



HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE

EMBARGO

**until speech delivered
check against delivery**

P-d

PAPUA NEW GUINEA – Port Moresby – 07.09.2024 – 17.40

**Meeting with the Bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, Priests, Deacons,
Consecrated Persons, Seminarians and Catechists**

Shrine of Mary Help of Christians

Testimonies

Original text

**GRACE WRAKIA – PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE
CHALLENGES OF SYNODALITY**

Holy Father,

My name is Grace Wrakia and I am a lay woman, born, baptized and raised in a third-generation Catholic Family of Papua New Guinea. I have three daughters, whom I have raised alone for the last twelve years. I have been given one of the greatest honors of my life: to attend the Synod of Bishops on Synodality in Rome in 2023 and 2024.

To use a local metaphor, I returned from a big feast in Rome (the Synod on synodality) and brought with me food (the Synthesis report) back home to share. The first and largest group to receive my news from the Synod were fellow women, both religious and lay. Many say that synodality is a way of life in the Church here in PNG. But I now wonder to what extent does this expression of synodality exist in our changing culture.

The method at the Synod of conversation at a round table gave me, a lay women, a voice both at the continental and the universal stages. But will this method work in my local church? I am not so sure yet. But it would only take a few men in a strongly paternal society such as mine to believe in and support a woman in order to see her rise above her traditional status in society and bring about change. Yet, the question in my heart remains: is my beloved Church in PNG, ready to accept the changes proposed by the Synod?

Personally, I want to see change where women are partners and cooperators, where young people are not ignored or neglected but received with open hearts and minds, where priests and religious work as partners and not as competitors, where priests and consecrated men are not regarded as “big men” but as servant leaders, where local priests are given the same respect as missionaries, where lay people are empowered to participate actively in the life of the Church and not as bystanders, where church politics does not cause division but diversity is embraced, where Catholics live in harmony with other Christian denominations and most importantly where synodal aspects of my PNG way of life, such as the “communal” and “friendship”, merge beautifully into the life of the Church. I want change, but as a Papua New Guinean, I know all too well that it requires much patience, in a place and era where technology and globalization have already reached us. Change in the Church is inevitable but in PNG it is a more gradual process and therefore should not be forced upon us as we had experienced before.

* * *

**FR EMMANUEL MOKU
ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT MORESBY**

I am Fr Emmanuel Moku, and I am 64 years old. His Eminence John Cardinal Ribat ordained me in 2012, when I was 52 years old, for the Archdiocese of Port Moresby. I was a late vocation!

I want to share a few obstacles which I encountered in my seminary formation:

1. My cultural identity and an expectation of my clan is to be productive. When I chose the priesthood over my cultural norms, I was ridiculed and rejected and I was called a waste of human resources. This negative response had an effect on my studies.
2. My clan expects a man to become a father and to work and feed his people. As a seminarian, I was therefore viewed as unfruitful. This made me feel hopeless.
3. When I offered myself to the Archbishop, however, to serve as a priest and was ordained, I made my clan proud. They said, "Our Son, a priest." Only then was I relieved of the pressure of my cultural norms.
4. I believe my service as a priest is my contribution towards building up the Kingdom of God here on earth.

I also want to share my challenges in my priestly ministry:

1. The challenge of moving from a local church that has received so much from others to a church that has to support itself.
2. The challenge of communicating the two-fold purpose of marriage, as both companionship for life and the caring and educating of children.
3. The challenge of young people overcoming obstacles in order to readily accept a priestly or religious vocation.

What is your response to the constant struggle to integrate the Catholic faith and our cultural identity?

* * *

**MR JAMES ETARIVA (CATECHIST)
HOLY FAMILY PARISH KURIVA
ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT MORESBY**

My name is James Etariva, and I am 68 years old. I am from the Goilala District in the Central Province of Papua New Guinea. I am sharing my experience as a catechist.

I began my service as a pastoral worker in 1982 at Holy Family Parish in the Archdiocese of Port Moresby. For 15 years, I did my pastoral work and then graduated as a full-time catechist in 1997.

During my time as a catechist, I have experienced good things as well as challenges. I have been responsible for six zones with ten chapels.

What I enjoy most about being a catechist is walking through the villages and serving the people, encouraging children in their catechesis and being a friend to all.

My main challenges are the following:

- The challenge of a lack of resources. At times, local communities have supported me with financial assistance, but at other times, I have to sell garden vegetables to afford what I need to do my work effectively.

- The challenge of how to travel to the distant communities within the parish. Currently, I have to walk to the farther communities in order to do my pastoral outreach
- The challenge of balancing the demands of pastoral ministry with the responsibilities of family life.
- The challenge of the influence of other denominations. Sometimes we receive criticisms and I do not want the Catholic faithful to lose their faith.
- The challenge of fewer people committing to be a catechist, especially the younger generations.

Regardless of all these challenges, I am happy and I enjoy what I am doing because it is for the glory of God and to win more souls for heaven.

How can we convey the enthusiasm for mission to young people?

* * *

SR LORENA JENAL

Thank you for your invitation to write about our ministry, the House of Hope, in the Diocese of Mendi.

In connection with Fr Jan Jaworski, the House of Hope provides security, shelter, hope and healing for those in need due to accusations of witchcraft and sorcery.

Unfortunately, there are practices of black magic, drug use and money laundering in our country. We work with community leaders, family members, different denominations, human-right defenders, police, court officials and lawyers to protect women from false accusations and extortion.

So far, we have been able to help 250 women and a small group of men. We provide a holistic approach with counselling, therapy, medical, psychological, financial, and emotional help.

I would like to tell you the story of one of the women we have helped. Maria came to us in 2017. She was so badly tortured and burnt that we did not know if we could save her life. Her family did not visit her due to feelings of fear and shame. We visited her family every week and informed them of her progress. The family visited Maria eventually, and then realized how she suffered. Maria went home to her family after six months. After two years the court ruled she was innocent.

Today she is working in our team standing up for human rights and the dignity and equality of women. She witnesses to the importance of love and forgiveness among all people.

How can we communicate to the deprived and those on the peripheries that Jesus Christ and his Church cares for them?
