

Participating as an invited delegate at Pope Francis's Apostolic visit to Papua New Guinea from 7<sup>th</sup> September till 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024



When the invitation came from The Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to all leaders and persons of responsibility for their organisation through CRA (Catholic Religious Australia) in early June 2024, I did not hesitate to accept this once in a life-time invitation to be present for Pope Francis's apostolic visit to Papua New Guinea from 7<sup>th</sup> September till 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024

The journey from Western Australia to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea itself took over nearly 8 hours from Perth, transiting in Brisbane after an overnight flight of 4 and a half hours from Perth. It took another three and a half hours from Brisbane to Port Moresby. The journey was worth it. PNG's relations with Australia goes back to the colonial administration era from 1949 to its proclamation of political independence on 16 September 1975. Our geographical proximity, cultural connections and people-to-people links goes back to prehistorical times. The battle against the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War (WW II) also forged close bonds between the two countries.<sup>1</sup>

I was told the whole of PNG was already excited ever since they knew Pope Francis would come all the way for this visit in September. It was a sign of 'hope' for them. One MSC (Missionary of Sacred Heart)'s priest related to me that people living in the rural areas of PNG had walked many weeks to Port Moresby, crossing jungles and terrains by foot just to get a glimpse to see Pope Francis.

As invited guests, we were allowed to attend three main events. The first event was His Holiness meeting with consecrated women and men, lay catechists, seminarians, bishops, archbishops from PNG and Oceania (14 countries including Australia). The second event was the Papal Mass on Sunday with everyone at Sir John Guise stadium. That is the third event we were invited to attend was the meeting of His holiness with the young people, whom he always attributes them as the hope of the future.

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<sup>1</sup>[Relationship with Australia – High Commission of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea \(pngcanberra.org\)](http://pngcanberra.org)



After Pope Francis meet with the lay catechists, consecrated women and men, priests, bishops, and missionaries from PNG, Oceania

One of Pope Francis' messages to all consecrated women and men missionaries at that meeting is to have the 'Courage to begin again and again even after many times of failures,' 'the beauty of being Present in mission' and 'Growth in and through the style of God which is Closeness, Compassion and Tenderness.'



The invited guests from Australia in front of the Shrine of Our Lady Help of Christian, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.



After the Papal mass

by Sr Lilian SJA