects of the programs stress ethical standards in business which is something unique to DWU and is very important in Papua New Guinea where corruption is a big problem.

The Divine Word Institute, later a University, was developed on a block of swampy land leased in 1964. Originally it was set up as a high school, opening in 1968 with over a hundred students in two Grade seven classes. Over the years, it developed into the Divine Word Institute (DWI).

In 1996, a hundred years after the first six Divine Word Missionaries arrived at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen in 1896, the Institute became the Divine Word University. In the Calendar for 2001, it was stated that, "the Divine Word's two year Business Diploma and four-year Degree programs equip graduates with the fundamental knowledge, attitudes and skills to become competent professionals in the corporate and public sectors. All aspects of the programs stress ethical standards in business, something that is unique to DWU. The University offers external diplomas in management and administration to meet employers and workers' need and resources. Teachers' Colleges, Paramedical and Nursing Colleges, and seminaries have also become part of the Divine Word University".

In recent years, Sir Peter Barter, proprietor of the Madang Resort Hotel and former Governor of Madang, praised the contribution that the Divine Word University made to Papua New Guinea and was particularly interested in the Tourism and Hospitality Courses offered.

An integral part of the Divine Word University is the Noser Library which consists of over 4,000 books and manuscripts on ethnography, history, manuscripts, photographs and other important primary and secondary source material (Mihalic, 1999: 225). So the first Archbishop of Madang has a place of honour in the Divine Word University: The Noser Library.

According to the web:

Divine Word University (DWU) is a National University and a leading tertiary institution in Papua New Guinea. Formerly Divine Word Institute, it was established by an Act of Parliament in 1980 and was established as a University in 1996. DWU It is ecumenical, coeducational and privately governed with government support.

Our vision is to be a National University, open to all, serving society through its quality of research, teaching, learning and community service in a Christian environment. DWU offers its educational services to those interested in improving themselves intellectually and spiritually so they can become responsible citizens and positively contribute to the development of society. DWU's philosophy of education is rooted in the Catholic tradition and well articulated in the University Charter.

The University is open to everyone, regardless of race, creed, colour or gender, who shares its vision to serve society through its teaching and research in a Christian environment. Students come from all 20 provinces of Papua New Guinea and abroad. DWU has a special interest to advance opportunities for disadvantaged individual, women and youth to help build the economic and social capacity of the South Pacific Region.



*Physiotherapy students at the DWU Open Day 2015 (Author).*

# Chapter 6. Mt Hagen after the war

## The Mission Resumes

Bishop Bernarding:

In September 1944, we were given the clearance to return to New Guinea. The Apostolic delegate and Monsignor Hannon from Melbourne were in contact with the armed forces and it was felt absolutely essential that someone get back to the country. Probably because of ourselves – we had told them what was going on there and the people should be contacted again. I understood some of the American and Australian Chaplains would have said Mass for the people. In this way, the people had been kept in touch and didn't suffer much from not having a Parish Priest living on the spot. They had Mass from time to time although from a spiritual point of view it would have been better if there had been parish priest there all the time. We spoke strongly about how we had been taken out [of Hagen] unnecessarily.

Although the Apostolic Delegate brought pressure to bear, we didn't get back when we thought we would be able to. It took 16 or 17 months to arrange it and everyone co-operated well. When we got back to Lae we stayed with Mr Horrie Nial – he was a major at the time. He looked after us and saw we got back to Mt Hagen and were able to continue where we had left off.

When we came back to Hagen, the people recognised Fr Ross by his stature and his voice and also by the fact that he could speak their language, but where was his beard? He started to grow his beard as soon as he hit New Guinea and he had a bit of stubble on him when he got to Hagen. We watched the progress from month to month and finally he got his beard back again but he reckoned it was never the same when you have a second growth like that after you've had one for years and years - that was his theory anyway. He used to have a black beard in the early days and of course it grew grey as he got older. He was very proud of his beard and anyone who came here always recognised him immediately because of it and also his small stature. He was always ready to take a joke and he used

to call himself 'Wee Willie Whiskers'. He used to amuse the kids or scare them. He would lift his beard and cover his face over one side and wink at the kids who would start to scream. That was one of the tricks he used to pull on them from time to time.

The Bearer of this pass

*Fr William Anthony Ross*

is a civilian in NEW GUINEA  
by authority of the C-in-C.

He will NOT, however, be  
granted access to Military build-  
ings or installations without prior  
reference to and permission of  
the officer in charge of such  
buildings and installations.

*W. A. Ross*

Signature of Bearer.

Loss of this pass MUST be  
reported immediately to H.Q.,  
New Guinea Force *ANGOU*



*W. A. Ross*  
H.Q., New Guinea Force

**Fr Ross's identity card.**

In Mt Hagen there were a few bomb craters around and one or two locals had been killed and the Lutheran mission at Ogelbeng had been set alight. From our place, a lot of equipment was gone. A group of Australian soldiers from signals had covered the walls with pin-ups and it took a lot of effort to get rid of them. We had to get hot water and scrub all the walls and clean the place up. The locks on all the doors were broken. There was a lot of work to be done as the houses had been used.

The church was intact but the vestments and the altar linen and other things had disappeared. The rest of the buildings, well most of them, had been broken into. During the war the catechists had covered the buildings with tree branches to disguise them from the aerial bombing by Japanese planes and none of them were damaged.

The soldiers knew we had altar wine and they had made an attempt to find it but they never did. When we came back we went to the place where we had hidden it - in an abandoned toilet actually - and we recovered quite a bit. Some of the corks had rusted. Those with real caps sealed with wax were good and the wine was still drinkable. We could use it at Holy Mass.



*Fr Ross and parishioners at Rebiamul after the war.*

At first there were no restrictions when we got back – we just carried on as we had after Mr Chalmers had gone. I went over to Ulga and Fr Ross made trips down the valley. He got permission from ANGAU and the authorities to move around the area. He went down to Denglagu to Toranambunan to Bundi and then back to Toranambunan and Denglagu and then back here. I made the trip about five times myself.

After the war, Jock Mackay was the officer-in-charge at Chimbu and he met his old friend, Fr Ross, who had a letter from the administration of the army in Port Moresby requesting assistance for missionaries with setting up the mission again at Bundi, a good day's walk from Chimbu. The Bundi buildings had been destroyed by the villagers because they thought the Japanese were coming. True the Japanese were heading up the Ramu valley towards Bundi but they never got there. They dropped bombs here and there and strafed some of the villages.

Jock Mackay said:

I sent out two or three police boys with Fr Ross to help get the people together and rebuild the church and the school etc. He stayed a day or so in Chimbu with me to get organised and then went on to Bundi to get going. Later on I got a letter from him thanking me and saying the church had been rebuilt and the people were happy. Fr Ross waited at Bundi while the building was in process and then he went back to Hagen. Later he came back on several occasions to see how everything was. After some time, another priest came to Bundi and organised the place but this was after I left. They had catechists but no priest until about 1946 (Interview by the author).

Fr Bernarding remembered the next stage:

Fr Ross may have made the trip to Bundi a couple of times but then at the beginning of 1945, I was appointed to Mingende by the Administrator of the mission, Fr Van Baar, and I made patrols to Bundi later. I was joined by Fr Dowd, one of the new arrivals and later another priest arrived and went to Denglagu. I was then the co-ordinator of the work in the Chimbu, so I stayed in Mingende and between the three of us we were able to rebuild and open up various stations.

In Bundi, most of the registers had been destroyed as people had used them to write notes and send messages back and forth. The registers had to be re-done as best we could by calling in people and asking them to remember who baptised them etc.

Eventually we got some sort of order back into the registers there. At the end of 1946, Fr Schaefer returned – he had been taken out under armed guard during the war. Rev Bergmann, Lutheran missionary who was also interned in Australia returned after the war with his family.

We had not been back to Mt Hagen many months when Kyngdon, the ANGAU officer, returned to Hagen in 1945 and restrictions were one more enforced. Missionaries were only allowed to go a certain distance from their stations and many outstations such as Kumdi could not be contacted. At the end of the year,

Fr Dowd arrived in Mt Hagen to help Fr Ross; however, his arrival was not appreciated by the ANGAU Officers.

In 1947, I was officially appointed to take over at Alexishafen as the Rector for the Society and I stayed there for five years. There was not much rebuilding at that stage but work had begun on the Sisters new convent. Brother Bonaventure had done a lot of that work and put up buildings including the old Brothers' house. The frame of the house was one of the few buildings left standing after the war and the whole community moved in there and that is where I had my office. The brothers' building is the double building which is still there today. Just after the war, it was used as a hospital by the Australians and one building after another was added. Another boat, also called *Stella Maris*, was bought. It was 300 tons with Captain Hall in charge.

I could speak the Melpa language a bit before I left in the 1940s and then I was in Alexishafen for five years, so I lost a lot of the fluency and I didn't give sermons in their language, any more. Fr Ross spoke a very simple version of the Melpa place talk. Those who studied the language could follow him very easily. He didn't use a lot of the different words they had in their vocabulary. I found it hard to follow a lot of their language as they seem to swallow their words. Chimbu people have got clearer cut endings and also the people of Wabag. At Ulga they speak the Chimpagig language which is much more guttural and the 't' is substituted for the 'r'.

Nep Blood, Patrol Officer in Hagen:

In Mt Hagen after the war, John Wayne, the actor, turned up with an actress and a baritone singer. The baritone was six foot four inches tall. At this time, planes were still a curiosity and there may have been a thousand people milling around. The baritone thought well here's an audience and he stood on the plane wing and started singing. Well the Hageners were delighted. They wrung their hands in glee.

Lindberg, the famous pilot, arrived in a Black Widow fighter and then another Black Widow came in with Brown as the pilot. They stayed overnight. One of the pilots was worried that 28,000 lbs weight of the aircraft would not be able to take off the airstrip. Anyway, Lindberg said to me (Nep Blood) "would you like a flight on one of these"? In the end I decided to give it a miss.

Fr Ross and Fr Krimm were having their photograph taken. Someone suggested that they take a full length photograph else people would think Ross was sitting down. Fr Krimm had a PSA Bantam motorbike. He had to have boots especially made for his long feet. If he wanted to turn to the left or to the right, he had to take that foot off the pedal. Fr Ross was a man who was always out in the bush and was not very keen on the social side of life. He was a human dynamo. My house was built by Brother Bonaventure as also was the District Office over near Gomis airstrip. Gradually other people came – medical assistants etc. but their buildings were mainly bush material buildings for a long time (Interview by the author).

An American plane crashed when Nep Blood was there and ended with its nose in the ground and the pilot was out the front of it taking a photo of it. He said the airstrip was too short, but it wasn't - he had just missed a lot of it. Nep Blood had organised stones to be put at the end of the airstrip and then it sloped down from there to the soft ground where the words "Mount Hagen" were formed in huge letters by flowers so it could be seen from the air..

### **Another plane crash**

In 1945, the US Army at Hollandia decided that their surplus should go to different mission stations throughout the whole of New Guinea. An American transport, carrying cargo for the Rebiamul Catholic mission, overshot the strip on landing. The plane became bogged at the end of the strip and the pilot tried to turn around, but in doing so, the propeller flew off through the cabin cutting off his legs. The pilot lived for about an hour. Fr Ross was called and gave him the last rites of the Catholic Church and he died shortly afterwards.

The pilot's body was picked up by an American plane and was taken to Hollandia where he was buried in a military cemetery. This disastrous accident made a sad impression on Fr Ross simply because he was so close to the chaplains at Hollandia and officers of the American army who had come in and out time and again and had spent various recreation leave periods in Mt Hagen or Rebiamul. It was a sad day when this happened.

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### **Fr Dowd**

Fr Dowd had heard of Fr Ross and the many stories and anecdotes about him in the early days of his seminary training. "A man that to my way of thinking was one I would like to imitate. This was why I volunteered to go to New Guinea because he was a man I looked up to".

When Fr Dowd came to Mt Hagen in December 1945, there were only a few administration people in the government station including the government officer in charge and a few assistant officers who lived in native material houses. They had taken over from the army who had given them civil control under the jurisdiction of ANGAU. There was unrest amongst the government officials because they were short-staffed. Fr Dowd's arrival was not appreciated - simply because all Europeans were not allowed to go from one place to another without official approval. He was sent in by his superiors at the request of Fr Ross. In the early part of his stay, the officials at ANGAU as much as told the missionaries to leave.

Fr Dowd:

The natives themselves were quiet and welcomed us and were happy to have us among them. I stayed in the administration quarters of the parish of Mt Hagen and became acquainted with Fr Ross.

The station at the Mt Hagen mission was very sparse: there was only one house and a few school classrooms, a church and nothing else. At this time, Fr Ross had been back about one year after his evacuation. He ran the station by himself with

some twelve boys who were his right-hand men. They had come from Rempi on the north coast and had served Father in all capacities as builders, mechanics and tradesmen. Previous to my coming to Mt Hagen, Fr Ross had done a good deal of patrolling in the districts around Mt Hagen and areas close to Wabag and also in the Wahgi Valley and had marked out possible locations for future stations.

Fr Ross was able to convince Mr Kyndon, the officer in charge of ANGAU, that they should be allowed to stay. That time Fr Dowd stayed with Fr Ross for only three weeks and in that time became acquainted with conditions as they were after the war. (Interview by the author)

After three weeks in Hagen, Fr Dowd was assigned by Fr Ross to the Chimbu.

Fr Dowd:

In regard to this assignment, Mr Kyndon was really furious as he said we had no authorisation for me to go there, because it was an unstable time, but he finally allowed us to settle down under very severe restrictions. So I stayed in the Chimbu area and started a school to train future teachers, catechists and helpers in mission work.

In 1947, the area was thrown open and all restrictions were lifted. Pre-war there was zoning [on the coast] and different missions were allowed only certain areas. But, in July 1947, all missionaries were allowed to go wherever they pleased and work in whatever districts they wished. For this reason, after July 1947, Fr Dowd went back to Mt Hagen and worked as an assistant to Fr Ross.

In those days, there were very few Catholics - maybe only 60 or 70 no more in Mt Hagen. These people were the nucleus of the Catholic population of Mt Hagen. After 1947, Fr Ross was able to start reaching the areas he had patrolled pre-war before the death of Fr Morschheuser and Bro. Eugene Frank. He went to every outstation and set up mission stations and patrolled day in and day out for five or six years. Fr Dowd looked after the schools in Mt Hagen for three years. After this, Fr Ross assigned him to the Ulga district which was part of the Mt Hagen parish before becoming a parish on its own.

What was Fr Ross like as a person?

Fr Dowd:

I worked with Fr Ross for six years in all. My experiences with him were mostly very pleasant. I found he could be difficult at times because he was very exacting in his work and sometimes a bit impatient with a new priest like me but, on the whole, I had great admiration for him because of what he had done and for his indefatigable work for the missions.

In the example he held up for a young priest, he never at any time spared himself. In regard to his own living, he was very humble and managed with nothing much. He was quite willing to go on patrol whatever conditions might exist so he could visit his people. The Hagen people were his life. He worked day and night and sacrificed himself to the bone in order that he might carry the message of God's Good News to the people. Let us think. After the war, we had 60 Catholic

people in the Hagen area but, when I left in 1953, we had close to 10,000 people. All during this time Fr Ross had proved himself a genuine pioneer missionary; a man who had become part of the people; a man whose direction was complete in order that the Mt Hagen area might be close to God and might be able to find a way to love God.

Among the native people, not many have fallen away. They have seen in Fr Ross's example a means whereby good was intended for them. Father has succeeded in many, many ways in training these boys and girls and giving them opportunities to advance. They have played an important part in the government of Papua New Guinea in Mt Hagen. All of the teachers and the nurses in the Mt Hagen area have been trained by the Catholic Mission. The schools in Kumdi, Fatima, and Mt Hagen are the products of Fr Ross's hard work. Through his patrols and his good example, Fr Ross did tremendous amount of work for the people of Papua New Guinea. The people of Hagen feel indebted to him and feel they could never repay the good he has done over the years (Interview by the author).

Bishop Bernarding remembers:

Some of the SVD Brothers brought cattle in. When I arrived, there were about 10 to 15 head of cattle here. When it came time to slaughter them, Fr Ross would get his elephant gun out, shoot them and bowl them over. Our boys knew how to skin them etc. We had no refrigerators in those days. So we had to boil or roast the meat and get the lard or tallow and melt it down. We would then put the meat in containers and cover it over with the lard or grease. When we needed it, we would take it out of the grease and cover it up again or we would salt it and put it in brine.

In the early days, I made our sausages and bacon. We had a little smoke house here and I used to get a hypodermic needle and get a strong solution of saltwater and take the bone out of the pig leg and just kept on injecting the meat so the salt would penetrate it. When that was done we would hang it up in the smoke house. We used the leaves of the casuarina tree or any other tree which would give a good smoke. In this way we were able to make our own bacon and hams and beef or pork sausages. We used herbs from around the place. We didn't starve at all – always plenty of food. It was a matter of knowing how to prepare it.

Karagu was our catechist from Wokenara, near Boiken on the coast, and did exceptional work in the early days of the mission. We owe much to him. As the head catechist he was responsible for many of our catechists. He learnt to speak the local language fluently and any of the lads he trained were the nucleus of our mission work here. They would go out to stations or open up new ones. From time to time, he would go visiting the stations with Fr Ross, though his work was mainly confined to the station here where he had his catechist school and where he trained his lads for baptism and so forth. When we were evacuated, he baptised any of the children who were in danger of death. You can see it is in the records of the mission.



**Moga ceremony with kina shells laid out (D. Leahy).**

He lived on the station here and had his own garden where he grew citrus trees, lemons and oranges which came from Australia. When he shifted and started working for the government, he dug them all up and transplanted them which was a bit of a risk but it came off and he is now producing oranges etc again.

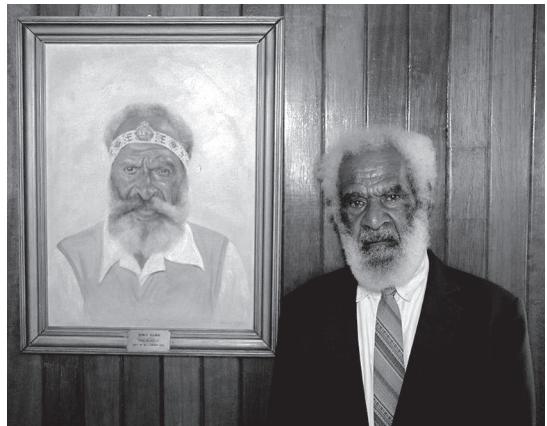
Karagu was not a teacher but a catechist. He married one of Wamp Wan's sisters and retired to live on his poultry farm near Dan Leahy's coffee plantation. His son, Raphael, was the postmaster at Wabag and his other children had prominent positions in the Highlands. Karagu did not return to the coast for many years and then only to visit.

Bishop Bernarding on Ninji:

If Ninji's last *moga* was between 1959 and his death in 1963, then I would have been there at his last *Moga* ceremony. The men lined up all the pearl shells and they counted them in twos. The man giving the *moga* goes up and down the line counting *ero, ero*, two, two makes four and he holds up four fingers on his hand the next unit is eight – i.e. two hands without the thumbs *engagle* that is eight. Then he begins again for the benefit of the newcomers who hadn't been there before. He passed on to the next man what he has accumulated. Any number of *mogas* can take place. Ninji had bamboos – *aumak* – almost down to his toes. After a while, he handed some of them out to his children so that not only he but some of the family own them to show their wealth. When they have dances or *singsings* you can pick the kids out with their pearl shells.

When I came in 1939, Ninji was in his thirties and married – at that time he had about ten to twelve wives, quite a large family. He lived up at Palimp which was his own place. He was a very friendly man and most helpful to the administration and the mission. He wanted to play both ends of the stick and was friendly to everybody. He was most helpful to us. If we needed men to cut the grass or do other work on the station, we just had to ask him. The same with the administration and that way he built up a reputation for himself of being co-operative.

He was later recognised by the government for his help in stabilising this area here. He was a very dignified individual. He was not a genuine *Mogei* but was from outside. He had quite a number of people living with him – the so-called *Koreba* or rubbish people – he offered them protection and they became his slaves and did his bidding. If it was necessary to take care of an enemy, some of these men would do his work for him. These serfs would work for the chief and he would protect them and feed them. They never married because they didn't have the money of course. That is all finished nowadays with the country being open wide. These men can get a job and buy pearl shells without any trouble. They can find a bride and have the where-with-all to pay for her. In those days it



*Portrait of Ninji Kama with a direct descendant.*  
(Photograph by D. Young with permission of the Mt Hagen Club).

was a reality and those people wouldn't have a hope of getting married whether they wanted to or not. It was in their economy. They were given protection and in return rendered service. There were quite a few of these people working in Ninji's garden or doing other work.

How did Ninji manage to build himself up as such a big man?

He certainly came from a chieftain's line – no question about that, but this was not his local habitat. Maybe the Nampagas didn't have anyone to lead them in those days. As I said he was the type of man to make friends easily. The fact that he had so many pigs and so much wealth meant he could easily get the wives and that was a sign of prestige. Each wife had to look after a certain number of pigs and very few of them would look after more than four pigs at a time. Once a wife had her quota of four pigs he would look around for another wife.

The government furthered Ninji's advancement because he was a pleasant man to deal with: an outstanding man and co-operated with the government so naturally they turned to him and he made friends in this group too. Ninji became the paramount chief in the Highlands. Wamp Wan was the *tultul* and Ninji the *luluai*. Ninji was a chief in his own right although he did not belong here. John Buri and Kedchika are the local chiefs here.

In his old age, Ninji's friends built him a permanent two-roomed house and he had a little place to sleep and a lounge where he used to meet his visitors. Fr Ross and I used to go up there occasionally when he felt he was getting towards the end. When there was little hope of recovery, he decided he would choose one wife as his official wife. His other wives were up in age and had their family. So we talked to them and they agreed that Ninji could have just one wife and the rest of them would just stay around and look after the gardens, the pigs and things. So Fr Ross baptised Ninji and I confirmed him that same day and within two or three months he was dead. He died in Mt Hagen in 1963 and there was a big funeral at the church – people came from town and various tribal groups were represented. Ninji is buried up in the cemetery. The women cut their fingers as a sign of mourning. Even now-a-days you can see some women with cut fingers (Bernarding, interview by the author).

Bishop Bernarding on Fr Ross:

In 1956, Fr Ross and I did a trip to Rome at the request of our Superior General and from Rome we went to Fatima in Portugal and also to Lisbon. We took the train over the mountains to Lourdes and from there to Amsterdam to our houses there and then to Liverpool and from there flew to the States where we parted. Fr Ross spent time with his relatives and I spent time with mine and then it was time to come back again. However, I was laid up for six months with a hernia. After this, Fr Ross and I returned back here to Hagen (interview by the author).

### **The Thirty Year man, 1926 to 1956**

While Fr William Ross was on leave in the USA, he was interviewed on television. At this stage he had been a missionary in Papua New Guinea for thirty years. Presenter

Val Bettin introduced him: "Fr William Ross of New Guinea is the oldest American missionary there. We are calling this interview 'The Thirty-Year man'".

When asked were the Highlanders friendly? He answered that at first they were not very friendly and had a war-like disposition. He mentioned the deaths of his companions, Brother Eugene who was from Illinois and Fr Morschheuser from Germany.

The following is a synopsis of part of the interview.

Fr Ross:

After the murder of our two missionaries, the government issued an order. No white resident could leave their mission. We were confined to our own places and this was enforced for several months. This gave me the opportunity to learn the Moge language. There were about 45,000 speakers of this language. No one knew anything about it and nothing was written in it of course.

So I started from scratch and learnt the language and made a lexicon of it. I worked tirelessly on this and then translated hymns, bible stories and the catechism into their language. In 1938, I mimeographed 500 sheets and handed them out. Then there was the medical work we did. A woman might come in selling us sweet potatoes but she would be carrying a sick baby. If we tried to approach the baby she would rush away. We were seen as sorcerers. After a while they let us bandage their sores and then they realised we were there to look after them and for their good. So instead of throwing spears at us they ground them and threw them away and now we have peace.

They are known as dancing people. You can go through the Hagen area and find a dance going on somewhere. The dances are done to show the prosperity of the people or after a good harvest. It is the happy, joyful spirit of the tribe. One of these dances is the *Mur* dance and it has nothing to do with religion. It is performed by men and women together. Young girls link arms with the men. This dance reminds one of a kind of bird as they go up and down on their feet bending their knees. There is also a long whistle piped in time to the dancing. Thousands of people crowd around to get a better view.

The *Moga* is the biggest social event. This consists of present giving. Let's say the chief wants to make a treaty of peace with another tribe. They pass over pearl shells trying to make friends. The shells are laid along the ground in rows and counted and checked. Each shell is worth about five dollars. They must be returned in value and accepted as a debt. Up to twelve hundred shells could change hands in a day. Then there is the exchange of pigs. The chief who receives the pigs counts them out. They are like a credit in a cheque book. Each eight pigs or shells exchanged are marked by bamboo disc which must be reimbursed in the future.

The people lived in a man's world. They see us westerners as very foolish: why should the women be allowed to make a choice in whom they can marry? The girl has nothing to do with it. All negotiations are made by the clan. Often the couple have not seen each other before the marriage ceremony. After the

bride price has been paid, which may be twenty pigs, the girl is brought to the man's house smeared with lard. The man might run away too scared to meet her. Maybe, a week later, the girl cooks a meal in public where everyone can see. She offers him food and if he accepts the food then he accepts the girl in front of everyone. In offering the food, the girl is agreeing to be his wife. This is the wedding custom of the Mogeis in Mt Hagen.

If a man gets sick, they try to cure the man. They hold a ceremony called 'Pulling Sugar'. They say, "let's try to suck out the poison from that man". They cut bamboo pieces and sharpen them. They place these on the body of the man and suck out the poison and then spit it into a tin on a fire which sizzles from that.

But now they say they have a real spirit man (a missionary) in the village. The missionary has been called and gives the dying man the last rites. The missionary is received well even by pagans who are willing to be baptised before death. The sick man is carried back to this house and the pieces of sugar cane are placed on a platform for all to see.

When we came into this area we found people who were living in an age of two thousand years ago. They knew nothing of steel, materials, paper or thread. The trend now is for the people to have a better life. The prime movers in this direction are the missionaries. There are now 36,000 baptised Catholics in 16 parishes. I am happy with the progress we have made in the last 22 years.

My greatest wish is that this work will continue. That boys and girls would follow in our footsteps. If I knew that we would have priests, brothers and sisters and lay people to go to the foreign missions so our work could continue then my dearest wish would be fulfilled (Fr Ross interview with Mr Val Bettin).

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### **Fr Gerry Bus moves to Wabag**

Fr Gerry Bus, a Dutch national, arrived in New Guinea on 17 September 1947. The ban on missionaries moving into new areas had been lifted in July 1947 and Fr Ross was keen to open up new stations. Fr Ross had already ventured into Kumdi, Kuruk, Kuli and Wurup which had not appeared on his travel permit previously but was keen to go further. Fr Ross had the policy of baptising all the babies that were brought into the Rebiamul mission. He had the feeling that they would be enough missionaries later to look after them while they were growing up.

Fr Bus:

I met Fr Ross the first time late in September 1947 at Nondugl. I think it was in the afternoon the mission boys told me a missionary was approaching the station so I went out to meet him and there was little Fr Ross with a pipe in his mouth. He was on one of his patrols in the Middle Wahgi and he had decided to continue his walk to see us at Nondugl where Fr Walachy was in charge. Fr Bernarding was in Minj. My appointment was to the Wabag area. Fr Ross had made one or two reconnaissance trips to the Wabag area and I was to go there under his

direction. That sounded all right, but in practice the distance between Hagen and Wabag was three days walking via Tomba. Fr Ross knew about my appointment to the Wabag area so when he met me in Nondugl he told me that he planned to make a trip to Wabag in the second half of October. I asked if I could go with him. He said, "Of course you must come too" (Interview by the author).

Around the beginning of October 1947, Fr Bus walked from Nondugl via Minj and Kuli to Mt Hagen where Fr Ross and he got ready for a longer trip into the Wabag area. Fr Bus was amazed at the cargo the carriers had of bedding, camping requirements and food.

Fr Bus remembered:

We left on 16 October walking via Tomba, Wailya and into the Cha valley. Here we stayed a couple of nights as we thought we might make a station there. After this we crossed the range to the River Lai. On that trip, Fr Ross actually surveyed the site at Yaibos to see if it was suitable for an airstrip. From Yaibos we went to Birip where we stayed and then we went to Wabag and met the Patrol Officer Mr Macilwain who was quite helpful. He went with us further west to the border of the uncontrolled territory near Sopas and then he returned to Wabag.

We walked as far as Kopen and from there looked down on the uncontrolled area. Then we returned to Wabag and spent the weekend with Mr Macilwain. On Monday, we walked back down the Lai Valley again towards Wapenamanda. Fr Ross advised me to build the first mission station at Pompobus not too far from Wapenamanda as the government was planning to build an airstrip at Wapenamanda and perhaps shift the whole government station from Wabag there. We slept there and then went around the north side of the Hagen range. It took us two days to get into the Baiyer River and from there we made our way to Hagen.

It was pretty rough going. – it has all deep gullies you have to cross before going down to the Baiyer River. I had had it. I was extremely tired I was sitting down waiting for the rest of the group to catch up – because I was leading the group. When Fr Ross came up, I said, "I've had it. I can't move."

He said, "Don't feel so bad because even now I am really tired. This is the roughest country I have seen." This gave me little bit of encouragement.

It was a long time ago that we made that trip but I wouldn't be surprised if we took plenty of boiled eggs wrapped in paper to prevent breakages. We always took enough tinned food, bread and honey hoping it would last a number of days. We carried a few American army canvas chairs and army cots to sleep in. I learnt from Fr Ross to take enough care of myself on these bush trips and walk with enough carriers and supplies and also to start early in the morning (Interview by the author).

Fr Ross wrote a letter to the Apostolic Administer, Fr Willem van Baar:

Fr Bus ought to be free at once to go to Wabag by plane with supplies, tools and a few boys. I can meet him there from time to time, either at Pompabus or

Wapenamanda or Wabag itself. He is full of enthusiasm for the new work and is willing to start as soon as you give the word ...Bob Macilwain is very friendly and helpful to us ... Fr Bus could remain at Wabag until he has sufficient supplies to start at Pompabus or Wapenamanda He has seen both places and cannot go wrong in his choices.

In February 1948, Fr Bus and Fr Tony Cruysberg flew into Wabag in a Dragon piloted by Fr John Glover with supplies. Here at Pompabus, Fr Gerry set about building bush material houses and a church. When Fr Tony went on home leave, Fr Bus was alone until Fr Bernie Fisher arrived in October 1949.

Fr Bus:

When I was on my own, I visited Fr Ross several times. I used to stay overnight in Wailya six hours from Pompabus and from Wailya to Tomba another 6 hours hard walking up the Hagen Range and then down to Mt Hagen. Fr Ross was my nearest neighbour. He was a very good host and always made sure you had everything you needed. I talked my problems over with him and the work I was trying to do. It is hard to remember now but he was the man who gave me advice. I would stay overnight in the priests' house which had been built pre-war. Fr Ross's room was the second from the end ever since I remember. There was the old bush church there when I first went there. It had timber walls and kunai roof. There were four small storage buildings and there were two classrooms. Fr Ross's office and the little room next to it were the kitchen and dining room – so tiny.

In the pre-war days, it was rather a wild place and then during the war so many missionaries had been killed including 60 Sisters. After the war there were only a few places on the coast that had sisters and it took years to start again. There was no sisters' convent in Hagen until much later after George Bernarding was appointed Bishop.

At that stage, Wabag was the administrative centre of the Enga District consisting of, "a cluster of bush buildings squatting alongside a long, soggy, downhill airstrip capable of taking DC3 aircraft" (Mihalic, 1999: 113). At the end of 1954, Fr Bus invited the Lutheran missionaries, Revd. Otto Hintze and Revd. Willard Burce to the mission to discuss the Wabag language. He said, "We learnt from each other and came up with a phonemic alphabet. This was the first time they had tried to help each other. Bill Burce was friendly on a personal level with some of the Catholic missionaries and they got to know each other" (Interview by the author).

The deaths of Bishop Wolf on the *Dorish Maru* and Bishop Loerks on the *Akikaze* meant that the Madang and Wewak mission centres had lost both their Bishops. After the war, Fr Willem Van Baar, was the administrator for all of the SVD missions from Lae to the Dutch border. He was the man in charge of everything. In June 1948, two new Bishops were appointed: Bishop Appelhans for Alexishafen and Bishop Arkfeld for Wewak which covered Mt Hagen and Wabag. The contact between the stations was by plane as

Bishop Arfeld was a pilot and would fly in regularly in his little Auster. So, after 1948, Wabag belonged to the Wewak Diocese because from Mt Hagen westwards the parishes were under that Diocese.

In 1957, the SSpS sisters arrived in Enga to teach at the Catholic school. Later, in 1958, others arrived to take over the leprosarium at nearby Yampu. Sister Ewaldine spent nine years helping the lepers and administering the life-saving drug, dapsone, which cured patients after several months enabling them to return home.

### **What were Fr Ross's daily activities?**

Fr Dowd:

Fr Ross would get up early and was a good example for the young missionaries. He was very faithful to his duties as a member of the Society of the Divine Word. He would do his meditation early and say his prayers before Mass by about 6.30. The rest of the day would be instructions, sick calls and office work.

Later on, when there were many Catholics, he was often called away to the villages to visit the sick. He never said no to a sick call. In the evening we would sit around and smoke in the little recreation room. That was the fifth room in the long wooden house. He was always quite pleasant. He would tell of his experiences etc and then after an hour or so he would retire. Most of the time he would go to the church and make a visit, then he would go back to his room and do quite a bit of reading. He retired quite late. He always kept up with the baseball matches with a good radio with a big battery. He used a pipe and in the evening and also he used to make his own cigars.

When I made that first trip with Fr Ross, it was twenty-seven years ago. He must have been about fifty by then he said to me, "Jerry if I can keep this up for another ten years I will be quite happy" He said that quite often. At that stage, he out-walked me – he outwalked most people. In fact, he kept it up much longer than the ten years; much, much longer. It was only in his last five years that he slowed down as far as the long distance-walking goes. He was agile and was called a mountain goat as he was light and quick.

As far as the missionary priests went, we got two big groups of Americans after the war and then another new group of German missionaries came in 1952. So the priests' numbers were built up much faster than the sisters. As most of the Highlands had been opened to missionaries in 1947, the administrator at that time, Fr Willem van Baar, sent a lot of new missionaries up to the Highlands (Interview by the author, 1974).

### **Fr Arnold Steffen**

Arnold Steffen was born 18 September 1929 in Dunkerton, Iowa, U.S.A. He was the seventh child of 10 children. He began his novitiate on 8 September, 1947 at Techny and was ordained there on 9 June 1957.

Fr Steffen arrived in PNG in November 1957 and was met by Fr George Bernarding who was the Regional Superior. His first job was to learn *Tok Pisin*. At

that stage travel to the Highlands was by a single-engine Cessna aircraft that were the versatile 'work horses' of the mission both for delivery of supplies and personnel travel. Thirty years later there was a network of roads communicating the many mission stations and planes were not needed to the same extent.

Fr Steffen:

Daily my 'hands on' experience was progressing: from accompanying Fr Ross on a number of nearby sick calls; and leading some of the week day and Sunday Mass celebrations; confessions; parish registers entries; to the planning of a full bush patrol of about three weeks of all the outstations to the north and east of Rebiamul. Fr Ross seemed to feel no need to accompany me on this extensive bush patrol, and some later ones as well, other than to advise me on details, and have a couple of trusted helpers to go along.

George Bernarding was named Bishop in 1959 and, with Episcopal Consecration and celebrations duly over in USA, was back on the job in Mount Hagen. Establishing the structures, buildings and all else needed for a new Vicariate Apostolic was a gradual process, but was started immediately. Fr Ross's role and mine continued little changed but with added duties

Bernarding's track record suited the development and expansion needs of the Mount Hagen situation! The vast Rebiamul parish, extended from the Wahgi to the Sepik and Ramu, tending roughly northward in a broad flaring corridor. The population was heaviest closer to Hagen but remained significant overall, only becoming increasingly sparse and scattered to the extreme north. Naturally Fr Ross's initial expansion efforts had been mainly centred on the nearer area with some twenty catechists on scattered outstations as far north as the Jimi River (Steffen, 2014).

In the 1960s, Bishop Bernarding asked Fr Steffen to establish a new parish at Mun on the existing road to Chimbu. He was guided in the choice of this area by Fr Ross's experience. The 'expansion era' was on! Mun was seen as a good site for a primary boarding school. Fr Jim McDermott was appointed to Mun, and his area of pastoral responsibility was suitably reduced, leaving him adequate time for school work.



*First Communion photograph 1964, with Sr Angela on the left and Fr Ross centre.*

Then Fr Steffen moved to the established Kuruk parish, which was 30 odd kilometres to the southwest. “In Kuruk I retained pastoral responsibility for the bulk of the original corridor to the north. But the expansion had only just begun!” In 1967, he was asked to find a site for another ‘break off’ parish. This time he began a parish at Kumdi. Later, Fr Steffen worked at the Bomana seminary as rector and then in 1976, he was the Alexishafen Regional Superior. He retired in 2009 in Madang (Steffen, 2014).

When Fr Gerald Theis arrived in 1961, he was appointed to the Vicariate Apostolic of Mt Hagen. He flew in on the Cessna 180, with pilot Fr Hoff. His first assignment was to learn *Tok Pisin* well enough to converse with the people. Mass was still said in Latin at that stage. He was taught by Fr Arnold Steffen, who was now fluent in *Tok Pisin* after being there since 1957. Bishop Bernarding, Fr Ross, Fr Krimm and Fr Misik were all working in the Diocese then. Later, Fr Theis was appointed to a bush parish for eight years after which he came back to Mt. Hagen as the education secretary. He became a member of the District Education Board, and a member of the Governing Council of Holy Trinity Teachers’ College. (Information from Daniel Kumba’s entry for the Crocodile Prize 2015).

### **Fr Joseph Knoebel**

Fr Joe Knoebel was newly appointed to the Hagen mission in 1964 during a flu and pneumonia epidemic. He, Fr Ross and Fr Meier went out on sick calls day after day. One night a woman came and said her father was ill and needed a priest. It was raining hard and the ground had turned into mud but Fr Ross set out and Fr Joe went with him. They drove a car for a while and then had to walk a long way in the rain until they came to Bindon plantation near the river. They walked through that with the clay there turning into a skating rink. They got to the man’s house and he opened the door. He was not sick at all. Fr Ross went in and said, “Oh a false alarm!” he gave the man his blessing and then the two of them re-traced their steps though the mud back to the car and then to the mission station. Fr Ross was not angry or upset at what had happened. Fr Joe was amazed at Fr Ross’s dedication. He was particularly good at hearing confessions and spent hours on Saturday afternoon doing just that listening to people’s problems and encouraging them. He could speak to the people in their own language which they found comforting (pers Comm.).

### **Fr Knoebel’s trip to Kopiago 1964**

In 1964, Fr Knoebel and Fr Steffen made a trip to Kopiago from 31 July to 20 August looking for new mission sites. On arrival, they investigated various locations, encountering rain, mud, mosquitoes, slippery roads and crossing rivers on vine bridges. The people not very friendly, as the Baptists, SDA’s and Lutherans were already in the area and had claimed their own spots. Despite this, Fr Joe concluded his report with the words, “It was a fine trip.” During that time Fr Knoebel found a mission site at Horale. “After brunch, we discussed land and a site of about five to seven acres just below the government station was marked out. It has two hills: the one suitable for a church, and the other for my house” (Knoebel, 1964). [My husband, Brian, and I both knew Fr Joe well as both men were amateur radio operators. This ability was very important for Fr Joe at that time for contacting the main station.]

## **The Melanesian Institute in Goroka**

Fr Knoebel's life was changed in 1968 when he became part of the new Melanesian Institute in Goroka. This Institute began officially in June 1968, after it was found that the Marist fathers, the Sacred Heart Missionaries and the Divine Word Missionaries had "for some time nurtured the same dream of developing a pastoral institute" (Mihalic 1996: 155). "The Institute is an ecumenical research, teaching and publishing institute. It is designed to help churches, government and other organisations speak more clearly on the needs of the people in Melanesia. MI's research focuses on topics of pastoral and social concern to people in Melanesia." (Web site). The first director was Fr Hermann Janssen MSC and his assistant was Fr Joe Knoebel SVD. "They gathered around themselves some specialists in missiology, anthropology, linguistics and pastoral theology and conducted their first orientation course of ten weeks for newly arrived Catholic Missionaries at Vunapope, Rabaul, on 16 November 1968. In 1971, they extended their services to other Christian denominations. "From then on Melanesian Institute became a joint ecumenical venture especially with the Evangelical Lutherans, the Anglican and the United Churches. In years to come they would share directorships" (Mihalic, 1999: 156).

## **Lay Missionaries**

Lay missionaries came from all over the world and offered short term or long-term assistance to the missions. They were welcomed everywhere and worked as teachers, nurses, mechanics and builders. One of these, John Macarthur, and his wife, Judith, arrived in September 1961 and worked with Fr Cohill (later Bishop) in Kuli, in the Mt Hagen Diocese, for two and a half years. John built schools, outstations, cabins, medical clinics and the like, looked after the mission's coffee plantation and ran a trade store to raise working funds for the station. Judith was a teacher as well and mother.

### **John Macarthur:**

Judith and I got to know Fr. Ross very well, an association which was greatly enhanced when our daughter Annemarie was born in 1962. Father really liked us to bring her to visit him. I have fond memories of him bouncing her on his knee while she amused herself tugging at his long white beard. All the while his faithful cook boy/factotum Aiwo would be hovering about, waiting to have his turn at holding Annemarie and marvelling at her 'blue *yau*'- blue eyes. As she grew older, Father would sneak her small pieces of biscuit! He really had a great affection for her (Macarthur, 2012).

John Macarthur found Fr Ross had a great source of knowledge about the Mogeï people and had a deep rapport with them as he could speak their language. He told John that learning the Mogeï language had been very difficult, mainly because of the way the language was spoken, as he put it: "we English speakers talk mainly with our tongues moving up and down in our mouths, whereas the Mogeï seemed to articulate with their tongues moving back and forwards." He noted that Fr Ross had a phenomenal memory knowing most of his parishioners by name and knowing their families and where they lived.

He lived a very simple lifestyle. His house at Rebiamul was the oldest on the Church's compound, thatched roofed, the kitchen area smoke blackened with age, the dining room furnished in a most basic way, while his own bedroom was small, maybe ten or twelve feet long by six feet wide furnished only with a bed and a side table with a full length book case lining one long wall and jam-packed with books, papers, magazines, an apparent messy jumble (Macarthur, 2012).

Bishop Bernarding:

After 1970, Fr Ross occasionally used to go out on patrol but not the same as he used to in the years before the place was opened up. Other priests came to help him and he would go out with them once or twice and show them around the areas. He stayed at the mission centre at Rebiamul most of the time doing his parish work and looking after the people. It was a full-time job. However, he would still do sick calls and go up in to the hills. For a young man, it would be very tiring and tedious, but he still used to do it if someone came in and there was no one else around.

Towards the end, he would be driven by car to the closest point and then he would walk. Occasionally you would see him out with one of the catechists who would walk with him and carry his bag. I would go with him on occasions – it wasn't always necessary that the two of us go but, if he wanted to go out, I accompanied him to various places where we did anointings and things like that.

In the early days, on his rounds he would stay in a lean-to or a *kunai*-type house. He would be gone for three or four weeks at a time and maybe stay a couple of days at each place. He opened up practically the whole of this area. Nearly every place where we have stations now he had visited before. If he went out on a sick call and was caught by heavy rains or something, he might stay in a house in a village, but he and the catechists had lanterns and could make their way back in the dark if the weather was fine.

If he was forced to stay out some place overnight, he would always send a message in. In other words, there was always one of us on the station here. If I was over at Ulga and found out that he was going somewhere, I'd come over but he still kept up that enthusiasm of moving to the people rather than have them come to him. He preferred to go out and meet them and stay amongst them and they appreciated that (Interview by the author).

### **Hagen in 1971.**

Brian and I, together with our two sons, transferred to Mt Hagen for six months early in 1971. At that stage, Mt Hagen was very different from Rabaul as it had only been discovered by Europeans in the previous forty years. The people still wore their traditional attire which was quite colourful. The weather was so much cooler and we were welcomed by the other public servants there.

Our next son, Gregory, was born on 25 March 1971 in the Mt Hagen hospital. We mothers were in the intermediate ward at one end of the wing with the nursery at the other end and through the middle at right angles was the main thoroughfare. At this time there was

a whooping cough epidemic in the villages and many children and babies were dying. In the hospital we could hear the poor patients coughing through the night in the next wing.

On the night of 27 March 1971, the Hagen people had had enough of this new disease which they saw as a whiteman's disease and the treatment was whiteman's magic and was not curing their babies. That night truckloads of angry villagers came milling through the hospital between us and our babies. We were told to stay where we were as our babies would be safe. It was a harrowing time for us as well as the poor village people. Ignorant of what was happening, they were wailing for the dying children. Several mothers grabbed their babies from the hospital beds and pulling the tubes out of their throats they carried them out. It was raining that night and I caught glimpses of weeping women walking in the rain with their tears mixed with the drips of rain down their cheeks and on to their sick children. We mothers took our babies home the next day, fearing our children might catch whooping cough if we stayed.

While I was in Mt Hagen, I also met Fr Ross. I took it for granted that his story had been recorded for posterity and was surprised that this hadn't happened. He agreed that I could bring a tape recorder and he would be happy to talk into it.

I also met Sister Vinciana who was living in Rebiamul. Semi-retired, she helped Fr Ross in his mission work. She loved to recount her journey from the Sepik to Mt Hagen during the war years. Every now and then she met up with Danny Leahy and Fr Laumann who had been her companions on the journey. (See Chapter 4).

I interested the wife of the Lutheran pastor, Marj Jamieson, in my research, and we visited various people, including Danny Leahy and many of the mission workers both priests and laity.

### **Meeting Danny Leahy**

One day in April 1971, Marj Jamieson, and I with baby Gregory drove out to Rebiamul to pick up Fr Ross. We then we headed off to the Dan Leahy's house adjacent to his coffee plantation. It was nearly an hour's drive and it had been raining again so the roads

were slippery. At one stage, Fr Ross looked over the edge down a steep cliff and murmured, "Oh, this is where a car went over last week and everyone was killed." That was not very reassuring but we managed to get there and were greeted by Dan Leahy's extensive family.

The women cared for baby Gregory, while we went inside and looked through the many photographs Dan had on the table and in photo albums. Great photographs of gold diggings; of early planes on small airstrip; of the



*Danny Leahy at his house in 1971 (Author).*

explorers, government officials and early missionaries and of the village people: their houses, dress, houses and ceremonies.

By then the competitive spirit between the Catholics and Lutherans had been replaced by more of an ecumenical spirit. While in Mt Hagen, Mr and Mrs Jamieson were friends of Fr Ross in a spirit very different to their predecessors at Ogelbeng. Marj's husband, Bob Jamieson later joined the Institute of Melanesian Studies in Goroka with Fr Joe Knoebel and Fr Hermann Janssen. He became the editor of *Point* and among other articles he wrote, *Theological Education in Melanesia today*.

### **Raphael Sabu**

One of the men I talked to was Raphael Sabu of Rempi. Along with Karagu, the catechist, Raphael was Fr Ross's right hand man. He was the *boss boi* for the trek to Mt Hagen, with 44 carriers to organise. Each rucksack had the name of the carrier on it and they all lined up and were given their rucksacks. Their route took them from Sek on a boat to Bogadjim where the plantation owner Mr Laufner met Fr Ross and they had a cup of tea before getting ready for the road.

The track from Bogadjim inland was very narrow. They camped the first night at Aiyau Village on the banks of the Ioworo River which they had to cross. The current was strong and the river infested with crocodiles. The going was level as far as Kwato and they camped there. The next day was Sunday so they had Mass before they set out. The track up to Yaula was very steep and they were hot and sunburnt. They camped at Yaula. Then they climbed further to Moto where they camped again. Then they came down to the Ramu River.

They slept at Yonapa on the bank of the river. Here they saw men swallowing long thin strands of *kunda* (vine) down to their stomachs and then pulling them out again so they began to spit blood. The cargo boys were afraid and wondered what it was all about. Next day they crossed the river on canoes. They climbed up to Bundi. It was hard as they weren't used to climbing mountains.

At Bundi, they had to wait for Fr Schaefer to come back from the bush. Raphael thought Fr Schaefer was *numba one* in caring for the carriers and everyone else. When they were travelling, they stopped walking at four o'clock in the afternoon, then built shelters and bought and cooked the food. Everywhere the local people came to stare at them, particularly the white men. When they saw them taking their clothes off, they thought they were taking their skins off. When they saw Fr Ross's beard, they thought he was a *tambaran* of their old *tabuna*. At last they got to Hagen and saw the Leahy brothers and saw the plane land. When the local people saw the plane, they thought their *tabuna* were all in it. They didn't think the cargo was for them though. [It was not like a cargo cult]. (Interview by the author, 1971).

### **A story by Gabriel Goimba of the Kauga people as told to his son Willie Goimba:**

Long ago, our ancestors did not see the face or skin of a white man. In 1933, Kiap Jim Taylor, Mick Leahy and Danny Leahy patrolled the jungles --- following the Chimbu River up to Kundiawa through to Banz and all the way to Hagen. They came with a lot of policemen and dogs. Our ancestors saw them and ran away

saying, "These are spirits of the Wahgi River, they are coming to eat us." They left their houses, food, pigs and dogs and ran away.

Jim Taylor built an airstrip and planes landed. They made friends with two men of the Yamuka tribe: Misi and Elte Kapi. A pinch of salt was placed on each of their hands and the taste was very nice. Misil and Kapi told the other people who were scared, "Come and see, they did not eat us." But they were very scared and ready to run.

Two girls, Dau from the Nenga tribe and Misa of the Jika tribe, married two policemen, Pup and Tuamia, who had come with the Leahy brothers and Jim Taylor. They went to Madang and accompanied Fr Ross to Mt Hagen in 1934.

Fr Ross is the face of the Catholic Mission. In 1935, he built the station and in 1936, 40 young boys, including me, went to school to be taught *pidgin* and to learn to read and write. Fr Ross and Peter Karagu taught us in *Tok Pisin* but we couldn't understand them. We were so confused. We spoke our own dialect and they didn't understand us. We used signs, like patting our stomachs and opening our mouths to show we were hungry. So they gave us food.

We were still at school in 1942 when the Japanese dropped the bombs. It was on Sunday, 20 April 1942 when we were having mass together. We'd never seen such things like bombs so we were very scared and ran for our lives. Only one man was killed. We ran away and hid in the bushes.

Soldiers came to Hagen. Four of us young men joined the soldiers and two *kiaps* from Hagen. There were six soldiers and four policemen. The four police were Burre, Demi, Dilika and Naleng. Their sergeant was Mr Moren. The four of us young men were myself: Gabriel Goimba, the interpreter; Clement Ker, cookboy; and Ragel Rugub and Kisika Rumand, cargo boys. We patrolled with a lot of men to Wabag and back to Hagen for nine months (Interviewed by his son, Willie Goimba).

### **Meeting headman, Wamp Wan**

Wamp Wan had many stories to tell me about the early days:

When white men first came here we thought they were *tambarans* and ran away to the bush. We did not stay near our houses but ran away, leaving our pigs behind. We sang out to our pigs from the bush so they would not be frightened.

These new white men, the Leahy brothers, held their bellies to show us they needed food. They could only talk with their hands. They held up wood to show they needed some wood to cook the food with. They pointed to pigs to show they needed them to eat. They made a sign to show that they wanted to make a house. They showed with their hands that they needed *kunai* cut for the houses and when all these materials were gathered the people helped them build their houses. The Leahy brothers brought out *kina* shells, tomahawks, bush knives, and showed us that they would pay for our work with all these things.

Later, when Fr Ross came, we did not know what he came for. Only later he told us about the mission. When he came, he said to the people, "Me, Fr Ross." We looked at him and saw his long *maus gras* (beard) and we said to each other, "He is like you and me" After five months Fr Ross began a school at Wilya at the *ples balus* (airstrip) and he picked boys for the school. They learnt to speak *Tok Pisin*.

When we saw the first plane come at Wilya at the *ples balus* we were very frightened. We wouldn't look closely at it, but ran to the bush. We thought it would eat us.

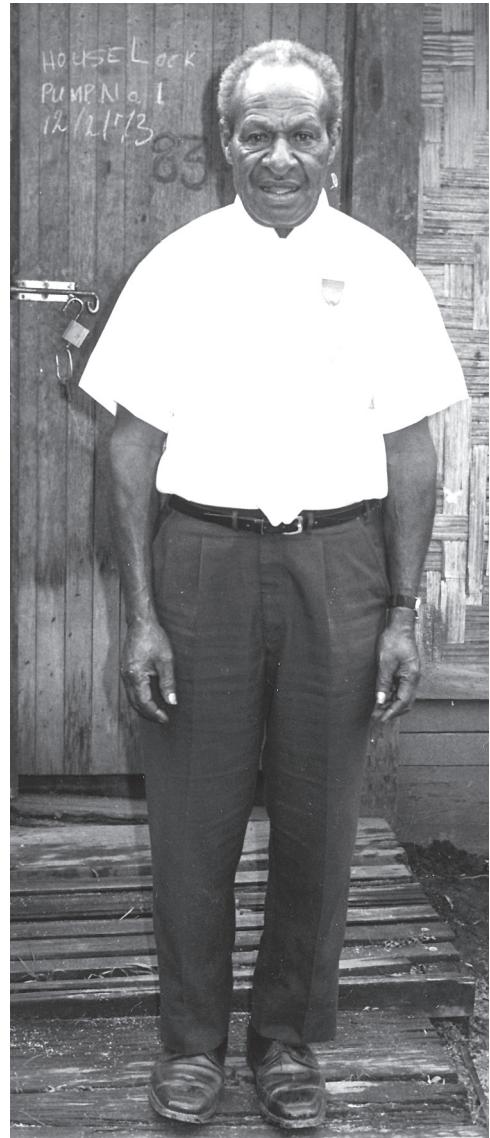
Brother Eugene came to build the church and the houses while Fr Ross organised the school. Karagu, Magok and Manui all came with Fr Ross. They cut the planks with their hands and carried the planks on their shoulders. They didn't have cars or trucks to carry things.

When the war came, Fr Ross called us together and said, "In the morning, I will say Mass and after that I have to leave." He did not want to go.

After Fr Ross had gone, the *kiap* was still here and many American soldiers stayed at the Lutheran station at Ogelbeng. They built a big fence there and stayed inside it. When Sister Vinciana and the other Sisters were escaping from the Sepik, we sent some of our men down there with Danny Leahy. They came back via Maramui with him. These Missionaries stayed at Mt Hagen but Fr Ross had already left. Plenty of Europeans came to Mt Hagen from Madang, and Manus Island and they stayed in Mt Hagen.

During the war, Hagen was bombed by the Japanese. We cut posts and planted them across the airstrip so the Japanese could not land. Some of the men covered the roofs of the mission houses with branches and leaves so the Japanese would not see the roofs and they were not bombed. (Interview by the author).

When Wamp Wan and his tribesmen saw Fr Ross again after the war, they said, "He must have cut off his beard." Wamp remembered Fr Ross as the father of his Hagen people



*Wamp Wan at his house in 1971 (Author).*

since he arrived. "He taught our children to read and write. Fr Ross always went out in any weather to reach the sick. If it was raining or if the rivers were flooded, he would go out and wade through them even in the dark."

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After interviewing Fr Ross while we lived in Hagen, our family moved to Madang but I kept in touch with him by letter and returned a couple of times to see him.

### **Sections of letters from Fr Ross to the author in 1972**

Dear Mrs Mennis,

Enclosed are what I think to be the last of the photos. As usual buried under a pile of papers and discovered by eagle-eye in the *haus kuk*. Last Saturday night the Pioneer club was opened and the portraits were dedicated in a ceremony conducted by the DC and attended by a large number of Hagen people. I met Mrs Jamieson there. Mick Leahy, Danny Leahy and Jack Fox on hand but Jim Taylor could not make it. I left the hospital on 2 July 1972 and have been using crutches ever since. The fracture is not yet firmly knitted, penalty of old age but I hope I can be on my feet for 8 September when the church celebration of my jubilee will take place. Fr Krimm goes on leave next Monday. I don't envy him. Regards to Brian and may God bless your home and family,

Sincerely W.A. Ross. (July 1972).

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Dear Mary,

Thanks for the photos and for your letter. Mick Leahy has not sent any photos and as for Danny I do not know whether he is back from south or not. Since Koibuga became a separate parish with Fr Don O'Connor in charge, the Ulga priest does not use that road any more and would seldom see Danny. Fr. Krimm went through Danny's plantation every time en route to Koibuga.

My leg is coming along all right, but it is still painful, and my energy is sapped 50% making it difficult to concentrate on regular work. I have two strikes against me: old age and a sore leg.

Dry as dust here and no relief in sight with the lack of rain water. Beer seems to be the solution. At least it has been suggested. Congratulations on *They Came to Matupit* It should make you feel the reward of a lot of hard work. The enclosed photo is of the first timber school house at Rebiamul. The first roof was of kunai and the windows of wire-glass. Later came corrugated iron and real glass. Meantime two other classrooms were built.

To be honest I have not been able to work on papers, Hagen culture or mission development after the war. Some day I'll have a lucid moment and get them all done in one 'go'.

Sincerely, W.A. Ross. (October 1972).

In the archives at Mt Hagen, there is a letter from Rome addressed to Fr Ross from Fr John Musinsky SVD the Superior General of the SVD Order at that time. It was a great honour for Fr Ross to receive this letter and he was clearly touched by it at the time.

Roma-Ostiense

29 May 1972.

Jubilee Greetings,

My dear Fr Ross:

It has come to my attention in various ways that you will be celebrating the Golden Jubilee of your priestly ordination on 10 June. I would like to congratulate you, both personally and on behalf of the Society, on this grand occasion.

Celebrating is not exactly the right word, since I understand that you are still hospitalized with a broken hip. The Regional's February - April newsletter was optimistic about your being around again in the time for your jubilee, but Bishop Cohill (who is here) said he did not think you would be.

It would be very good if the Bishop was wrong in this case, and the Regional right! Whichever way it goes, I am sure that you will take this in your stride, as you have taken so many other hardships since going to New Guinea. What a lot of changes you must have witnessed in nearly half a century as a missionary in one of our toughest missions! And what a lot you have accomplished for the local church there, bringing God's Love and his salvation to so many people who, but for you might never have known Him at all.

You have labored long and hard in the Lord's vineyard, from the early days until now and you have earned a rest. It may be that God had immobilized you for this very reason: to give you time to sit down and to look back leisurely on these fifty years as His servant. We will join you in thanking God for his Graces and for the gift of your vocation; we thank Him too for leaving you with us so long: a living link with Techny's past and with a glorious chapter of our history. May He keep you with the Society for many more years and then reward you, as a good and faithful servant with eternal life.

Fraternally in the Divine Word,

John Musinsky, SVD,

Superior General.

The letter was very special as Fr John Musinsky was the Superior General of the whole SVD Order throughout the world. It was said that Fr John presided over the Society during one of the most difficult times immediately after Vatican II. His insightful and effective leadership kept the Society united during those turbulent years (Web site).

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### **Fr Ross's Golden Jubilee, 8 September 1972**

Fr Ross's Jubilee celebration was postponed until September 1972 because of his broken hip. I was delighted to receive an invitation and flew up from Madang for the occasion.

Here are my memories of the event:

There was great excitement in the villages around the township of Mt Hagen. The men, their skins glistening with pig grease, strung new *tangat* leaves through their belts, donned their finest golden bird of paradise feathers and gathered their drums, for this was a day of celebration. It was a beautiful day with the mists rising from the green valleys and clearing above the blue-green splendour of the mountains. The mission with its setting amongst the pine trees and clumps of bamboo was a fitting place for the festivities.

Around an outside altar decked with golden sunflowers and lilies, twenty priests gathered to concelebrate Mass, dressed in golden vestments. The small bearded figure of Fr Ross was flanked by an Archbishop and two Bishops as he bent his snow-white head over the altar to intone the words at the beginning of Mass. In his address, Bishop Bernarding paid tribute to Fr Ross's pioneering work. He recalled his tireless spirit and strong physique which had enabled him to tramp great distances over rough terrain to lay the foundations of the Hagen mission which was now the third largest in Oceania consisting of 24 parishes in the Hagen and Wabag areas (Mennis, 2015: 9).

Wamp Wan and his Mogeï people gave Fr Ross some money for his Golden Jubilee. They did not count how much it was but many people gave two dollars each so it would

add up. They said to Fr Ross: "You are old now and we are giving you this money to buy some coffee and food. Now you can stay home and eat and drink and enjoy this food. When you die we will bury you in the cemetery at Rebiamul."

### **Death of Fr Ross**

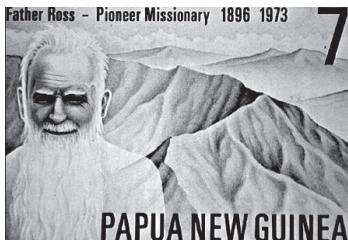
Fr Ross died on 20 May 1973. He was lying peacefully on his bed holding his rosary beads. Word spread and the people, faces smeared with red mud, came flocking to the space outside his room and sat under the casuarina trees mourning him with great sobbing. On the day of the funeral on 24 May thousands gathered at the open air funeral mass and followed the coffin on its way to its last resting place.

Bishop Bernarding was out of PNG when Fr Ross died:

I have been out of the country a few times since: for my consecration as Bishop and for two or three sessions of the Vatican Council. Since 1959, I have been Bishop of Mt Hagen and continued the work begun by Fr Ross. That small seed he planted has grown into something really big. From that small group of 20 whom we baptised in 1941, we now have 100,000 Catholics: almost one third of the population. Fr Ross was a father to these people and they showed him how they felt. Unfortunately, I was not here when he died. I was notified when I was at Toledo in Mexico and I had a memorial Mass for him in Techny Illinois. I felt it badly as I had been so closely identified with him for so long and knowing so much of his life. He is buried here and we're getting a plaque and we are hoping to have a dedication ceremony when it is finished. [Interview by the author]



*Funeral of Fr Ross, May 1973 (Author).*



*Commemorative stamp of Fr Ross, 1973*

Councillor Wamp Wan had seen how important men had been buried in Church vaults in Italy and he wanted to have the same for Fr Ross. However in the end he agreed that a cement lined grave be built in the Rebiamul cemetery. Fr Ross would have been happy to see that the contributions towards his grave came from different Mt Hagen tribes who had once been enemies: the Nampagas, Dikas and Yamkas and Kominigas and others. So often he had seen them fight yet now they joined to give him a peaceful resting place in land that had once been their old fighting grounds in the cemetery at Rebiamul.

Bishop Bernarding:

If you went out among the old people you would probably get lots of stories about Fr Ross. I know when he died, there were quite a number of pigs owed to him. We had a number of very good pigs in those days. They would bring their sows in and had them served. He was supposed to get one or two pigs out of the litter. They felt a millstone taken off from around their necks because they owed him quite a few pigs. A lot of them borrowed money from him too – they had *dinaus* (loans) but they never opened their mouths. There is a record book and, if I could unearth it, it gave a list of the people who were holding pigs. About 50 or 60 pigs would be owed to him or the mission but he arranged these things for them. This was a throw back to the old days. Danny Leahy used the same system. He would demand one pig from the litter as recompense.

At other times, piglets were given to Fr Ross and he would farm these out to some of the women to rear them until they were big and then give them a certain amount of money for looking after them. They never came back and never opened their mouths, but if I found that book with the lists I'd find out for sure.

### **Fr Joseph Bisson**

Fr Bisson came to the Mt Hagen area in the 1960s and was still there in 2015. In his young seminary days while he was studying at the Techny community, there were 450 men there including brothers, seminarians, priests, and brother novices. In December, 1962, the Provincial called Fr Joe's class of 22 to his office individually to give them their appointments. They were being sent all over the world: "Four of us were assigned to New Guinea: Ernie Ferlej and Dick Stegman to Chimbu; Joe Bugner and myself to Mt. Hagen".

Ordination day came on 2 February 1963. "As we processed down the aisle of the big Techny Chapel, I kept thinking: Now it was my turn. The big seminary choir, with organ and trumpets, sang us to the altar where Bishop O'Brien from Chicago put his white-gloved hands on our heads. Finally, after 14 years, I was to be a priest. The next day we celebrated our First Holy Mass with our families and friends."

It was now September, 1964. The family had a grand farewell party for me at our local parish hall. Fr. William Ross just happened to be in Boston at that time. He showed up

unannounced with his slides and projector and entertained the large group for two hours. Now my family and friends knew where I was going.

In late 1966, Bishop Bernarding sent Fr Bisson to Mun which had been opened up by Fr Steffen in 1961 as a new satellite mission broken off from Rebiamul. Mun had been chosen because of road access and to cater for the people towards Banz. From 1966 on, it was Fr Joe's home for the next 22 years. He worked hard with the people and the catechists but felt more spiritual input was needed. At this stage he invited Fr Bus to introduce the Movement for a Better World (MBW) in to Mun. Fr Bus came with two Sisters and started a program of renewal in the parish according to the ideals of Vatican II. The program worked well and different ministries were set up, to get all the lay people involved, by setting up "structures and channels of communication"

Fr Bisson said:

The main effort was to establish small ecclesial communities where our Catholic people at the local level can come together regularly to pray, share their faith, and have a Catholic identity. We had regular meetings, retreats, courses, and practical activities during all the seasons of the Liturgical year.

Then, in 1988, Fr Joe was transferred to Kiripia Parish where he did the same thing all over again. On the strength of what he had done in those two parishes the Archbishop appointed him Pastoral Vicar. "So I started all over again at the archdiocesan level with a team to organize the MBW program in all the parishes in the Archdiocese. I held this post until the year 2000" (Web site. Voice of To Rot).

With his training in education, Fr Joe has been intensely interested in the parish school and skilling the teachers in the schools. The Kiripia Primary and its three Elementary



*Self study group at Rebiamul, 1972 (Author).*

Schools now have 1600 students. He has been on the educational boards and showed a keen interest in the affairs of the schools, which has all paid off. "In recent years almost 100% of our Grade 8 kids have gone on to Secondary School. Most schools manage to get only 50% of their kids into Secondary".

For Fr Joe's Golden Jubilee in 2014, the parish sponsored a three day celebration in February. The theme was "I have no hands but yours." Fr Joe wanted to get the young people of the parish to think about coming forward to take the place of us missionaries. Visitors came from Germany with a 50 year old candle and twenty five fellow priests congregated to celebrate (Web. Voice of To Rot).

### **Death of Sir Wamp Wan**

In 2007, the great Chief Sir Wamp Wan died and was buried in the Rebiamul cemetery in front of Fr Ross's grave. Wamp had had an interesting history as we have previously seen. In February 1973, he went to see Pope Paul VI and was the first one of his line to meet him.

I told the Pope about Fr Ross who brought the talk of God to my people and had helped our people for many years. I told the Pope that Fr Ross didn't worry about himself but only about his people. The Pope was happy to meet me as he hadn't met a man from my line before and he gave me his blessing and also a blessing for my family and people (Interview by the author).

On that trip overseas, Wamp Wan also got to meet the Queen in London. During this meeting he dressed in a suit. There was also a photograph in the papers of him catching a double-decker bus in London wearing his traditional Mt Hagen attire which caused quite a stir. The London people were amazed and excited to see him in his feathered headdress.

On 14 June 1980, Wamp Wan was knighted by the Queen on the advice of Her Majesty's Papua New Guinea Ministers. He received the honour of Knight Bachelor for community service.

Fr Garry Roche wrote:

Sir Wamp Wan of the Mokei Nampaga clan near Mt Hagen was a prominent leader in the Western Highlands Province from before World War II until the 1990's. He was a strong supporter of the Catholic Mission, although he delayed baptism until 1976 because he had several wives. Sir Wamp's life covered the entire period of the exploration of the highlands, the colonial era and PNG's journey to independence, and much beyond. He died in 2007.



*Grave of Sir Wamp Wan at Rebiamul.*

## Chapter 7. The Three Archbishops of Mt Hagen.

Bishop George Bernarding, 1959 to 1982.  
Archbishop George Bernarding, 1982 to 1987.  
Archbishop Michael Meier, 1987 to 2006.  
Bishop Douglas Young, 2001 to 2006.  
Archbishop Douglas Young, 2006 to present.

### **Bishop George Bernarding Pioneer Bishop of Mt Hagen**

George Bernarding was born at Carrick, Pa., U.S.A., 15 February 1912. He entered the SVD seminary in Techny Illinois in 1926 and was ordained there on 13 August 1939. [Most of George Bernarding's story has been told in preceding chapters when it dovetailed with the earlier history of Mt Hagen].

As we have already seen, Fr George arrived at Alexishafen in 1940 and was appointed for brief times at some coastal stations: Alexishafen, Bogia, Josephstal, Sek Island. Then, just before Christmas 1941, he went to Rebiamul to help Fr William Ross, with the baptisms scheduled for Christmas. On 21 January 1942, Madang was bombed, and Bishop Francis Wolf told him to stay on at Mt. Hagen. This probably saved his life because many missionaries on the coast died during the war. In 1943, Fr Bernarding and Fr Ross and two Lutheran pastors were flown out of New Guinea by order of the Australian authorities. The two of them returned to Mt. Hagen on 8 September 1944. They were the first missionaries to return as the war was still raging on the coast. After this, the Western Highland's mission began to expand – old stations were built up again and new stations were started: Kumdi, Kuruk, Kuli, Wurup, Minj, Banz, Nondugul, Ulga. There was expansion into the Wabag area in 1947 and Pompabus, near Wapenamanda, was built up in 1948.

At the end of 1945, Fr Bernarding was made rector of Mingende, then from 1947 to 1952, he was rector at Alexishafen. From 1952 to 1955, he was a parish priest in Lae and built a cathedral church there. In 1955, he was named the Regional Superior for New Guinea. On 19 December 1959, he was named the Bishop of the new vicariate of Mt. Hagen and ordained Bishop on 21 April 1960, in Pittsburgh, Pa., USA and celebrated with his classmates of Techny.



*Archbishop Bernarding.*

## The first cathedral was built in Mt Hagen in 1962

Bishop Bernarding:

The construction of Rebiamul cathedral was started by me in 1962 after my consecration as Bishop because we found the former church was too small. It was built by an Australian fellow, Mike Ellwood, a volunteer carpenter who got the frames from Brisbane. Brother Bonaventure did the cement work. The new church was opened around Christmas 1962. It was a Cathedral from start to finish as I was already a Bishop and used it as such. It was not the Cathedral which we had hoped to build eventually if we ever do build it. It was very practical and suited our needs and has served our purposes for 12 years or more. The timber in the old church, known locally as *jomba*, was still good and it was used for furniture and some of the planks were used for houses.

I made Fr Ross my Vicar General in the sense that if I was away or overseas, he took my place say for the dispensation of marriage especially. He also looked after the financial side of things, though this was mostly done by Fr Ed Misik from Banz who took over the business side. Fr Ross never concerned himself with that. He was more concerned with the spiritual side of things. He was the Parish Priest here and anything in regard to the running of the parish for marriages particularly he would take care of.



*The 1963 Cathedral in Rebiamul seen in 2015 (Author).*

In 1974, the Diocese took in the whole of the Western Highlands, the Enga District which used to be Wabag and as far as Kopia - the first station here is Nondugl in the Wahgi Valley and the opposite side in Minj. Beyond Nondugl is the Chimbu which is the Goroka Diocese. The population in the area is something like 300,000 and we have a total on our books of 100,000 Catholics - roughly one third of the population. Another third is Lutheran including the Lutheran Missouri Synod in the Enga District and the American Lutherans here. The last third would be partly mixed with the Seven Days, possibly some Baptists and the rest of them would be pagan or heathen. The majority of people are connected with one or another of the missions. Furthermore, Catholics and Lutherans have what is known as adherents - i.e. people in preparation for baptism or favourable to us. There could be 30,000 or 40,000 adherents.

When I first came here, we had a Diocese formed from Alexishafen and Wewak. The Wewak Diocese looked after the Wabag area with Bishop Arkfeld as their Bishop and the Hagen area with Bishop Noser of Alexishafen. When the new Diocese was formed, the Wabag and Enga area was united with the Mt Hagen Diocese. Initially we had 18,000 on the books and most of the Catholics belonged to the Hagen Parish. Since 1959, when I took over, until the present day we have had an annual increase of something like 5,000 baptisms so we would be over the 100,000 mark today. That means that 80,000 Catholics have been brought into the Church here from the time I took over until the present time.

Mike Ellwood built the convent for the sisters in 1962. The reason we didn't have sisters until then was because of the number who died in the war. Those who survived went back to the coastal convents and re-established their schools in Wewak, Madang, Alexishafen and Mugil. The Notre Dame Sisters came here in 1964 and took over the Guardian Angel School with about 450 children in it. There was another school connected with the Teachers' College with another 450 children. The Teachers' College is run by various groups: civilians from the VSO, and AVA from Australia; lecturers from Canada; volunteers from PALMS in Sydney; the Sisters of Mercy; and Holy Spirit Sisters. The Fatima School at Banz about three miles west of Banz town is run by the Christian Brothers with a number of outside volunteers, and the Brothers of Charity have a vocational school there. Up at Kumdi, on the road to the Baiyer Valley, there is the Notre Dame High School for 250 girls (Interview by the author, 1973).

### **Relations between Lutherans and Catholics**

One of the achievements of the post-war years was the growing friendship between the Lutherans and Catholics. This progress was noted by Bishop Bernarding:

In the old days, it was a rivalry in a sense because wherever one mission had settled down the other mission felt it was their duty to bring in their own missionaries to offset them. This accounts for why there is a cross-over in the various missions in some areas. Most of the Mogeis are Catholics whereas the Yampaga and Jigas are Lutherans because it is nearer to their headquarters at Ogelbeng. There were recriminations on both sides. It is hard to know who was to blame for it. The

teachers and evangelists of the Lutheran mission would at times cause problems with the Catholic people and the Catholic catechists would say things that were pretty hard about the Lutheran people and this would be brought to the notice of the Lutherans. Without getting together these things would tend to simmer in your heart because we did not get together and find out the truth of what was going on. I remember in Alexishafen, Fr Cranssen had to go to court because he had set fire to a house built by the Lutheran evangelist pastors. He was charged and told he had to leave the country. Things like this shouldn't have happened. [As we have seen this was not quite true the house was little more a flimsy hut and they weren't pastors, just adherents who were threatening him].

If we opened up a station, we could be sure the Lutherans would come in too. The Seven-Day Adventists only came in later; the same with the Jehovah Witnesses who are making strong propaganda at the market place. Four Square causes more confusion. We provide schools and hospitals whereas they came just to win converts. To the Catholics and Lutherans this is an unfair thing. It is just proselytising.

There is not much proselytising between Lutherans and Catholics these days because the Vatican Council set guidelines down. After Vatican Council, we got to know each other a bit better. We were always on friendly terms with Dr Braun who worked formerly at Amele and then built the hospital at Yagaum. We got to know him well and appreciated the work that is being done by both groups – the Lutheran missionaries with their hospital work and in education and the Catholics much the same. There are more cordial relations between the two groups now and we hope one day we'll all be one. In the meantime, we have a policy to live and let live.

The war helped in breaking down the hostilities between the Lutherans and Catholics as they began to appreciate each other more. For example, when we were on the ship heading to Australia, we shared a cabin with Rev Kuder and Rev Doering and we got to know each other very well. Kuder later became Bishop of the Lutheran church in New Guinea and we have always remained good friends over the years (Interview by the author, 1973).

Zdzislaw Kruczek spoke of further changes by 2007:

Today this cooperation [between the churches] is more open, because of the closeness brought by the ecumenical atmosphere existing among Catholics and the majority of the other confessions. The Catholics, with such attitudes, are open to share their Catholic values and faith with non-practising persons and non-Christians, because they feel that their faith in Christ Jesus, and in moral principles, fills important and unquestionable needs in the life of each human being. The local church of Mt Hagen is also tranquil in its mission, because it is able to face the material and financial demands of remuneration of the workers, running necessary institutions, keeping ancillary personnel working, and controlling the all-important petty cash (Kruczek, 2007: 23).

## **Archbishop George Bernarding (1982 to 1987)**

On 27 March 1982, Mt. Hagen was raised to the rank of Archdiocese, and Bishop George Bernarding became the first metropolitan Achbishop of the Highlands' Dioceses with four suffragan Dioceses: Goroka, Mendi, Wabag, and Kundiawa. The centre of the See was at Mt Hagen, with the residence at Rebiamul. He lived there as Archbishop for five years until 1987. Over the time he was Archbishop, George Bernarding established 11 new missionary parishes, and divided the whole Diocese into deaneries, "having very dedicated SVD men and SSpS women missionaries, he continued and extended activities, especially in the fields of education, health, and social development" (Kruczek, 2007: 23).

Archbishop Bernarding tried to improve the eduction of young girls which lagged behind that offered to boys of the same age. The Notre Dame Sisters addressed the problem with a new school for girls. In those years, more religious communities came to the Mt Hagen Diocese including the Christian Brothers, the De La Salle Brothers, Charity Brothers, Marist Brothers, Michaelites, Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, Franciscans of the Third Order, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and the members of the Society of Catholic Medical Mission Sisters. To cater for the growing number of Catholics in the Diocese, catechumenates and catechetical groups were formed.

During the time Archbishop Bernarding was in Hagen, Fr Theis was vicar general, chancellor, consulter and board of trustee's member. Education was seen as the key to the future of the youth in Papua New Guinea. Now in the city of Mt Hagen it was hoped to establish another university built on the lines of the Divine Word University in Madang. The Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Hagen has 160 catholic schools, a Teachers college, two catholic high schools each with almost 1000 pupils, three technical schools, and numerous primary and elementary schools. "Archbishop Bernarding as pastor, teacher, and administrator, was assisted by his closest co-workers: general vicar, diocesan consulters, and vicars, up until 1987" (Kruczek, 2007: 23).

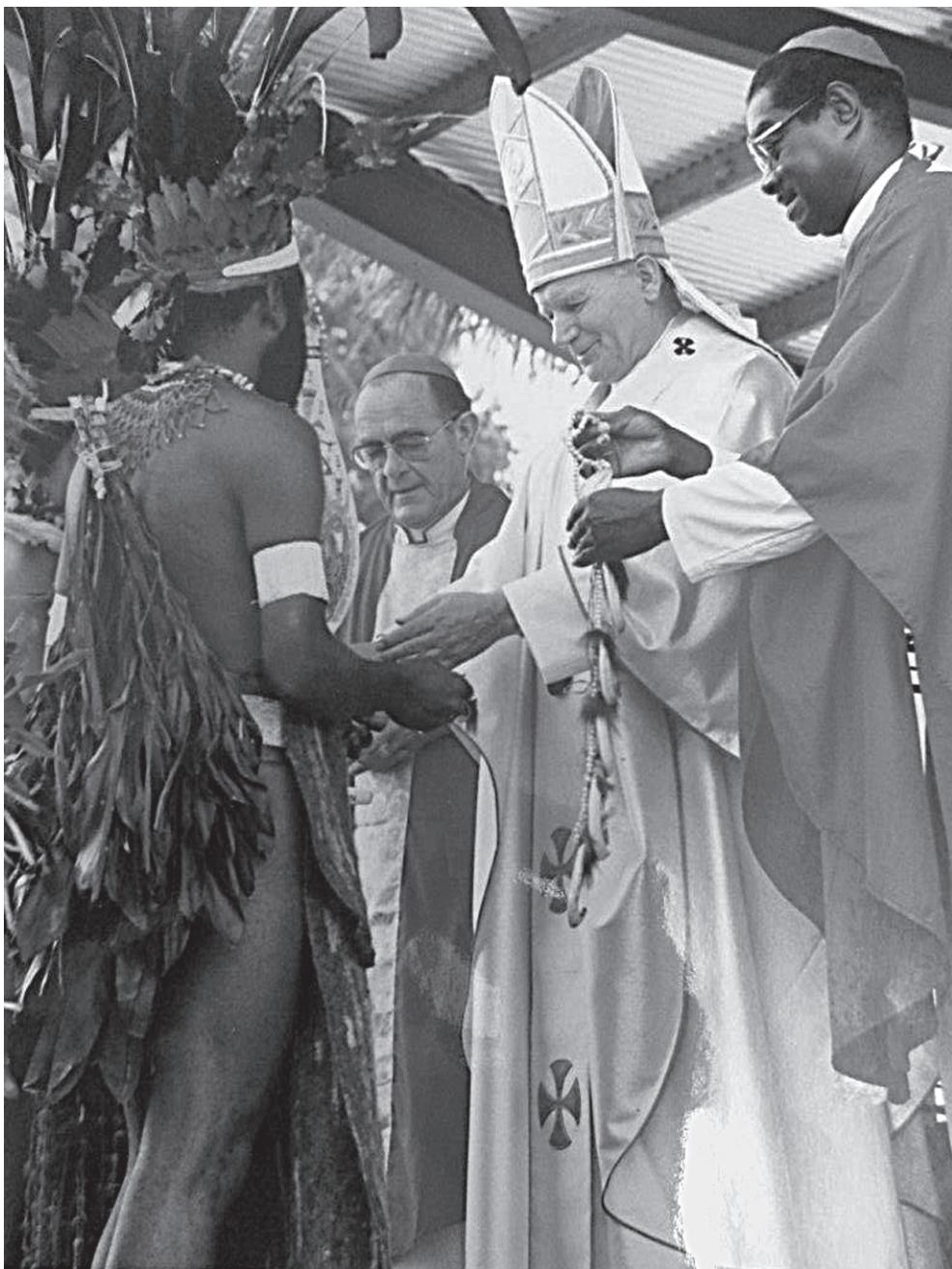
## **The Pope's Visit to Hagen in 1984**

A highlight of Archbishop Bernarding's time was the visit by Pope John Paul II to Mt Hagen on 7 and 8 May 1984. It was the first pastoral visit of any Pope to Papua New Guinea. Weeks before there was frantic preparation for the visit but also fears that it might all end in grief.

On 10 April 1984, Archbishop Bernarding wrote a Message to the People of the Highlands just a few weeks before the Papal visit:

On the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to Mt Hagen on 7 and 8 May we, the members of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea, should acknowledge that we have been singled out for this great honour. His Holiness's visit coincides with the fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the church in the Highlands.

Remember that Frs Alphonse Schaefer and William Ross together with several Priests and Brothers all Divine Word Missionaries arrived here in Mt Hagen in 1934. In a comparatively short time their efforts of evangelising the inhabitants



*Pope John Paul II receiving gifts from a local chief with Archbishop Bernarding and Bishop Ceasar looking on* (Photograph © Photographia Felecia, Rome, used by permission.).

grew from a few converts in the early 1960s until today in the five Dioceses which make up the Archdiocese of Hagen, there are well over a quarter of a million people who are members of the Catholic Church.

The first few years after 1934 were critical because of the violent deaths of two missionaries: Fr Karl Morschheuser died on the 16 December 1934 and Brother

Eugene Frank who died on 23 of January 1935. Both were killed in the Chimbu area. From the very beginning, the church set up schools and with the assistance of trained catechists taught the basic skills of reading, writing, religion and learning *Tok Pisin*.

The pioneer missionaries studied the local language and printed Bible stories, especially those dealing with the life of Christ. God played an important role in their lives. By constantly referring to God who knows everything and is present everywhere and is all good, the people learned to respect the rights of their neighbours and members of other tribes.

The people learnt about the Pope, the head of the Catholic Church who lives in Rome, but they had never had the opportunity to go there and see him in person. Pope John Paul II is the 265th successor to St Peter whom Christ personally appointed to represent Himself when he said, “And so I tell you Peter you are a rock and on this rock I will build my Church and not even death will overcome it. Peter, take care of my sheep.”

We, Catholics are numbered amongst the sheep entrusted to Peter’s care. Today we are cared for by Peter’s successor, Pope John Paul II, and so we have every reason to rejoice that he will soon be in our midst. We can express our joy and appreciation by closing ranks, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, by working together to welcome Christ’s Vicar on earth in a sincere and enthusiastic way.

It may never happen again that a Vicar of Christ will journey to Mt Hagen in the centre of the Highlands. I pray that this occasion will be a happy one never to be forgotten. May it bring peace to each individual and many blessings for years to come!

But there were many concerns at this time because of the tribal fighting which was becoming very dangerous which is reflected in the following letter;

Letter from Archbishop Bernarding to missionaries about the Papal visit:

31 March 1984.

Dear Missionaries,

With only five weeks left before the historical visit of Pope John Paul II we are faced with a situation which could not only disrupt but even bring about the cancellation of the same. I refer to the tribal fighting which has been going on and could spread to other tribesmen in the Hagen environs.

It is for this reason that I propose that, in conjunction with the heads of non-Catholic Missions, government officials and police that every effort of bringing the warring parties together and arrange a truce for peaceful co-existence be made before the fighting spills over into the area surrounding Mr Hagen town.

In order to forestall such a shameful and tragic occurrence I propose that each parish arrange for an intensive preparation of three or more days to stress the importance of Pope John Paul’s visit to Mt Hagen. This would entail a joint

effort and co-operation on the part of all Parish Priests, Brothers, Sisters, Lay Missionaries and catechists to take part in the “Papal Visit Awareness Preparation Programme”.

Subjects for discussion could be: 1) The Papacy. 2) Reconciliation including acknowledgement of forgiveness for alleged or real grievances. 3) The Eucharist with stress on family attendance on Sunday Masses.

Wishing you and your parishioners every grace and blessing as we approach the event of Holy Week and the close of the year of Redemption.

I remain fraternally yours in Our Lord and Saviour.

George Bernarding +

The move towards peace between the various tribes must have been successful as the Pope’s visit to Mt Hagen went ahead.

Pope John Paul II arrived first in Port Moresby to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of the Sacred Heart (MSC) missionaries in Rabaul in September 1882. Then he travelled to Mount Hagen. Here he celebrated Mass in front of 180,000 people which was said to be the largest gathering ever in Papua New Guinea.

For several days and nights preceding the event, various groups of Highlanders carried large pilgrim crosses from village to village, from one tribal area to another. Thousands of people were involved – and they brought peace amongst the highlanders fighting grounds. They arrived in Mt Hagen the day before, marching six abreast across the highways, singing and dancing, with the leaders calling the chants (Mihalic, 1986: 200).

The early morning rain had cleared when the people arrived walking or in trucks singing hymns as they made their way to the golf course later renamed John Paul Park, Archbishop Bernarding was at the forefront of organising the event. Invitations were sent out weeks in advance.

The Pope concelebrated the Mass with Archbishop Bernarding and Goroka’s Bishop Raymond Caesar. The liturgy was in *Tok Pisin* which the Pope spoke fluently. Gifts were given by several local people as well as a Lutheran bishop and two Anglican priests. The Pope loved Mt Hagen and appreciated the colourful attire of the local warriors. He praised the work of the catechists and the missionaries including Fr Ross and Archbishop Bernarding who had worked so hard to lay the foundations of the mission.

Pope John Paul was overwhelmed by the spectacle of all the tribesmen wearing their bird of paradise feathers – thousands of them who had gathered from far and wide to see him. Many whose fathers had been brought the Good News by Father William Ross and Archbishop Bernarding over years of tramping over the mountain ranges and wading streams into their remote villages never hindered by the weather on their sick calls. Yes it was a time to gather and remember the sacrifices they had made. So memorable was his visit to Mt Hagen that any missionary from the area who visited the Vatican and met Pope John Paul only had to say they were from Mt Hagen for his face to light up with joyous recollection of his two day visit there in May 1984.

## **Death of Archbishop Bernarding**

In 1987, Archbishop Bernarding retired and returned to the USA for medical attention. He died on 21 December 1987 at the Vincentian Retirement Home in Pittsburgh. He was 75 years old and had been a priest for 48 years. He came to New Guinea a year after his ordination so he was 47 years in New Guinea, and for the last 28 years was Bishop of Mt. Hagen. His body was returned there and was buried in Rebiamul cemetery alongside his friend, Fr William Ross. They were both pioneer missionaries of Mt Hagen.

Fr Garry Roche:

There are many other confreres who will have known Archbishop George Bernarding better, and for a longer time, than I knew him. These few words of appreciation are based on the time I knew him from 1970 to 1987. This is how I saw him. In common with other priests in the Hagen Diocese I had my share of disagreements with Archbishop Bernarding, yet after each disagreement one felt that one had in some way got to understand the man better. Sometime after a heated argument he could be surprisingly frank about the difficulties he faced, and it was clear that he privately agonized over many diocesan problems.

Archbishop Bernarding could seem to be abrupt, even rude, in public, yet if one went to him with a personal problem he was very understanding and never condemnatory. He might not forget a disagreement, but in my experience he did not hold a grudge against one. I remember well in 1976 I asked for a private meeting with him and criticized him, perhaps harshly, on some matters. Shortly afterwards I ended up in some trouble of my own making and went to see him. He was very understanding, even kind, and never once referred to my previous 'attack' on himself.

From listening to him reminiscing, I would speculate that his happiest times in PNG were in the years before he became bishop. First his years together with Willie Ross in Hagen in the 40s, and later his brief time in Lae as parish priest there. He could tell stories against himself, e.g. how two pigs chased him all the way down a mountain to Wilya. His gruff exterior hid a more flexible private attitude. In dealing with marriage cases at a personal level he was very pastoral, even 'liberal' - but in public he took a hard line.

He certainly allowed his priests to use their initiative in their pastoral work, and encouraged financial self-reliance. One could never say that he was over-paternalistic. While no doubt wishing at times that he would be more supportive, many confreres relished the pastoral latitude allowed them and found satisfaction in their work. I remember in 1975 when Fr. Karl Mueller was on visitation he remarked to me that despite controversies in the Hagen Diocese, he did not meet any SVD missionary who wanted to transfer out of the Diocese.

His policy of allowing pastoral initiative and encouraging self-reliance had its weaknesses (and its critics!). But the Spirit works through us and where a more paternalistic policy might have resulted in a 'spoon-fed' subdued faithful, his policy certainly contributed to the fact that he has left behind him a Diocese that

perhaps looks a bit ‘disorganized’, but at the same time is very active, lively and energetic. Archbishop George Bernarding suffered through many a crisis. One could sense that he agonized over many of the problems. But before he died he found peace of mind. May he have eternal peace (Voice of To Rot, 9 April 2014).

## **Archbishop Meier, 1987 to 2006**

### **Archbishop for the Youth**

*[Archbishop Meier provided the following information in an extensive email exchange with the author in May and June 2016].*

Michael Meier was born in Wolfshausen, Germany on 19 October 1928. His parents were Michael Meier, the son of a blacksmith, and Anna, nee Biberger. They were fulltime farmers and had eight children Therese, Magdalena, Anna, Maria, Katharina, Michael, Anton and Johann whose professions were a carpenter, works mechanic, a seamstress, and a factory worker. He wrote, “the next generation of children are in a widespread range of employment in banking, teaching, trade and sales management, and are engaged in community activities in the church in choirs, communion ministers, parish council and volunteer work.”

In his childhood, Michael’s family lived in a farming community area and the children grew up with 23 neighbourhood children like an extended family. Their home had a religious atmosphere as their parents taught Christian living “with prayer, work, playing and quarrelling to fill our days. To attend Church and do pilgrimages was a matter of faith commitment but our early years were also marked with the Hitler regime.”

Their primary school was in a neighbouring village with good teachers. The Parish Priest taught them the faith and prepared them for the Sacraments. He could see the potential in young Michael, enrolled him as an Altar Server, guided him towards the priesthood, and taught him Latin which he needed to qualify for the High School. From 1942, he boarded in Landshut, the capital of the province during the week and went home for the weekend.

In 1944, the war caught up with me and interrupted my studies. I had to do four weeks in a Youth Training Course, followed by three months in the Labour Force and finally military service with the Signal Troops. I was never engaged in real combat. At the end we surrendered to the Americans and for three months I was in a Prisoner of War Camp in an open field fenced in until, in July 1945, I was released to help in the harvest since I came from a farming area. All the time I felt the fatherly hand of the Lord in all these days.

At the beginning 1946, I was accepted into the Minor Seminary of the Diocese in Regensburg where I concluded High School Studies in July 1950. Initially it was my intention to become a diocesan priest. But God had his own agenda. When I moved to Regensburg, I joined a class that a youngster had attended and had died at the beginning of 1944. His name was Bernhard Lehner, an extraordinary young man of faith. While at school he also spoke of and prayed for the Missions. His schoolmates in my class often mentioned him. Somehow it happened that 12

young men from this class that Bernhard had attended, joined various Mission Societies, I and one other joined the Society of the Divine Word, SVD.

Bernhard Lehner was born 4 January 1930. He was consecrated by his mother, Anna, to the Mother of God. At his First Communion on the 16th of April 1939, he said, "I want to be something in order to get to heaven." He wanted to become a priest and was admitted to the Episcopal boys' seminary in Obermünster in Regensburg. [The same seminary Michael Meier later attended]. Beginning in December 1943, Bernhard fell ill and was admitted to hospital. After a few weeks he asked for the last sacraments, and said to his family, " Let me die: Who will cry when they get to heaven!" He died on 24 January 1944. All who witnessed his death had the impression that he had gone home like a saint. Even his seminary director said: "Now we have an advocate in heaven. He was the best seminarian I ever had." A process of canonization has started and he is declared Venerable (Web Site).

Michael Meier knew about the SVD Order because his family supported them. With the influence of Bernhard Lehner, he decided to be a missionary with this Order. He entered the Novitiate in 1950 and was ordained in 1957. "It was my longing to go to the missions, but God decided I should first do further studies."

Fr Michael then went to Rome and did a dissertation on Church history. His thesis was the *SVD Involvement in the Black Apostolate in the USA, Especially the Southern States of USA*.

He described the topic:

When the SVD missionaries moved to the States, their first intention was to involve German settlers there in mission support. But soon the Society was approached by Church bishops to extend their mission to people of African origin living in the southern states especially Mississippi and Louisiana. The SVD order established a number of parishes in the townships. Naturally the next step was to have priests of their own race to serve them. Again the Society answered positively to the request from the Propagation of Faith in Rome and started a seminary in Bay St. Louis in 1920. The seminary produced excellent members for the Church and Mission as bishops, fathers and brothers, including Bishop Raymond Caesar, an African American, who came to Papua New Guinea. The task was not easy. The general attitude of many people was not favourable towards the Africans. There were strict laws of segregation. While the SVD Community with black and white members lived peacefully together; in public, they were not allowed to be seen together or take the same means of transport. One white confrere told me that when he disregarded the law and took the same bus with the Africans, he was duly taken into custody by the police.

After finishing his doctorate in Church History, Fr Meier applied to go to Madang where the Society had been asked to start a Major Regional Seminary. His application was accepted.

After a few months in England, I arrived in Papua New Guinea in July 1962. The Seminary had not yet started, so I had a chance to get to know the new

country and the mission work in Mt. Hagen under Bishop Bernarding and Fr Ross. I experienced the *Hagen Saga* life. Mt. Hagen had just begun to develop and mission activity was in full swing with a school and catechumenates with up to 500 or more baptisms a year. After a year in 1964 at the novitiate in Marburg, Australia, to relieve the shortage of manpower there, I returned to New Guinea.

In 1965, Fr Meier joined the staff at the Holy Spirit Seminary at Kap, near Alexishafen. Here he taught Church History, and Fundamental Theology. He was also the Bursar of the Seminary under the Rector, Fr Patrick Murphy. On the staff was Fr Raymond Caesar who lectured in Philosophy and later became Bishop of Goroka. Fr Meier was delighted to meet Fr Raymond as he had attended the seminary in Bay St. Louis at which Fr Meier had studied while doing his doctorate.

While at Kap, one of the students was Benedict To Varpin and Bishop Meier remembered him well:

I remember Benedict To Varpin from the Seminary days. He was one the pioneer students, studying very hard and was very co-operative in the development of the Seminary grounds in Kap and Bomana. There was a lot to do. Kap was built in a coconut plantation with tropical growth and full of snakes. One seminarian mentioned he killed more than 300 of them. The grounds of Bomana also had to be cultivated. Later in 1991, Archbishop Benedict and I travelled together to Valis and Futuna as representatives of the PNG/SI Bishops Conference for the 150 years celebration of the death of St. Peter Chanell, the Martyr-Saint of Oceania.

In 1993, on the way to the *Ad Limina* to Rome, he came to my home place in Germany, joined the parish festival and together we visited the Marian Shrine of Altoeting and went on to Rome.

In 1968, the Kap seminary in Madang became just the Minor seminary and the Major Seminary was moved to Bomana, outside Port Moresby. This enabled the seminarians to have access to other educational institutions especially the University and to have joint programs with the Sacred Heart Seminary there. The Holy Spirit Seminary produced many bishops including Peter Korunku, Gregory Sinkai and Benedict To Varpin.

Fr Michael wrote:

God's hand was active again. The tropical climate of the coast affected my health. Perhaps I did not take proper care of living in the tropics. I got kidney stones and had to undergo three operations. Finally I gave up and applied for a transfer to the temperate climate of the mountains. My application was accepted. So I came back to Mt. Hagen in August 1970.

He did parish work in St Paul's Parish, in Mount Hagen town and concentrated on the youth, directing the YC youth centre.

Fr Meier continues:

In the mid-sixties, with the opening of the Highlands Highway, Mt. Hagen 'exploded' into a Commercial Centre from being just an Administration Centre

with a Police Station and Hospital. The development of the town had a tremendous influence and attraction for young people attending schools and generally for the surrounding population. Mt. Hagen became the centre of the Highlands and became the third city of PNG.

The Church, too, had to find ways to cater for this development. The time of big catechumenates and big baptism ceremonies was passed. The new task was to pastorally and socially care for all the young people, who were baptised as children and were growing up. A good number were attending schools and being taught religion and sport there. For the rest one had to find answers. Some Dioceses like Madang, Wewak and Goroka already had a YC (Young Christians) program and had built or were building Social Centres.

When I arrived in Mt Hagen, Bishop Bernarding asked me to develop a youth program there and he supported the building of a Social Centre in Rebiamul and others in a number of other parishes on a smaller scale. In Rebiamul, we started with sports, Christian Fellowship (Young Christian Workers/Students: YCW, YCS), but also with courses for women in domestic science and a Kindergarten/Preschool. All these activities were supported by the Australian Development Agency.

With the cooperation and support of the Provincial Sports Council, we built a rugby and soccer field. A basketball court was already integrated in the Social Hall and attached to the hall were netball and volleyball courts. Rebiamul was teeming with thousands of people, especially the young, every Sunday afternoon. In 1975, the Centre was extensively used to stage functions for the Independence Celebrations.

Fr Meier:

In 1976, I went on home leave and, when I came back, Bishop Bernarding, asked me to look after the Cathedral Parish in Rebiamul. It was a familiar situation I knew already. The work was more daily routine. But a challenge came, when the Bishop asked me in 1980 to move back to the parish of St. Paul in Hagen Town. The Catholic community had grown tremendously and composed of people from all over. There were naturally the Hageners from the surrounding rural area, then in the town, people from many Provinces in the country and expatriates of European and Asian origins and of all states of life. The willingness of coming and sharing together was great. The liturgy was lively and each group took turns to share their style of prayer and song and dance. It was a joy to see them in action.

In the mid-1970s, there was some unrest among the mainline Churches through the arrival of the Pentecostal Movement. Young people especially were attracted to it, and then pulled their families away from the Church. At this time, a Chinese business man brought me in contact with Fr. Jack Soulsby, a Marist priest, who was very active in Australia in the Catholic Charismatic Movement. He visited various places in PNG and shared his gifts with our people in St. Paul

and other parishes. His approach and enthusiasm caught fire. It contributed to livelier celebration and participation in church services, but also brought bible sharing and community prayer into the villages. They built prayer houses and had fellowship going several times a week. Many young people carried a Bible in their handbag and were not ashamed to talk about their faith. Some even dared to do street preaching.

We developed a vocational school in town, catering for boys who previously had no chance to further their education. The girls were hanging around looking for opportunities to prepare them for life. We found some manual typewriters and, on a private basis, they started to learn to type. Luckily, through the help of volunteers we developed a secretarial school, that got government funding and became the 'Secretarial College'. Naturally, computer skill was one of the subjects taught. From the beginning, the young women found employment in offices and as sales personal in the stores. Businesses houses supported the College and some girls were sponsored by them.

Fr Meier was the parish priest at St Paul in 1984 and he spoke on the Pope's visit:

Then came 1984. It started with the exciting news that the Pope would come to Mt. Hagen on his visit to PNG. A big supporter was the then Deputy Prime Minister, Paias Wingti, a Western Highlander. Hagen was full of excitement and various committees were busy preparing for the event. A park in the centre of Mt. Hagen, now called 'John Paul II', was chosen and prepared for the Papal Mass. Parallel to this, preparation were going on for the liturgy. It was not only Mt. Hagen, but the whole of the Highlands that was involved. The Town Parish, St. Pauls, was naturally in the midst of it all. Together with students of the Teachers College, they were to lead the musical part of the liturgy. But other functions like the Entrance, the Bible readings and Offertory Procession were shared by other parishes.

8 May was the great day. A downpour the day before could not dampen the enthusiasm. The whole night was a continuous coming in of people in procession. Some groups were days on the road walking and singing and praying. By six o'clock in the morning, the town was packed with people. It was the biggest assembly of people ever in PNG, some 180,000 of them. One could feel the joy and happiness in the air. It was almost something from another world.

The Pope was received with unending cheers and applause. Then the quietness of participation in the Liturgy, a prayerful atmosphere and attentive listening to encouraging words and the good news that the Pope shared. The Pope himself was taken in by this colourful assembly and dancing. It brought a big smile on his face, when the choir at the end of the ceremony sang the Marian hymn of *Tscharna Madonna*, the Black Madonna, in the Polish language. A Polish family, living in Hagen, had taught them, followed by 'Happy Birthday to you', since the Pope was celebrating his birthday a few days on. The papal visit had a lasting impact for the people.

Later this same year, Archbishop Bernarding was asked about a possible successor. A *terna* was submitted to the Holy Father, John Paul II, suggesting his Vicar General, Fr Michael Meier.

### **Archbishop Michael Meier**

He recalled:

After the Pope's visit in July 1984, came a second big event. Indirectly it affected the Church in Mt. Hagen, but most of all it concerned me personally and changed my life completely. It was so unexpected, out of the blue, it left me dumbfounded, I had never dreamed of it. One morning I answered the telephone. It was the Apostolic Nuncio in Port Moresby.

"Are you alone?" he asked.

When I answered positively he said, "I have news for you. You are elected Coadjutor Archbishop of Mt. Hagen."

All I could utter was 'My God'. Then silence.

After a short while, he asked: "are you there?"

Until then I was happy with the work, I was doing at St Paul's in Mt Hagen and the people were cooperating. I had no desire for a change. Was it God's will?

"If there is not a serious reason to decline, you have to accept," was the advice of the Nuncio.

The Ordination was set for the Feast of Assumption of Our Lady, August 15. It was a joyful, but also a humbling occasion for me. Archbishop Bernarding, priests, religious and the people went out of their way, to make the day memorable in preparing the location. It was on the sports-field, that I had developed when working with the youth. Government officials and some five thousand people attended the ceremony, enhancing the day with their songs and dances. Some of my family came from Germany including one brother and two sisters with members of their families.

After the ordination I lived at the Bishop's house at Rebiamul. Since St. Paul's Parish is only a short distance from there, I could stay in touch with those people for another three years. This gave a certain ease to my mind.

Fr Meier went from being a priest to an Archbishop when he was consecrated coadjutor by Archbishop Bernarding on 15 August 1984 on the Rebiamul League Field. Three years later, when Bernarding returned to the States, Michael Meier became the next Archbishop of Mt Hagen on 7 March 1987.

Zdzislaw Kruczek said that the new Archbishop opened various offices, and set up a number of committees to keep the Diocese running smoothly, "to better to serve all faithful Catholics of the Archdiocese: grown ups, youth, children, Christians of other denominations, and any people, who needed support, help, and solidarity in their spiritual life, or earthly situation" (2007: 23-2).



*Archbishop Meier with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.*

Archbishop Meier:

In March 1987, the countdown ended. Archbishop Bernarding retired and went back to the States and I had to follow in his footsteps. He had been leading the Mission/Church since 1959 and he could show a tremendous growth with 23 parishes, an educational entity of a Teacher College, High Schools, Primary schools, vocational institutions and a Pastoral Centre, relying on the able and efficient initiative of his co-workers of Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, volunteers and lay-helpers. The pastoral work was assisted by the Catechists, instructing the people and preparing them for baptism and the other sacraments, leading the liturgy and looking after the properties together with an extensive network of health facilities. A tremendous task to lead and guide all this lay ahead of me and honestly I was a bit in a loss how to handle all these things. But, surprisingly, everything went more smoothly than I thought it would.

The system of the team work of priests, catechists and Church leaders, men of standing in the community, was efficient. But it also was felt that the young Church of PNG had to take another step forward. The Second Vatican Council was talking about a communitarian Church, a Church with the participation of all the faithful, if possible. To achieve this in PNG, a new 'Agency' was in the making under the leadership of Fr. Gerald Bus, the Community Animation Service (CAS). Eventually they made their headquarters in Mt. Hagen. CAS is based on the Movement for a Better World of Fr. Lombardy, whose understanding of Church was influencing the discussions of the Vatican Council. The Movement was already operating in some countries especially South America. In May 1987, we had a two-week presentation of the program and the priests unanimously opted for its acceptance.

The first step was the New Image of the Parish (NIP) program. Teams were trained to give a basic Community Retreat. The people responded fantastically. They found a new entity in the Church. Naturally the existing structure was incorporated in it. The new structure was: the Community Pastoral Advisory Board (CPAB) at outstations and the Parish Pastoral Advisory Board (PPAB), comprised of representatives of the CPABs. It caught like a wildfire. There was no end of ideas and sometimes the priests had a hard time to keep up with it. After a short period of time, the program was advanced to PRD, Program of Renewal of the Diocese. Yearly assessments and new planning during the Diocesan Assembly keeps it alive and productive.

On Thursday 10 December 1989, Archbishop Meier received the *pallium* from Rev. Antonio Maria Veglio, the Apostolic Nuncio to PNG and the Solomon Islands. The ceremony was held in the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity at Rebiamul. The *pallium* is the symbol of a special relationship with the Pope and expresses the power that, in communion with the Church of Rome, the metropolitan acquires by right in his own jurisdiction. According to Canon Law (canon 437), a metropolitan must request the *pallium* within three months of his appointment and may wear it only in the territory of his own Diocese and in the other Dioceses of his ecclesiastical province (Web site).



*Archbishop Meier with Sisters of St Therese. On right is Sister Josepha.*

Archbishop Meier was best known for his work with the youth of Mt Hagen and the football field is called Meier field in recognition of this. He is also regarded as the father of the Antioch movement in Papua New Guinea. This was a youth movement founded at the Notre Dame University in 1964. Archbishop Meier led a delegation to Australia to learn more about the movements in a Sydney parish in 1985. Subsequently he organised eight youths and four 'parents' to go to Sydney for training. They returned to Mt Hagen where they "planted the idea in the parishes" (Brumm, 1995: 163). The movement quickly spread from Mt. Hagen to the other four Dioceses of the highlands region as well as the coastal Dioceses, particularly, Wewak, Madang, and Lae. Antioch has been an important faith experience for many committed Catholics today. In 1985, the National Catholic Youth Assembly was also held in Lae after World Youth Day was inaugurated by Pope John Paul II in response to the United Nations International Youth Year.

Archbishop Meier continues:

In the process of the implementation of the new pastoral approach, it became evident that our key-workers, the Secretaries of our Diocesan Offices of Evangelisation, Pastoral Animation, Communication, Family & Women, Youth, Justice & Peace were to be a leading force. These men and women, Brothers and Sisters, would be key-elements of the success of our program. A big thank-you to them for their dedication but they worked out of various locations, in isolation. This brought us to the decision to build an office-block to bring them together. People knew then where to find them, and it also gave them the chance that they

could assist, consult, plan and advise each other more easily. It also created a responsible attitude among them of faithfulness and commitment.

Another aspect of implementation was communication. The activities of evangelisation had to be constantly brought to the attention of our people. A Newsletter, even if it was sometimes irregular, kept the work alive and gave other communities encouragement to put more energy into their own efforts. A Catholic Bookshop supplied material for the planned activities.

Part of my motto as bishop was “Go and Teach”. It was my dream to open a Catholic Radio Station to reach a greater number of people not only Catholics. The Commission of Social Communication of the Bishops Conference of PNG produced half hour religious programs, which were supplied to the Provincial Radio Stations operated by the Government and were then transmitted once or twice a week. I felt that was not enough. It took a long time to achieve my dream. Finally, on 15 January 2003, the Feast Day of St. Arnold Janssen, the founder of the SVD Society and a keen communicator, the Radio Station called ‘TRINITY FM’, under the Patronage of the Archdiocese of the Holy Trinity, went on Air. It transmitted programs 24 hours seven days a week. Despite that the staff had no training in communication, they really worked professionally and the Radio was accepted by the people and was most popular. You could even hear the voice of TrinityFM in some of the stores in Mt. Hagen in the background. It was a means of evangelisation, broadcasting religious programs, Church News, and was the voice of the Diocesan offices presenting and providing information of their work and gave guidance on social and public issues and Christian entertainment.

In March 2004, Archbishop Meier condemned a barbaric killing which occurred on 16 March in Mt Hagen, when a well-known pilot, Captain Mourlyan was shot in the chest by two gunmen after he left an ATM machine at a bank. He had been watched by three men who followed him to his car demanding cash. One of them drew a pistol and shot him at close range and he died on the way to hospital. Captain Mourlyan was known as a remarkable and very generous person often bringing clothes and sweets from Australia for the Mt Hagen hospital. Archbishop Meier said the killing was done by those who had no respect for human lives. He said the killing painted a bad picture about the province. He called on the people “to pray for the criminals to turn away from their criminal activities and turn to God.” The Provincial Executive Council described the killing as barbaric, portraying a bad image of the province and country and wanted the suspects to face the full force of the law. It was feared that such killing would prevent tourists from coming into the Province

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When Archbishop Meier ordained Fr Michael Anis SM at Nondugl, over 2,000 people attended, including some who had walked for three days over the mountains carrying their pigs for the feast which the whole community celebrated. Some of the visitors came from Bougainville where Michael had previously done his pastoral year. In 1992, Michael Anis had won an Ausaid Scholarship to Woodlawn, a Marist College in Lismore in northern NSW. At that time there were 36 students from Papua New Guinea attending

school at Woodlawn, many of them on Ausaid Scholarships. Michael obtained his Higher School Certificate and then studied for the priesthood. After his ordination, he was appointed to the Marist Mission in New Caledonia. Fr Paul Pidcock, Chaplain, of St. John's College Woodlawn, wished Fr. Michael Anis every blessing and success in his priestly life and congratulated him on his Ordination. As of 2016, Fr Anis is studying for a Degree in Canon Law in Ottawa and will soon return to the Mt Hagen Diocese to look after the diocesan priests. Archbishop Meier ordained at least seven diocesan priests who are still active today.

Another priest Archbishop Meier ordained was Fr. Francis Koimb who was the second local Papua New Guinean to become an SVD Priest. Once ordained, Fr Koimb served in Ghana. It was noted at the time that young seminarians were getting a taste of the international character of the Divine Word Missionaries when they go for two years to the novitiate in the Philippines. This international experience can be very important for the development of their vocation.

During his time as Archbishop, there was a big tribal fight in 1998 between the Komkane people and Wandike people on the grounds of Denglagu Catholic church which was where Brother Eugene died in 1935 over 60 years earlier. The Archbishop was instrumental in peace negotiations on several occasions.

A Research Report by P. Gibbs and D.W. Young in 2007 was entitled *The Churches and Peace Building in Papua New Guinea*. The two researchers stressed the importance of 'good peace-making' giving the example set by Archbishop Michael Meier:

Those occasions where Church leaders were involved were especially powerful: for example, Archbishop Meier's role in the Cross of Peace brokered in the Ulga Ukupal/Kulka peace ceremony; and the role of Bishop Reichert, Catholic, and Kabali, United, in the Unjamap/Tunjup reconciliation, and the role of Goglme Catholic Church Parish Priest Fr Peter Nulai and peace mediation team member Mr Kolkia Bonney played in peace making between the Kulkane and Grai Tamagle clans in North Chimbu.

Several researchers commented that Church leaders must remain apolitical. They should not stand for election or support candidates because they "represent the Lord". Obviously there are others who do not see any problem with this as Church leaders have authority because they live with the people and understand them. Police and government appointed peace mediators come to do their job, but then leave and return to live elsewhere. Church leaders on the other hand are often part of the community where the trouble lies. They usually know the history of the conflict, have a sense of the issues involved, and will be around for follow-up. They also have a capacity to motivate people to work together towards a goal without financial reward (2007).

Zdzislaw Kruczak, writing in 2007, mentioned the Diocese at that time had "12 younger, ordained men as diocesan priests and two deacons. In addition, three men, coming from the territory of the Diocese, have been ordained as religious priests, and five others are serving the church as lay religious brothers with final vows. Among women, 13 religious sisters, with final vows, have come from this Archdiocese" (2007).

## **Archbishop Michael Meier honoured with the title of Chief**

On Tuesday 20 November, 2007, Reverend Dr. Wesley Kigasung, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in PNG, and Michael Meier, Archbishop of Western Highlands, were honoured with title of Chief by Governor-General, Sir Paulias Matane, during an investiture ceremony at Government House, Konedobu. Archbishop Meier and Dr Kigasung were invested with the insignia of the Grand Companions of the Order of Logohu (GCL) by Sir Paulias for their untiring services to the Church and the communities in PNG.

In particular, Archbishop Meier was named Chief for his service to the Catholic Church and the community, particularly the people of Western Highlands, where he served as a missionary priest, teacher and Archbishop for 44 years (*Post Courier*, 21 November 2007).

Archbishop Michael Meier retired in 17 July 2006 aged 78 years with fond memories of his years spent in New Guinea:

When I said surprisingly all went more smoothly than I anticipated; it all amounted to the cooperation of all the co-workers. It was fantastic. From the Diocesan Consultors, the Administrative Secretary and all the heads of the various offices, they all made their contribution, they were dedicated, reliable and creative. Their contribution and input to the monthly diocesan pastoral meetings widened the way to the growth of awareness in the parish communities. Sure, not all the planning bore the maximum of expected fruit, but the challenge to the people could not be denied. Thanks also to the support of an army of prayers especially the Legion of Mary.

In 2007, Archbishop Meier celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Priesthood in his hometown of Walkertshofen. There is a photograph of him in a horse and carriage on his way to the Church and Reception. In 2016, Archbishop Young visited Bishop Michael Meier who said, “I am living in the Infirmary section of the Central House of the SVD in Saint Agustin and am in good care of the Croatian Vincentian Sisters”.

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## **Bishop Douglas Young, 2001 to 2006**

## **Archbishop Douglas Young, 2006 to present**

### **Bishop of reconciliation and peace-making**

**Pontifical Act:** A message from the Vatican 2006.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Douglas Young SVD, Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea, as Metropolitan Archbishop of the same Archdiocese (area 8,288, population 392,259, Catholics 144,745, priests 38, religious 91). The Archbishop-elect was born in Brisbane, Australia in 1950. He was ordained a priest in 1977 and ordained a Bishop in 2000. He succeeds Archbishop Michael Meier S.V.D., whose resignation from the pastoral care of the same Archdiocese, the Holy Father accepted, having reached the age limit.

Douglas Young was the third child in his family. His father was Robert Jack Young and his mother Bernadette Anne, nee Cashin. Their daughter Ellen joined the Brigidine Sisters for a while, and then the Australian and New Zealand armies and NZ police. Their oldest son Robert has three sons and now grandchildren as well. He is a technician by trade.

Douglas was born in Brisbane in 1950 and was baptised in Scarborough by Monsignor Frawley. The family house in Dunns Terrace was near the Redcliffe jetty and beach where they could go swimming and fishing. His father, Robert ran a nearby sawmill, but he also had a penchant for betting on the horses, which resulted in many moves for the family. His mother, Bernadette, worked at the corner store in the same road as their house.

Douglas began school in 1955 at the Soubirous Convent School, Scarborough, but he did not like school and was known to play the wag. Only five years old, he had to catch a bus to school but sometimes would walk past the bus-stop and continue on to his grandmother's house. She would then ring his mother and he would be picked up and taken unwillingly to school. Like many 5 year olds, he would have preferred to stay at home with his mother.

The family moved around to many places in Australia as his father looked for work based on his experience in co-operatives from the time he was a butter maker at the Atherton dairy co-op during the war. These places included Chinchilla (1956) where his father managed a co-op store. Douglas found he still did not like school there where he was taught by the nuns. Recently he re-visited Chinchilla with his brother Robert and this brought back many memories. Robert had been a teenager there and had happy memories of the place. They found that the Co-op building still stood.

The family was forced to move to Sydney for work and family support due to his father's financial problems. Initially, the family stayed in Petersham and Lidcombe with different aunts. At his first school in NSW, the syllabus differed from that in Queensland and young Douglas had trouble coping. He was ahead of the class in English but behind in Maths. The teacher, an Irish nun, beat him up for getting his sums wrong. His mother took umbrage and told the principal and the teacher off and took him away from the school. The family later rented houses in the western suburbs of Ashfield and Croydon and Burwood.

Douglas then went to school in Stanmore where he had a good lay teacher and became an altar boy. He attended Mass every morning in Lent and the curate taught him the Latin responses. When they moved to Quakers Hill (1959) and Blacktown(1960), Douglas did Grade three with the Sisters of the Holy Family at Marayong, then Grade four at Patrician Brothers Blacktown. At this time, his mother worked at Mastercraft in the city. She would walk a mile to the station at Quakers Hill and then take a train to the city. In the afternoon she got home late. Only Douglas was still in school, but she needed the job to support the family. Later they moved to Lithgow (1961) in the Blue Mountains where Douglas had his first experience of snow and enjoyed climbing the nearby mountains. His father had another job in a co-op there.

They stayed there for a while then moved back to Lidcombe (1962) in Sydney where he did Grade 6. By then he was eleven. The family stayed for a while in Petersham and then rented a house in Croydon.

While at Petersham, he caught the train at Stanmore to the Marist Brothers School at Auburn. In grade 7, he became interested in entering the priesthood. He wanted to go to boarding school at a minor seminary, but his mother was against it. Later she felt guilty about this but Douglas told her it was OK as he wasn't really ready at this time. He also thought about the Marist Brothers at their Juniorate at Mittagong but nothing came of this. His senior college grades 11 and 12 were spent at Parramatta Marist High, Westmead, who now claim him as a famous ex-pupil. With all the moving around he learnt to adapt to new environments, meet new people and make new friends before moving on: a good foundation for a missionary career when he became a priest, a Bishop and an Archbishop.

In Grade 12, Douglas wrote to various orders including the Jesuits, the MSCs and the Oblates. There was an SVD candidate from the SVD house at Marsfield teaching at his school and Douglas began talking to him. The candidate invited him to attend a function for a visiting black Bishop from the United States and then a 21st birthday party for a seminarian and he was impressed by the atmosphere. After that he often quipped that he joined the SVD for the parties and he has never been disappointed.

In 1969, he entered the Novitiate of the Society of the Divine Word at Woodlands, Marburg, Queensland. The property had been bought in 1944 for the many missionaries who had been evacuated from New Guinea and needed recuperation after the war. Many other missionaries had been killed and others injured on the *Dorish Maru* just off Wewak, [as we have noted already] and the Order was lacking personnel. The property



*SVD Seminary at Marburg in the 1950s.*

at Marburg had been owned by a protestant family who would not have sold to any Catholics. Archbishop Duhig, as usual very astute in these matters, managed the sale through a third party who was a lawyer. The large two-storied home was surrounded by beautiful gardens with jacarandas and bunya nut palms growing in a plantation style estate.

The Order added a grotto, an open-air chapel and a small cemetery. While there, Douglas Young learnt to milk cows and to bring in the hay to the barns for the winter months. It was hard work at Woodlands and he found the isolation challenging. He missed his mates in Sydney and was a bit homesick. He began there in a class of eleven candidates; five finished the course. The Novice Master, Fr Frank Gerry, had got his vocation listening to SVD missionaries expatriated during the war. He is Bishop John Gerry's brother. [When Douglas Young visited Brisbane in 2016, he stayed with Fr Frank Gerry in his retirement unit near Nudgee College].

In about 1970, the seminarians were visited by Father William Ross and Bishop George Bernarding who were viewed as important figures in the SVD order even if they were a little different, having lived for so long in Mt Hagen. Fr Ross, in particular, was seen as a bit eccentric, with his long beard. Of course, the two of them were full of interesting stories which the seminarians appreciated.

In November 1970, Douglas took his vows at Marburg to the first Australian-born Provincial, Fr Kevin Cantwell. For two years, in 1971 and 1972, he did part-time voluntary work with the ecumenical group, Action for World Development, and with



*Douglas Young ordained a priest by Bishop George Bernarding in 1977.*

the campus-based World University Service. By this time, he was back in Sydney at Marsfield, Epping and was enrolled at the Macquarie University and the Marist Theological College at Toongabbie. In the 1960s, when the Order wanted to buy a place for a seminary, an Italian farmer was selling his farm at a good price. Then Macquarie University opened nearby. The provincial went back to the farmer asking if he was still happy with the deal. He replied it was OK but then he sold the top soil off the property and it took years to get the gardens going again. This became the Marsfield Seminary which is now the Administrative Centre of the Australian Province of the Divine Word Missionaries. The heart of the seminary is the Arnold Janssen Chapel where daily Mass is celebrated. Many retired missionaries live there and it has been a home for a group of asylum seekers.

In 1973 and 1974, Douglas took part in the SVD Overseas Training Programme (OTP) which involved doing work in a mission as part of the seminary programme and was peculiar to the Society of the Divine Word Order. He was sent to Papua New Guinea as it was relatively close to Australia. Here he supervised religious education work in the parish of Sari in the Enga Province. At this stage, Enga was still part of the Mt Hagen Diocese. It was here Douglas saw his first tribal fight and experienced his first earthquake. The mission land had been the old fighting ground between two tribes which was therefore easier to gift to the mission, also with the idea that there should be no more fighting. Unfortunately, there was more fighting and so the battleground was again used as such so missionaries got a first-hand look at the fighting warriors with their spears and large shields.

The following year, 1974, Douglas began a three-year study of Theology in London and, while there, he visited sites like the Tower of London and the Cathedrals which gave him a broader perspective on the world and on English history and culture in particular. He was able to study and visit where his ancestors once lived. During this time, he studied for a Bachelor of Sacred Theology and an MA in Religious Studies. The degrees were awarded by the Catholic University of Louvain Missionary Institute London, in 1977. His thesis was *The Application of the Pedagogical Theory of Paulo Freire to Religious Education in Papua New Guinea*. While in London, he also did voluntary work with the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice and pastoral work at St Thomas of Canterbury parish, Fulham.

After his time in London, at the time of his Final vows, Douglas was asked to nominate where he would like to do missionary work. His first request was Indonesia especially West Papua, then Chile and PNG. However, the superiors decided that anyone who could survive Enga should go back to PNG.

Douglas Young was ordained on 13 August 1977 in the Marsfield Parish, Sydney, by Bishop George Bernarding, actually on the same day as Bernarding's own anniversary. What would Bernarding have thought if he had known he was ordaining a successor? There were many photographs of the actual ordination ceremony, but the photographer ran out of film for the celebration afterwards. As a result, there was only one photograph of him with his family - his parents Robert and Bernadette as well as his brother, Robert, and sister, Ellen.

## **First post, Kompiam, in the Highlands**

After a short period at the North Rocks parish in Sydney, the newly ordained Father Douglas Young was appointed to the Mt Hagen Diocese. When he arrived, Bishop Bernarding met him at the Hagen airport and asked him to go to Kompiam where the priest and a brother had left the Order and the people were confused. So for five years the young Fr Douglas became the parish priest in Kompiam in the Enga region. He also cared for the nearby bush parish of Keman for the first three years. During this period, he did extensive field research on the Enga culture and language, and new religious movements and encountered more tribal fights. It was a great opportunity to study tribal fighting and peace negotiations at the grass root level.

Here, Fr Douglas had a dog called Murph who saved him on more than one occasion. Once he was walking along a bush track with Murph when they saw a mob of wild pigs which could be quite dangerous. Douglas was holding a watermelon which he threw at them. This slowed but did not stop them. He then climbed up the nearest tree which happened to be a fern with spikes and thorns so he could not climb very high and the pigs were snorting and snuffling around the bottom of the tree trying to grab his legs. What could he do? Suddenly, Murph began growling and snarling. The pigs were startled. They hated dogs and took off after Murph; Douglas didn't think he would see Murph again. But ten minutes later, back came Murph panting happily. He had saved his master! Murph cost Fr Douglas a few kina also as he took very seriously his role as defender of the property and occasionally bit people that he should not have. The local Councillor who was also the Village Court Magistrate also found Murph guilty of killing one of his cows and fined Fr Douglas K100. To this day, Fr Douglas protests at the obvious miscarriage of justice!

The years spent in Kompiam were happy years for Father Douglas. He could get out among the people and talk to them about their conflicts with other tribes and the solutions. He learnt the language well enough to say Mass and have conversations with them and they were impressed about his willingness to learn about their culture and history. There were five or six out-stations there. So this involved bush patrols.

There were no Catholic schools or clinics and the Catholic mission was surrounded by SDAs and Baptists. Some church leaders thought the Catholic Mission should not even have been there but now there was quite a group of ardent Catholics who needed help. Most of the churches were of bush materials with one permanent church.

As usual the mission station was built on the fighting ground between two tribes. When there was a fight the people charged up to the mission area shouting and brandishing spears and shields. They threw spears at each other and their opponents deflected them with the large wooden (or roofing iron) shields while shouting insults. Guns weren't introduced until the 1980s. The people still wore their traditional clothes but gradually European clothes began to be used.

Douglas was friendly with the Baptist minister, Roger Bryson, and his wife, Mary, who came from South Australia. They had three children. Their oldest son Tim now works for the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby and still speaks the Enga language

fluently. Their daughter, Keturah, returned recently as Matron at the Kompiam Hospital and their second son, Cameron, is involved with low-cost housing in Port Moresby.

Being Baptists, Roger and Mary were nominally teetotallers but, when invited to dinner, Fr Douglas brought along a bottle of wine to go with the meal and was careful to take the empty bottle home afterwards. It was good for him to experience their family life and Mary's home cooking. The friendship between the leaders of these two churches, Roger and Douglas, was unusual as it meant there was no need for animosity between the Catholics and Baptists in the villages. The local people said that before the missionaries came they were united and then they were divided by the different mission groups. After Fr Douglas arrived and became friendly with the Baptist minister, they were united again. It was a good reputation to have established. Fr Douglas wrote an article at this time called, *Pastoral Response to the Enga Holy Spirit Movement*. In Religious Movements in Melanesia Today (Point Series, The Melanesian Institute. 3:224- 239).

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After he left Kompiam in 1983, Fr Douglas went to the United States for further studies. He did a Licentiate in Sacred Theology an Advanced MA in Religious Studies, awarded by the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. His thesis was based on his research in the Mt Hagen Diocese: *The Theology of Peace among the Enga: the Preferential Option for the Enemy*. He enjoyed his time in Berkley and found their renewal programme for men and women was very open theologically.

While there, Douglas did part-time general pastoral work in St. Patrick's Parish in Oakland, an urban black parish. At one time, the parish priest was away and asked him to put the alarm on in the St Vincent de Paul shop each evening. One night he was a little late getting there. He entered the premises and pressed all the buttons to set it up. Just as he was leaving he was accosted by an armed policeman who pointed a gun at him yelling, "What are you doing here?" It was a frightening situation facing possible instant death. Apparently, a burglary had set off the alarms in the nearby school and the police had been summoned. Douglas thought if he had been black, the policeman might have shot him. He only had minutes to reassure the policeman that he was the acting parish priest. Night after night, he had to continue setting this alarm which was like a nightmare. He began to miss his parish work in the Enga Province and the people there.

During this time, he also studied Spanish in Mexico as part of the licentiate degree. Then, the Generalate in Rome wrote wanting him to go back to Australia for formation. He resisted the request arguing that the Diocese in Wabag had supported his plan to study at Berkley so as to strengthen lay spirituality in the Diocese and it was only fair that he return there.

As a result, he returned to Wabag in 1986 as Director of the Holy Spirit Youth and Pastoral Centre, a centre for non-formal education for the Diocese of Wabag in the Enga Province. He was also chairperson of the Enga Provincial Rehabilitation Committee and a member of the Governing Council of Wabag High School. During this time, he wrote more articles: *The Symbol of Jesus in Enga*. (Catalyst, 1984: 14.2) and *Pastoral Responses to Tribal Fighting in Enga* (Catalyst 1986: 16.1).

Later on, he also assisted the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands on peace, law and order, and drafted a pastoral letter on Village Courts. The title of the letter was: *Happy are the Peacemakers* (*The Times of Papua New Guinea*, 25 April, 1991).

Father Douglas was still faced with the question of what were the obstacles to peace in the midst of tribal warfare. He offered to go for further studies on the theology of peace. Before he left for Macquarie University, he asked the people what was the greatest problem they faced. They answered on-going tribal fighting. He took this on board and from 1991 - April 1995, he did a Ph.D. at the Macquarie University, in the new Centre for Conflict Resolution. The centre had only just opened so the staff were surprised that someone was applying to do a doctorate. They also thought his subject looked more like Anthropology but, in the end they accepted him. His doctoral thesis topic was: *Resolving Conflict for Gutpela Sindaun: An Analysis and Evaluation of Traditional and Modern Methods of achieving Peaceful Inter-Group Relations among the Enga of Papua New Guinea*. During this time in 1992, he wrote an article: *Grassroots Justice: where the National Justice System is the 'alternative' the Village Court System of Papua New Guinea* (*Australian Dispute Resolution Journal* 3(1)).

While doing field work in Wabag, he supported local mediators who were traditional peace-makers and worked to upskill them and give them confidence. There was also a chance to skill the orators who played an enormous part in village life and helped them decide what worked and what didn't work. Part of the programme was anger management, *rot bilong daunim bel*, involved in conflict resolution: trying to help individuals listen to angry young men and the young men to find alternative ways of letting off steam. Some of the programs are still in place. He concluded that, although land, women and pigs, might still be the main contentious issues in the Highlands, these were indications of much deeper issues of identity and security. By this time, politics could also be added



*A peace meeting between two rival clans in the Western Highlands witnessed by Fr Robert Lak.*  
(Sent by the Word, P78)

to the mix. Most women in jail were because of men. They had assaulted or killed their philandering husbands or their husband's other wives or new girlfriends. Who looks after the children? Payback does not keep you safe. It was often said that when you are planning revenge for the death of your father, prepare the grave of your son. This cycle has to be broken.

There were some success stories that have saved lives. One man forgave the murderer of his father. The murderer shook in his boots when he was confronted with the murdered man's son at a church gathering, but the latter told him he had forgiven him. They even shared a room during the course.

When he finished his doctorate, Fr Douglas thought he should use his research to help the Enga people. The idea would be to get his work published and give feedback to the people as part of the cycle of learning. He knew his previous informants and their communities would benefit from the knowledge gained. It was important to go back to the area of the research and train them in times of peace for early intervention. He concluded that there was not much anyone could do when the fire is hot, but after a while war weariness sets in and then it is the time to act, as also during times of peace

From April 1995 to May 1998, Fr Douglas was the coordinator of Pastoral Planning for the Diocese of Wabag, and the director of the Diocese's *Gutpela Sindaun* (Peace) program. Here he was training others to use traditional and modern means of problem solving. He was also a Chairperson of the Hospital Board, Yampu Health Centre from 1997 until 1998. In this time he wrote an article: *Non-violent Alternatives Among the Enga of Papua New Guinea Highlands*. (*Social Alternatives*, 1997. 16(2):42-45).

In 1998, the request came to leave Enga and use his talents on a bigger playing field.

From June 1998 until July 2000, Fr Douglas was Head of the Papua New Guinea Studies Department and, later, Dean of Studies at Divine Word University in Madang. He was the executive, administrative, and academic leader of the department. The Papua New Guinea Studies Department prepared students for leadership and development tasks in their own community, as well as for future employment in community and organisational development in the public and private sectors. He taught subjects, such as PNG history, oral history, and conflict resolution. He was asked to be the Dean of the whole University but the writing was on the wall as he might also be appointed the SVD Provincial for PNG or Australia. He published two more articles about conflict resolution in the PNG context including: *Pastoral Responses to Contemporary Conflicts between some Practices of Melanesian Religion and the Christian Gospel* (Liturgical Catechetical Institute, 1998). The second article was *Prescriptive and Elicitive Approaches to Conflict Resolution: Examples from Papua New Guinea* (*Negotiation Journal*, 14(3):211-220).

### **Appointed Auxilliary Bishop of Mt Hagen**

In 2000, everything changed. Fr Douglas thought and hoped he was destined for an academic future. He enjoyed the university atmosphere with the students and staff and with the possibility of attending conferences in his field of research. However, he noted that some of the SVD priests were being called up to be Bishops. When Fr Arnold Orawai was announced as the Bishop of Wabag, Douglas thought he was safe.



*Fr Douglas Young and seminarians (in white) and DWU students July 2000.*

Then, on Palm Sunday, he had a call from the Nuncio, Archbishop Schwemmer, to go to Port Moresby to "talk about the seminary". Fr Douglas arranged to go the following Tuesday of Holy Week. A driver took him out to the Nunciature. The Nuncio greeted him with the news:

"The Holy Father has appointed you to be Auxiliary Bishop of Mt Hagen and I congratulate you, Your Excellency."

"Are you sure?" asked Fr Douglas. It was quite a shock to him. "There are others who could have been chosen."

"Oh, really, name them."

Fr Douglas mentioned a few names but each of them was brushed aside. "Does Bishop Meier know about this?" he queried.

"Well, yes he does; when we were deciding on the Bishop for Wabag there was one question on the paper which said if this candidate was not chosen, would he be suitable for a similar job. Archbishop Meier had put you down as a candidate and he had ticked the box that said you would be suitable for a similar position if you were not chosen for Wabag. So here we are. How can you say no to the Holy Father?" [The Holy Father was Pope John Paul II].

It was Easter time and all during the rest of Holy Week, Fr Douglas gave sermons about accepting God's will and not always having things your own way. This was before the appointment was announced. He knew he would miss the academic life at the university including the staff and especially students. In July 2000, he was ordained auxiliary

Bishop to Archbishop Meier. There was a big celebration at the John Paul oval in Mt Hagen. Some staff and students, led by Fr Jan Czuba, President of the University, came up from the DWU in Madang to hand him over to Archbishop Meier and the people of Mount Hagen during the ceremony. He found that quite moving and the reality hit what he was leaving behind.

From then on, he lived in the Bishop's house with Archbishop Meier who was very kind and tolerant. He was given special responsibility for the Pastoral Planning, Education and Health Services portfolios while Bishop Meier kept the financial and personnel side of the mission. In those first years as Bishop, contact with the academic world of DWU was still made possible by occasional visits. During this time, his old rector and teacher at Marburg, Fr Kevin Cantwell, was working in the Mt Hagen Diocese. Although he had some health problems he kept going and worked in Minj, Banz, Kumdi and Mt Hagen before he left in 2004 and recently has celebrated his diamond jubilee of priesthood. He and Bishop Young shared memories of the day when young Douglas made his first vows to him at Marburg, when he was the Australian Provincial of the Society of Divine Word.

### **Archbishop of Mt Hagen**

When Douglas Young received the news of his appointment as Archbishop in 2006, he was in the middle of watching a State of Origin game and was called to the phone. It was the new Nuncio who had just arrived in Port Moresby telling him he was being named as the next Archbishop of Mt Hagen. He was a bit shocked but just returned nonchalantly to the group still watching the State of Origin. Someone asked what the phone call was about: "Oh it was the Nuncio, and he has just arrived in Port Moresby. He was watching the State of Origin and wanted me to explain what it is all about." The group bought his explanation. He had to keep the news of his appointment quiet, but he had been expecting news of some sort as Archbishop Meier had passed retirement age.

When he was appointed Archbishop on 17 July 2006, it was noted on the web that Pope Benedict has announced the appointment of Brisbane-born Bishop Douglas Young, auxiliary of the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, as metropolitan Archbishop of the same Archdiocese.

Bishop Young has worked for more than 30 years in the PNG highlands and has developed a deep understanding of Melanesian cultures especially in regard to their reconciliation processes. Bishop Young holds a doctorate in conflict transformation from Macquarie University for which he researched and reflected in the PNG context. He has been Head of PNG Studies at Divine Word University, Madang, and has been involved in conflict transformation training and facilitation in many parts of PNG including Bougainville. His international experience includes training others in Manila, Rome, Sydney and American Samoa. In a variety of pastoral situations including prison ministry, youth ministry and parish life, Douglas Young has applied the theological principles and practices of conflict transformation and peace-building. The Mount Hagen Archdiocese has a Catholic population of 145,000 from a total population of nearly 400,000 people.

Archbishop Young has become famous for his work on facilitating peace between tribes. He had firsthand experience of tribal fighting before modern weapons were used and when fighting was restricted to traditional weapons. But there is also the possibility of quelling the heated debate before it escalates to open warfare. Tribes had peace-makers who tried to avert a war in the early stage. It is a matter of skilling these people up as peace made this way maybe has more chance of succeeding.

Zdzislaw Kruczek wrote about the Hagen Mission at the time of the installation of Archbishop Young in 2006 – ten years ago:

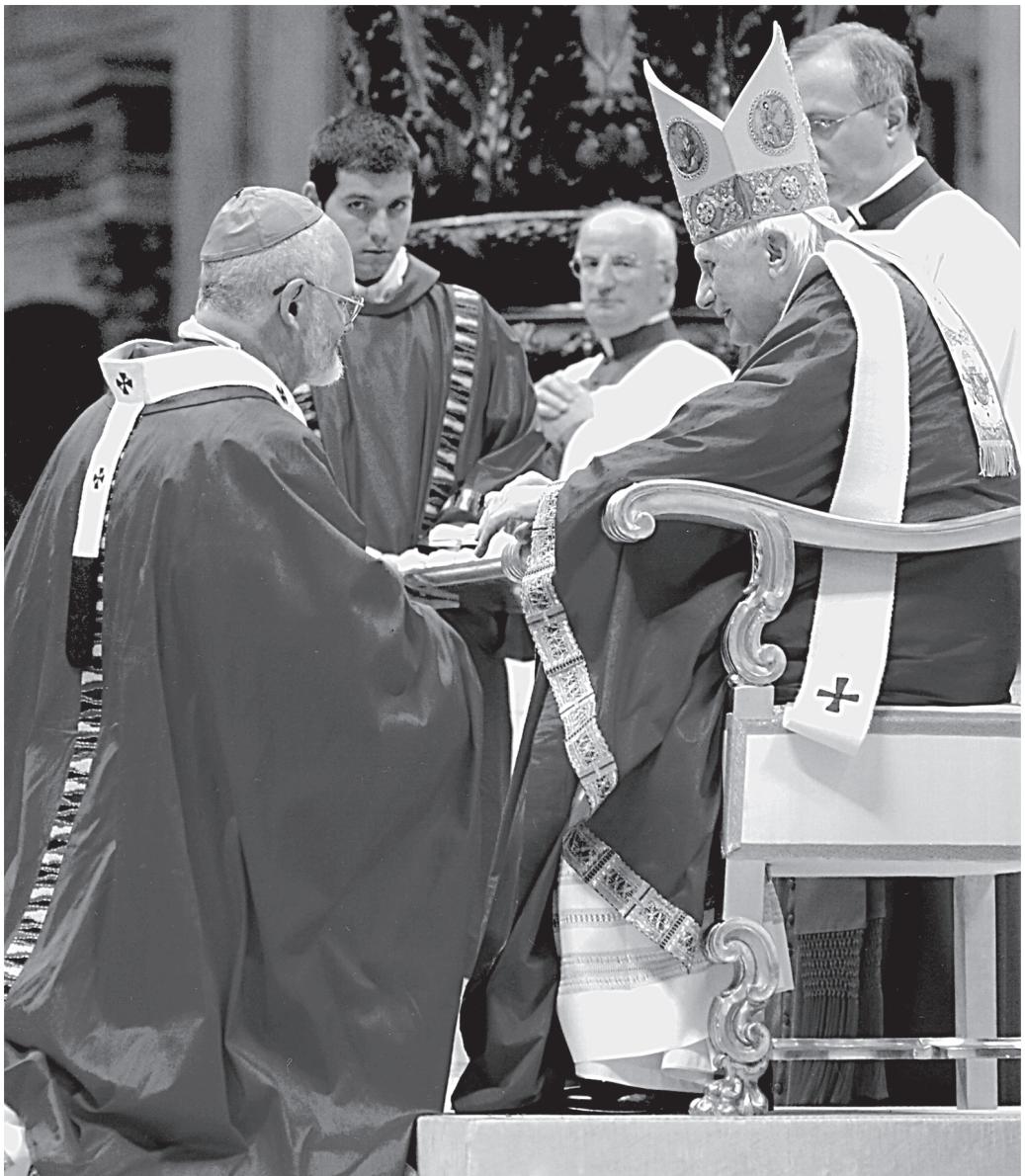
So what is the future for the Archdiocese? The answer to this question is simple. Its future depends on the local Catholics (the local church), their spiritual formation, and intellectual abilities. There are no other options for the church of Mt Hagen. Hence, it is no surprise that this statement corresponds with the vision and mission that the Archdiocese formulated during its so-called Archdiocesan Assembly, held at Rebiamul on 3 to 5 June 2004. Here is the vision: “All the people of the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen are the Body of Christ, sharing the life of the Trinity.” Then comes the statement of the mission that says: “In order to truly be the Body of Christ, sharing the life of the Trinity, all the people of the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen commit themselves to work together in all that they do together.”

These summary statements of vision and mission are like a programme for future action in the Archdiocese, especially in connection with new evangelisation. If the Archdiocese is to be able to put it into practice, families must be properly formed, further general educational promotion must be emphasised, together with the provision of daily catechesis. As well as this, all the faithful in the Archdiocese must be treated and served equally. Those people, living in remote areas of the bush, should be convinced that they have the same rights, pastorally, as those living near the main centres, roads, and more-important settlements. These are the three priorities: family, education, and catechesis, together with proper care of everybody in the Archdiocese. These are the challenges and obligation of everybody who really experiences the reality of the existing Catholic Church of Mt Hagen, in its situation, deep in the highland interior of PNG. (Kruczek 2007)

Once he became Archbishop, Douglas Young was alone in the Bishop’s house taking on the full responsibility of his role. Archbishop Meier went home to Germany for a break but then he returned to help out, residing in the nearby SVD house. He made himself available for advice and background information but never interfered. Unfortunately, Archbishop Meier got cancer and was on chemotherapy but he stopped the therapy when he thought it was killing him and got better. He returned to his old seminary at St Augustin and has been the chaplain to the infirmary there for a while. [It was this seminary where Fr Morschheuser trained].

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The year 2010 marked seventy-five years since the death of Brother Eugene Frank and his anniversary was appropriately remembered. The Archdiocese designated it as a time to



*Archbishop Young receiving the Pallium from Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican.*

reflect on Christian servant leadership as Brother Eugene is remembered as “as a model of servant leadership and a guardian of all the church leaders.” He is also credited with beginning the Mt Hagen mission alongside Fr William Ross. A new elementary school at Anganere in the Kundiawa Diocese was named after Bro. Eugene. (This was the site where Brother Eugene received his ultimately fatal spear wounds.) On 27 January 2010, Archbishop Young, visited the village of the Anganere tribe and had a reconciliation service with the people. Previous to his visit, a monument had been constructed to remember Brother Eugene and it was suggested that Anganere could become a site for a regular pilgrimage so that “young people would always be reminded of the great sacrifice made by missionaries to bring the gospel to the Highlands of Papua New Guinea”.

In 2011, Archbishop Douglas Young agreed to build a third Catholic Secondary School, since the Western Highlands Province had been divided and a new Jiwaka Province had been established. It was going to become increasingly difficult to send Western Highlanders across the border to the Fr Peter Secondary School in Fatima which was now in the Jiwaka Province. After months of surveying possible sites, Kiripia was finally chosen as the site for the new school. As Vicar for Education in the Archdiocese, Fr Joseph Bisson, was entrusted with the task of carrying the project forward. This began in 2015 with 1000 students, but there were no boarders yet. Bisson wrote “We hope to have our first intake of 250 Grade 9 students in 2016, with 250 more coming each succeeding year until 2018. The planning is complete and I will be making my presentation to the Provincial Education Board at their next meeting as well as the Provincial Executive Council. Governor Paias Wingti is a big supporter of our new school”.

Fr Bisson who has worked in the area for fifty years, summed up some of the work that has been achieved in recent years:

In the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen, we run 160 catholic schools, a Teachers college, two Catholic high schools each with almost 1000 students (900 boarders each), as well as three technical schools, and numerous primary and elementary schools. We are building a third Catholic high school for 1000 students of which 900 will be boarders and hopefully will have the first intake of students in February 2015. We are doing the initial planning for establishing a new campus for a Divine Word University in the city of Mt. Hagen. Education is the key to the future for the young people of Papua New Guinea (SVD Alumni Newsletter, January 2014).

According to recent statistics (2013), the Diocese of Mt Hagen now has 181,655 Catholics which makes up one third of the population. There are 40 priests and 44 religious sisters working in 23 parishes. This is a great leap forward since the mission began at Wilya in 1934.

One aspect that Archbishop Young brings to his new role was his knowledge of tribal fighting and different styles of peace negotiations which he has studied in details. One paper he wrote with his colleague Labo Kamitu described traditional ways of peace negotiations as compared with more recent times:

Traditionally in Chimbu, when two clans or tribes were preparing to fight, the leaders and elders from the neighbouring clans would meet and quickly try to stop the fight. They would cut tree branches and place the branches across the area where the fight was going to happen. Then they would gather there and wait for the opponents to arrive. When the opponents came to fight, the neutral parties negotiated with the opponents to find a resolution to the conflict. Now, few leaders are prepared to take such a stand. This is due partly to the changed nature of conflict with the introduction of guns. Conflict between the leaders themselves was identified as an important factor in the Bomaikane and Nauro conflicts in Chimbu. In Gumas village near Mount Hagen, leaders disagreed among themselves and supported different political candidates, thus leading people in different directions. Aspiring leaders used clients to intimidate others.

Archbishop Young plays an important role in the Church in Mt Hagen but also in a wider context of Papua New Guinea and Oceania. Recently, in 2016, he went to the Vatican to represent caring groups like St Vincent de Paul and Centacare in the Oceania region. On the way to the Vatican, he met up with members of Centacare in Brisbane Australia, and also Aspleycare which is a parish organisation devoted to the homeless and those in need of Emergency Relief.

## **Rempi to Rebiamul**

### **Anniversary Celebrations of the Mt Hagen Mission**

In 2009, Rebiamul, the Mt Hagen Archdiocese and the Highlands celebrated 75 years of missionary work since Fr Ross and party came to Mt Hagen in 1934. There are more than 500,000 Catholics in the Highlands. In the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen, covering the Western Highlands and Jiwaka provinces, there are 190,000 Catholics (2016). That represents more than 28 percent of the population, followed by the 25% Lutherans and the balance a number of other denominations.

The Hagen people wanted to do something special to remember the 75th anniversary. Why not follow the route that first group of missionaries, catechists and carriers had made? Where had they gone? What route had they followed and what difficulties had they encountered? The map in *Hagen Saga* provided the route as remembered by Peter Manui. It was decided not to follow the exact route from Bogadjim as it would be too arduous and long and there were not enough Catholics along the route to cater for the pilgrims. This time the official climb began at Brahman, after some preliminary activities at Rempi and Alexishafen.

In 2014, for the 80th anniversary of the Mt Hagen mission, after months of preparation, a larger pilgrimage of five hundred Hagen people travelled by PMV down to Rempi



*Archbishop Young leading the pilgrims in procession at Rebiamul, Easter 2014 (Paul Petrus).*

near Alexishafen where they were accommodated in the village. It was here in Rempi Village that Fr Ross had once taught and from where, in 1934, he had set out bringing many Rempi men and others as catechists, carpenters and other workers to the highlands. In this trek, he was accompanied by Frs Alfonse Schaefer, Tropper, Aufenanger, and Br Eugene Frank and 72 co-workers.

In 2014, once prepared, the pilgrims were joined by some of the Rempi village people, anxious to see where the first missionaries went. The pilgrims began the long and arduous walk following the route the missionaries had taken in 1934 to Mt Hagen. They climbed up the steep ridges of the Bismarck Range to Bundi and then into the Chimbu Gorge. Travelling south along the gorge the pilgrims visited Denglagu, Goglme and the Omondo Parishes. On the way they also had a chance to visit the memorial sites of two of the first missionaries to die in the Chimbu area. At Womatne Village was the memorial for Fr Morschheuser, who died in December 1934 and, at Anganere, was the memorial for Brother Eugene Frank who died in January 1935, both killed by the local tribes. The pilgrims then travelled west up the steep hills of the Gena Mountains and arrived at Mingende, ending the first week of the pilgrimage. By this time many of them had blisters but their spiritual strength motivated them to continue. The second week from Mingende to Hagen followed the old highway (Paul Petrus).

They arrived at Rebiamul, on Palm Sunday 2014. This 2014 trek was called “From Rempi to Rebiamul.” Patrick Matbob told me the people at Rempi still feel connected to Fr William Ross who is buried at Rebiamul. They always say he spoke the Rempi language better than the Melpa language he learned in Mount Hagen!



*Children at Holy Guardian Angel Primary School at Rebiamul, December 2015 (Author).*

## Chapter 8. Rebiamul Mission, 2015

### Ten Days in Mt Hagen November/December 2015

I was back in Mt Hagen in 2015 for the first time in 40 years and I hardly recognised the place. The hospital where I had had my third child in 1971 has shifted and the school our six year old, John, attended is quite different now with a high fence and barbed wire enclosures. The town is busy with cars and people everywhere. It is a bustling place.

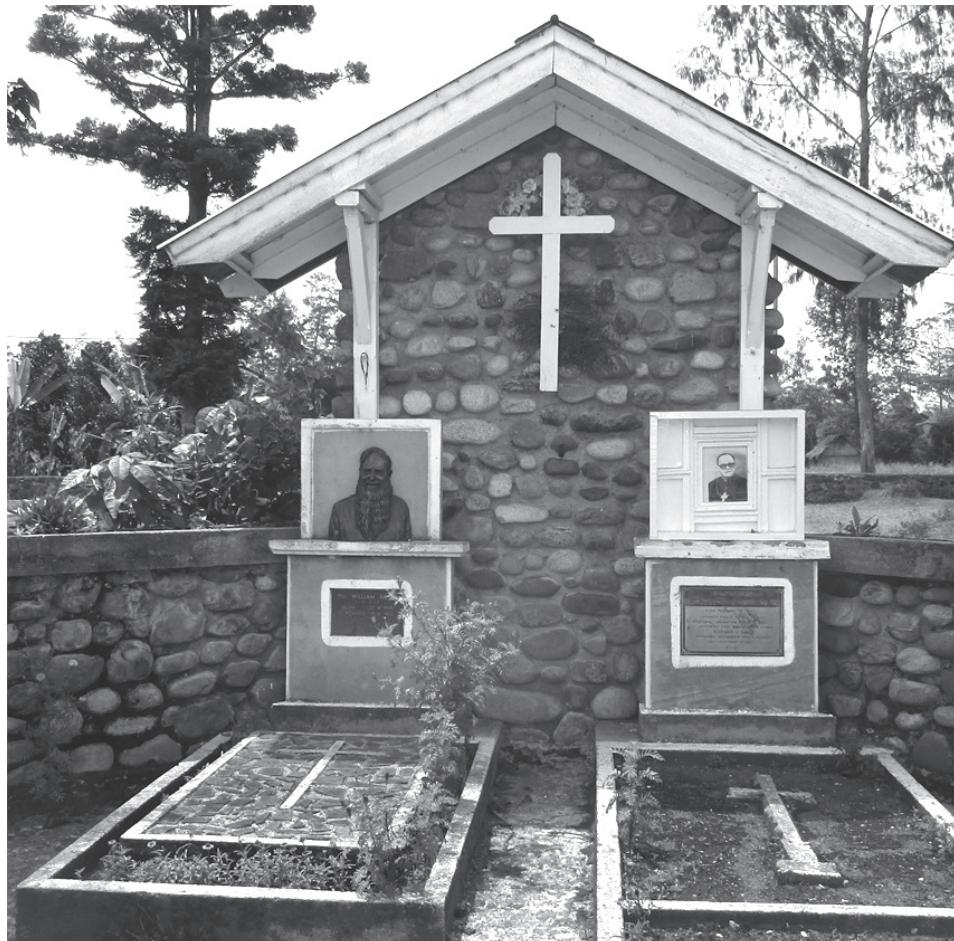
On Saturday, 28 November 2015, I had left Port Moresby at 8.30 in the morning. The one hour flight over the mountains brought back many memories of close calls with cloud shrouded mountains and the pilot looking for the gap between the hills to descend into Hagen. The area around was dotted with the extensive *kaukau* gardens which are still the main staple of the people.

The plane landed at the interim terminal where the luggage was all piled on one large trolley at the side of the terminal. Mine was at the bottom and I had to wait for the crowd of passengers to get their bags. Each bag was checked at the gate with the owner's ticket to ensure the correct bag was taken. There was a crowd of people waiting for friends and relatives and PMV's waiting for passengers. When I left Hagen ten days later on 7 December, it was from the new terminal which was built on the site of the old terminal and which was of international standard and very impressive. Prime Minister O'Neill said at the grand opening in early November, "Mount Hagen's international airport is part of the Government's plan to develop airport infrastructure around the country."

That morning, I was met by Joachim Kerua, the mission driver, who helped me with my luggage and then disappeared among the dozens of vehicles. I was too busy looking around at the passing scene, daydreaming about the way it used to be. I noted that the people were dressed differently now. In the 1970s, they wore their traditional clothes but now the women were in meri dresses and the men wore shorts and shirts. Joachim drove me through town where the city buildings extend well beyond the central shopping centre. The road that curves down to the Rebiamul mission was crowded with people making their way to town or the markets and I was in familiar territory as the roadway has not changed since the 1970s. As we turned into the mission property, changes were visible as well as old landmarks. On the left of the road was the framework for the brand new cathedral and on the right was the Rebiamul School started by Fr Ross and his catechist, Karagu, in 1935.

My unit was across the way from the convent where three Holy Spirit sisters live: Sister Davida, Sister Jeanette, and Sister Valsi. After lunch, Sister Jeanette took me for a drive around the mission centre. The priest's house is still the same with Fr Ross's old room the second door from the end on the veranda. Across the driveway is the dining room which has now been renovated and extended.

Running parallel to the priest's house at the back is the Bishop's residence which also houses the archives. This building, the Pioneer House, overlooks a grassed area with pine trees leading down to the cemetery which was our next port of call. There we saw the graves of Fr Ross and Archbishop Bernarding, the two pioneer missionaries of the



*Graves of Fr Ross and Archbishop Bernarding at Rebiamul (Author).*

Mt Hagen mission. They gave their lives to bringing the Good News to the people and laid the foundation of the large number of Catholics now in the Archdiocese. Fr Ross's grave has a bust above it. Nearby is Sir Wamp Wan's grave (See page 164).

Then Sister Jeanette took me out to Wilya where a white cross marks the spot Fr Ross and Brother Eugene set up the first mission in 1934. It was erected as part of the celebrations at the 75th anniversary of the mission. The plaque under the cross reads:

**Wilya.**

**Father William Ross SVD and Brother Eugene Frank SVD  
co-founders of the Catholic Church in the Western Highlands  
with Fathers Tropper, Aufenanger and Schaefer SVD,  
Rebier and 72 Coastal assistants arrived at this place on March 28 1934  
to establish the Catholic Church in the Western Highlands.  
They were welcomed by local chiefs Wamp and Ninji.  
'They heard the Word and accepted' (Mark 4:20).**



*Cross at Wilya to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Mt Hagen Mission (Author).*

That night the Sisters took me to the Highlander Hotel for dinner to celebrate the Foundation Day of their order. We had a delicious barbecue roast meal which the chef cooked while we waited. At the next table a family was celebrating a birthday. One of them knew Sister Jeanette and I heard her say, “Mum had a stroke and can no longer speak. Then I pricked up my ears. ‘What is your mother’s name?’

“Maria Kupang,” she said. It was then that I realised the connection.

“You must be the special family of Fr Ross!” What a coincidence to meet them. Unfortunately, Maria was too incapacitated to attend. But that night I also met one of Ninji’s grandsons who was celebrating with them.

### **Sunday 29 November 2015**

The church at morning Mass was full. The men still sit on the right side and the women on the left. We had a local priest who finished Mass early. Outside on the noticeboard was a note to say that Mike Willesee and I were going to give talks after Mass in the hall and crowds of people were soon heading in that direction. Sister Jeanette and I headed back to my unit to pick up my computer with my PowerPoint talk on it before going to

the hall. I had wanted to leave it in the back of the car while we were in church but was advised against it as someone might break the window of the car to steal it. That happens in Brisbane too these days so in some ways we are experiencing a breakdown in law and order in Australia as well.

When we got to the hall there were crowds of people probably to hear Mike Willesee. They certainly didn't know who I was. Initially there was no projectionist and no power for the microphone so I couldn't talk. One man in the front row pointed at me and said loudly, "Who is this woman. What is she doing here?" I couldn't explain so we just waited while more people trooped in. There might have been 800 to 900 people there in the end. Then the projectionist turned up, switched the power on and put my USB stick into the computer. Now I could be heard. There was still no sign of Mike Willesee who was supposed to talk first, so I was on.

The only trouble was that my photographs on the flimsy screen were awful so the projector was moved forward. The pictures were clearer but now they were a lot smaller and the people couldn't see them. So they were told to move closer and they did - a whole eight hundred or more of them, grabbed their seats and surged forward around me. There was a group of small boys sitting on the floor near me with big eyes watching intently and drinking everything in. I was so happy to see them. As I talked, my fluency in *Tok Pisin* came back to me from 1982. I could even joke in it as well.

It was quite elating having so many people interested in what I had to say. For the last thirty-five years living in Australia there had not been a big interest in my slides on PNG so I was in my element. I showed them photographs of Fr Ross's family; of the early mission; and of the people in those early days. I told them of the work that Fr Ross and Brother Eugene Frank had done in bringing the Good News to the people. They were most impressed with the photographs taken in 1972 of Sir Wamp Wan who is now a famous figure in their history. The men in other photographs wore the traditional headdress and front aprons but now in the hall the men of the next generation wore trousers and shirts and on their heads were the knitted Hagen beanies now the favoured headdress. My talk was about Mt Hagen forty years ago when I lived there but also included Fr Ross's trip of eighty years ago in 1934 when he and Brother Eugene first arrived there. After my talk I was dubbed the '*Hagen Saga Lady*'!

Mike Willesee had arrived by then and thanked me for holding the fort. He was the favoured speaker they had all come to listen to. However, he doesn't speak *Tok Pisin* and the translator translated every sentence of his talk until it grew tedious and he lost his train of thought. Then he spoke of a Bolivian woman called Katya Revas, who has the stigmata and the people were very interested to hear about her. His documentary about her had been watched by an audience of 28 million in the United States. Mike had just finished talking when the power went off and stayed off for the rest of the day. How lucky was that! I think we are being looked after here in Hagen.

That morning, I looked around the convent garden which can grow a variety of flowers. There is also a big vegetable patch but at that stage mostly strawberries. The climate in Mt Hagen is much cooler than on the coast and lends to growing a great variety of plants and vegetables. There are three cats needed to keep the number of mice down. I could



*At Banz, Fr Thomas Ottarackal, the author, Fr Paul Sundu and Archbishop Young (Author).*

hear the mice in the ceiling at night. Next door to me are the staff members who run the kitchen, laundry and housework on the mission station.

Later that day, Archbishop Young arrived at the convent to pick up his keys. He had just arrived from Madang and invited me to dinner with Mike Willesee and John O'Brien who is the architect of the new cathedral. The Archbishop took me up and showed me the archives which were held in two rooms on the ground floor of the Bishop's house. Many precious items of church regalia were held there as well as boxes of information. Some of the relevant ones for me had already been retrieved and they contained photographs, paperwork and books.

That evening a group of us including Mick Willesee and John O'Brien met in the dining room where I had interviewed Fr Ross forty years earlier so it brought back many memories. Some of the recent improvements to the structure and furnishings were pointed out to me. We had a good conversation and then later went over to the Bishop's house until quite late.

### **Monday 30 November**

The Archbishop was going to the Good Shepherd Seminary at Banz and invited me along. The road on the way was quite rough and sections were positively dangerous and broken with large potholes. In Banz, the surroundings are lovely with low hedges alongside the footpaths. It was quiet that day as most of the students had begun their

holidays. The Seminary started in 1992 "when the Catholic Bishops' Conference set up this philosophate to provide a four-year segment of priestly formation for diocesan seminarians. Veteran Fr Piet van Adrichem was the Rector" (Mihalic, 1990).

That day we met Fr Thomas Ottarackal SVD who is a lecturer and Fr Paul Sundu, who is the present rector of the Seminary. He is also a Chimbu diocesan priest. The Archbishop was lecturing some of the students so I was free to explore the environs of the seminary.

Lecturer, Brandon Zimmerman, and his daughter, Anastasia, took me for a walk up the hill behind the seminary where there is a lovely grotto of our Lady of Fatima overlooking the valley. The view is very extensive from the ridge to the far-distant mountains.

Brandon also showed me around the seminary including the extensive library which has some interesting life histories of missionaries including short histories of Fr Schaefer and Fr Nilles both of whom worked in the Chimbu areas. I marked many pages I wanted copied and Brandon organised to have them done. It cost 65 kina but was worth it. We had lunch with the staff at the seminary there and I met Brandon's wife, Rebecca, and their two other children, Tabitha and Tobiah: a lovely family.

Brandon had explained to me that the grotto was placed on top of the hill to mark the mission land. I heard later from the Archbishop that there had been some controversy over the land so it was hoped Our Lady of Fatima would safeguard the area, including the Good Shepherd seminary, as well as the nearby schools, the land, buildings and people and protect them from trouble. So far it is working but there is pressure from the traditional owners for compensation.

The Archbishop's summary about the problems is on a web site:

Landowners of the Andapang Karerem tribe in Jiwaka threaten to block access to all services in Fatima - primary, secondary and vocational schools, the Good Shepherd Seminary, Callan Services for the Disabled, the health clinic and also the church. They estimate the value of what the church is providing in Fatima at K13 million and believe the State should "compensate" them for this amount.

Landowners are threatening obstruction of access to these services unless they are paid large amounts of money by the State. These groups feel their concerns are not being listened to by Lands Department authorities and the only way for them to attract attention is to disrupt the provision of services, with consequent threats to the safety of those who have a right to make use of these services.

These services, and those who need them, appear to be caught in a struggle between the high expectations of the landowners and the incapacity of the State to deal with the burgeoning compensation industry.

The Archbishop reaffirmed the desire of the Archdiocese to honour its side of the original covenant made with the landowners who gifted their land to the church.

We want to continue to do our best to preach the gospel through our religious, educational, and health activities. If it becomes unsafe to do so in an environment of threat and intimidation by a minority group that the majority is unable to control, then these services will have to be closed until such time as the threat

is removed. While understanding the frustration of landowners who spend large amounts of money in pursuit of an elusive dream, I regret that innocent students, mothers and children are being used as bargaining chips in a dispute that does not concern them (Law, Order and Justice, Permalink, web).

Archbishop Douglas Young is head of the Catholic Education and Health for the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen and the above summarises some of the problems facing the Health and Education services provided by the Catholic Church in Western Highlands and Jiwaka Provinces.

That afternoon, after the visit to the seminary, we passed the Fr Peter Secondary School at Fatima. This boarding school is run by the Catholic Mission and has a student population of 900 students with 40 staff, catering for students in Grades 11 and 12. It is named after Fr Peter van Adrichem SVD, a previous Parish Priest, who had been there for 50 years. He ministered to all the villages around the school and was dearly loved. The whole area is still called Fatima so Our Lady of Fatima lives on in the heart of the Highlands.

We returned from Banz to Mt Hagen on a better road but slightly longer. On the way, we crossed the Wahgi River which Fr Ross followed in 1934, eighty years previously. We saw tea and coffee plantations and many vegetable gardens. We passed many speeding trucks coming towards us and detoured around many pot holes. Back in town, Archbishop Young pointed out the new commercial building, Bernarding House, where he would like to have a visitor's centre. I was interested in the idea as I had spent time in Madang earlier in the year helping to update their museum.

That night, I had dinner in the convent with Sisters Jeanette, Davida and Valsi. We were finished by seven and then I had all evening to myself in my unit. There was a power cut but I could play games on my laptop which is battery operated. In the convent TV room they have solar lights which they can switch on. Later in the week, I was invited to watch the news with the sisters before retiring. They live a full life: up very early every day beginning with many prayers in their lovely little chapel. Their voices can be heard singing at 5.30 in the morning when they begin their day.

## **Tuesday 1 December**

I was up early as it was a big day, today. I went to the 6.30am Mass with Sister Jeanette, a lovely lady. It was World Aids Day and quite a big event in Mt Hagen where Aids is one of the worst problems. A special service was held in the cathedral and participants wore red shirts with the slogan on the back: "Know your HIV status. Get treatment and live longer." Archbishop Young led the service which was attended by staff at the AIDS clinic as well as many of their clientele.

Sister Davida, who runs the Aids clinic, read out some of the prayers for the youth who have already died and others who are suffering. During the service, candles were lit and placed in sand boxes near the altar for friends and relatives who had already died from the disease. This brought back many sad memories for some members of the congregation: many young people have died before their time. After the service, a procession of people from the church followed a truck, bearing the slogan 'Catholic HIV/Aids Services, Mt Hagen', to town where they assembled at the park joining groups from other churches.

I spoke to Sister Davida later about the work she does in the HIV/AIDS clinic and she said it was difficult to help some people who expect to get everything for nothing and then forget to take their medication and get very ill. They also pass on the disease to their wives or husbands. Many die young leaving it until too late to come to the clinic. It is a slow process to get the message across about HIV and people are slow to change their behaviour with the result that many more are becoming infected.

Sister Davida said:

A simple blood test can identify those who are positive as it indicates the presence of the virus. The people need to have good awareness of how the medicine works so that those who are in remission can give advice to those still receiving treatment. The trouble with the testing is that the results are confidential and the family of the client cannot be told by the staff. This is overcome by insisting that a relative accompany the patient when they receive the second test which confirms the disease.

That morning Sister Jeannette drove me alongside the procession and later we saw the crowds assembled at the park in Mt Hagen in front of a large sign declaring World Aids Day. Various government and religious leaders exhorted the people to do something about the problem which was affecting every level of their life: their families, villages, schools, government departments and churches.

That afternoon back at the Bishop's House, I worked on the archives finding photographs and information about mission activities. Mike Willesee was outside preparing his talk which he was giving that night. I was giving the same PowerPoint presentation which I had already given it in the hall so was familiar with the content.

### **Evening fund-raising dinner for the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Rebiamul**

The invitation for the fund-raising dinner said that it was to be held on 1 December 2015 at the Rondon Ridge Hotel. The cost was K200.00 per person. It was being put on by the CMHT Board of Trustees and the Guest speakers listed were Mike Willesee who would speak on his conversion and myself with the re-launching of my book *Hagen Saga* which was about the life of Fr William Ross. I signed some books in advance and there were only a few left after the event.

That evening, 1 December, Archbishop Young picked Sister Jeanette and me up and we were off up to the Rondon Ridge Hotel about half an hour's drive overlooking Mt Hagen town. It was a winding road up the hill and the view is quite extensive and at night the lights of Mt Hagen are visible. A perfect place to relax, retreat and drink a wine while the sun is setting. The vicinity is very nature friendly, lots of plants and flowers around. They even have their own hydroelectricity and water supply.

It is a four-star hotel especially for international travellers many of whom do a group booking. Once a year, groups come particularly for the Mount Hagen Cultural Show which is one of the largest cultural events in Papua New Guinea and a big tourist attraction. The Hagen men and women do themselves up in all their finery and feathered headdress and dance to the beat of the drums. The gold-lip shell ornaments are sometimes replaced with oval red boards on which is painted a yellow imitation shell. In recent years, it has been

held at Rebiamul Field on the edge of the property adjacent to the new Cathedral.

The hotel that evening was colourfully decorated for the fund-raising dinner and seated over two hundred people. Guests came from the mission, from government departments and from Mt Hagen businesses. By the time I got there I was quite anxious as I was the first speaker in front of all these important guests. While talking to some of them before the event my throat went on me and I could hardly whisper. I was given fisherman's friend tablets which helped. Some of the important guests were very late and we were all seated waiting. To pass the time, I went through the photographs of my PowerPoint one at a time on the screen without any talking and this kept everyone amused for a while. Each photograph had a caption typed on it giving some indication of the content. This helped me when I had to give the talk shortly afterwards which went off without a hitch.

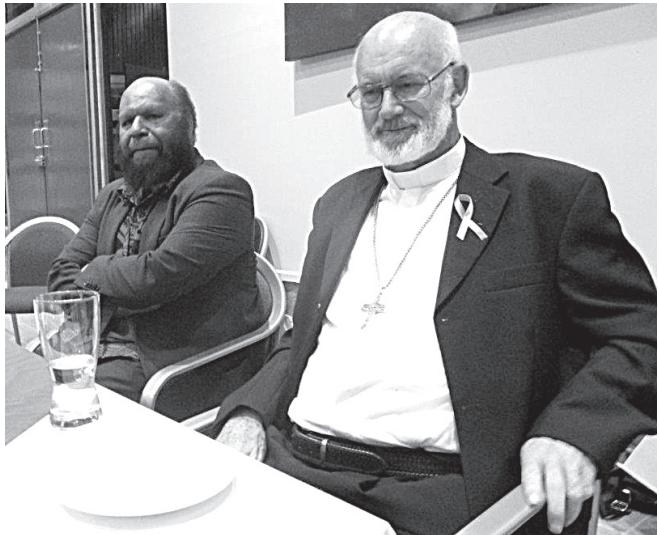
The guests were interested in what Mike Willesee had to say about his life as a television journalist. Later in the evening we had the re-launching of *Hagen Saga* and some copies were auctioned off. They got a good price particularly when signed by Mike Willesee and Paias Wingti, the governor. Someone at the high table wanted copies of my photographs of Sir Wamp Wan so they could enlarge them and for their office walls.

Mike Willesee and I were seated with the Governor, Paias Wingti and the Archbishop, so it was very special. On the invitation there was a long list of Mike's achievements. He is a well-known television and documentary producer for Australian television for the last forty years. He has reported on religious topics and, in 1998, he made a report entitled *Signs from God* on Katya Revas. [In 2002, Willesee became the 19th inductee into the TV Week Logies Hall of Fame].

### **Wednesday, 2 December**

I met up with Regina Graham whom I had met the night before with her brothers and sisters. She is a member of Fr Ross's special family. When she was little, she would stand outside his window and wait for him. But he would hold up his rosary beads to show he was praying so she would go off, knowing he was too busy. However, when he was sick in hospital the family visited him there.

Regina offered to take me out to see her mother, Maria. What a surprise to meet her! Maria was visiting her son, Paul who has a home with timber floors and veranda. Maria



*Governor Paias Wingti and Archbishop Young at the dinner at Rondon Ridge(Author).*

has had a stroke and can't talk much but the rest of us talked. Paul had read my postscript to be added to *Hagen Saga* and made a comment that it was good apart from the fact that I had said Maria had had a good education. Apparently she was illiterate all her life. According to Paul, when Maria was born in 1937, no girls in Mt Hagen were educated and only a few boys attended the Rebiamul School. During the war years all education ceased for a couple of years. After that, there was the mission school at Vunapope, Rabaul, for mixed race girls but if Maria went there her family thought she may not have been allowed to return to Mt Hagen. Maria's mother, Bom, was married to a Hagen man and so Maria was brought up in the village.

I was unable to communicate much with Maria but she was full of smiles and is a gentle soul. After her stroke, Archbishop Young gave her the last rites as it was a serious situation but she recovered her strength. Regina then showed me her own house which is next to Paul's. It has water tanks and a veranda overlooking her extensive garden where she grows vegetables and flowers. She then took me to lunch to the Coffee Kav near the airport. It was a very secure place with high stone walls and an archway with a tropical setting. We ordered and we sat outside.

At the time I did not know that, a few months previously, this restaurant, Coffee Kav, had been involved in a crime when a gang of raskels broke in and, once inside the secure premises, the gang members stopped the police from entering while carrying out their crime. Today all was fine and we had such a large serving Regina took half of it home for her dinner. She lives on her own. Her husband who is part-Scottish lives in Port Moresby. I was shown photographs of their beautiful daughters. Regina has a good job with the Heart Foundation and volunteers with Red Cross.

In the afternoon, I returned to work again in the archives. I had dinner with the good Sisters in the convent and stayed and watched TV in their parlour. When we had a power cut, they could turn on the solar power electricity which is a bonus.

### **Thursday 3 December**

#### **Joachim Kerua's story**

I had put out a request for people who had once known Fr Ross to come and tell me their stories. Who should turn up but Joachim Kerua, the driver! Joachim was born in 1950 and baptised by Fr Ross. His mother was from Ulga and had four children two of whom have died already. In his youth Joachim, spent a lot of time with Fr Ross going out with him when he was answering a sick call and carrying his bible for him. Joachim learnt to be a mechanic with Brother Theo Becker, whom I had met in Madang some years ago. Joachim worked for 3 or 4 years as a mechanic with the mission and then thirty years with a company in town. However, he now has a bad shoulder and can only work as a driver.

Joachim's father was a refugee from another tribe that had been under attack. His grandfather told his father to hide while he distracted the enemy. His father, who was still a boy at the time, was able to escape and wandered towards Wilya just when Fr Ross was setting up the school. He allowed him to join in the first class in the school. How lucky was that for him! His father's teacher was Peter Karagu, a catechist, who also taught Pius



***Joachim Kerua and his daughter, Julie, in front of his house*** (Author).

Piu. Pius is a famous pioneer caterchist and one of the last survivors of the first baptism at Rebiaumal in 1938.

Joachim had interesting stories to tell about the old days. When he saw the photograph of the First Communion of 1964, he said “that’s my class and our teacher was Sister Angela.” He recognised some of his school mates and thought he was in the middle of the back row but partly obscured. He was 14 years old in the photograph and older than some of the others. The Archbishop was impressed that Joachim knew so many of the names. This large photograph of the 1964 first communion had sat unnamed in the archives for fifty years; even the name of the Sister on the left, Sister Angela, had been unknown until Joachim saw the photograph and recognised her.

#### **Friday 4 December**

I worked on the archives and finished most of the work I wanted to do there. In the afternoon Joachim Kerua took me to town. I went into the ANZ bank and it was crowded with a long queue so I went outside to get money from an ATM. There were three ATMs in an adjacent room which was less crowded. I tried the first one; put my number in but nothing happened. Several men were very interested in my number. The second ATM was no better, I knew I had to have money to take everyone out to dinner that night as the Mt Hagen Club did not accept credit cards. I lined up at the third ATM which fortunately was working; I had to put my pin in twice to get enough money. The Hagen men queuing up behind me were getting impatient and looking over my shoulder. They probably all knew my pin number by this time. I recalled that, in 2004, a pilot had been robbed at gun-point at one of the tellers in the shopping centre. He was shot for twenty kina.

After getting the money, I went into the pharmacy thinking to get some photographs printed for people who had helped me. The shop was crowded with people enjoying

the air-conditioning. I was getting worried carrying all that money. Then I noticed that, to get the printing done, I would have to hand my camera card to a shop assistant who would put it into a machine two metres behind him. How could I choose which ones I wanted? Each photo would then cost two kina each so I gave up.

Joachim then drove me back to Rebiamul to the Willie Ross Community Area which lies just behind the church. Access is via a stony driveway down the side wall of the church. This is where many of Fr Ross's workers and catechists built their houses all those years ago. Joachim took me down to see his house which is a native material house. He stood proudly in front of it with his daughter, Julie. He had a small vegetable garden as well. His own sons are building permanent houses nearby while he makes do with his house.

Another family in this community area is that of Andrew Wandau who was born in 1939. Andrew has had a stroke but could talk well enough. He lives with his daughter Maria who is his carer. They have a house with photographs on the walls and veranda in front. I had met Maria a few days earlier when I gave her some rosaries for her youth group and family so she greeted me warmly and invited me in.

Andrew's father, Philip Magik, came into Hagen with Fr Ross in 1934 with 72 carriers, interpreters and policemen. Philip wasn't from Rempi but from the bush area behind Rempi at Baiteta and they still keep in touch with their relatives there. Maria said she goes and stays with her aunts on the coast. They still own land at Baiteta and some of the family have moved back there.

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It had rained most of the day so the drought has at last broken. That night I took the Sisters and the Archbishop out for dinner. Sister Davida drove through the dark wet streets of the town expertly avoiding the potholes. The Mt Hagen Club where we were heading has a high security fence around it and a big iron gate. The security men decided that Sister Davida was parked in the wrong area, although there seemed to be lots of spaces. It seemed they did not have much to do. The kitchen is run by a Filipino couple who are friends of Sister Jeanette. When she disappeared into the kitchen to visit her *wantoks* I teased her that she was out there to help with the cooking.

Archbishop Young was already there when we arrived. He had driven over to Banz earlier in the day and returned through the rain. I was worried about him on those roads but he said it was OK until it got dark when he found it hard to see with the headlights of oncoming trucks. After dinner, the Bishop showed us the portraits on the upstairs walls of the club of some of the early residents of Hagen including Rev. Doering, the Lutheran pastor and Mick and Dan Leahy, Fr Ross and Ninji Kama. Fr Ross had mentioned the launch of these paintings in one of his letters back in 1972. The club probably had a bigger patronage in those days as there weren't many people there that night.

## **Saturday 5 December**

In the morning, I went to see the staff of the complex and we talked about rosary beads and how I could send more of them and about the possibility of making the rosaries themselves. One woman said she could but that she needed the thread and the connectors and crosses, so I said I would provide these for her.



*Some of the staff at the Rebiamul Mission, December 2015 (Author).*

I later interviewed Archbishop Young for a couple of hours. I did not use a tape recorder as I feel it blocks the mind and then there is the hassle of listening to it and typing it out afterwards. [Much of the material from that interview can be found in Chapter 8]. The view from the top floor of the Bishop's house is very good as it opens on to the Rebiamul station with its green lawns and waving pine and casuarina trees and overlooks the present cathedral built by Bishop Bernarding in 1959.

Tonight in the convent there was a Sister from Wabag with a young girl who just finished Grade 11 and who wants to join the SSpS convent. They were returning to Wabag and next morning were driven to the bus depot which is amazing with PMVs and buses taking off for Madang, Lae, Goroka and Wabag. The fares are much cheaper than airline tickets and the buses are the favoured means of transportation for the local people, but the state of the roads would make it a difficult mode of travel.

There are a several different orders of Sisters here in Mt Hagen: Mercy Sisters, Sisters of St Therese, Notre Dame Sisters and Franciscans of the Immaculate Heart of Mary as well as SSpS Sisters. They see each other at church and other gatherings.

Sister Josepha is a Sister of the St Therese Order and is in charge of the kitchen for the clergy. She is very jolly and happy in her work. Nearly everyday she does the shopping in town or at the markets for the kitchen. She is from Wewak but joined the Sisters in Madang. She has been in Mt Hagen for 14 years and enjoys the cooler weather. Her parents have died already. She is the oldest in her family and has one brother and five sisters. Her brother, John, is a financial adviser in Port Moresby. Sister Josepha told me about her Order which was started in 1951 by Bishop Noser who thought the local girls should have their own order. When she first came to Mt Hagen, Archbishop Meier was here and there were two Sisters working in the kitchen; now she is the only one, but she has other people helping.



*SSpS Sisters Valsi, Jeanette and Davida (Author).*

On Sunday morning, Sister Jeannette and I went to St Paul's in town for the 9 o'clock Mass as the Archbishop was saying it. At the front of the church there was a group of women dressed in bright red clothes with red veils. I was wondering if they were some sort of order but, apparently, they are a sect within the church. They attend every week at St Paul's and all sit together. I spoke to the leader after Mass and she said they had been instructed by the Holy Spirit to form a group and attend Mass together. They support each other in their marriages.

### **Sunday 6 December, the three Holy Spirit Sisters speak of their lives**

#### **Sister Davida Strojek SSpS**

In 2015, Sister Davida is the leader in the Mt Hagen convent. She is from south-east Poland near the Ukraine border. There were six children in her family which was very religious. Her parents, Mary and Wojciech, have now been married 55 years, her eldest sister is in a monastic convent in Poland and her eldest brother was a priest but died when he was 42 years old.

Sister Davida was born in 1964 and trained as a nurse. She wanted to be a missionary and help families in foreign countries. However at that time, communist Poland would not allow anyone to leave the country as a lay person. She could only leave if she belonged to a religious order so she joined the Holy Spirit Sisters in 1984. She studied in Poland and after three years was sent to Rome to study spirituality until 1994. She took her final vows in 1995 and was then sent to Romania which, by then, was a free country. Romania

was a good experience as the sisters worked with the poor villagers and established Nazareth House where they cared for homeless children and orphans. These children attended school and many are now doctors and nurses. Sister Davida treasures this time in her heart and is happy they have achieved so well.

After ten years in Romania, Sister Davida was sent to the Republic of Moldavia which had also gained its independence from Russia. This was a difficult mission in a town with only one Catholic. Some of the people were Russian Orthodox but most had no religion and did not know who the Sisters were. The Moldavians were a suspicious people having been under Communist domination for so long: suspicious of each other and their neighbours and had high walls around their houses. The two Sisters began by visiting the sick, but one night they were attacked by three youths who broke into the convent through the roof. They were street boys whom the Sisters had tried to help. They tied the sisters up and had held knives to their throats; fortunately, the sisters were not sexually assaulted. Over the next while there was a court case over the attack and one of the boys proved to be HIV positive so the sisters were lucky the attack had not been worse. In 2007, the convent was closed as being too dangerous and the two sisters spent time in recovery.

At this stage, Sister Davida was forty years old and felt if she didn't do something, the bad experience could ruin the rest of her life. She decided that "God saved me from being infected so I wanted to work with people with HIV". It was a toss up between Ghana and Papua New Guinea. New Guinea answered first. She arrived in Madang in 2009 and initially did an orientation course at the Divine Word University. Then she was sent to Mount Hagen to set up a counselling centre at Rebiamul.

Sister Davida said:

The Catholic HIV/AIDS clinic has activities and outreach in villages and also provides courses in gender, violence, human dignity and child protection. Sometimes it is the first time the people have had advice on how to act as a family. Often the women are not educated and spend their days looking after their children, their gardens and the pigs as they did in their traditional life.

At Kumdi, Sister Davida and her staff help a woman called Miriam who is looking after thirteen abandoned children as she felt it was her mission to do this. However, her accommodation was pitiful and her house was beginning to collapse. Sister Davida and staff organised the building of a house on Miriam's land and the children moved in last Christmas. Now they have their own beds with sheets, pillows and blankets. Once a month, Sister Davida and the staff at the HIV clinic go to Kumdi to help Miriam and buy her food. The outside of the house is made of native material to tone in with the rest of the village but inside is very nice with bedrooms and a separate cooking facility. Archbishop Young blessed the house and the children regularly attend church. Last Christmas, the clinic staff brought the family food and presents. Miriam and the children are very happy. It is a wonderful story of helping people.

So life continues and Sister Davida is busy organising convent life and enjoys baking Polish delicacies as well as running her clinic. Visitors arrive from different places to be accommodated, including myself, and we are made to feel welcome.

## **Sister Mary Jeanette Matela SSpS**

Sister Jeanette was born Elisa Trazo Matela in the Philippines. She is the fifth child in her family and another was born after her. Her mother, Fortuna was a home economics teacher. Her father, Melanio, was from Leyte in the Philippines. The family lived in Cebu near where Majellan, the explorer, landed and erected a large cross. Elisa was a blue baby and she likes to add that she went from being a blue baby to entering an order known as the Blue Sisters (SSpS). She celebrated her Golden Jubilee last year with Archbishop Young. She joined the sisters in 1961 and took her first vows in 1963 in the Holy Spirit Convent in Manila.

Before Sister Jeanette entered, she was an accountant and received her Bachelor of Commerce in 1958. While studying, she worked in her old school as a secretary. After religious training she was assigned to different SSpS provinces in school offices. She studied for a Masters Degree in Manila which she completed in 1969. She made her final vows in 1970 and then studied for an MBA degree. In 1973 she went to Ghana West Africa as an Accountant for five years. She enjoyed Ghana even though her mother had advised against going there. She also did youth and pastoral work for the people.

In 1981, she went to Madang to the Divine Word Institute to organise the Business Studies course covering accounting, economics and business law. It began as a two-year diploma Course but in 1988, it was designated to become a four-year course. Before the longer course began, Sister Jeanette went to Lae to learn how to implement the four-year course and then went to Port Moresby's Auditor General's Office to find out about government auditing. It was there she discovered about corruption first hand. The man in charge of the petty cash had been using it to buy *buia* for himself. He soon lost his job.

Sister Jeanette then ran the four-year Business Studies Course at the Divine Word University with an accounting major. Some lay teachers came from the Philippines and many of the students have done well and become accountants. In 2001, Sister retired from the Divine Word University after 20 years of teaching and managing the Business Studies Department. She then went to Rome for six months for Bible Studies at the Verbum Dei College in Rome run by the SVD.

After these six months, Sister Jeanette returned to PNG and, while in Port Moresby, was asked to help Caritas at the Catholic Bishop's Conference. She worked as their finance officer for three years. In 2006, she was elected Superior of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters in Papua New Guinea and lived in Alexishafen where their headquarters is located. In 2013, Sr. Jeanette took her home leave in the Philippines and while there Archbishop Douglas Young requested her to work in the Mt Hagen Archdiocese. Since then she has been Chancellor and Finance Officer of the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen. Sister Jeanette celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 2013.

## **Sister Valsamma Kurean (Valsi)**

Valsamma means a loving person and this well describes Sr Valsi. She kept the name Valsi at the time she took her final vows when she could have opted to change it. There were eleven children in her family 6 boys and five girls. Sr Valsi is the fourth one. Her eldest brother is a priest in Indonesia

Her first school was near her home: the nuns were very strict and Valsi complained about them. In those earlier years, most of the children she played with were boys including her own brothers and their friends. In the holidays they looked after the cows and went out with the workers to the rice fields. The children enjoyed watching the workers harvest the rice by hand. They sang as they worked and the children joined in. Once the rice was cut, it was winnowed and then put in a machine to remove the husks. Trucks of rice left the farm at harvest time. Part of the large farm was a rubber plantation and then there was the vegetable garden where they grew all their own vegetables. Valsi's father had been a teacher but he gave it up to run the farm which was a successful business. Valsi helped her mother and the cook in the kitchen, cooking for the many workers. Now today one of her brothers runs the farm.

After Grade 10, Valsi went to College for Grades 11 and 12 in a different village and it was about this time she contacted the SSpS Sisters. She saw something about them in a magazine and wrote to them. Their convent was in Bangalore where her brother was in the seminary. She travelled for twelve hours by bus to visit him. While there, Valsi contacted the sisters and they were happy to meet her but said she was too young. They sent her off for further studies at Mysore which was nearby. Here she studied sociology and history to Diploma level and enjoyed this. She returned to her parents who didn't think she would ever succeed in the convent.

In 1985, she took her first vows in Bangalore and then she went to the Holy Spirit hospital in Bombay, where she worked as a nurse. In the convent, she took care of the visitors and supervised the kitchen staff. In 1986, she started a four-year diploma Course and following this she did midwifery in Bombay where they were visited by Mother Theresa. Valsi's uncle was a priest in Calcutta and a good friend of Mother Theresa as he gave spiritual direction to the Charity Sisters there. After Sr Valsi made her final vows, she came to Papua New Guinea in 1992. She went first to Madang at Alexishafen and stayed until 1996 then went to Wewak. After 2000, she was at the Divine Word University doing a diploma in Health Management.

Then she was at Alexishafen again. The situation was not always secure. She was once attacked on the playground near the vocational school and thrown to the ground. It was 31 December 2000, and there were New Year's Eve parties going on. The attacker had a knife to her throat but she managed to give him a big kick and screamed. At first the people nearby thought the noise was from the New Year's celebrations and then everyone came running and the attacker ran off. The police were called but nothing much happened. Afterwards Valsi was trembling with shock and did not feel like joining in the New Year celebrations. Before this, she used to go back and forth from the clinic at night and felt safe but after this she was scared. However, people knew her and looked after her so she became more confident after a while.

In 2013, Sr Valsi was posted to Mt Hagen where she runs the health clinic at Rebiamul with thirty staff including security, cleaners and nurses. There is an outpatients' clinic, an emergency department, an anti-natal clinic, and a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases. Sr. Valsi and staff also conduct health education in schools and villages in the nearby areas where they weigh babies and immunise the children. Overall, it is a very busy clinic which serves many people.

In 2015, Sr Valsi celebrated thirty years since her first vows.

Coming from different countries, the three sisters stand together through thick and thin. They work in Mount Hagen and are called the Blue Sisters. The convent is protected by security grills and the cars are heavily protected at night behind heavy doors. Sometimes, I could hear them singing their prayers in the little chapel upstairs.

On 30 November 2014, The Holy Spirit missionary sisters celebrated 115 Years in Papua New Guinea and 45 years of service at DWU. On Monday 8 December, Foundation Day, the six missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit (SSPs) on the staff of Divine Word University in Madang celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Congregation. Mass of celebration was by Fr Jan Czuba, SVD, President of DWU

### **The work the Sisters are sometimes called to do.**

Fr Philip Gibbs wrote about one of the many calls for help received by these Holy Spirit Sisters in Mt Hagen. When the Sisters received a radio call from Ambulua, a mission station on the slopes of Mt Wilhelm about a woman in labour who needed urgent help, they called an ambulance. “The Sisters set out that night on the 120 km trip, but the 4WD Land Cruiser ambulance could not make it across a swollen river and they had to turn back.” The next day the sisters hired a driver and another 4WD which managed to cross the river and reached the woman who was still in labour. On return trip, the 4WD got stuck in a hole where the woman gave birth at the side of the road.

Fr Gibbs used this as an example of the plight of many women in PNG:

The tale above might sound like a mission story with a happy ending. However, there is a wider context in which such episodes often end in tragedy. The woman and her baby were very fortunate. A number of women die every day in PNG due to birth complications. Maternal mortality in Papua New Guinea is now thought to be at a rate of 730 deaths for every 100,000 live births. Australia’s maternal mortality rate at 8 per 100,000 live births means that PNG’s rate is about 90 times that of its neighbour. However, without looking abroad, distressing disparity is found within PNG itself symbolized by a chaotic birth on the back of a bouncing truck. The disturbing contrasts between haves and have-nots, traditional and modern, village and the town, global and the local, exemplify the context of mission today. How does one assess that context? How does the changing context affect intercultural relations? What does it mean for Divine Word Missionaries, particularly from a missiological perspective?

Fr Gibbs concluded his long paper:

The woman mentioned at the beginning of this paper, rested and then walked home to Ambulua with her baby. Helicopters continue to fly overhead. She lives in a village with no road access and no electric power. Access to human rights and the exercise of community power are uncertain. With the help of the SVD, women’s groups and people responsible for rural health centres could develop ways to make their needs known to the wider world and empower relevant agencies to provide better services. In that way there could be a higher percentage of ‘happy endings’ for women having difficult labour no matter where they live.

Hopefully too the SVD effort will contribute to the birth of a new society with intercultural relations reflecting the values of the reign of God. (Gibbs, 2012)

## **Problems facing present day Mt Hagen**

### **The Aids/ HIV problem**

At a meeting in Mt Hagen in September 2003, more than 500 health professionals and researchers from Papua New Guinea and overseas met for the 39th Medical Symposium. The PNG Medical Society hosted the gathering, whose theme was The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Papua New Guinea. Professor Mathias Sapuri, president of the PNG Medical Society, said:

The devastation caused by the epidemic since the nation's first case was reported in 1987 has become a major concern for government, nongovernmental organizations and international communities. HIV/AIDS is no longer just a health problem. It also carries with it a burden, not only to the victim but their family, relatives and the society at large. Papua New Guinea currently leads the other Pacific nations in the number of HIV infections. In the North Capital District alone, about 100 new cases are reported each month at Port Moresby General Hospital.

Topics of the 48 papers presented at this gathering included more effective ways to control the epidemic's spread; how to provide adequate care for infected persons; reports on mechanisms of transmission for better control; and treatment accessibility. West Highlands Governor and former Prime Minister, Paias Wingti, welcomed the participants and commended the medical society for taking on such a challenging theme for the symposium (Adapted from *Post Courier*, 9 February 2003).

As mentioned above, the first case of HIV in PNG was reported in 1987 and by the 1990s HIV prevalence rose steeply. In the years after 2002, approximately 2,000 new infections were reported annually. The National Aids Council (NAC) estimated that 46,275 people were HIV-positive by the end of 2006 (From CDC, National Prevention Information Network). According to the United Nations Development Program, "gender-based violence affecting women and girls has reached unprecedented levels making them vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS." In 2009, the National Aids Council of Papua New Guinea reported that approximately 0.9% of the population had the disease, with 60% of reported cases located in the Highlands.

The disease is having a major impact on people's lives and many of the adult admissions in the hospitals in Port Moresby are related to the disease (*Post Courier*, 3 October 2008; 32). The individual might be diagnosed but then their wives, husbands, children and families are also at risk. It is said that Aids affects the whole family and community. People get suspicious and lack faith in others. If a woman dies, then her children need caring for and often it is the grandparents looking after them. Yet there are attitudes that make it difficult for the people. One poor woman whose husband had aids was found to have a condom in her bilum and for this she was attacked by her fellow villagers (Gibbs, 2008).

In an article named *Forces of Death and the Promise of Life in Papua New Guinea*, Fr Gibbs, while listing the difficulties facing the people of Papua New Guinea, also give a message of hope for sufferers. His paper uses a re-reading of passages from the Fourth Gospel to question the negative opinion.

Gibbs wrote:

Trust and respect between ethnic groups is low, women have a significant lifetime chance of being raped. Networks with concurrent sexual relationships continue to expand, and PNG has the greatest socio-economic disparity in the Asian and Pacific regions. What then is the practical Gospel message of life in face of such forces of death? What does it mean to talk of the goodness of God in the context of HIV and AIDS?

In a country with no system for old age pension the loss of a son or daughter is a severe blow to the security of parents in their advanced years. --- What is the practical Gospel message of life in face of such forces of death? A response will be sought in a re-reading of passages from the Fourth Gospel - starting with the political, socio-cultural and economic driving forces of the epidemic (2008).

In 2015, Sister Davida was in charge of the Catholic HIV/AIDS clinic in Hagen and she and her staff continue to work tirelessly with people who are suffering with the disease. She said, "If people take the medication they have a great chance of being stabilised. It was a slow process but patients who are successful in combating the disease give encouragement to those who have just been diagnosed".

The Mt Hagen hospital web site said, "as the epidemic continues to increase annually by over 20 percent across Papua New Guinea, women have been accused of being witches and have been tortured and murdered by mobs holding them responsible for the apparently inexplicable deaths of young people stricken by the AIDS epidemic". This shows that there is a connection between people dying of aids and women being accused of causing their deaths by *sanguma*.

### ***Sanguma, (Sorcery)***

*Sanguma* is a big problem in Papua New Guinea where many people do not accept natural causes for a death; they feel they must accuse someone of it. Often the suspects are vulnerable women who lack support.

There were at least two cases of *sanguma* that involved the Rebiamul Catholic mission. There was the case of a young girl whose parents had been accused of causing the deaths of several people and had both been burnt to death. Their little daughter was then a suspect and was attacked. She was brought secretly to the Rebiamul convent with knife slashes to her body and was very frightened. The sisters cared for her for three weeks but it could not be a permanent solution and the sisters arranged for her to go to a coastal mission where she is now attending school.

### **The death of Kepari Leniata in 2013**

On 7 February 2013, a young village woman, Kepari Leniata, was brutally burnt alive after being accused of making *sanguma* and causing the death of a young boy who died

in the Mt Hagen hospital. She was dragged from her house and tortured and brutally burnt alive. Some village people had mobile phones and sent images of the event to their friends. This case hit the international press when these photographs were beamed around the world via mobile phones of witnesses.

The *Post Courier* said the torture and brutal murder of Leniata the mother of two “provided a photo opportunity for many of the onlookers, including school children, who crowded around and took photos of the woman being consumed alive by the fire.” Two other women had been tied up to meet the same fate. Police who rushed to the area were turned back by an angry crowd, but they rescued one of these two women, and the other one fled. Two people were arrested by the police for Leniata’s death, but were never convicted. However, it was not just them who were at fault, as many of the villagers also believed Leniata had used sorcery to kill the boy and they did not want to police to interfere.

Archbishop Young wrote a submission to the National Court regarding the death of Kepari Leniata, based on information from the internal Catholic Church network:

Kepari Leniata was born to a Christian (SDA) family. She is the last born of four children. Her father was Pokoli, and mother Moreme. They lived in Tobena village near Mt Hagen. Kepari got married to a young man (Lutheran) from Kolombi village and gave birth to a baby boy. About this time she was accused of practicing *sanguma*, a type that derives from *Hewa*. (*Hewa sanguma* apparently only affects or possesses women, not men). According to local stories, she was blamed for the death of a husband and wife. Sometime later, she was blamed for the death of her uncle, named Simbu Waiyama. Later she was blamed for the death of another young man (Okawi) who is also her relative.

After being blamed for the death of these four people, she divorced her husband and got married to a young man from another village (Komanga). While living with her second husband in Komanga, she was again blamed for the death of another baby. The second husband divorced her and she went back to her family in Kolombi. She had a reputation in Kolombi as a *sanguma meri* and the relatives of the deceased wanted to kill her. Then her brother, Seai, brought her to Mount Hagen. Kepari came to stay with this family in Mount Hagen. Other women from Paiala have been accused of *sanguma*. Some escaped to other places such as Madang and Port Moresby, intermarried, and have not experienced the allegations any more. Leniata Kepari is buried in an unmarked grave at Rebiamul Catholic Cemetery, Kuta Road, Mount Hagen.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas W. Young Archbishop of Mount Hagen

Following the death of Kepari Leniata, and the subsequent beheading of teacher Helen Rumbali, who was also accused of practising sorcery, a wave of indignation swept across Papua New Guinea. Days of mourning called *haus krai* days were held lamenting

the deaths of these two women and demanding action. Students, teachers, parents and politicians dressed in black made rallies across the country. Marches were held. Pressure was mounting on an international scale after news the deaths of Kepari and Helen were beamed around the world. Many people in Papua New Guinea said that they had had enough.

Archbishop Young said that *sanguma* allegation is a big challenge in present day Papua New Guinea. Allegations of *sanguma* reflect on the power of traditional beliefs and also on the shallowness of faith.

Two thousand people attended a prayer vigil in Port Moresby overnight on 15 May 2013 and more were expected the following day. The organisers sent a petition to Prime Minister Peter O'Neill calling for government action to help end violence against women. More gatherings were held across the country with people being contacted by mobile phones.

It was reported that the Prime Minister, Peter O'Neill, attended a gathering at a Port Moresby stadium. He told the rally, “Your government says sorry. It is not acceptable in this day and age and your government stands with you”.

In May 2013, the government decided to expand the nation’s Death Penalty laws.

Prime Minister Peter O'Neill and his government reactivated the nation’s death penalty in 2013 in a bid to tackle PNG’s endemic law and order problems, and an escalating crime rate. In the past 12 months crimes have included women being stripped and burned alive, the beheading of a former teacher and an increasing number of horrific revenge killings by alcohol fuelled men or tribal mobs (Web site).

Douglas Young, the Catholic Archbishop of Western Highlands, shares the view of Amnesty International and other church leaders that state-sanctioned violence is not an appropriate way to tackle community violence. He expressed his deep concern at PNG’s Justice Minister’s determination to execute 13 men currently on death row. The Archbishop said, “The death penalty is giving into the same vengeful streak in PNG culture that is part of our current problem.”

### **Domestic Violence.**

Domestic violence is also a problem in Papua New Guinea. While I was in Madang in May 2015, there were gatherings against domestic violence when a woman and her disabled daughter were senselessly killed in a village. The daughter had been cruelly raped by a man who was found guilty and imprisoned. Angry at his sentence, he urged his friends to murder both the mother and daughter as payback. This action stirred the hearts of the population and mass protests against domestic violence were the results. Both men and women took part in them which is a positive sign as the problem of domestic violence will not be addressed until the men are also involved.

Charlotte Lytton wrote:

When the UN introduced the millennium development goals (MDGs) in 2000, its third pledge – to promote gender equality and empower women – promised

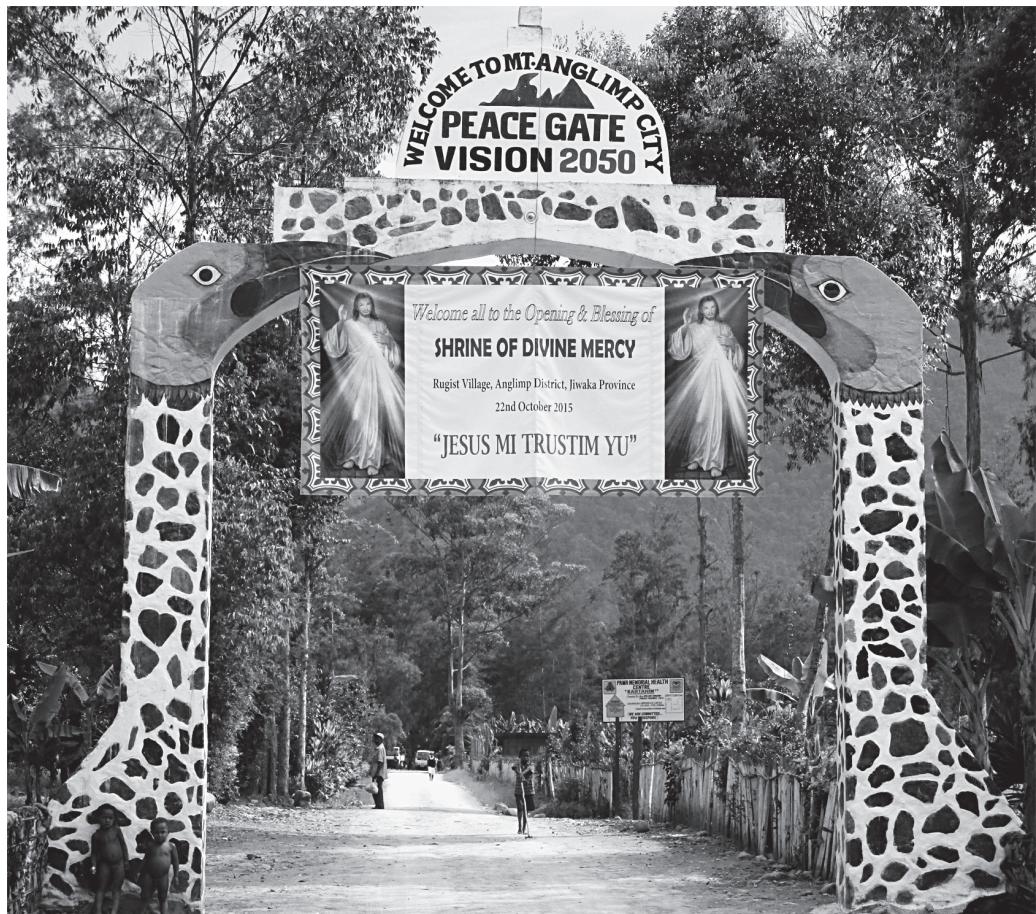
to herald worldwide reform. But 15 years later, and with 67% in the country suffering domestic abuse, progress in Papua New Guinea has been far slower than hoped. --- Many had hoped that the 2013 family protection bill criminalising domestic violence would signal a renewed political system committed to fighting anti-female abuse, but no further action has been introduced and rates remain unchanged (Charlotte Lytton, Thursday 17 December 2015. Global Development Professional Network).

Philma Kelegai, is a co-founder of a women's advocacy group, the Leniata Legacy, named after Kepari Leniata. The 20-year-old was accused of *sanguma* (or sorcery) – a major cause of gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea. This means that the death of Kepari Leniata has reinforced the need to tackle domestic violence. The reaction of the nation to this horrific crime witnessed even by young children shows that people generally want peace and an absence of domestic violence in their families and society. If Papua New Guinea were to become a peaceful law-abiding country, then the bonus would be an increase in tourism which would help the economy, create jobs and benefit everyone. Papua New Guinea is a beautiful country and most of the people are just lovely.

James Leahy of the famous Leahy family is the President of the Western Highlands Chamber of Commerce and he notes that development of roads and access to markets will enhance the ability of the Highlands to feed the nation. The Highlands area is seen as a fertile valley and natural centre for agriculture

Mr Leahy said

We, and the rest of the country, hear of millions of kina being pumped into Port Moresby and Lae. What about the locals in the Highlands provinces? The Highlands Highway is the lifeline for our produce to get out. If the highway was good, agricultural products could flow to markets and encourage people to remain in the village and work, slowing migration to city centres. While a new Mt Hagen airport is due for completion in 2015 and remote airstrips need to be upgraded too, so that coffee and other crops can be flown out. We also want the government to help develop micro mills in remote areas so that coffee can be shelled into green bean form and air freighted out (Web site).



*Archway near the Mercy Centre (Author).*

# **Chapter 9. Mt Hagen, 2015**

## **Places and Buildings**

### **The Divine Mercy Diocesan Shrine**

The Divine Mercy Shrine is thirty kilometres from Mt Hagen at Ruquis and was opened by the Apostolic Nuncio on the Feast of St John Paul II, 22 October 2015, in the presence of three Bishops and two Archbishops. (See inside front cover). Thousands flocked to the celebration in the church. The Divine Mercy Shrine is to be a significant place of pilgrimage not only for the Archdiocese, but also for PNG and other countries as well. Basic accommodation for pilgrims has been built.

Sister Jeanette and I visited the New Mercy Shrine on Sunday 6 December 2015. It was threatening storms before we left Rebiamul and I was reluctant to go particularly when I was told a couple of rivers might rise if the storms broke and we could be stranded. I was leaving the next day for Australia. Still Sister Jeanette was very persuasive and having heard so much about the shrine I decided to go anyway. In the end I was very pleased I had made the effort as it is a wonderful place. On the way there were lots of people on the road which was rather narrow. There were quite a few rivers to cross some with bridges and others without; they were the ones that might flood. We knew when we were getting close when we saw two high archways over the road.

The first archway has two long-necked mythical birds holding up a banner across the road with a Mercy Picture on each side. The banner read:

**WELCOME TO MT ANGLIMP CITY  
Peace Gate Vision 2015,  
Welcome to the opening and Blessing of the  
Shrine of Divine Mercy  
Rugis village Jiwaka Province.  
22 October 2015.  
JESUS MI TRUSTIM YU**

The shrine itself is a beautiful church with stone-imbedded walls with a backdrop of the hills edging the Wahgi Valley. The people are rightly proud of it as it was mostly built with their own labour. John O'Brien, the architect of the new cathedral, gave advice on some of the structures to make them earthquake proof. It was built on Rose Ume's land donated after she was cured in Port Moresby at a Divine Mercy prayer meeting. We met her briefly before the service.

Fr Bogdan, the Parish Priest from Kuli Parish, and his assistant greeted us that afternoon. They were getting ready for the long service beginning at three o'clock with Mass followed by talks and the Mercy Chaplet. Crowds of people began arriving and settled into the beautiful interior with its banners of St Faustina, Pope St John Paul II and of course the large Mercy painting of Jesus. There was lots of singing during the service. Suddenly the storm broke and the rain pelted down. Everyone had been praying for rain to break the long drought so they were happy: their prayers had been answered.

Afterwards, we joined Fr Bogdan and the others for refreshments. Everyone was so enthusiastic about the Mercy Shrine. We heard more about how it had happened.

The Shrine had been opened just a month earlier, in time for the upcoming Jubilee Year of Mercy, and was dedicated by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Michael Banach. Bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful from surrounding Dioceses joined Archbishop Douglas Young for the joyful celebration. When the idea of the shrine was first mooted, Fr Bogdan, who belongs to the Polish Michaelite Fathers, was very enthusiastic about the project. Sr Faustina, who introduced the Divine Mercy devotion, was from his native Poland. However, he wondered about the financial side as it was a huge project. Then on a visit to Poland in 2010, he received financial support and some money was raised locally.

### **How did the Shrine come to be?**

The awesome Shrine of Divine Mercy can be traced to one woman, Crescentia Anderson who began the Divine Mercy devotion in Port Moresby in about 1994. While visiting Cairns, she had picked up a leaflet on the apostolate to the Divine Mercy in St Monica's Cathedral. She decided that this devotion was needed in PNG. She invited three other women to help her start devotions in honour of the Divine Mercy at St Mary's Cathedral, Port Moresby. They represented the four regions of PNG - the Highlands, the New Guinea Islands, the PNG mainland and the southern region.

Paul Dobbyn wrote an article about Crescentia for the Catholic Leader:

Meeting Crescentia, a force of nature, is an experience in itself, and an inspirational one. People often ask Crescentia why she is so passionate about the apostolate. "Because the most beautiful thing in my life is to have known the Mercy of God - his love is above and beyond our sins; his love is unfathomable," she said. (*The Catholic Leader/cathnews.com* – 17 June 2012)

Crescentia approached St Joseph's parish priest, Fr Paul Guy, about forming a Divine Mercy prayer group at St Mary's Cathedral in Port Moresby. Gradually more and more people joined the prayer groups. In October 2005, Crescentia and two other members of the group went to Cracow in Poland to attend the Second International Congress on the Divine Mercy message and devotion. The group lit a candle from one originally lit by Pope St John Paul II in 2003.

The candle was re-lit in Port Moresby at a Mass in St Mary's Cathedral in 2006. During a prayer service at that time, Rose Ume of Mt Hagen was cured of a chronic back pain and from then on was keen to promote the Divine Mercy Chaplet and develop a centre in her village of Ruquis near Mt Hagen. Furthermore, Rose had land she was willing to donate for the shrine. She invited Crescentia and other women to hold a prayer meeting there. So a lantern lit from the special candle in Port Moresby was brought by Rose Ume and seven other women to Ruquis village near Mt Hagen.

Crescentia described the event to Paul Dobbyn:

We celebrated the Feast of Divine Mercy there [in Ruquis] in 2006 and many wonderful things happened. After we left, I heard people had been touched by

the message of the Divine Mercy. They were particularly impressed by healing of a young man with epilepsy and saw the power of Divine Mercy. It was the people from the village who initiated and decided to build the shrine - I had no hand in this, only God had. The people said they trusted Jesus and the chapel would be built. A couple of years later, the chapel still needed a roof. How do they do it? To tell the truth, I don't know. I'm so amazed with the dedication, love and joy they're doing this (*The Catholic Leader/cathnews.com* – 17 June 2012).

Local fundraising in Mt Hagen began after a statement by Archbishop Young during the celebration of the Feast of Divine Mercy in the incomplete chapel several years ago. Crescentia Anderson also raised \$240,000 dollars for the shrine. Finally, the church was completed in 2015 with the celebration already mentioned just in time for the Year of Mercy. As already mentioned, the Divine Mercy Shrine is to be a significant place of pilgrimage not only for the Archdiocese, but also for PNG and other countries as well. Basic accommodation for pilgrims has been built in round local houses that nestle together near the church. Meanwhile, the devotion to the Divine Mercy continues to spread in PNG. In 2009, 20,000 copies of the Divine Mercy chaplet were printed in English.



*Group outside the Mercy Shrine, December 2015 (Author).*

As we left that evening, I was worried about the rivers after the heavy storm we had experienced but we crossed them easily. The villagers nearby were revelling in the rain after the long drought. Playing a muddy game of football in a nearby paddock, they kicked up the water and sang happily in the rain.

Crescentia Anderson lives in Wynnum, Brisbane. In April 2016, she was able to fill me in with more details about the shrine in a long phone conversation. Amazingly both in Port Moresby and in Ruquis Village she and others witnessed the rays of Divine Mercy in the sky. Beautiful red rays over the Cathedral in Port Moresby and on another occasion in a little village church against the green of the mountains at Ruquis village. She also had a story of a white dog with black spots on its face which came into the village church during a ceremony for the Divine Mercy. It went up to the table where the image of Divine Mercy was displayed and shoved the table several times trying to dislodge the picture. When the priest shooed it away it went straight up to Crescentia in the congregation and angrily tried to bite her. No-one knew where the dog came from and the villagers all knew their dogs. Afterwards there were many theories about this dog.

Crescentia also told me more facts about Rose Ume and her brothers who gave the land for the shrine. They cleared the land of their coffee plants and taro and donated it to the shrine. When the foundations were being laid, they had a feast with plentiful food and killed three pigs with a club for the feast. This club was then buried under the front of the church as a symbol that the land had been given to the church. It was now God's land and no-one could claim it back.

Rose Ume's nephew, Peter, was one the organisers of the construction of the shrine. Her son, David, is also involved. The people of Ruquis village have now handed the Shrine over to the Diocese of Mt Hagen and they are very happy at the encouragement given to them by Archbishop Young. There are plans afoot to have a convent near the shrine and invite some sisters from Sister Faustina's old convent in Cracow, Poland, to come and run it.

### **Holy Trinity Teachers' College**

The college was established by the Divine Word Missionaries in 1957, and was originally located in Banz and called The Fatima Teachers' college. However, with an increase in school populations, it was decided to shift it closer to Mt Hagen. Now, the college is 5 kilometres away from Hagen town and is connected by bus from the city centre.

The Sisters of Mercy arrived in 1968, in response to a request by Bishop Bernarding for qualified people to staff the fledgling College. Initially three sisters formed the founding group of the Mercy Sisters. Their original convent was a large two-storey building where many gatherings were held. The most significant of these being the Union of Women Religious Congress in 1977. Since their arrival at Holy Trinity in 1968, 39 Sisters of Mercy have lived and worked there for over 41 years. Their contribution came to an end on January 4, 2010 when Sisters Joan MacGinley and Vero Lokalyo RSM moved out (Sister Pat Wood RSM, of Rockhampton. Web Site).

In 1974, Bishop Bernarding spoke about the Teacher's College run by various groups: civilians from the VSO, and AVA from Australia; lecturers from Canada; volunteers from PALMS in Sydney; the Sisters of Mercy; and Holy Spirit Sisters.

The College is now run by the Catholic Mission with links to the Divine Word University. It provides primary teacher education programs and accepts students from around the country. There are over 30 teaching staff and a student population of 600 including the nearby school which is attached to the college. The college offers two year diploma program in primary teaching.

### **Bernarding House**

On 1 June 2015, the Catholic Archdiocese of Mt Hagen opened a new commercial building in central Mt Hagen. It was named Bernarding House after the first Archbishop of Mt Hagen, George Bernarding. At the opening there were many important figures including: Archbishop of Mt Hagen Douglas Young; Honourable Paias Wingti, Governor of Mt Hagen; the Project Director of Essar PNG Limited, Prem Vardhan; the Provincial Police Commander, Martin Lakari; Mt Hagen City Manager, Pais Pim; and other notable leaders in the Province and the Catholic clergy of the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen.

Unveiling of the name sign was by Fr Joe Bisson, the most senior missionary, friend and colleague of Bishop Bernarding. Fr Joe then gave a short history of Archbishop George Bernarding and added that the Archdiocese decided to name the building, Bernarding House to honour his efforts in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ and



*Bernarding House, Mt Hagen (Author).*

of establishing numerous social services like health and education. The Opening Prayer was by Fr Clement Papa, a senior Western Highlands priest.

Archbishop Young addressed the crowd of more than 500 people and explained that this new building was a fulfillment of the Scripture in the Book of Genesis on God's account on demanding human race to subdue, have dominion over the land, procreate and be self-reliant to serve the people. Archbishop Douglas Young pointed out that the main reason for erecting this new commercial building is to sustain the evangelization work of the Catholic Church in the WHP by generating some income.

The Governor of Western Highlands, Paias Wingti, acknowledged the Catholic Archdiocese of Mt Hagen for its continuous contributions towards the development of the Western Highlands Province and the Essar PNG Ltd Building Construction Company for completing the building in due time.

### **Paias Wingti, Governor of the Western Highlands**

Paias Wingti was born 2 February 1951 and is a member of the Jika Tribe of the western Highlands Province. While doing his final year in Economics at the University of Papua New Guinea, he stood for election in 1977, and became the member for the Hagen Open in the country's National Parliament. In 1985, as leader of the People's Democratic Movement, Wingti became the youngest Prime Minister in the Commonwealth and the first Highlander to become Prime Minister. He was Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea between 1985 and 1988 and again from 1992 to 1994. From 1995 to 1997, Paias Wingti served as the governor of Western Highlands Province, when he was defeated for re-election by Fr Robert Lak. Wingti returned to parliament in 2002, defeating Lak to regain his seat and the governorship. Honourable Paias Wingti is the present governor of the western Highlands.

### **Cathedral of the Holy Trinity at Rebiamul Mt Hagen 2016.**

For a long time the people and clergy of Mt Hagen wanted to have a large cathedral, worthy of the high number of Catholics in the Diocese. As far back the 1960s, Bishop Bernarding spoke of it. When he built the present cathedral, he said, "It was not the cathedral which we hoped to build eventually if we ever do build it." It did not happen in his lifetime and when Archbishop Meier succeeded him, he hoped to build one but at that stage there was neither the money nor the materials available.

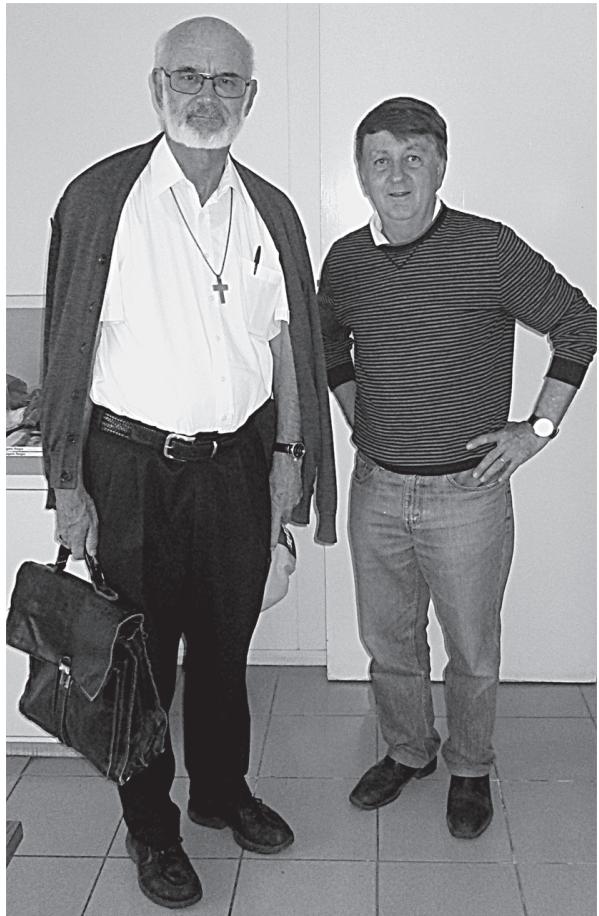
Archbishop Young said:

It was the dream of Bishop Bernarding, our founding Archbishop of Mt Hagen, to build a larger cathedral and he passed this vision on to Archbishop Meier who passed it on to me. I don't think I can pass it on to anyone.

Archbishop Young, knew it was a big task and not to be undertaken lightly. He said: "This is a highly significant project for the Catholic people of Mount Hagen, but raising the funds to complete the Cathedral will be a big challenge." Although the building of the cathedral is one of his main projects, Bishop Young is also interested in bringing peace between tribes. These two ambitions may come together as the design of the cathedral includes a piazza with a canopy outside overlooking a gathering place called the *Moka*

*Pena* where peace settlements could be achieved and celebrated. [The traditional *moka pena* is described by Joe Palimi in Chapter 3].

When Archbishop Young was looking for an architect he read an article on modern styles for cathedrals in an Australian magazine written by a young Catholic architect, Mr John O'Brien. The Archbishop contacted him. After an enthusiastic discussion about possible designs Mr O'Brien said, "Invite me up and I'll build it for you". That was the beginning of months and years of planning and designing, incorporating many features of the local culture as possible. John O'Brien is from Sydney and had studied Architecture and landscape Architecture at the University of NSW. Overall he has worked on 35 large ecclesiastical projects in NSW. He has also advised on the structural upgrade of the Divine Mercy Shrine at Ruquis.



*The Archbishop and the architect* (Author).

As the cathedral site is in an earthquake zone, the building has to comply with the PNG earthquake code. The steel for the structure has been fabricated in Vietnam. Using this source has meant a saving of one million kina (\$A500,000). A local Mt Hagen company is doing the actual construction.

Archbishop Young:

The Cathedral of the Holy Trinity at Rebiamul demonstrates the maturity and vibrancy of the Catholic Church in the region. The design incorporates traditional Highlands's landscape and architectural values. These include the ceremonial ground called *Moka Pena* where peace is negotiated and celebrated, the 'men's house' where the ancestral stories are told and commitments made, the garden which is the site of industry and the source of the sustenance for life, and the sacred space where rituals are celebrated.

The Cathedral will also feature traditional Catholic ecclesiastical design in the *narthex* (entrance), which is the transition from the secular world to the sacred space, the soaring sweep of the central nave, the octagonal shape of the space surrounding the main altar and tabernacle, the main sanctuary with Episcopal

chair, sacristies, adoration chapel and prayer garden. In addition, the building complex will incorporate functional but highly symbolic elements such as the studios of Trinity FM, the longest running Catholic radio station in the Pacific. This will mean that the radio station will be broadcasting the Word from the symbolic heart of the Diocese.

There will also be room and space for Sunday school and conferences, encouraging participation and dialogue. The Cathedral of the Holy Trinity will seat 1500 people comfortably, with space for a further 250 to 500 people under cover and an overflow area providing an uninterrupted view of the sanctuary for a further 1000 people. This is a highly significant project for the Catholic people of Mount Hagen.

The shape of the campanile (bell tower) alongside the cathedral was inspired by a traditional ritual structure of the Mount Hagen area, described as the “light that is seen from afar.” Furthermore, the Cathedral will harmonise with the distant Hagen hills and be surrounded by natural landscape. Overall, the cathedral is a structure befitting the growing city of Mt Hagen and catering for the growing number of Catholics. The design entails an 18 metre high roof on an axis with the top of Mt Hagen, the ancient volcano that gives its name to the town. It also points heavenwards like the traditional European cathedrals.

In 2012, when the news of the proposed cathedral was broadcast, John Eggins, a parishioner and TV personality, made a video about the plans for the new cathedral and the people’s response.

He described the Rebiamul mission with its casuarinas, pine trees and green lawns which is located towards the south west end of the town of Mt Hagen. Here are the many buildings of the mission – the Bishop’s house, various offices, two convents and the priest’s house as well as the Rebiamul Primary school and health centres with a central church.

John Eggins wrote:

When Fr William Ross and his party came in 1934 they were met by the local Mogeis chiefs, Ninji Kama and Sir Wamp Wan. All are now deceased but the relationships they fostered and the visions they set endure until today.

Fr Ross, who died in 1973, and is buried at Rebiamul would be happy to know that the Catholic Church is heavily involved in education. The Archdiocese today manages 33% of all educational activities in the province. Leading is the Holy Trinity Teachers’ College with affiliation with the Divine Word University in Madang. The Church provides 30% of health centres. It leads with efforts to arrest the spread of the HIV/aids virus. In 1987, the church took this on as a challenge when the government denied its prevalence. It has now spread to epidemic proportions.

The life of the local church is in the hands of sixteen local priests and hundreds of missionary men and women. Central to the church activities is the present pro-cathedral. It has a significant role in Church history. Just in front of it is where

Fr Ross built his first church at Rebiamul made out of bush materials. In 1962, Bishop Bernarding built the present pro-Cathedral which is the venue for daily and weekly masses, civil events like weddings and opening of the school year among others. A high moment for the Diocese will be when the work begins on a new cathedral at Rebiamul.

Eggins asked some of the parishioners what they hoped to contribute to the cathedral:

Raphael Goiya, the head of the fund raising committee, asked people to be ready to contribute to the Cathedral. "Please, I ask for your assistance to get this money". He mentioned the shortfall in the funds needed. "It must not be just the Hagen people trying to be independent. Money is needed from people everywhere."

Willie Tep, the youth coordinator, said: "the Bishop has come up with this idea of the cathedral and we set up a committee so that the young people can contribute. We are happy to do this as we are looking forward to playing music in this new cathedral."

Maggie Numdee, a women's representative said: "the people in the many outstations are happy that the new cathedral will be built. They will be able to come and see it and the Catholic Faith will be stronger and will fill up this cathedral."

John Eggins said:

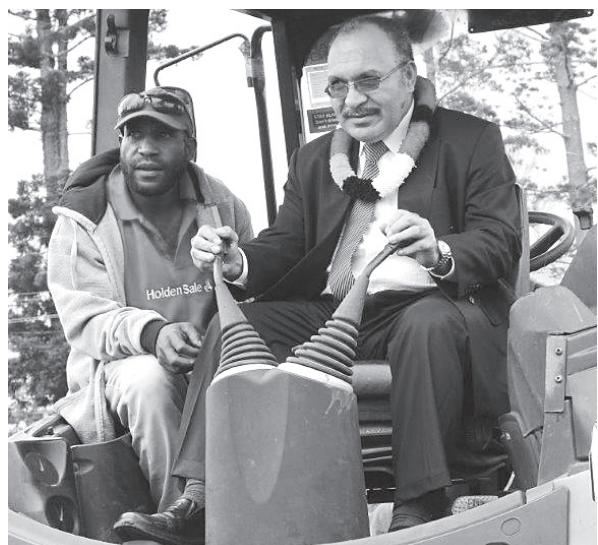
Soon, a backhoe will come and scoop up a bucketful of ground signalling the start of the construction work which could take two years to complete. When all the meticulous architectural work comes together the new cathedral will be a landmark in Mt Hagen in the highlands and even in PNG.

Before the ground breaking ceremony, a crowd of people watched as three large stones were carried forward by prominent parishioners to the site and blessed by Archbishop Young and then buried. It was a symbolic laying of the foundation stones of the cathedral.

### **Ground breaking ceremony of the Holy Spirit Cathedral.**

On 9 March 2014 there was a significant ceremony at the site of the future cathedral. The Prime Minister Mr. Peter O'Neill and entourage came from Port Moresby and was welcomed by Archbishop Young. Prime Minister O'Neill praised the potential building and made a commitment of money from the government - enough for the construction to begin. There were speeches at the time and the future building was praised by the Governor of Mt Hagen who said it

*Prime Minister O'Neill uses a tractor at the ground breaking ceremony.*



was an iconic building as it can be seen from the air as the planes fly in. The Prime Minister said the Holy Trinity Cathedral was another major project being co-funded by the government. Once completed it would be a landmark in the Highland region. He called on the people to forget about politics and grasp the education and infrastructure projects his government had embarked on.

Archbishop Young was happy that the project had started as the cathedral would be of a size and stature needed for the Diocese which now has 186,000 Catholics. It will be a symbol of the strength of the Church in the region and will cater for many groups, involved in different activities and services. The Hagen people themselves have wanted a new cathedral for a long time and they will rejoice when it is completed.

He said:

Furthermore, the cathedral is a celebration of the achievements of 80 years of evangelisation in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea and demonstrates the maturity and vibrancy of the Catholic Church in the region. It is seen as the crowning of the church work in the highlands, 80 years after Fr Ross and Brother Eugene began the mission and also reaffirms a renewed commitment to continue.

When asked what his main focus was, Archbishop Young answered:

Archbishop Bernarding was the founding Bishop; Michael Meier was a Bishop for youth but my orientation, coming from an academic background and a planning background is to put emphasis on pastoral planning. I am trying to ensure that as many people as possible take part in the life in the Catholic Church



*Parishioners carrying the stones to be buried at the site of the new cathedral.*

and that we will go forward in an organic and planned way.

Dr Paulus Ripa, a paediatrician who also teaches at the University of PNG, had this to say of the donation by the government to the building of the Cathedral:

The recent announcement that Prime Minister Peter O'Neill donated a large sum of kina, public money, towards the construction of the Catholic Cathedral in Mt Hagen leaves me with many misgivings. Whilst it may be a relief for thousands of Catholics in Western Highlands and Jiwaka provinces, it is wrong for the Church to accept donations from the government.

Firstly, over the last couple of hundred years the development of liberal democracy has seen the definition of roles of church and state to be separate.

Second, government funds are clearly for designated secular purposes, and building churches or making donations to church groups are not right and proper. It can be rightfully construed as misuse of public funds.

Third, and most importantly, the church has always been an independent conscience and bulwark for what is right and what is wrong. In PNG, where there is no effective political opposition, the churches should be more vocal in issues where a powerful government is railroading policies and actions through parliament which are ill thought through and of great detriment to the nation.

In such circumstances the churches are compromised by government funding for projects which really should be funded by the churchgoers themselves. The Bishops have been bought and they dare not utter anything against the government of the day.

I confine my arguments to the Catholic Church because I am a Catholic and I will, of course, personally contribute to the Mt Hagen Cathedral construction.



*Archbishop Young burying the stones 2014.*



*Archbishop Young and Prime Minister O'Neill at the ground breaking ceremony.*

#### Reply by Archbishop Douglas Young

I appreciate Doctor Ripa's comments and, as a product, even something of a victim, of a western secular "liberal", democracy with a fairly strict division between church and state I agree with him entirely. I say a victim because, for most of my childhood, the State did not assist my education because I was in a Catholic school and the burden was carried by my parents with considerable stress on our family income. The Catholic Bishops Conference has consistently maintained that the State should adequately budget for and fund the areas for which it is responsible: roads, communication, civil infrastructure, education, health, security, law and order.

If the State adequately supported the economic infrastructure and generated employment, our people could earn their own money and freely contribute for religious and other purposes. We know from history that the Church is at its strongest when it is entirely supported by the generosity of its members. Whenever it is dependent on the State it is at risk. However we have to admit that this is not the popular view of our constituents. If they could articulate their position in these terms they might say that the Western liberal approach is dualist whereas the Melanesian Way avoids unnecessary and non-traditional distinctions between the secular and the religious.

Thus, in the view of the majority of Papua New Guineans, politicians and public servants can and should be explicitly motivated by their faith and the churches should receive public funding. Our people tell us “the money is ours”. We would also not argue for a strict division as per USA or Australia because, as Dr. Ripa, says, we must always be free to influence the public sphere. At the same time we have to be accountable to the wider community, not only financially but morally also.

The argument of our fund raising committee has been that the State has failed to contribute adequately to the services that Dr. Ripa has mentioned: health and education, and related social services. For 80 years, the Catholic Church has been providing these services. They see the Kina for Kina contribution of the State as “catching up” with what is owed.

The project is not simply a cathedral but also a home for Trinity FM radio station, the beginnings of a Conference Centre, a venue for large scale public events of a religious or civic nature, and integrated with long-term plans for the development of Rebiamul Field, including parking. Some of the funding will certainly go to aspects that are normally taken care of by public authorities such as road, power, and communication connections, water supply and drainage.

Sometimes I hear politicians talk about “tithing”, i.e. giving 10% of public funds to the churches. I am one who is opposed to this. For one, I think tithing is an Old Testament idea and the New Testament idea is to give according to ability. Also if the churches have 40% of education and health care, surely they should be getting 40% of the funding for these sectors! This is not the case. If the State merely followed its statutory obligations to those churches providing services, and withdrew some of the onerous taxation burden, we would be able to take care of our spiritual and pastoral services quite adequately. Currently much of our limited income and resources goes towards providing services which are the obligation of the State.

The danger of being bought is very real. We will have to see whether this happens in Mount Hagen! On the other hand, some maintain that the only way to bring about change is to be part of the process and not standing outside it with a holier than thou attitude. Generally people seem to appreciate the stand of the Catholic Church on social issues especially corruption and the care for rural areas. I doubt if this will stop. If it does, then please let us know!

We are currently attempting to respond to another area where the State is failing badly: the care for vulnerable children especially orphans. This requires both a sharp public criticism of this failure and a willingness to work along with those who are in a position to do something (26 September 2014, Keith Jackson and Friends).

What are your hopes for the future of the Church in the Highlands?

Archbishop Young replied:

History and the commitment and sacrifice of countless missionaries before us have given the Catholic Church in PNG and in the Highlands a unique authority, credibility, and even power. I hope that this power can be used not for privilege but for the service of the people, especially the poor and marginalised.

He added, “I would not give up a single moment of these wonderfully rich 40 years of missionary service among the people of PNG, especially our dynamic and vigorous Highlanders.”

Fr Philip Gibbs said of the future:

I hope that the Church here in PNG can come to recognise its common identity and its potential to be a leaven [good influence] in the society here as it faces rapid socio-cultural, political and economic changes. It is too easy for the many Dioceses to operate on their own, but we could be much more influential if we could speak with one voice and work together with one plan. I hope too that the younger more educated generation will realise how corruption can drag the whole country down and that they will push for reform both in the government and society, but also in the Church. If people can be less concerned with just getting money at any cost, then there might be more chance to recognise the poor and to recognise new ways to have happy and healthy families.



**New Cathedral of the Holy Trinity at Rebiamul** (Artist's impression by courtesy of John O'Brien).

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