**News Compilation for Catholic Church News aired on Radio Maria**

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**Welcome to another week of Catholic Church News on Radio Maria. I am Nigel Akuani, and I am Jessica Oata with the news.**

**Our stories for the week:**

1. **Pope: “Christianity is relationship, care and joy”**
2. **Council Launches Prayer Plan**
3. **Health Experts on Testing and Vaccines**
4. **Third PNG Priest Ordained in Africa**
5. **Touch Our Hearts and Awaken Us**
6. **Easter Celebrated amidst COVID-19**

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**News Item 1 – Pope: “Christianity is relationship, care and joy”**

“Jesus is not a spirit but a living person, and being a Christian means to be in a living relationship with Him, with the Risen Lord, where we look at Him, touch Him, and are nourished and transformed by Him,” said the Holy Father at the recitation of the Regina Coeli prayer, on Sunday 18th April 2021, in St Peter’s Square.

The Pope reflected on the Gospel reading of Luke 24, that tells of how the Resurrected Jesus presents himself in the midst of the group of disciples in the Cenacle in Jerusalem. Then Jesus shows them his bodily wounds and says: “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me”, and to convince them, he asks for food and eats it before their astonished eyes.

The Pope explained that three very tangible verbs characterize this Gospel passage: the disciples were looking, touching and eating.He said these were all verbs that reflected our individual and community life with the living Jesus, and that when we ate together, with family or friends, it also became an expression of love, communion, and celebration.

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**News item 2 – Council Launches Prayer Plan**

Members of the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches (PNGCC) have started a 21-day prayers and fasting programme in response to the Covid-19 surge in the country.

The report published on Wednesday 14th April, stated that the Council’s Acting Chairman and Archbishop of Port Moresby, Cardinal Sir John Ribat, appealed to Christians, church congregations, fellowship groups and church institutions to join the church leaders in observing the 21-day in prayer and fasting period.

Cardinal Ribat said the 21-day prayer and fasting was based on the scripture of Isaiah 40:31, and urged for unity as people of God amidst the life-threatening challenges created by the pandemic.

He urged people to use this time to reflect on the challenges faced by many families and individuals affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and said it was evident that many people, living during the time of the pandemic, needed prayers to overcome their negative emotions created by fear, stigma and other causes.

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**News item 3 – Health Experts on Testing and Vaccines**

Esteemed Health Experts came together in an effort to enable Papua New Guineans understand a bit more about the COVID-19 testing and vaccination situation in the country.

A two-hour COVID-19 talk session was held on Saturday 17th April, at the Catholic Bishops Conference, Waigani. The talk organized by the Catholic Professional Society of PNG, had as its theme: ‘Informed for our well-being’, and focused on testing and vaccines. It was held as an online Social Media digital platform using ‘Zoom’, to connect with participants in the country and abroad. Several more connected via the Facebook page of Radio Maria PNG.

Speakers included Dr Moses Laman, Deputy Director PNG Institute of Medical Research; Dr. Clare Rock, Associate Professor of Medicine from the John Hopkins School of Medicine, United States of America; and Professor John Vince, Pediatrician from the UPNG School of Medicine.

Responding to incidences where locals now refused to test and receive the shot of vaccine, Dr Moses Laman, Deputy Director PNG Institute of Medical Research, reaffirmed that the testing was safe and that the AstraZeneca vaccine had indeed gone through various stages of clinical trial before its approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

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**News item 4 – Third PNG Priest Ordained in Africa**

The third Papua New Guinean Marianhill Priest was ordained in the East African country of Zambia.

Fr. Alois Gende, a Mariannhill missionary from Simbu Province was ordained a priest on Saturday 17th April, at the St. Margaret’s Parish in Mungwi. He has been assigned to St. Henry Parish in the Archdiocese of Kasama in Africa. We congratulate him along with the three other Mariannhill priests.

Fr Gende together with three other Deacons from Malawi, Congo and Zambia, were ordained by Archbishop of the Diocese of Kasama, Ignatius Chama. The ordination ceremony had the attendance of many faithful who adhered to the COVID-19 health guidelines in place.

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**News Item 5 – Touch Our Hearts and Awaken Us**

The Risen Lord touches our hearts and awakens us each time when we receive His Body and Blood, and so, the church has to touch the hearts of the youths and awaken them to follow the Risen Lord, as He is the way, the truth and the life.”

These were the scriptures highlighted during a Youth Rally celebrating the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord to Passion, held on 25th to 28th March 2021, at the St. Gabriel Parish in the Diocese of Aitape.

The rally organized by youths with the assistance of Parish Priest, Fr. Giannie Gattei Ofm, had the support of surrounding communities and the engagement of more than 200 youths.

Presentations were given by Fr. Giannie and Br. Walter Kalana Ofm, that dwelled on Maria, Youth, Vocation, History of the Cross and Holiness. Activities were held in between that focused on Rot Kruse*,* Benediction, Confession, Movie Viewing, Sports, singing and dancing.

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**News item 6 – Easter Celebrated amidst COVID-19**

Easter celebrations conducted in the Diocese of Wabag were memorable and new as many faithful Christians of Sangurap Good Shepherd Parish, adhered to the pre-existing COVID-19 safety measures.

The parish was divided into two sections, east and west. The venue of the celebration for the East was at Keas outstation, and the West at Sangurap Parish. This was to ensure an equal distribution of Christians in each venue selected for the celebration.

According to the Fr Newman Kingi, Social Communications Coordinator of Wabag, wearing of face masks were encouraged and made obligatory, where even in the confessional box, appropriate social distancing was maintained.

Liturgy, prayer, gatherings, baptismal promises, liturgy of the eucharist, and the vigil mass were cut short to only six minutes and controlled to avoid keeping people clustered together for too long.

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**Recapping our headlines for this week:**

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**This ends the Catholic Church news for this week. Join us next week for more.**

**From all of us here at Catholic Communications, we wish you all an enjoyable week.**