

Nachrichten aus Papua Neuguinea - Februar 2020

Dear friends of Mariannahill PNG!

This edition of Tanget starts with very sad news, which in the meantime you must have heard about already via other means of communication.

On the 11th of february, feastday of our lady of Lourdes, Patroness of the sick, our confrere **Deacon Daniel Apas**, passed away in the Angau Hospital in Lae.

Daniel was 49 years old. His health had deteriorated dramatically from November 2019 on. He was internalized in the hospital in Lae, but in vain. He just got weaker and weaker. He had, however, no pain and died peacefully, with a last deep sigh, with a picture of Padre Pio, to whom he had great devo-tion, smiling at his side. May he rest in peace!

Daniel – his full name: Daniel Kwainimbu Apas - was born on the 30th of June, on Walis Island, East Sepik Province. He was the third last born of the eleven children of Mr. John Apas and Mrs. Maria Moinedan. His childhood he lived on Walis, enjoying and discovering with eager interest maritime life around the island. He still knew the names of all the different fishes in tokples. Also in school Daniel showed himself an interested and intelligent pupil.

In 1985, then 14 years old, Daniel came with his elder brother Steven to Lae. After his grade 8, Daniel started studying at St. Joseph's Technical School, where he came in contact with Mariannahill. The life of the Brothers and contact with Fr. Christian Blouin inspired him and he felt called to join the Missionaries of Mariannahill.

In 1992, Daniel moved into the Mariannahill community in Chinatown, Lae, in order to discern his vocation to religious life. After that and two year of propaedeutic studies at St. Fidelis College near Madang, he began his philosophical studies at Holy Spirit Seminary in Bomana – Port Moresby.

In 1999 Daniel entered the novitiate in Mariannahill Monastery in South Africa. He made his first profession on February 2, 2000, and became the first Papua New Guinean member of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill. After the novitiate he went for theological studies to the Cedara Institute of Theology in Pietermaritzburg South Africa.

In 2002, however, he came back from South Africa, together with Frt. Ludwig Teika, who had just finished his novitiate. They were to receive their further initial formation at Bomana, near Port Moresby. Two years later Mariannahill opened its own house of formation at Bomana, where the students would have easy access to the Catholic Theological Institute there.

Daniel quickly became the Vice-President of the Students Representative Council and an editor of the students' publication for Mariannahill College. During this same year, on 22 October, the Archbishop of Port Moresby, Brian Barns, conferred on him the ministry of acolyte along with other seminarians and students from several religious institutes at Bomana.

In 2003, Daniel moved to Lae for his pastoral year. He worked with Fr. Alfonso Voorn in the Holy Spirit Parish.

On February 2, 2004, Daniel made his final profession, and became a permanent member of our Congregation.

On the 9th of October 2004, Daniel was ordained a deacon by the auxiliary bishop of Port Moresby, Cherubim Dambui in the chapel of the Catholic Theological Institute at Bomana. Thus, he became the first Papua New Guinean deacon of the Missionaries of Mariannahill.

After finishing his studies in November 2004 with a bachelor degree in Theology, Daniel served as a deacon in several parishes: at St. Mary's Cathedral, in Wau, in Tent City and in St. Steven's at Three Mile.

His time as a deacon was marked by this varied experience in the pastoral field, by a formative interlude in Rome in 2008, by a frustrated transfer to the Zambian Province and by other circumstances that prolonged his diaconate.

It must have put a strain on his patience and endurance, and at the beginning of 2016 Deacon Daniel asked for a year exclaustation, which was granted.

When his year of exclaustation finished in May 2017, his health had deteriorated. He didn't regain his former strength and in November 2019 he was hospitalized.

Even the healthcare given at the Hospital, first at the Lae International Hospital and then at the Angau Memorial Hospital, was not able to avoid a continuous weakening of his vital functions.

On the 11th of February 2020, day of our Lady of Lourdes, Patroness of the sick, at about 1 pm. Deacon Daniel breathed his last in the company of his nephew Joseph Apas at the Angau Memorial General Hospital. He may now rest in peace and enjoy the fullness of life that is at the heart of all our dreaming and longing.

The funeral Mass took place at St. Therese, Kamkumung, where many relatives and wantoks of Daniel are living. More than three hundred people filled the church. Their mourning showed their love and nearness to him.

On Sunday, the 23rd of February the "haus krai", which had been set up at Mariannahill House, was closed.

Daniel died more or less a year after Bishop Christian Blouin, CMM, whose death we had commemorated with a solemn Mass at St. Joseph's on the 16th of January.

The Diocese of Lae has welcomed new missionaries, among them two Montfort Brothers. They have been put in charge of the supervision of the Catholic Schools of the Diocese. Both reside at St. Joseph's Station and one will have a special task with regard to St. Joseph's Technical School, while the other is the manager of St. Francis Technical School in West Taraka. This special attention to the Schools is certainly in line with the longstanding tradition of our Diocese to give priority to Education.

On the 23rd of February, Fr. Alfonso Voorn, cmm, gave over the keys of St. Joseph to the Brothers, one of whom is now the Superior of St. Joseph's Station.

The 2nd of February, Feast Day for all Religious and the “birthday” of our CMM Congregation, this year fell on a Sunday. There was a special Eucharist at the Cathedral for all Religious in the Diocese of Lae, with refreshments afterwards, and in the evening we renewed our vows during Vespers in the chapel of Mariannahill House. Many other religious were joined us. (see picture). The “haus win” was nearly too small for the sharing afterwards.

On February 21, **Bishop Rozario** went through a kind of “baptism of fire” when driving on the highway. Two missionaries from Congo were with him in the car. They had come to Lae to see whether it was a suitable place to send some of their confreres to work in the Diocese. Bishop Rozario was showing them places and possibilities.

Uninvited, a gunman appeared, determined to hold up the car. But Bishop Rozario was not less determined to go on, and gave gas. The man had to jump aside but still had a chance to trigger the gun and a bullet went in through the second left side-window leaving the car through the third right-side window. Thanks to God nobody was hurt.

The incident may have convinced the visitors that Lae is a safe place to work: not even when they shoot at you, do you suffer personal damage!

The personal damage came five days later when the same gunman tried to stop a lorry of the Tablebirds Company. He didn't jump aside in time and died of the impact. Shortly before, he had tried to hold up the parish priest of the Christ the King Parish, Fr. John Joseph, a new priest from India. Fr. John also gave gas and escaped.

And a last short notice: your correspondent is going on home-leave at the end of March (if the coronavirus permits it). The next Tanget may come not earlier than July.

Till then, all the best and may our common Father in Heaven bless you, your families and communities!