



## Opening Celebration of the Continental Mission Year Asia and Oceania in Papua New Guinea

**PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea** - As the plane hovered and circled over the tropical evergreen forest of the Western Province, in search of a suitable landing ground, Fr. Decari of the Montfort Missionaries looked at the pilot and said to him, "Let's go back to Port Moresby." When they arrived back to the Mission Headquarters in Port Moresby, he said to the bishop that the Montfort Missionaries will take the mission in the Western Province. "Why do you want to take the mission there in the Western Province?" asked the bishop. Fr. Decari replied without hesitation, "Because it is difficult, we will take this place for our mission."

It was the scenario that captured in the history accounts and retold by Bishop Rozario in his homily about the first Montfort missionary who set his first glimpse over the rugged region of the **Western Province in 1959**. It was really a touching message to the congregation who listened attentively to the homily. The congregation felt touched by the story because they know the conditions and situations in this part of the country. By the record, the Western Province appeared not only to be the poorest region of the country, but also the largest province in the country. By its geographical conditions, the mission was somehow embedded to the heart of the Montfort Missionaries. Despite the fact that the government services are limited in the remote parts of the province, the Montfort Missionaries is still reaching out to the people in the remote villagers through its diocesan pastoral planning and programming activities. According to the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and Solomon Islands, the Daru-Kiunga Diocese serves as a model for other dioceses in the country by its Diocesan Pastoral Planning and Programming. Now, the fruits

of the mission are seen in other two dioceses in the country which are Port Moresby and Lae. There is no doubt that God is really manifesting in the lives of the people by the works of the Montfort Missionaries in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

As it was pointed out in the homily, the celebration of the Continental Mission Year provides an opportunity for the Montfort Missionaries, the Brothers of St. Gabriel and the Daughters of Wisdom : **firstly**, to thank the Heavenly Father and be grateful to Him for the mission in PNG; **secondly**, to evaluate this mission to which He has called us to do in His Church. To do the evaluation, we want to reflect on the challenges that we have encountered and to appreciate the progress of our mission; and **thirdly**, we would like to continue praying for our mission by entrusting ourselves to the providence of God. By our total surrender to God's providence, we are confident in the progress and success of our mission which is to establish the reign of Christ through Mary. As we are together to celebrate the Year of Continental Mission, we pray that God will continue to guide and lead us into the future of His Church in PNG and Solomon Islands.

The Eucharist celebrated at St. Martin de Porres Parish, Morata, Port Moresby, was presided by **His Eminence Cardinal John RIBAT**, Archbishop of Port Moresby, concelebrated by **Bishop Rozario MENEZES** of the Lae Diocese, **Fr. Aloisius BANGGUR, SMM**, the delegation superior, **four SMM missionaries and one MCS priest**. The celebration was witnessed by so many people that those who were not able to find their place inside the church were standing outside. The opening ceremony commenced when the bishops arrived at the parish gate with the traditional welcome song by the selected Mama Group of the parish. At the entrance of the church, the master of the ceremony who was a senior member of the Montfort Associate proceeded with the program by introducing the sequence of the celebration and in brief, telling the history of the Montfort Missionaries in PNG. When it was over, Fr. Aloisius, the Superior of the Montfort Missionaries in PNG and the members of the Montfort Associates continued with the procession of the Rise and Shine banner to the altar. Accompanied with the procession of the banner, the song "Rise and Shine" was played by the choir group of the Liturgy. Then at the altar, Fr. Aloisius explained the symbols of the "Rise and Shine" logo on the banner to the congregation. When he was done, the master of the ceremony invited the congregation to respond to the slogan three times, **"We are called to be sent"** and **"Rise and Shine."** After shouting the slogan, the Liturgy started with the entrance procession of the celebrants and the Montfort Fathers. The celebration was beautiful and enjoyable.

The **show room** which Fr. Roy, Fr. Roshan and the Montfort seminarians prepared at the Resource Centre building was a beautiful display of a story timeline about the Montfort Missionaries doing God's mission in PNG. The photographs told the story of the first arrival of the **Montfort Missionaries from Canada** and their missionary work in the Western Province and those who continue the mission till today. Also, on display were the **young seminarians of the Montfort Missionaries** who were the future of the congregation in PNG. The photographs were displayed on the wall of the room starting at the left corner and covering the wall towards the right side of the room. Above the photographs, the caption, **"Missionaries without borders"** was attached to the wall. At the center of the display, an altar was set up close to the wall for the statue of our Founder, **St. Louis-Marie de Montfort** and a photograph of **Blessed Marie-Louise of Jesus**. Another caption was displayed, **"If you don't risk for God, you won't do greater things for Him."** At the other corner of the room, the **Montfort Associates** were displaying their photographs. The showroom was beautifully decorated with flower pots that look so beautiful from inside.

Outside activities of the church involves the display of the showroom, dance sessions and testimonies from different individuals who were inspired by the spirituality of St. Montfort. The "Rise and Shine" dance performed by the Montfort seminarians, Montfort Associates and the youths started with the dance sessions. The activities started right after the refreshment of the invited guests. The dances were scheduled for different Basic Christian Community (BCC). At the end of all the activities, Fr. Aloisius made the final blessings.

It was only the opening for the parish activities schedule in the calendar. We continue to ask for God's grace and guidance in all the upcoming activities of the "Rise and Shine". We ask God's grace upon all our parishioners, spiritual groups and the Montfort Associates in the parish.

*Godwin Dalle*  
*Postulant*