



# The Holy See

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## APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

### SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND

(MAY 2-11, 1984) MASS FOR VOCATIONS**HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II***Port Moresby Stadium (Papua New Guinea)*

*Monday, 7 May 1984 Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,*1. "You are my friends if you do what I command you . . . I have called you friends, for all that I heard from my Father I have made known to you" (*Jo. 15, 14-15*). These words *Christ spoke to his Apostles* in the Upper Room, the night before his Passion. They are words of friendship and love for those he had called to follow him more closely, words of support and encouragement for those he had chosen to continue his work of salvation in obedience to the will of the Father. Today *the Church celebrates and lives these words of Christ* in this evening's liturgy which I have the joy to offer with you in this Stadium of Port Moresby. I proclaim these words to you to whom Christ has made known what he heard from his Father - to you who have done what he commanded you. Today I offer these words to all who continue the work of the Apostles in Papua New Guinea: to the Bishops above all together with their priests, to the men and women religious and to the lay apostles of this country, especially the many zealous catechists.2. At this moment, my thoughts turn in a particular way to *the missionaries*: to those who first brought Christ's message to these islands and to those who continue to serve here today. It is not possible to recount the whole story of the Gospel in Papua New Guinea, but I wish *to pay homage to the sacred history of evangelization*, and to mention some of those apostles who lived and died so that the sons and daughters of this place might know and love Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. The first attempt at evangelization was made by *the Marists* on the islands of Woodlark and Rooke in 1847. But they had to leave. Five years later another attempt was made there by the PIME missionaries. But after only three more years, they too were forced to abandon their missionary effort - not however before one of their number had given his life as a martyr for the faith: Blessed Giovanni Mazzucconi, who died at Woodlark in 1855 and who was recently beatified in Rome. With the arrival of *the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart* on the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel in 1882, *a new era dawned*, one of uninterrupted evangelization in what today is Papua New Guinea. Three missionaries, under the leadership of Father André Navarre, set foot on Matupit Island in the harbour of Rabaul, New Britain. With gratitude we remember the people of Nodup and their "big man" To Litur, who made the missionaries welcome in their midst, and gave them shelter and land to live on. From these humble beginnings at Nodup, progressive evangelization went on at an unremitting pace through the zealous efforts of the missionaries and under the enlightened guidance of a number of saintly and dedicated Bishops. Among these, special recognition should be given to the Vicar Apostolic of New Britain, Bishop Louis Couppé. In 1885, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart took charge of *another area of missionary endeavour*, this time along the coastal areas of New Guinea known as Papua, not far from where we are celebrating the Eucharist today. Here, on the fourth of July, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered to God for the first time on Papuan soil, an anniversary which is still remembered with

special devotion. Among the apostolic labourers who providentially directed the growth of missionary activity along the Papuan coast and into its interior two holy Bishops deserve particular mention: Bishop Henry Verjus, who died at an early age after his health had been ruined by the privations and sacrifices of a heroic life; and Bishop Alain Guynot de Boismenu, who as the second Vicar Apostolic of New Guinea promoted the missionary cause for many years and left behind a shining example of holiness of life. I cannot fail to mention at this point that, from the very beginning, the work of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was zealously assisted by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Later on they were joined by the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Five courageous women of this latter Institute were subsequently to be numbered among the "Martyrs of Baining". In 1896, *the Society of the Divine Word*, under the leadership of Father Eberhard Limbrock, opened up *a third area of missionary endeavour*, along the north-east coast of New Guinea. While their brother missionaries preached the Gospel in the coastal areas, Fathers William Ross and Ivo Schaefer were pioneers in bringing to the people of the mountain valleys the light of Christ the Lord. Thus what began very humbly at Tumleo Island near Aitape today embraces the two Archdioceses of Madang and Mount Hagen, together with eight suffragan Sees. Three years later, the Marist Fathers took over *a fourth area of missionary enterprise* in the North Solomons. Settling down first on the Shortland Islands in 1899, they later moved the centre of their missionary activity to Kieta, Bougainville. Today the Diocese of Bougainville with its autochthonous Bishop gives ample testimony of the work done by the zealous missionaries. Thus we see how, from these four different areas of missionary activity, today Papua New Guinea has four Metropolitan Sees with fourteen dioceses. God has greatly blessed this country and made fruitful the courageous efforts of the missionaries who came here at Christ's command with the message of salvation and fraternal love.<sup>3</sup> With the marvellous and praiseworthy efforts of *all these missionaries* and of many others before our eyes, the words of the first reading of today's liturgy come to our mind: "Forgetting what lies behind" (including their families, friends and country of origin), they were "*straining forward to what lies ahead*", pressing on towards the goal (Cf. *Phil. 3, 13-14*): the building up of the Kingdom of the living God, the Church of Jesus Christ, among their brothers and sisters on these faraway islands of what is today Papua New Guinea. For the sake of the Gospel they "suffered the loss of all things", in order to "gain Christ" (*Ibid. 3, 8*) and to gain for him new members of God's Kingdom - who like themselves were redeemed through his Cross and Resurrection. It is my heartfelt wish today *to offer praise and thanksgiving to the living God*, together with you, beloved brothers and sisters, for this wonderful divine call which has already borne plentiful fruit in this land. *Te Deum Laudamus!* The Church, living among new peoples and nations, gradually grows towards maturity as *indigenous sons and daughters* take up and respond to the divine call of the Gospel, not only by faithfully living the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation but also by embracing the evangelical vocations *to the ministerial priesthood and consecrated life*.<sup>4</sup> The Church as the Body of Christ increases in this land with her *own life*, with her own distinctive gifts of nature and grace, yet sharing in the unity of the universal Church. It is *my fervent prayer* that the Church in Papua New Guinea, as she continues to grow and mature, may experience a *great flowering of vocations* to the priesthood and religious life. Would that an ever increasing number of your sons and daughters might attentively listen to and willingly accept those words of Christ which speak of a special personal choice by God, of an apostolic fruitfulness: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (*Jo. 15, 16*). It is God's plan that the priests and religious should serve the Christian families, and that the Christian families in their turn should provide the proper conditions of faith in which young people can hear God's call. The missionary Church in this country realized the importance of fostering vocations. In this, the establishment of Catechists' and Teacher Training Schools proved providential for vocations in the various regions. The result of these efforts was seen when Louis Vangeke, *the first priest* of this country, ordained in 1937, was ordained a Bishop by Pope Paul VI in Sydney, Australia, in 1970. Great efforts were required to establish *minor seminaries*. The first one was set up

at Vunapope, New Britain, in 1937, and the second a year later at Alexishafen near Madang. Other initiatives followed these, and particular mention should be made of the valiant work of seminary formation during the difficult years of the Second World War. Today you are blessed with the *Regional Major Seminary* of Bomana, which prepares for the priesthood young men coming from all the local Churches. These seminarians give us great hope for the future of the Church in Papua New Guinea. As they increase in number, the Church is truly coming into her own. Today, four sons of this country are serving as Bishops in your midst. I thank God that *many women* of Papua New Guinea have accepted his call to the religious life. As early as 1912 the first local Congregation of Sisters was founded: the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. And six years later the Handmaids of the Lord were begun here in Papua. In addition, many young women have joined the missionary Congregations and have served both at home and abroad. There have also been vocations to *the religious brotherhood*, and despite various difficulties, they are not lacking in Papua New Guinea today. I pray that by God's grace their numbers will grow.<sup>5</sup> Today, we gather in this Stadium to bear witness to the fact that the Church of Christ is a living temple filled with men and women of this land. On this historic occasion, we lift up our hearts *in an ardent prayer* for more priestly and religious vocations, so that the work of evangelization can be carried on. They are so necessary for the life and continued growth of the Church in Papua New Guinea, necessary for the well-being of the whole People of God. As Jesus said: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest" (*Matth.* 9, 37-38). Let us make this prayer, beloved people of Papua New Guinea, in the name of Christ, knowing that *whatever we ask the Father in his name, he will give it to us* (Cf. *Io.* 15, 16). Let us make this prayer with confidence and love. Let us make this prayer for the glory of the most Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana