

## FCBCO Summary – 13 April 2018

### – James van Schie

The Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania ('FCBCO') 4 yearly Assembly continued today in Port Moresby.

The bishops began the day with prayer and Mass. Spirits are high following the uplifting Mass celebrated yesterday afternoon together with Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Holy See Secretary of State) at the Caritas Technical School, Boroko. Nearly 2000 people came to pray with the bishops and the Mass included special musical composition from local PNG musician Mr John Lavu. The bishops were inspired by the traditional dance and beautiful music that enriched the celebration of Eucharist.

Today, the bishops returned to dialogue on serious and weighty issues of concern for Oceania.

The Hon. Powes Parkop, Governor of Port Moresby, spoke about the continuing work of transforming the capital into a peaceful and confident city and home. Governor Parkop also addressed the challenges presented by the refugee situation in PNG. There are two main sources of refugees in PNG. Firstly, those from West Papua and secondly those in PNG at Australian processing centres.

The Governor emphasized the strong friendship between Australia and PNG but on the issue of refugees and mandatory detention on Manus he said that Australia cannot wash its hands of the social and humanitarian problems the PNG government are now facing. He said that PNG has paid "a high price" for helping Australia on refugee resettlement and one cost has been a tarnished reputation of Manus as a place of welcome and hospitality.

Bishop Leo Labar Ladjar from Indonesia talked to the bishops about the life of the Church in West Papua and explained the history and dynamics of this culture. Of particular concern to him is the profound need for quality government schooling and healthcare not only in the cities but in the interior of this region.

Melissa Hitchman, Australian Ambassador to the Holy See gave a presentation to the bishops which highlighted Australia's work in the region and the many areas of shared interest. Melissa has spent the last two days with the bishops of Oceania, creating and renewing strong relationships. Her presence and participation has highlighted the way faith communities, diplomats, and governments can work for the common good.

Fr Ambrose Periera sdb, a Salesian priest and Secretary for the PNG/SI Bishops Commission for Young people led a discussion which included the participation of young people from various parts of the country. The young people challenged the bishops to spend time with them, accompany them in the reality of day to day life, and form and fully involve young people in the life of the Church. They made mention of the need for good marriages that lead to stable family life.

Finally, Archbishop Mark Coleridge brought to the attention of the bishops that the Australian Church will have a “Plenary Council 2020” and he discussed possible ways in which neighboring churches could be involved in the Council.

### **Background on speakers**

- **Honorable Powes Parkop** is the current Governor of the National Capital District and is a lawyer by profession. He was elected to the National Parliament of PNG in July 2007. He is also the member of Constitutional Laws, Acts & subordinate Legislation Committee and member of the Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- **HE Melissa Hitchman** commenced her position as the Australian Ambassador to the Holy See on 18 July 2016. She is an experienced career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. She has served as First Secretary at the Australian High Commission in London and served as Director, Regional and National Security Section; Director, Intelligence Review; and Director, International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Secretariat; and most recently, Deputy Chief of Protocol.
- **Bishop Leo Laba Ladjar ofm** was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Jayapura in by St John Paul II on Jan 6 1994. He was appointed Bishop of Jayapura on Aug 10 1997. During a formal ceremony of “canonical possession” held at Christ the King Cathedral in Jayapura on Sept 21 that year, his missionary predecessor, Franciscan Bishop Herman Farina Marie Manning, turned over leadership of the diocese to its first native Indonesian bishop.
- **Archbishop Mark Coleridge** is the seventh Archbishop of Brisbane. He has served as the Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn (2006-12) and as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. He earned a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture at Biblicum in 1984 and a Doctorate in Sacred Scripture in April 1992. In 1997 he was appointed to a position un the Roman Curia at the Secretariat of State, where he spent 4 years.
- **Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb** has spent 20 years in the pacific, a majority of them have been in the Solomon Islands. Having completed a Master of Communications Social Change at the University of Queensland, he strives to offer young people a platform to express themselves, bring about change and effect policy change. He is Secretary for the Commission of Youth and Social Communications in PNGSI.

### **Media enquiries.**

Fr Ambrose Pereira SDB