



**Bishop Gilles Côté took part
in the Anglophone Conference for the Safeguarding
of Children**

We met Bishop Gilles Côté, during his recent visit to Rome and we asked him a few questions. Bishop Gilles is from the Province of Canada and has been a missionary in PNG for over 40 years.

What brought you to Rome this time of the year?

I came to Rome to attend the Anglophone Conference for the Safeguarding of Children. We were 114 participants from 14 countries, among them 15 bishops. There were some religious superiors as well as lay people, most of them women, involved with the protection of children in their own country or diocese.

What topics did you discuss?

We had an interesting talk on the secondary victims of abuse of children, mainly the family members, the parishioners and the leaders in the Church. One presentation was about the new Ratio Fundamentalist for the preparation of seminarians for the priesthood. It was said that if this Ratio Fundamentalist is adapted in each country the seminarians will have a more solid human formation and the consequence of that is there will be less abuses of children.

Did you also had sessions in small groups?

Yes of course. At the Conference we learn from one another and we commit ourselves to support one another so that our children will be safeguarded. It was my first time to attend the Conference. I usually send other people to attend it. Realising how rich it was, I felt a bit sorry that I did not come to earlier Conferences.

Pope Francis is very much involved with the work of preventing child abuse. Did you have the chance to meet Pope Francis?

Yes. On Wednesday morning we went as a group to the general audience of Pope Francis. The bishops who had their cassock on were able to sit close to the Pope and shake hands with him at the end. I mentioned to him who I was and that I had been a missionary in PNG for 46 years. I told him that the Papua New Guineans love him and pray for him. I also asked him to continue the reform of the Church and that we were walking with him. That was a touching experience.

Any other interesting experiences?

I was able to meet with Cardinal Filoni, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. I was expecting that he would maybe give me 15 minutes of his time but to my great surprise and joy we had a wonderful conversation for a bit over one hour. We talked about PNG, about my diocese. I mentioned to him that my main reason to meet with him was to follow-up on my request made for a bishop coadjutor. I explained to him that it is much better to have a smooth transition of bishops and that the sooner one is appointed the sooner I can start to prepare him to replace me when the time comes. I also shared with him about our Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

Any other thoughts?

I want to say thank all to the smm fathers and brothers living at the generalate. They made me feel at home and I was able to live community life with them, which was very refreshing for me. May they all be blessed for their kindness.

Thank you Bishop Gilles. We wish you a safe return to PNG and the best of luck in your mission. We will keep you in our prayers.