



# CONFERENTIA EPISCOPALIS PACIFICI

## EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC

### CEPAC Bishops Gather for Plenary Assembly in Noumea, New Caledonia

The Episcopal Conference of the Pacific, more commonly known as CEPAC (*Conferentia Episcopalis Pacifici*), held its plenary assembly on November 13-17, 2023 at the Accueil Mont-Mou, a retreat house administered by the congregation of *Soers Missionaries de la Société de Marie* in Paita, New Caledonia.

The plenary assembly of CEPAC is held once every two years but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the bishops in the Pacific region were not able to meet in person since 2019.

Bishop Paul Donoghue, outgoing president of CEPAC who represented the bishops at the recent Synod of Bishops last October in Rome, led the conversation on Synod and Synodality. “Listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit,” said Bishop Donoghue, is critical. “My people in the Diocese of Rarotonga (Cook Islands) need to be taught more about discerning the voice of God,” Bishop Donoghue emphasized. Bishops, likewise, encourage their parishioners to take the time to read and reflect on the Synod of Bishops’ synthesis report, “A Synodal Church in Mission” and use this document in the continuing process of walking together as people of God.

Pastoral concerns from CEPAC dioceses were given time and attention for sharing and discussion. Archbishop Peter Loy Chong of Suva facilitated the discussion on issues surrounding the region, specifically on climate change and deep-sea mining. “Our islands are vulnerable. We need to echo our collective voice, engage in a multi-layer collaboration that includes the non-Catholic churches in addressing these critical issues,” highlighted Archbishop Chong. He, together with Cardinal Soane Patita Paini Mafi of Tonga will attend a conference organized by the Pacific Council of Churches in a few days to express solidarity with church leaders in addressing these issues.

Moreover, the bishops spent an extensive and thorough discussion on the significance of formation, especially in preparing candidates for the priesthood. Everyone was in agreement that a wholistic and contextual approach to seminary formation, as part of the preparation for the ordained ministry, is paramount.

As Bishop Donoghue finishes his term as CEPAC President, a new set of CEPAC’S permanent council have been elected. The new leadership team is composed of the following:

**President: Bishop Ryan Pagente Jimenez** of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa

**Vice-President: Bishop Jean Pierre Cottanceau** of Papeete

**Permanent Council Members Representing CEPAC’s three Regions**

**Central** (Suva, Tonga, Samoa Apia, Samoa-Pago Pago, Tokelau, Rarotonga, Tarawa and Nauru, Tuvalu: **Bishop Kolio Etuale** of Samoa Pago-Pago

**Francophone** (Noumea, Port-Vila, Wallis and Futuna, Papeete, Taiohae):

**Bishop John Bosco Baremes** of Port-Vila

**Northern:** Añaña, Chalan Kanoa, Caroline Islands, Marshall Islands:

**Bishop Julio Angkel** of the Caroline Islands

At the concluding liturgy of the CEPAC gathering, Bishop Jimenez as the new president received a blessing from his brother bishops led by His Eminence, Cardinal Mafi. “I have been a member of CEPAC for thirteen years now—six years as Apostolic Administrator and seven years as bishop. With the grace of God and the support of my brother bishops, I look forward to working with you in a more synodal way, listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and walking together in addressing challenges and issues in our region,” said Bishop Jimenez.



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The bishops of CEPAC are grateful to Archbishop Michel Calvet of Noumea for hosting the Plenary Assembly. Archbishop Calvet, with the clergy, religious, and people of Noumea, led the liturgical celebration for CEPAC bishops on November 16, 2023 at the Cathédrale Saint-Joseph de Nouméa. Fellowship with the people of Noumea followed after the liturgical celebration.



**Newly-elected leadership team of CEPAC (left to right):** Bishop John Bosco Baremes of Port-Vila (Council Member), Bishop Jean Pierre Cottanceau of Papeete (Vice-President), Bishop Ryan Jimenez of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa (President), Bishop Julio Angkel of the Caroline Islands (Council Member), and Bishop Kolio Etuale of Samoa Pago-Pago (Council Member).



Archbishop Michel Calvet of Noumea presided the Eucharist for Bishops of CEPAC on November 16, 2023 at the Cathédrale Saint-Joseph de Nouméa. Fellowship with the people of Noumea followed after the liturgical celebration.