



DIOCESE OF AITAPE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

PO BOX 179, Aitape 553,

Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea

“The Love of Christ Impels Us”. (2 Cor 5:14)

March 03, 2025

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 1/2025

To All Priests, Religious and Lay Faithful of Aitape Diocese

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I wish you all a fruitful Lenten Season.

Return to the Lord with Hope

Mel Gibson’s famous movie **The Passion of Christ** won worldwide praise. Released in Lent 2004 it ran to packed theatres. Some critics commented that the movie was too violent and imaginary. It depicted the suffering, the excruciating pain, the loneliness, the helplessness of the human person in vivid images. The viewers were moved to pity, wept profusely and many were transformed. Though it was in the original language spoken at that time, people understood the message and the implication. The film’s message was simply to show that the suffering of Jesus was real and the intention was clear. The cross and the crucifix with its portrayal of the tortured body of Jesus, is the symbol of Christian faith and the mystery of our salvation. Jesus was ill-treated, he was defenceless and he was vulnerable. He suffered and died.

Jesus Christ suffered for the world, for humanity and for each human person. He voluntarily suffered for our sake, for our salvation and for our own wellbeing. He did not complain and curse. He suffered for our sins though he was sinless. He

committed no sin (1 Pet 2:22). He himself bore our sin in his body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24). He took up the cross which was the sign of humiliation and thus brought honour to humanity humbled by the sins of the successive generations. God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong (1 Cor 1:27).

The period of Lent is forty days long (not including Sundays) as a preparation for the joy of Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians.

In the Lenten Season, we are called to engage ourselves in prayer, fasting, penance and charity. Lent offers us all a very special opportunity to grow in our relationship with God and to deepen our commitment to a way of life rooted in baptism. In our modern and secular world, Lent provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon our thoughts, beliefs and actions, to pray more deeply, to experience sorrow for what we have done and failed to do, and to be charitable to those in need. Prayer is an important aspect of Christian life. Jesus spent much of his time in prayer (Lk 6:12; 9:18). He asked his disciples to pray (Mt 9:18; Lk 6:28). The disciples after the death of the Lord prayed together (Acts 1:24; 4:31).

Fasting for forty days is influenced by the example of Moses, Elias and Christ. St. Thomas Aquinas says the following about fasting: "Fasting is directed to two things, the deletion of sin, and the raising of the mind to heavenly things. Therefore fasting ought to be observed specially for those times, when it is necessary for the faithful to be cleansed from sin, and the minds of the faithful to be raised to God by devotion; and these things are particularly essential before the feast of Easter." Fasting has the example in Jesus who fasted forty days. "Then Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry" (Mt 4:1-2).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1438) says: “The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year are intense moments of the Church’s penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, and pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).”

We are trained to fast and we are also accustomed to make penances during this season and thus to show our love for Jesus Christ who suffered for our sake. We also make these voluntary exercises to express our solidarity with the poor and the suffering. Let us also remember that we are supposed to give up something on order to help the poor.

The Lenten season is a time to reflect on the suffering and death of Jesus. The mortification and penance which we undertake are the ways to reciprocate the love of Jesus. It is the time to come back to the Lord. It is the coming back to his love. May this Lenten season be a time for change, transformation, sacrifice and prayer. I wish you a fruitful Season of Lent.

1. CONGRATULATIONS AND HEARTY WELCOME TO THE NEW APOSTOLIC NUNCIO



The Holy Father Pope Francis has appointed His Excellency Msgr. Maurizio Claudio Bravias the Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. His Episcopal

Ordination was on February 22, 2025 in the Cathedral of St. Alessandro, in Bergamo, Italy. Msgr. Maurizio Braviwas born on July 20, 1962. He was ordained a priest on June 21, 1986. He graduated in Canon Law and entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1995 and served the Apostolic Nunciatures in Argentina, France, Canada, etc.

The Diocese of Aitape joins the Church in Papua New Guinea in extending a hearty welcome to His Excellency to our country and we join him with our prayers particularly on the 22nd of February 2025.

2. SOME OF THE PROGRAMS OF THE BISHOP IN 2025

1. 1 January: St. Ignatius Cathedral, Aitape
2. 5 January: St. John the Evangelist Church, Paup
3. 9 January: Funeral of Fr. Sebastian Vlaustat OFM, Aitape
4. 12 January: St. Joachim Parish, Aitape
5. 14 – 16 January: First Clergy Conference
6. 17 – 18 January: College of Consultors
7. 19 January: Confirmation, Holy Cross Parish, Romei
8. 21 January – 1 February: Visit to India, funeral of Bishop's father.
9. 2- 10 February – Vietnam, Thanksgiving Mass of Fr. Peter Minh OFM
10. 23 February: St. Joseph's Parish, Pes
11. 26 February: Funeral Mass for late Mr. Johnny Yapon, Raihu
12. 28 February: Funeral Mass for late Mr. Peter Watae, Aitape
13. 2 March: St. Daniel Church, Poro
14. 9 March: St. Ignatius Cathedral, Aitape

15. 13 March: Holy Cross Parish, Romei
16. 14 March: Confirmation, St. Michael's Church, Amu
17. 16 March: St. Vincent De Paul Parish, Ulau
18. 18 - 19 March: Holy Eucharist Workshop for Clergy and Religious
19. 25 March: Launching of the year of the Eucharist & Jubilee Year
20. 27 March: Chrism Mass
21. 1 April: Confirmation, St. Gabriel Parish, Malol
22. 3 April: Confirmation, St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Puang and other nearby parishes
23. 4 April: Confirmation, Our Lady of Immaculate Conception Parish, Lumi, Karaitem, Yaluwape and other nearby parishes
24. 6 April: Confirmation, St. Michael Quasi Parish, Monandinand other nearby parishes
25. 14 April: Diocesan Education Board Meeting
26. 17 – 20 April: Holy Thursday – Easter Sunday
27. 23 April: Diocesan Health Board Meeting
28. 25 – 27 April: HGN Gathering, Vanimo
29. 28 April – 11 May: Annual General Meeting, CBC, Madang
30. 21 May: Jubilee of Fr. Martin We-en, Our Lady of the Annunciation Parish, Seim
31. 25 May: Confirmation, St. Andrew Parish, Kupkain
32. 26 May: Confirmation, St. Francis Assisi Church, Oum

33. 29 May: Confirmation, Sts. Peter & Paul Parish, Warsai
34. 10 – 14 June: Annual Clergy Retreat
35. 20 – 23 June: Confirmation, St. John Vianney Quasi Parish, Yilui
36. July – August: Visit to the USA
37. 21 – 28 September: Workshop for Bishops, Port Moresby
38. 1 October: Diocesan Education Board Meeting
39. 7 October: Diocesan Health Board Meeting
40. 21-23 October: 2nd Clergy Conference
41. 24-25 October: College of Consultors
42. 12 October: Feast of St. Ignatius of Antioch, Diocesan Feast in all parishes
43. 4-7 November: Deanery Meeting, Nuku
44. 11–14 November: Deanery Meeting, Lumi
45. 18-21 November: Deanery Meeting, Aitape
46. 20 December: Advent Recollection for Clergy and Religious in Aitape

N.B.: Dates for Bishop's visit to other parishes and Sub-Parishes are yet to be confirmed.

3. APPOINTMENTS/TRANSFERS OF PRIESTS IN PARISHES IN 2025

1. Fr. Hugh Kuam OFM – Administrator – Aitape (St. Ignatius Cathedral Parish) (1)
2. Fr. Peter Minh OFM – Assistant, St. Ignatius Cathedral Parish
3. Fr. George AyikadeCSSp. – Caretaker Parish Priest -Aitape (St. Joachim Parish), Malol (2)

4. Fr. Joseph DinhCSSp. – Caretaker Parish Priest – Ali (1)
- Assistant –Aitape (St. Joachim Parish)
5. Fr. Gregory Los – Parish Priest - Lemieng(1)
6. Fr. Patrick Iwu CCE - Parish Priest - Ulau (1)
- Caretaker - Suain, Yakamul (2)
7. Fr. Patrick Posani – Parish Priest - Sissano(1)
- Caretaker - Barupu (1)
8. Fr. Terence Tavaive – Parish Priest – Pes (1)
9. Bishop Siby Mathew HGN – Caretaker – Remei (1)
10. Fr. Sandro De Pretis – Parish Priest – Lumi (1)
11. Fr. Dominic Numbanoko – Parish Priest – Ningil (1)
- Caretaker - Laingim, Yili, Yilui, Fatima, Karaitem,
Yaluwape(6)
12. Fr. Thomas (Pradeesh Mathew) HGN – Parish Priest – Puang (1)
13. Fr. Tommy Makain – Parish Priest – Wassisi (1)
- Caretaker - Yambako, Woluk, Monandin (3)
14. Fr. Bruno Amanos- Parish Priest – Nuku (1)
- Caretaker - Wati, Yimut, Mukili(3)
15. Fr. Patterson Mutuwai - Assistant – Nuku, Wati, Yimut,
Mukili
16. Fr. Martin We-en – Parish Priest – Seim (1)
- Caretaker - Kafle, Warsai, Oum-Kupkain (3)
17. Fr. Joe Amanos – Rowell House - Helping Aitape
Coastal Parishes and schools

4. APPOINTMENTS TO SOME OF THE PASTORAL OFFICES

1. Dean of Aitape Deanery - Fr. Terence Tavaive
2. Caretaker Director of St. Martin's PC – Sr. Anastasia Rengreng OLSH
3. Vicar for Spiritual Groups – Fr. Dominic Numbanoko
4. Youth Chaplain – Fr. Martin We-en, to be assisted by Fr. Patterson Mutuwai
5. St. Francis Raihu District Hospital, Chaplain – Fr. Philip Pagolu OFM
6. Chaplain for Children's Ministry – Fr. Walter Kalana OFM
7. Men and Women Religious Coordinators – Dn. Michael Laka OFM.
8. Right Relationship Officer – Sr. Anastasia Rengreng OLSH
9. Pastoral Ministry for Seminarian IssacUnakau
 - With Fr. Martin We-en in Seim, Kafle, Warsai and OumKupkain Parishes from February to June 2025.
 - With Fr. Dominic Numbanoko in Ningil, Laingim, Yili and Yilui parishes from July to December 2025

We extend a hearty welcome to those of you who are taking up new pastoral offices in the diocese: Fr. Sandro De Pretis, Fr. Peter Minh OFM, Fr. Joseph Dinh CSSp., Fr. Thomas (Pradeesh Mathew) HGN, Fr. Patterson Mutuwai, Fr. Philip Pagolu OFM, Fr. Walter Kalana OFM, Rev. Dn. Micahel Laka OFM, Sr. Anastasia Rengreng OLSH, Seminarian IssacUnakau. May the good Lord bless them abundantly and help them to fulfill their responsibilities most faithfully.

5. JUBILEE YEAR 2025 – PILGRIMS OF HOPE



1) Introduction

The Jubilee Year 2025 began with the traditional opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on December 24, 2024 by Pope Francis and continues until the closing of the Holy Door on January 6, 2026, the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. In our diocese the official launching of the Jubilee Year 2025 and the Aitape Diocese Eucharistic Renewal 2025-2026 will be on the 25th of March 2025, on the solemnity of the Annunciation during the concelebrated Holy Mass at Aitape Jubilee grandstand.

2) Brief History

Historically, since the 15th century, it has been customary for the Universal Church to celebrate a Jubilee (Holy Year) every 25 years. It is a particular year set aside to encourage the faithful to

embark on pilgrimages, to repent of their sins and forgive the sins of others, and to renew the focus on the spiritual life. In the Hebrew tradition, as recorded in Leviticus, a Jubilee was celebrated every 50 years with the freeing of slaves and the forgiveness of debts. In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII instituted the first Christian Jubilee, and since then the Church has designated each new Jubilee as a special year of grace and forgiveness, offering the faithful an opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence.

2025 is 1700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea. The First Council of Nicaea was a council of Christian Bishops convened in the Bithynian city of Nicaea (now in Turkey) by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in AD 325.

3) Theme

The theme of the Jubilee of 2025 is “Pilgrims of Hope”. The Holy Father Pope Francis has chosen the theme from Rom 5:5 – “Hope will not disappoint us”. It is a time to renew hope in Christ and share the light of faith with others. The year is intended to be a time to foster hope in the face of suffering from war, poverty, climate change, etc. As His Holiness Pope Francis so beautifully expressed it: “We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.”

4) Logo

The logo for the 2025 Jubilee features a cross, waves, and an anchor. The cross is a sign of faith and hope, the waves symbolize the challenges of life’s pilgrimage, and the anchor symbolizes hope.

The last Ordinary Jubilee was the Great Jubilee of 2000, celebrated by St. Pope John Paul II.

5) Pilgrim Churches designated for the 2025 Jubilee

1. St. Ignatius Cathedral, Aitape
2. St Vincent de Paul, Ulau
3. Corpus Christi, Arop
4. Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, Lumi
5. St Anthony of Padua, Puang
6. Christ the King, Kafle
7. Holy Trinity, Wati
8. St Benedict the Moor, Wassisi

6) Holy Doors

All the above pilgrim churches should set up specially designed holy doors and have them blessed. Pilgrims who travel to the Jubilee Church pass through the holy door and seek special graces following the guidelines on the Jubilee Prayer Card.

7) 2025 Jubilee Year Activities

1. Pilgrimage to a Pilgrim Church
2. Make Confession
3. Attend Holy Mass
4. Make Adoration
5. Attend a lesson on the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Mass
6. Make a commitment to do at least one spiritual or corporal work of mercy
7. Prayer for the intention of the Holy Father
8. Pray the prayers on the printed Prayer Card

8) Jubilee Indulgence

Jubilee indulgence is a special grace offered during a Holy Year that frees the faithful from the spiritual effects of past sins.

What is Plenary or Partial Indulgence?

There are two types of indulgences – plenary indulgence and partial indulgence. Every sin has consequences. It disrupts our communion with God and the Church, weakens our ability to resist temptation, and hurts others. The first consequence of sin is eternal punishment and the second is temporal punishment. A person who commits mortal sin breaks his relationship with God and loses the sanctifying grace and so he deserves eternal punishment. Deliverance from eternal punishment comes only through the sanctifying grace which is the fruit of the passion and death of Jesus Christ on the Cross freely given to repentant sinners through the sacrament of confession. Deliverance from the eternal punishment depends entirely on God's mercy and not on man's deeds.

The sinner needs to receive also deliverance from the temporal punishment due to sins when he is alive on earth or after death in purgatory. Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and other works of charity can take away entirely or diminish the temporal punishment. All our acts of penance for the forgiveness of sins help only to obtain the deliverance from temporal punishments.

Because of the fullness of redemption obtained for us by Christ, the Church attaches to certain prayers and actions an indulgence or pardon, that is, the full or partial remission of temporal punishment due to sin. Christ, acting through the Church, brings about the healing or deliverance of the consequences of sin when an individual uses such a prayer or engages in such an action.

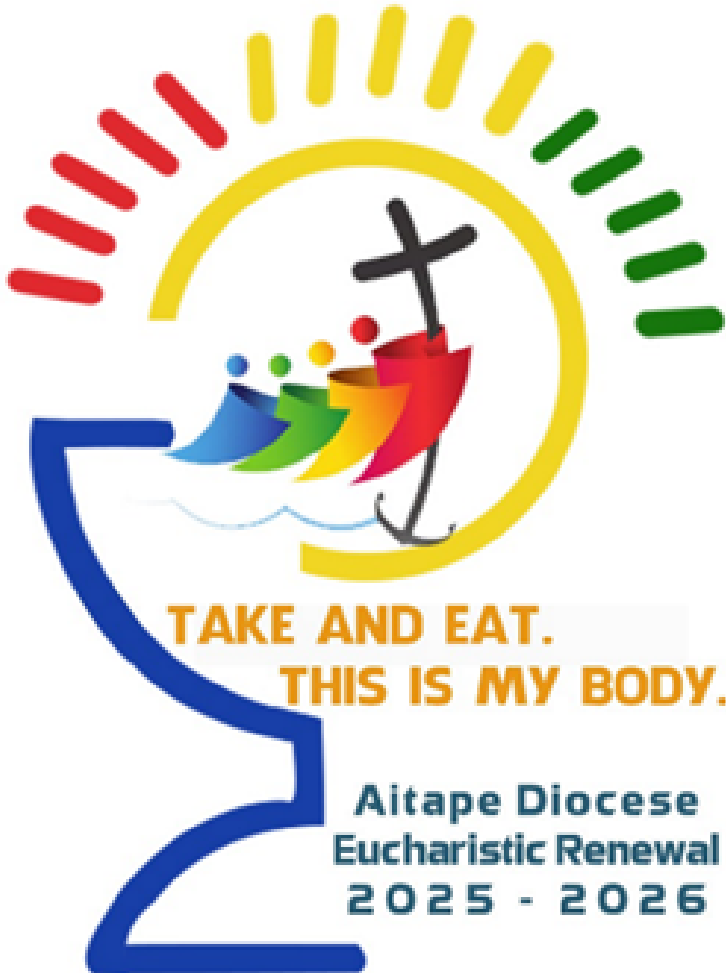
What are the conditions for gaining a Plenary or Partial Indulgence?

1. Be a baptized Catholic and practice the Catholic faith.
2. Be in the state of grace. (For Plenary Indulgence – total detachment to sin is required.)
3. Be sorry for the sins committed.
4. Have the intention of gaining the indulgence.
5. Pray the Creed.
6. Pass through the Holy Door with great devotion, for those who are able to make the pilgrimage to one of the assigned Pilgrim Churches. Those who are not able to make the pilgrimage to one of the assigned pilgrim churches, may obtain the indulgence in their own Parish or community Churches. Sick persons who are bed ridden could receive the indulgence in their own homes.
7. Make the prayer of Jubilee and some other prayers as prescribed in the Jubilee Prayer Card.
8. Pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.
9. Receive the Sacrament of Confession and the Holy Communion within eight days.
10. Commit oneself to perform one or more spiritual or corporal works of mercy.
11. Partial indulgence may be obtained more than once per day. Plenary Indulgence may be obtained only once per day.
12. Jubilee Indulgence may be gained for ourselves and for those in Purgatory.

The corporal works of mercy recommended by the Church for our salvation are: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, healing the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and burying the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy, equally recommended by the Church for our eternal salvation, are: counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing sinners, comforting the afflicted, forgiving offences, bearing patiently those who do us ill, and praying for the living and the dead.

**6. AITAPE DIOCESE EUCHARISTIC RENEWAL
2025-2026**



1) Introduction

After due prayer and discernment we have decided to dedicate two entire years to the Holy Eucharist and invite the whole Diocese to reflect upon the Eucharist. The aim of the Eucharistic Renewal is to inspire, educate, and unite the faithful in a more intimate relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist. These years should help us to transform and rededicate our personal lives, families, communities, parishes and the entire diocese to Jesus in the Eucharist.

2) Logo of Aitape Diocese Eucharistic Renewal 2025-2026

The logo combines the themes of the Eucharistic Renewal 2025-2026 and the Jubilee Year 2025. The logo features a chalice, sacred host surrounded by the radiant sun, cross, people, waves, and an anchor. The chalice and the sacred host surrounded by the radiant sun represent Jesus in the Eucharist, the center of our life. The people are the Church, the body of Christ. The Cross represents the sacrifice of Jesus and a sign of faith, hope and love. The waves symbolize the challenges of our daily life. The anchor symbolizes Christian hope and the colours green, yellow and blue stand for Aitape, Nuku and Lumideaneries respectively.

3) Theme: Take and eat. This is my body

The theme of Eucharistic Renewal 2025 - 2026 is taken from the words of Jesus: “Take and eat. This is my body” (Mt 26:26) pronounced at the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

Brief reflection on the scene of the institution of the Eucharist (Mt 26:26-29, Mk 14:22-25, Lk 22:19-20 and 1 Cor 11:22-26) draws our attention to some of the essential truths of faith about the sublime mystery of the Eucharist:

1. The Holy Eucharist or the Holy Mass was instituted by Jesus as a sacrament and Jesus is really present in it.

By the words “This is my body...this is my blood...” Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist. What up to this point was nothing but unleavened bread and wine, now – through the words and by

the will of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man – becomes the true body and true blood of the Saviour. Some people believe that Jesus is present in the Eucharist only symbolically and not really. But the Catholic Church has always believed and will continue to believe until the end of the world that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ; the flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, of his kindness, brought to life. The Lord did not say: “This is the symbol of my body and this is the symbol of my blood.” He said: “This is my body and my blood”.

The Holy Eucharist has not only the power to sanctify but it actually contains the very Author of holiness. Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist to be spiritual nourishment of the soul, to strengthen it in its struggle to attain salvation. The Church teaches that it also confers pardon of venial sins and helps the Christian not to fall into mortal sin. It unites us to God and thereby is a pledge of future glory.

2. To continue the celebration of the Holy Eucharist or the Holy Mass until the end of time Jesus also instituted the Christian priesthood.

By giving the apostles and their successors the power to perform the Holy Eucharist Jesus established that it should be repeated until the end of time (cf. 1 Cor 11:24-25; Lk 22:19) and thereby he instituted the priesthood. The apostles in turn passed on this power to their successors. At Mass when the priest, with the intention of doing what the Church does, says Christ’s words of consecration over the bread and the wine, at this very moment, a change takes place in which the whole substance of bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ and the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This amazing change is given the name of “transubstantiation”. Through transubstantiation the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine disappear, becoming the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. The Lord conserves the appearances of bread and wine but changes the bread and wine into the reality of his flesh and his blood. Christ’s real presence is to be found also in

any little particles which become detached from the host, or the smallest drop from the chalice, after the consecration. Christ's real presence continues when the sacred species are reserved in the tabernacle, as long as the appearances of bread and wine last.

3. The Holy Eucharist or the Holy Mass is the sacrifice of the New Testament.

At the Last Supper, on Holy Thursday, Christ - miraculously, in an unbloody manner - brought forward his passion and death. Every Mass celebrated from then on renews the sacrifice of our Saviour on the cross – Jesus once again giving his body and blood, offering himself to God the Father as a sacrifice on man's behalf, as he did on Calvary – with this clear difference: on the cross he gave himself shedding his blood, whereas on the altar he does so in an unbloody manner.

This sublime sacrament should be received with proper dispositions of soul and body – in the state of grace, in a spirit of adoration, respect and recollection, for it is God himself whom one is receiving. “Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Cor 11:28-29).

Eucharistic Renewal in the Pastoral Renewal Programme

In the diocese currently we are going through phase three (2024-2027) of the pastoral renewal programme and the theme of this phase is Loving Unity. And the theme of this year 2025 (step 2) as per the renewal programme is Sharing. The Holy Eucharist unites us in a supreme way with the Almighty God and with our brothers and sisters. When we participate well in the Holy Mass we enter into a loving union with the Blessed Trinity and our brothers and sisters who share in the mystery. The Holy Eucharist is the ultimate sharing of God with man and we who celebrate the Holy Mass and partake of the Holy Eucharist are enabled to share our lives with our family and our brothers and sisters for the love of God.

We are grateful to God, the missionaries, and our parents and elders who have handed over to us the light of faith in the mysteries of the Eucharist. Our people make many sacrifices in order to be able to participate in the Holy Eucharist and receive Holy Communion. I have seen many mothers crying because they are not able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist due to marital situations. Love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is central to the faith of many of our people. However, it is also a fact that although we have been participating in the Holy Mass since our childhood, it has not transformed the lives of some of us and we have continued to live in our selfishness and worldliness. We need the grace of God to understand, believe and profess these mysteries of our faith. We need to give up sins and our attachments to sins. We need to deepen our prayer life and continually grow in our faith. A deeper grasp of the mysteries of the Eucharist will help us understand how precious and meritorious is the celebration of the Holy Mass and our worthy participation in it. How many times we have participated in the Holy Mass or SandeLotu and not cared about receiving the Holy Eucharist or we have received the Body of Christ in the state of sin? How serious are we about visiting Jesus in the Eucharist in our church and adoring him?

Genuine faith and true worship of Jesus in the Eucharist should transform our lives. We will put the kingdom of God and its values first. It will transform our families and relationships. It is a fact that we have many children and youth who have not received the first Holy Communion for various reasons. We have many couples who are married customarily, but not married in the Church, and therefore are not able to make their confession and receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Many times we do not care about attending the Holy Mass or SandeLotu, even when we have the opportunity. We have churches and chapels and tabernacles where the Holy Eucharist is reserved in an unworthy manner. During the Eucharistic Renewal 2025-2026 we shall earnestly try to grow in our faith and devotion to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. We shall try to improve every aspect of our faith in relation to Jesus in the Eucharist. May Jesus transform our lives. May he help us to

overcome sins and our sinful addictions. May the Lord deliver us from the clutches of Satan and all evil spirits.

4) The Special prayers for the years of Eucharistic Renewal are the following:

1. Soul of Christ - to be prayed soon after receiving the Holy Communion. Singing is recommended.
2. Prayer to St. Michael - to be prayed soon after the blessing of the Mass and before the final hymn.

7. 2025 PASTORAL ANNUAL ACTIVITY PLAN OF AITAPE DIOCESE

The DTPA under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Hugh Kuam OFM, Vicar General and Pastoral Vicar, has prepared the 2025 AAP. Many activities have been planned for this year mostly in parish clusters, and some in deaneries and a few at the diocesan level. Copies of the AAP 2025 have been distributed to the Parishes during the deanery Meetings. Kindly incorporate them in your Parish AAPs and carry them out as diligently as possible.

8. SPECIAL COLLECTION OF K1 PER BAPTIZED CATHOLIC

It was decided during the Clergy Conference in January 2025 that from this year onwards we take a special collection of K1 per baptized person. Every family in the diocese is requested to submit to the parish the amount collected according to the number of baptized persons in the family. The parish will forward the money to the diocese. This fund will be utilized for the pastoral programs in the diocese. This is our humble effort towards self-reliance and continue the work of evangelization the Lord has entrusted to every baptized person. The money could be given any time before the feast of Christ the King.

In this context I wish to inform you that it has been decided to cancel the special collection for the diocese taken, since a few years, on the feast day of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the patron of the diocese.

9. TOKPISIN BIBLES AVAILABLE IN THE CATHOLIC BOOK STORE

Since a few years Catholic TokPisin Bibles were out of print and unavailable in PNG. However, now they are available in our Catholic Book Store in Aitape for a subsidized price of K40 per copy. Kindly buy your copies before they are finished and make it a habit to read the word of God and receive life from it. Priests, pastoral workers, teachers, nurses and community leaders are requested to encourage the faithful to buy their own Bibles.

10. OUR GOAL IN EDUCATION

We are currently in the 5th week of 2025 academic year. Most of our schools I believe are operating well. Many factors contribute towards good education. We need more facilities in our schools and classrooms, better text books, lighter workload for teachers, sufficient and regular funds from the government, good houses for teachers, good board of management/governors, support from P & C, constant guidance and help from the province, district and Church agencies, etc. Even if all these were available, the role of the teacher in education will remain paramount. He or she alone can create the congenial climate for learning.

Child psychologist Dr. Haim Ginott, who was himself once a school teacher, wrote:

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or honour, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized.

Our goal in education should be the integral formation of the child. It certainly includes learning. But more than learning

we want our children to become adults who are warm, loving, hardworking, honouring God, financially careful, careful about health (avoiding drugs, betel nut, tobacco and alcohol), moral and law-abiding, caring for and respectful of others, their family, friends and neighbours. Children who are brought up this way will certainly be studious too and be sure of succeeding in life for they are taught among other things the habit of hard-work and skills to get along with people.

Besides being well educated, they will be good human beings, good wives and husbands, good parents and good neighbours. Let us remember that the most important goal of a school is not achieving high academic grades but developing in its students qualities of integrity and fairness, habits of hard-work and of service. If the primary emphasis is on academic performance, the school may not achieve it. It is not unlikely that the school be tempted to use fair or unfair means to achieve it: screening students too rigidly in admission, detaining in lower grades, etc. and most especially neglecting the most important goal of character formation.

If the school's primary emphasis is character formation, then academic success is added unto it, almost automatically. I sincerely thank the Principals, Head teachers and teachers who have been teaching in our agency schools with much commitment and dedication and welcome the new teachers to our agency. During these years a lot of work will have to be done for eh implementation of 166 as well as for the establishment of newly approved Junion High Schools.

We remember with gratitude the National Department of Education, PEB and the Districts. We are also thankful to the community, the board of management/governors and the P & C. Mr. Philip Waiwo, CES , and Mr. Brian Samgur, CEC, Fr. George AyikadeCSSp., Vicar for Education,who are all working hard to improve our diocesan education services.

11. TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN CATHOLIC AGENCY SCHOOLS

Sincere thanks to all the teachers who are teaching religious instruction on our Catholic Agency schools. Some teachers are real role models for the students as well as for the people in the community. However, I also receive reports that many teachers are not teaching RI and many teachers are not even going for Holy Mass or SandeLotu. It is sad that Catholic teachers and non-Catholic teachers in Catholic Agency schools behave this way.

I request the Principals to look at the possibility of reintroducing Religious Instruction as a certified subject as we have in some of the Catholic agency secondary schools in the country.

I understand that certain elements of misinformation exist in regard to the teaching of Religious Instruction and Citizenship and Christian Values Education (CCVE). Let me quote three short paragraphs from the National Catholic Education Secretary Circular No. 1/2022, copies of which were circulate by Mr. Brian Samgur in the past.

“Be advised that Religious Instruction does have periods allocation in our National Education System just like CCVE. CRE Coordinators and teachers in our Agency Schools, must teach Religious Instruction. This is critical, if we are to proactively promote our Catholic Philosophy of Education and Catholic Identity in our students.

I am informed that some of our Inspectors and Provincial Education Officers are claiming that CCVE must be taught and NOT Religious Instruction. (I am not sure if this is true in our province, probably not.) This is totally incorrect. As an Education Authority recognized under section 5 (h) of the Education Act 1983, we as a Church Agency have the right to teach Religious Instruction.

Therefore Religious Instruction must be taught by our CRE Coordinators and teachers. You are encouraged to use the CCVE

course materials as additional resources to be creative and innovative in teaching and the formation of our students through Religious Instruction in our schools.”

I would kindly remind our priests, religious, catechists and other pastoral workers of their duty to teach religious instruction in the schools, under the care of the government or other church agencies, in the area of the parish once a week. It is the duty of the Parish Priest or Caretaker Parish Priest to coordinate this.

12. TEACHERS TRAINING COLLEGE IN AITAPE

After elaborate consultation and prayer the diocese, with the approval of the Provincial Education Board, has decided to establish a Teachers Training College in Aitape. Such a tertiary institution in Aitape will bring some relief to the parents and ensure the training of many more qualified teachers to meet up with our increasing demand for teachers and the ever-growing student population in the province and the country. I thank the clergy, diocesan education board and the provincial education board for their initiative and collaboration. With the collaboration of the people of Aitape and the support of the leaders of the Districts, the Province and the National Education Department, God willing, we will be able to start the project in a few years’ time. I request your continued support and prayers.

13. MUSIC LESSONS IN AITAPE FOR CHILDREN

In collaboration with St. Ignatius Secondary School the Diocese is organizing music lessons, in a modest way, for the interested children of Aitape. The lessons started on 25 February 2025. Mr. Emmanuel Herman, Music Teacher of St. Ignatius Secondary School, is voluntarily giving his services. The lessons will start with wind instruments.

Experts say that learning musical instruments at a young age can help children in many ways, including social, cognitive, and mental health benefits in addition to overall character formation. It helps build friendship and develop social skills. It helps to improve

memory, develop concentration, improve attention span, reduce stress and anxiety, increase self-esteem, etc. Good music helps us to come closer to God. It helps us experience joy, happiness, peace and love. Please make use of the opportunity and contact Mr. Herman or your parish priest for more information.

14. SILVER JUBILEE OF THE PRIESTLY ORDINATION OF REV. FR. MARTIN WE-EN

By the grace of God Rev. Fr. Martin We-en will be completing 25 years of his priestly life on 21 May 2025. The Jubilee celebration will take place in at Seim. Hearty congratulations to Fr. Martin We-en on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of his Priestly Ordination. We thank him for his dedicated services for the building up of Christian communities in our diocese. We thank God for the gift of Fr. Martin and ask God to continue to bless him and his priestly life.

15. PASTORAL LETTER OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE PNG/SI

On 24 December 2024 the Pastoral Letter 2025 was published by Most Rev. Otto Separy, President of the Bishops Conference of PNGSI. The theme of the Pastoral letter is “Journeying in communion with youth in Christ”. The letter is inviting us to reflect with faith and hope on the challenging plight of our youth. As leaders and members of the Church, it is our duty to embrace and support our young brothers and sisters in Christ as they journey through the troubled waters of life in a society marked with difficulties and struggles. Jesus tells us that he will be always with us to the end of time (Mt 28:20).

The Bishops invite us to reach out to our youth with love, hope and compassion, to listen to their voices, to understand their struggles and to accompany them on their journey towards a brighter future. It is our duty to sow the seeds of hope in their hearts. In the context of the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope the Bishops present the following seven pastoral priorities of our youth ministry.

- 1) Young people with well-organized youth ministry.
- 2) Empowered and self-reliant young people.
- 3) Culturally rooted young people.
- 4) Young people formed and grounded in the Catholic faith.
- 5) Young people accompanied in their vocational discernment.
- 6) Young people as active evangelizers.
- 7) Young people living Christian values.

The pastoral letter concludes with the wish that “May the love that is present in the Sacred Heart of Jesus dwell in the hearts of our young people and transform them into the light and salt of the earth.” Rev. Fr. Martin We-en, the newly appointed Diocesan Youth Chaplain, and Rev. Fr. Patterson, the Assistant Youth Chaplain will help our youth to incorporate the themes of the pastoral letter in their reflection and action during the year. Full version of the pastoral letter will be sent to the parishes separately and you can get from the office of the diocese.

16. IRREGULAR UNIONS AND HOLY COMMUNION

It has been brought to my notice that some couples who live in irregular unions go for confession and receive Holy Communion on special occasions. It is also learned that some others who live in irregular unions make confessions, but do not receive Holy Communion.

Unfortunately those who live in irregular unions, which means, living as husband and wife but have not received the sacrament of marriage, are living in sin. Therefore as long as they live in that state, they cannot make their confession and receive Holy Communion. If they need prayer or counseling from the priest, as soon as they go to the priest they must inform the priest that they are not married in the Church. The priest will give them some counseling and will pray for them. However, the priest is not able to absolve their sins. The word of God reminds us that

those who partake of communion in an unworthy manner are “guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor 11:27). Those brothers and sisters will do well to remember the importance of Spiritual Communion (receiving Jesus spiritually). The priests are requested to impart correct teaching to the faithful periodically.

In some cases there are possibilities to rectify those irregular unions especially with the cooperation of the non-Catholic partner. If such possibilities are there the priests need to consult the Bishop or Fr. Bruno Amanos and seek their assistance to rectify those marriages.

17. SINCERE THANKS FOR SERVING IN THE DIOCESE

1. Rev. Fr. Norbert Anzac OFM

On behalf of the diocese, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Rev. Fr. Norbert Anzac OFM for the last four years of his service as the administrator of the Cathedral Parish, Dean of Aitape Deanery, member of College of Consultors, and Vicar for Health. He has also served the diocese for many years during his previous appointments. We remain ever grateful to him for serving the diocese selflessly for many years. I wish Fr. Norbert God’s many blessings in his future apostolate and great rewards for having served our people for years.

2. Rev. Fr. Herifetra Anicet Dimby CSSp.

Rev. Fr. Anicet served the diocese for seven years as the parish priest of St. Joachim Parish, member of College of Consultors, Bishop’s Master of Ceremonies, Vicar for Spiritual Groups and Caretaker Director of St. Martin’s Pastoral Centre. He fulfilled his responsibilities with great commitment, dedication and humility. He was given farewell in the parish on the day of the blessing of the renovated and extended St. Joachim Parish Church, Aitape. To a great extent it was the fruit of his organizational leadership and pastoral commitment.

**18. REST IN PEACE - LATE MR. JOHNNY YAPON
(26.08.1981 – 18.02.2025)**

Late Mr. Johnny Yapon succumbed to illness and breathed his last on the 18th of February 2025. We remember with gratitude Mr. Johnny Yapon who served the Diocese of Aitape Health Services for many years in various Health Sub Centres and Aid Posts. From May 2022 he served as the Rural Health Coordinator of DOAHS. He was strong in his faith and prayer life, committed to fulfilling his responsibilities and honest in financial matters. The shocking news of illness struck us all, and the loss is even more profound. While there was a plan in place, we trust that God has a greater purpose for Him. We stand united in prayer, honoring Late Johnny. May God grant strength to all who miss Johnny, especially, his beloved wife, his children, his mother and other family members and friends. My special condolences to Rev. Fr. Patrick Iwu, Diocesan Health Manager, and all the staff of Diocesan Health Services. May he rest in peace.

Many Thanks Again

I thank you all most sincerely once again for your prayers for me and our diocese. I keep you all in my daily Holy Mass and prayers. Sincere thanks to all of you who are helping the diocese one way or another. May the Lord bless and reward you and your families now and always and keep you in His Most Sacred Heart.

With love and prayers, I remain,
For the love of Christ



✠ Siby Mathew Peedikayil, HGN

Bishop of Aitape