

SECOND REPORT: Monday, April 02, 2007 9:02 PM

Dear All,

It has been a long day of expectation, thank God it seems that the problem is more local than nation wide. It has been frustrating to hear: "Sorry all lines in use, we can't take your call" every time I tried to call Gizo. The Government Machinery has got into action and there are teams on their way to the Western Solomons, to access the situation. Gizo township is badly hit. The sea front area which is the town is a restricted area now and every one has had to move to higher ground and just sit under the trees. The earthquakes were continuous throughout the day. In Honiara we have not felt them. People are saying they did feel the morning quakes around 8 to 9 am. I did not notice them, others have told me that they too did not notice them. Those who did notice them said they were not the normal kind of jolting earthquakes we have on a regular bases. These quakes were more like a swaying feeling. People got up to check that it was a real quake and not just something they were imagining.

News from around the Diocese of Gizo reports that Nila Catholic Church area did experience the waves, the Nila Rural Health Clinic was reported in the Evening News as having been damaged. Other buildings in the Nila Church area seem to be in tact. In villages near Nila some homes were down. From Moli I did not hear reports of damage, but from Taro Island which is not far from Moli people were forced to evacuate the island (I am not certain about this). Sirovanga it seems reported no damage, that makes sense, it is on high ground. From Wagina there is no report. Loga Island where the Dominicans Sisters and Friars have their formation programmes it seems the seas went through the Sisters Houses. The Brothers House that is on higher ground, the waves reached the floor level only. The Sisters and the Friars are all up in the hills above there place of residence. From Vanga Point no news, most of the building there are on the higher ground, but at sea level their workshop and wharf were damaged. I got this information right now from Bishop Chris Cardone OP by phone from Auki, he had managed to make contact with Vanga Point. The Evening News told us that the Gizo Air Field is out of action, the waves went right through it and left a trail of debris.

The island of Simbo with its active volcano has suffered a lot. People there are caught between their constantly active volcano and now the waves. They are afraid to move to higher ground in case the volcano erupts. There seems to have been a number of deaths in the Simbo area. The number now believed to have died is around 12 people. This is not yet confirmed.

In Munda, patients from the hospital were evacuated. They are using the community high school for shelter. The roads in the Noro area are showing major cracks and unsafe to use.

I am putting these bits and pieces together from what I picked up on the National Radio and the odd phone call and the local stories floating around. I hate to think of the poor people spending the night in the open on the higher ground on Gizo and on Loga and in all those places where people have had to move to higher ground.

Around Honiara the fear feeling seems to have subsided. The warnings that were given are now not being made. All we can do is wait and hear the results of the assessment teams that have

been sent to study the situation. For the people in Gizo clean water is going to be a major problem.

I hope the report tomorrow will bring good news - telling you that the waters have subsided and the clean up is in place. I hope Bishop Bernard is able to sleep in his own house tomorrow and that there will be relief available to all who have suffered so much.

I just got another phone call from Australia . The caller was able to get through to Bishop Bernard and the Helicopters were hovering overhead in Gizo. Good news. The Cathedral is more seriously damaged than I thought. The top of the bell tower came tumbling down and part of the wall has caved in. The morning earthquakes in Gizo were very severe. Bishop Bernard has been able to come down to his house and pick up a few things to help him through the night on the hills. Many things in his house are broken as they crashed from the shelves during the quakes. Sasamunga Hospital it seems was badly hit by the waves that came inland to about 500 metres. For many in the small islands – it means that a large portion of the islands have been under water. The list of missing people is growing. Bishop Bernard is worried about a Catechist and his family. I better send this off before it becomes a book!

Please keep them in your prayers.

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