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Bishop Peter Houhou

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME. (Mk: 8: 34)

Dear brothers and sisters, as the Ordinary of the Diocese, I want to greet you all in the Name of God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Before we dive into the reflection for this month of August, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge you all for the great, great, contributions you have render to all members in our families, communities, parishes, deaneries, Church ministries and diocese at large. I salute you all for your good work in spreading the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Our theme for this month as mentioned above is a great message. It encourages us to carry our crosses faithfully each day with love as Jesus taught us.

Let us begin our reflection with words from a common song (chorus) usually sung by Sunday School kids. The title of the song, "Decision to Follow Jesus" and I quote:

"I have Decided to Follow Jesus; I have Decided to Follow Jesus; I have Decided to Follow Jesus; No Turning Back, No Turning Back. The Cross Before me, the World Behind me. The Cross Before me, the World Behind me; The Cross Before me, the World Behind me; No Turning Back, No Turning Back".

Dear beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, reflecting upon the words of the above theme and song, the words are very inspiring and touching. It helps us to know that yes, to follow Jesus; first, it is a decision that each one of us has to make each day as we journey in life, and second, to follow Jesus; each one of us has to carry our crosses. The mes-

sage is clear, and sound simple, but it's very challenging.

As Christians, our first decision to follow Jesus was made at Baptism when the Priest administering the Baptism addressed your name saying; "Peter, the Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In his name I claim you for Christ our Savior by the sign of the Cross. I now trace the Cross on your forehead, and invite your parents (and godparents) to do the same." Pocket Ritual pg.5, number 13. During the Baptism ceremony, on your behalf your parents and godparents trace the sign of the CROSS on your forehead.

What did Jesus mean when He said: "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me?"

During the time of Jesus when a person carried a cross no one thought of it as a persistent annoyance or symbolic person. To a person in the first century, the cross meant one thing and one thing only: death by crucifixion. To carry a cross was to face the most painful and humiliating means of death human being can develop.

Now two thousand years later, Christians view the cross as a cherished symbol of atonement, forgiveness, grace and love. But in Jesus' day the cross represented a torturous death. The Roman forced convicted criminal to carry their own crosses to the place of crucifixion (John 19: 17). Bearing a cross meant one was about to die, and that one would face ridicule and disgrace along the way.

Therefore, Jesus' command you to "take up your cross and follow Him" is a "CALL" to self-abasement and self-sacrifice. One must be willing to die in order to follow Jesus. Dying to self is an absolute surrender to God.....

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BISHOP'S MESSAGE CONTINUE

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Bp's PM cont'

.....after commanded cross-bearing, He said, "for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16: 25-26). Although the "CALL" to take up your cross is tough, the reward is matchless. Nothing in this world is worth passing up eternal life.

In our time, carrying one's cross is taking responsibility and answering God's Call in our families, communities, parishes, deaneries, church ministries, and in our vocation as Religious Brothers, and Sisters, Priests and Bishop of the diocese.

In brief we will be reflecting on the different responsibilities that each of us has been shouldering in the above groupings for the past years in serving the people of our Diocese. Despite of the weight and challenges that you have encountered, you carried your cross faithfully.

FAMILY:

In our families, parents are the ones who has the sole responsibility to care, to guide, to provide for the family. During the ceremony of their marriage, the priest asked them three (3) very important questions and I quote: "John and Alice, 1) Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage? 2) Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives? 3) Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?" Pocket Ritual page 51 no. 96. Each answered these questions separately.

The ritual is not only about answering questions, but above all the priest invites the couple to declare their Consent. The bridegroom says and I quote: "I John take you Alice to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life." Pocket Ritual page 52 no: 97.

In the same way, in response to the bridegroom, the bride says; and I quote: "I Alice take you John to

be my Husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life." Pocket Ritual page 52 no: 97.

After the husband and wife have exchanged their consent, the priest continues: "May the Lord in his goodness strengthen your consent and fill you both with his blessing. What God has joined, men must not divide" Pocket Ritual, page 52, no. 97. Therefore, husband and wife on the very day of their marriage they have consented to carry their cross as father and mother until death separates them. As husband and wife, they carry all the responsibilities of the family.

COMMUNITY, PARISH, AND DEANERY:

Under the above levels of leadership, those who were elected in office by the community, parish and deanery are also to be commissioned to their specific areas of responsibilities. They are to make their promise before the community. On the day and date of their commissioning, when the priest asked them; "Are you willing to serve the people of God?" They answered individually "Yes, I am." Their term in office is for two (2) and can be renewed.

As someone who has been commissioned to take the responsibility to serve under the above levels of leadership, there will be challenges coming your way, but be firm in your decision, carrying your cross faithfully until your term of responsibility has come to an end. Never be discouraged when faced with so many oppositions in your ministry. As a Christian leader, you should bring all your difficulties, challenges, and worries and offers them to Mary our mother and she will offer them to and through Jesus, to the Father. Humbly kneel down before your Lord and Savior and say; thank you for allowing me to have this golden opportunity to take this responsibility and to be challenged. Despite of all these challenges and difficulties, once again, be firm, and follow your Lord Jesus singing: I have decided to follow Jesus..... The Cross before me, the world behind me..... Should no one join me still I will follow

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BISHOP'S MESSAGE CONTINUE

Bp's PM cont'

.....No turning Back, No turning back.

DIOCESAN PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS PRIESTS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, AND BISHOP:

Dear beloved Diocesan Priests, Religious Priests, Brothers and Sisters, reflecting on our vocation, together let us thank God for calling each one of us to be who we are now. We came from different places, back grounds and cultures, but now we are members of the Body of Jesus Christ and God's Family. We were called to serve the Church in the Diocese of Gizo in a very special way, sacrificing ourself for Christ and Christ alone and no other. The call of Prophet Jeremiah supposed to be a model call for each one of us.

THE CALL OF JEREMIAH:

The Lord said to Jeremiah, "I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nation." Jeremiah 1: 4 -5. Jeremiah in response to God's call answered, "Sovereign Lord, I don't know how to speak; I am too young."

Jeremiah 1: 6. But the Lord said to Jeremiah, "Do not say that you are too young but go therefore to the people I send you to, and tell them everything I command you to say. Do not be afraid of them, for I will be with you to protect you. I, the Lord have spoken." Jeremiah 1: 7-8.

Reflecting on the story of the call of Jeremiah, it helps us to reflect on our own call. Each one of us have our own stories of how God calls you to be who you are now. God chooses you among your people to be who you are not to be served but to serve. I hope you and I are happy to be chosen. Our God is a God who do things in a mysterious way. He came in like an Eagle and snatched us from our own families, friends, comfort zones and the pleasures of this world and flew with us up higher beyond the clouds of the unknown. Where are we now? Still up beyond the clouds? He set us apart for a purpose, to carry our specific crosses every day and to follow him and him alone and no other. Are we happy with our vocation as a priest, religious brother, sister and bishop? If Yes, then, together let us thank God for our vocation and pray that the Spirit Jesus promised his Apostles will give us the courage and strength to be faithful in carrying our crosses in serving the people of the Diocese.

CONCLUSION:

Let us conclude our reflection with the beautiful words from St. Rose of Lima and I quote; "Apart from the Cross, there is no other Ladder on this planet earth by which you and I can climb to reach heaven. The only ladder to climb to reach heaven is the Cross."

Here, St. Rose of Lima is encouraging us as; Parents in our Families, Leaders in our Communities, Parishes, Deaneries and diocese at large, and above all as; Priests, Religious Brothers and Sisters and Bishop to embrace and carry our crosses each day with great passion in serving our people and not ourselves. As a family of the Diocese of Gizo journeying together in Communion, Participation and Mission, May God Bless us all in the Name of the Father, Son, and of the Holy Spirit... AMEN.

Your Servant Bishop Peter HOUHOU.

The Transfiguration of the Lord (6 August)



THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (15 August 2025)



The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary (22 August)





CBC NEWS PNG AND SI

Next Phase, Synod on Solidarity.

(Vatican City - July 2025)



The Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands is being invited to embrace the next phase of the global Synod on Synodality with renewed commitment and creativity, following the release of a new Vatican document titled "Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod."

Sister Nathalie Becquart, XMCI, Undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, spoke to *Vatican News* about the significance of the implementation phase and how local Churches—including those in Oceania—are called to live out synodality in concrete ways.

A Call to Put Synodality into Practice

"The Synod is not finished," Sr. Becquart emphasized. "We are now entering a crucial phase where the fruits of the Synod must be received and implemented at the local level." She highlighted that this is not just about reading the Final Document but about "putting it into practice with creativity, in the diversity of each Church's context."

The implementation phase, spanning from now until October 2028, will culminate in an *Ecclesial Assembly in Rome* to assess how synodality has taken root globally. Local Churches are encouraged to

hold diocesan, national, and continental assemblies to share their experiences and foster a stronger exchange of gifts between communities.

Synodality: A Way of Being Church

Sr. Becquart described synodality as "the way God is calling the Church to be today." Rooted in the vision of the Second Vatican Council, synodality promotes **communion, participation, and mission**. It calls for every baptized person—laity, religious, and clergy alike—to take co-responsibility for the mission of the Church.

She stressed that synodality is not a new program but a spiritual renewal of how the Church journeys together, especially listening to the voices of the poor, the marginalized, and the excluded.

The Role of Local Churches and the Faithful

The *Pathways* document calls on dioceses and bishops' conferences—including the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBCPNGSI)—to form or strengthen synodal teams to help guide this process. Bishops, religious, lay leaders, youth, Catholic educators, and organizations such as Caritas and religious congregations all have vital roles to play.

Catholic schools, universities, seminaries, and youth ministries are particularly urged to integrate synodal principles into their educational and formation programs. Religious communities are also recognized as key contributors to the synodal conversion through prayer, discernment, and mission.

A Global and Local Movement

Across the world, dioceses are already implementing synodality through synodal assemblies, pastoral letters, and dedicated teams. Some have appointed vicars for synodality or directors for synodal implementation. Others are developing *local vademecums*, or handbooks, to adapt the Synod's fruits to their contexts.....

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PASTORAL & HRP IN PICTURE

Vatican News Continue

.....In French-speaking Africa, a *School of Synodality* has been launched. In the Philippines, synodality is now included in Catholic school curricula. Creative initiatives like concerts, hymns, and spiritual retreats focused on synodality are also gaining momentum. **Implications for the Church in PNG and Solomon Islands**

The Church in PNG and Solomon Islands is well-placed to contribute to this global synodal journey. With a strong communal culture, vibrant local liturgies, and a youthful demographic, the region can offer unique insights into how synodality can be lived at the grassroots level.

Already, through the Social Communications Commission, diocesan synods, youth formation programs, and active religious congregations, signs of synodal life are emerging. Now, the *Pathways* document encourages further steps: forming diocesan synodal teams, hosting synodal assemblies, promoting listening circles, and ensuring that the marginalized are included in Church processes.

A Journey Together

Sr. Becquart concluded with a hopeful message: *"The Holy Spirit is already working. Many Churches have not waited for this document—they have started. But we hope that with the Pathways, many more will continue. The Church in PNG and Solomon Islands is not alone. We journey together, inspired by the Spirit, and committed to mission."*



HOLY ROSARY PARISH IN PICTURE



International security base at Leofang

A visit to Harapa, with Sr. Sponsor



Br James Rapeka with Harapa Sunday school children.



Five days mens workshop with Fr Charles at Nila parish Station



Catechists and prayer leaders meeting at Nuhu.



Visiting friends from Bougainville family

OUR YOUTH NEWS

80 Youth Successfully Complete Youth Encounter.



Approximately 80 youths from the St. Eusebius parish in Noro completed the Youth Encounters Seminar on July 2nd at Noro mission station.

The program had a good number of youth participants since many youths are on holiday, which helped the program run smoothly.

One of the missionary facilitators, Fr. Charles, recalled that many hearts were touched, lives were renewed, and faith was deepened.

He said, "It was a powerful moment of grace, where our youth came together to pray, reflect, and build a stronger relationship with Christ and one another." He thanked all the speakers, volunteers, families, and sponsors who supported this grace-filled event



Youth Leaders Workshop and Training Program Achieves Success.

20 youth participants have successfully received their certificates after completing a four-day training program, which was held from July 6th to July 9th at the St. Peter's Youth Center, Gizo.



The workshop aimed primarily to assist these young individuals in understanding the seven priorities of the CBC PNG/SI Catholic Youth Ministry and to explore potential actions. This initiative encouraged them to participate in group discussions and deliver presentations.



The workshop was facilitated by Sr. Sharon Palencia, a Youth Commission for Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In her concluding remarks, she emphasized that the main goal of the Youth Ministry is to guide young people in meeting, accepting, and committing themselves to Christ.

Her speech underscored the central aim of the Youth Ministry, PNG/SI, which is to disseminate the gospel among young people, empowering them to take an active role in evangelizing the world.

Sister Sharon stated that their program has now progressed to phase 3. However, the Solomon Islands is currently unable to advance to that stage, but can participate from phase 3 back to phase 1.

Significant moments during the workshop included the celebration of Solomon Islands Independence Day, which coincided with the event, as well as the observance of the Feast of Blessed Peter To Rot in anticipation of his forthcoming canonization as a saint in October 2025.

The youth participants hailed from Vanga, Gizo, and Noro, encompassing the two parishes involved.

At the conclusion of the event, 20 individuals were awarded their certificates.

SD NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS IN JULY**Zone Leaders Workshop, Gizo.**

St. Peter's Parish Gizo is honored to host a workshop for its zone leaders on the weekend of July 19th, taking place at the St. Peter's compound in Gizo.

With the assistance of Fr. Henry Paroi OP and Sr. Teresa OP, and the pastoral coordinator, Augustine, the leaders were able to engage in the workshop, where they discussed and delivered presentations, etc.

The primary focus of the workshop is on the ethics of leadership.

A Visit to the Correctional Center, Gizo.

St Peter Catholic youth from Gizo, as part of their monthly programs, visited Malakerava Correctional Centre on the 27 July.

The youth were led by Sr. Salome, Deacon Mathew OP, and the Diocesan pastoral coordinator, Augustine.

They conduct a communion service, which is led by Deacon Mathew.

**SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHT DURING JULY.****A Day Workshop at Kukudu.**

The aim of this workshop was to further engage church leaders as advocates for an awareness campaign focused on immunizing girls against cervical cancer between the ages of 9 and 14, while also encouraging women over 25 to undergo regular cervical cancer screenings. The workshop includes all about ADRA, their current program in Solomon Islands, and their key strategies.

Youth Consultation Bill.

The Youth Justice Bill consultation ended well at the Women's Centre yesterday. 22 participants took part in the consultation, representing different stakeholders.

Attended by our Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator, Mr. Augustine Kasiava



MOLI AND SIROVANGA NEWS**SJP Moli, to Motivate Young into Futsal.**

ST. Joseph Parish, Moli, has taken steps to inspire the youth to engage in Futsal, intending to enhance the quality of soccer within the parish and the province, as stated by Anthony (Parish Media Volunteer). He noted that the intention is to introduce them to the sport at a young age.

He elaborated that these young athletes have been motivated by their involvement in fundraising activities, which allow the organizers to monitor their fitness levels.

He also conveyed his appreciation to Mr. Lawrence Isa, the Vice President of the Lauru Football Association, for supplying balls for their training sessions and tournaments.

The Catholic Bishops Conference PNGSI has identified seven essential priorities for youth that now shape the engagement strategies for our young people.

The foremost priority is to ensure that they are effectively organized within their youth ministry. The inclusion of sports, a vital activity for engaging young individuals, aids in building relationships and offers avenues for spiritual and personal development.

Youth ministries within the church that incorporate sports into their initiatives provide physical activities and create settings where young people can cultivate character, enhance leadership abilities, and deepen their faith. By merging athletic pursuits with Christian principles, such programs instill values that resonate beyond the playing field.

DMCT, Tiarama Committee Meets for 2026 Programs.

The Tiarama Committee, which oversees Divine Mercy initiatives across the four Catholic parishes

(Moli, Taro, Sirovanga, and Voruvouru) in Choiseul, has sanctioned its programs for 2026,

which encompass activities planned for this year.

Anthony Telo affirmed that their planning process included an assessment of some of their activities for this year, in addition to preparations for the forthcoming National Congress at Tangarare and their own congress set for October 5, 2026, at Moli parish.

Their past gatherings have proven to be highly effective, and this year's meeting offered an excellent opportunity for the committee to reflect and strategize for the future.

**14 Receive Matrimony, St. Dominic Sirovanga.**

On July 30, seven additional couples were granted their Sacrament of Marriage (SM) at Barakakasa Village, Sirovanga.

This positive sign is encouraging for both couples and their parents, as it highlights the importance of receiving guidance from catechists and priests prior to their consecration.

Our diocese has persistently urged those cohabiting without formal marriage to seek instruction from their catechist or priest.

It is important to note that marriage is intended to be the most enduring institution within any society. For many, it represents the most magnificent and fulfilling relationship they can experience in their lives.

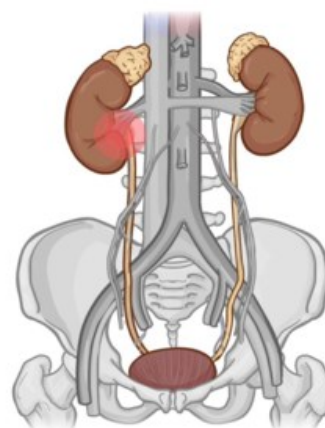
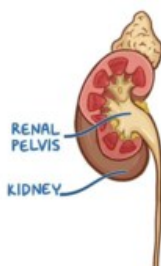


KIDNEY INFECTION (PYELONEPHRITIS)*continue from last issue***CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS****Causes**

Bacteria that enter the urinary tract through the urethra can multiply and travel to your kidneys. This is the most common cause of kidney infections.

Bacteria from an infection in another part of the body also can spread through the bloodstream to the kidneys. In rare cases, an artificial joint or heart valve that becomes infected can cause a kidney infection. Rarely, a kidney infection happens after kidney surgery.

PYELONEPHRITIS
ASCENDING URINARY TRACT INFECTION

**Risk factors**

Factors that increase the risk of a kidney infection include:

Being female. The urethra is shorter in women than in men. That makes it easier for bacteria to travel from outside the body to the bladder. The urethra being close to the vagina and anus also makes it easier for bacteria to enter the bladder.

Once in the bladder, an infection can spread to the kidneys. Pregnant women are at even higher risk of a kidney infection.

Having a urinary tract blockage. Anything that slows the flow of urine or makes it harder to fully empty the bladder can raise the risk of a kidney infection. This includes a kidney stone, a narrowed urethra or an enlarged prostate gland.

Having a weakened immune system. Medical conditions such as diabetes and HIV can weaken the immune system. Certain medicines also can lower immunity. These include drugs taken after an organ

transplant that help prevent rejection.

Having damage to nerves around the bladder. Nerve or spinal cord damage can block the feeling of a bladder infection. That can make it hard to know when an infection travels to a kidney.

Using a urinary catheter. Urinary catheters are tubes used to drain urine from the bladder. Catheters are sometimes used after a surgical procedure or diagnostic test. They're also used in people who are confined to a bed.

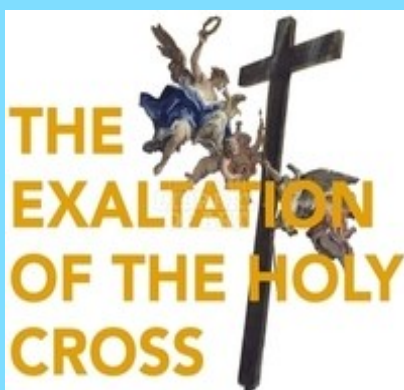
Having a condition that causes urine to flow the wrong way. In vesicoureteral reflux, small amounts of urine flow from the bladder back into the tubes that connect the bladder and kidneys. People with this condition are at higher risk of kidney infections when they're kids and when they become adults.

*To be continue next issue***- UPCOMMING SOLEMNITY FOR SEPTEMBER 2025 -**

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT
DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH
(Wednesday 3rd September)



THE EXALTATION
OF THE HOLY CROSS
(Sunday 14th September)



SS MICHAEL, GABRIEL, AND
RAPHAEL, ARCHANGELS
(SUNDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER)

