



Take Risks for the Common Good

DARU, Papua New Guinea - St. Louie Marie De Montfort once said, *"If you don't take risks for God, you won't give anything worthwhile."* This quote from our founder makes me realized when I step in the country of Papua New Guinea. The people call this country as *'Land of the Unexpected'*, and that is true as what I have observed, experienced and lived. The unexpected beauty that is in this country can be compared to no other countries. It is a place of serenity and tranquillity, and a place beyond imagination surrounded by giant mountains, exotic foods and friendly people.

Then, one might ask me, what is the risk hidden in this country when everything seems nice and beautiful? Yes! The risk is that this country basically not known to many and the geographical condition makes everyone think twice before one could enter it. Taking risks for the common good gives always a satisfaction in what I am doing here. The mountains, rivers and the seas are beautiful to see but are difficult once you are on a journey as missionary walking and crossing for the first time. Yet this kind of difficulty is inspiring for all the missionaries who serve God in this unexpected country. I always remember when I am in the jungle and ruthless situation that Jesus Himself accepted the crown with full of thorns, and, why not me also as a follower of Him in the footsteps of St. Montfort accepts the roads that are difficult to travel and do evangelization? And in here, I understood evangelization is not preaching about Jesus for hours confined in one place only but it is all about living the life of Jesus among these beautiful people. At the same time, I was also evangelized by them.

"Doing little things with great love" is the spirituality that I have adopted from the words St. Therese of the child Jesus. As I adopt this spirituality to the situation in the parish and among the people with whom I worked with and I found a miracle in my life. Our Lady of Star Mountain is a beautiful parish shining in the middle of the star mountains. It was my first assignment after my ordination to be assigned here to share the mission with Fr. Martinus Widyatmoko, SMM and two sisters from the Oblates of Notre Dame (OND) congregation. As a team, we dare to make difference and proclaim Christ with all our hearts over all the mountains and rivers.

Our Lady of Star Mountain (OLSM) Parish has 13 substations reaching its border of Indonesia. Since it is a place of thick forest, rough rivers and mountains and we walk not counting on hours but on days. It's quite far, difficult and painful but there is satisfaction in going to all the places and being a witness of God's love. OLSM Parish was established in the year 1987. The presence of the Church here has completed 30 years. As the years passed by, the faithful in the church was increasing and the church building could not contain all of them. When I saw it, I prayed with the intercession of Mother Mary and gradually the eternal Wisdom revealed Himself in reality. It inspired me and showed me His way to move towards in making the extension of the church and a new grotto of Mother Mary. When I was completely sure of what I am going to do, I discussed with the parish team and the finance committee regarding the renovation and extension of the church and to build a grotto. I really felt that it is possible, and I saw the miracle is waiting and I got approval from all in the parish.

I prayed to make this dream come to reality. It was a bit difficult to get things done to the place where we don't have proper transportation and communication. But, I always believe that 'if there's a will, there's a way'. I believe in the Will of God in my Life and I know He will supply all the necessary things to realize His will to the Church. With strong desire to do the will of God finally I was able to realize the extension and renovation of the Church and the grotto with the help of so many people including the construction companies who did the work. The blessing of the renovation and the extension of the church and Grotto was done by Bishop Gilles Cote, SMM (Bishop of Daru- Kiunga Diocese). Now I am happy to see that the people can comfortably sit inside the Church and pray.

I am grateful to all who prayed for this intention and all who supported and contributed financially and physically through labour for our dream to come to reality. Indeed, taking the risk for the common good is a manifestation of our living faith to God's continuous fidelity in our lives.

God bless us all.

Fr. Francis Prashanth, SMM