

# Star MESSSENGER

Dear Brothers

Last Sunday, the Brothers from PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu gathered in Port Moresby for Retreat.

<b>Simon Serero</b>	<b>Sixtus Winduo</b>
<b>Clement Pekubei</b>	<b>Cyril Benora</b>
<b>Rodney Pauru</b>	<b>Mark Kenatsi</b>
<b>Carlvin Rumina</b>	<b>Dominic Tsibuen</b>
<b>Henry Uguni</b>	<b>Hudson Horoto</b>
<b>Epalle Taega</b>	<b>Jean-Marie Batick</b>
<b>Raphael Fakaia</b>	<b>Fereole Melteror</b>

Unfortunately, Bonaventure Tolack couldn't join us because he didn't have a passport, and Finan Valei has withdrawn to his village on Bougainville.

Also present are **John Hazelman** (Pasifika Delegate), **Tony Leon** and **Graham Neist** (Co-presenters). I arrived Tuesday.

The venue is the Emmaus Retreat Centre which is a ministry of the Salesians. It is conveniently located about 10 minutes from our residence at Korobosea, Port Moresby. As you'll notice in the photos, it's an attractive environment, well suited to our purposes.

The Retreat is the first time since before the pandemic that the Brothers have come together in this way. They have found it beneficial to have time to reconnect personally. In addition to it serving as the annual Retreat, it's also a valuable opportunity for the Brothers to discuss their life and mission in this part of the world. After morning contemplative prayer, there is a presentation by Tony Leon. Given Tony's natural creativity, it is interesting and engaging. In the afternoon, Graham leads the Brothers in a process of discussion and discernment. Once again, it's an interactive and creative time. I believe the Brothers are enjoying and benefitting from the opportunity.

I finish with a quote that both Tony and Graham have used in their presentations. You will quickly identify what is being proposed and how it relates to Champagnat Marist life in Melanesia.

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 NAVIGATING NEW WATERS TOGETHER

*"In the parenting model, being a parent is like being a carpenter. You should pay some attention to the kind of material you are working with, and it may have some influence on what you try to do. But essentially your job is to shape that material into a final product that will fit the scheme you had in mind to begin with. And you can assess how good a job you've done by looking at the finished product. Are the doors true? Are the chairs steady? Messiness and variability are the carpenter's enemies; precision and control are her allies. Measure twice, cut once..."*

*When we garden, on the other hand, we create a protected and nurturing space for plants to flourish...Unlike a good chair, a good garden is constantly changing, as it adapts to the changing circumstances of weather and the seasons. And in the long run, that kind of varied, flexible, complex, dynamic system will be more robust and adaptable than the most carefully tended hothouse bloom."*

*Alison Gopnik, "The Gardener and the Carpenter - 2016*

## Br Dunstan Henry

After many long years living and working tirelessly at Sacred Heart College, Dunstan moved to the peaceful surroundings of Manly 3 years ago. In the near future, he will relocate to the 100A Victoria Street community at Onehunga. Here he will be closer to other communities and health care. Welcome back to Auckland, Dunstan!

Next week's Star Messenger will be the final one for the year.

Warmly (literally) from Port Moresby,



**Br Peter Carroll**  
 Provincial





The Emmaus Retreat Centre



**Top L-R:** Epalle Taega, Dominic Tsibuen, Cyril Benora, Clement Pekubei

**Middle L-R:** Jean Marie Batick, Graham Neist, Hudson Horoto, Sixtus Winduo, Simon Serero, Mark Kenatsi, Peter Carroll, Rodney Pauru, Raphael Fakaia

**Bottom L-R:** Henry Uguni, Fereole Melteror, John Hazelman, Tony Leon  
**Front:** Calvin Rumina

Anti-clockwise: Epalle Taega, Clement Pekubei, Sixtus Winduo Calvin Rumina



Peter Carroll and Fereole Melteror



L-R: Fereole Melteror, Dominic Tsibuen, Epalle Taega, Mark Kenatsi, Hudson Horoto



Brothers taking part of afternoon 'circle discussion' activity



**Scripture Reading: Matt 11:16-19**

<sup>16</sup> “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, <sup>17</sup> ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ <sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; <sup>19</sup>the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

**Reflection:**

Jesus proceeds to reprove the inconsistency and fickleness of people at that time. He says they were like children - nothing pleased them. He refers here to the “plays” or “sports” of children. Instrumental music, or piping and dancing, were used in marriages and festivals as a sign of joy. This is also clear in Isa 5:11-12, Job 21:11, 2 Sam 6:14; Judges 11:34 and Lk 15:25. Children often imitate their parents and others and act out in play what they see being done by others. Among their childish sports, therefore, was probably an imitation of a wedding or festal occasion. We also are aware that often funerals are attended with mournful music, and lamentation, and howling (See Mt 9:23). It is not improbable that children also, in play: imitated a mournful funeral procession. One group is represented as sullen and dissatisfied. They would not enter the play: nothing pleased them. The others complained of it. We have, they said, taken all pains to please you. We have piped to you, have played lively tunes, and have engaged in cheerful sports, but you would not join with us; and then we have played different games, and imitated the mourning at funerals, and you are equally sullen; “you have not lamented;” you have not joked with us. Nothing pleases you. So, said Jesus, is this generation of people similar. “John” came one way, “neither eating nor drinking,” abstaining as a Nazarite, and you were not pleased with him. I, the Son of man, have come in a different manner, “eating and drinking;” not practicing any austerity, but living like other people, and you are equally dissatisfied - nay, you are less pleased. You chastise him, and you abuse me for not doing the very thing which displeased you in John. Nothing pleases you. You are fickle, changeable, inconstant, and abusive.

God has always wanted to shower his people with favours and with gifts. However, often when the offer is made (through the mouth of his messengers, the prophets), people have turned their backs. In fact, even as Jesus would have been preparing to begin his public ministry, this was still happening – they refused the message of John the Baptist. So, it is no surprise that Jesus himself began to meet opposition.

What has always been on offer from God is the gift of life lived to the full. However, what some people do is choose to complain and sulk about the situation – to Jesus, their objection was the company that he ate and drank with; to John, their objection was that he neither ate nor drank, but fasted. Jesus arrived offering a gift of new life in abundance, yet this offer was rejected. The issue is that it might be that people often remain choosy about the packaging in which the Good News is showcased (too ‘churchy’ or too ‘worldly’). Jesus knew that his message would not please all the people around them: people often prefer to stay in their own comfort zone. Yet, Jesus could not ignore the innate and deep call he experienced from God, which is why he was often driven to prayer. It is in prayer that one will find one’s heart being opened by God’s incessant invitation to love. It is not about the approval of others, but it is about our heart becoming more open to the love of God, and in experiencing that love being willing to share God’s hope for all to those whom one encounters of the journey that is life. If that outlook brings scorn and derision from others, then one takes comfort in the words: “Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds”.

Third Sunday of Advent | 17 December 2023

**Scripture passage: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

*John the Baptist did not give in even for a moment to the temptation to draw attention to himself: he always directed it toward the One who was to come. He said, "He is the one who comes after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie" (v. 27). Always pointing to the Lord. Like the Virgin, she always points to the Lord: "Do what He tells you." The Lord always in the centre. The saints around, pointing to the Lord. And whoever does not point to the Lord is not holy!*

*Here is the first condition of Christian joy: de-centre oneself and put Jesus at the centre. This is not alienation, because Jesus is effectively the centre, he is the light that gives full meaning to the life of every man and every woman who comes into this world. It is a dynamism like that of love, which leads me to leave myself not to lose myself, but to rediscover myself while I give myself, while I seek the good of the other. Pope Francis*

## IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT

The grand religious movements have almost always been born in the desert. They are the men and women of silence and solitude who, seeing the light, can be converted into teachers and guides of humanity. In the desert what's superfluous doesn't count. In silence only the essential questions are heard. In solitude, the only ones who survive are those who feed on what's inside.

In the fourth Gospel, the Baptist gets reduced to what's essential. He isn't the Messiah, nor Elijah returned to life, nor the awaited Prophet. He is «the voice crying out in the desert». He has no political power, doesn't possess any religious title. He doesn't speak from the Temple or the synagogue. His voice isn't born of political strategy or religious interests. He comes from what a human being hears when she goes deep into what's essential.

The Baptist's presentiment can be summed up thus: There's someone greater, more worthy and more hopeful than what we are living. Our life must change at its root. It's not enough to visit the synagogue Sabbath after Sabbath, it's no good to routinely read the sacred texts, it's useless to regularly offer the sacrifices prescribed by the Law. No religion

gives life. You must open yourself to God's living Mystery.

In the society of abundance and progress it's getting more and more difficult to hear a voice that comes from the desert. What is heard is the advertising for what's superfluous, the spreading of what's trivial, the hot air of politicians imprisoned in their strategy, and even self-interested religious discourses.

Someone could think that it's no longer possible to know witnesses who speak to us from the silence and the truth of God. That's not true. In the middle of the desert of modern life we can encounter people who radiate wisdom and dignity, since they don't live by what's superfluous. Simple people, dearly human. They don't pronounce a lot of words. It's their life that speaks.

They invite us, like the Baptist, to let ourselves be baptised, to submerge ourselves in a different life, to receive a new name, «to be reborn» so that we don't feel ourselves as a product of this society or as children of our environment, but as beloved sons and daughters of God.