

SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Some of the attendees from several dioceses across Papua New Guinea at the Charismatic Workshop at Mary, Help of Christians, Cathedral in Goroka, Papua New Guinea



BY ANNA FEOLA

**Papua New Guinea
Mission Team Member**

Anthony & Anna Feola are long-time friends and collaborators of Renewal Ministries, where Anthony serves as Country Coordinator for Papua New Guinea. Since meeting as young adults at an international mission school in Sweden, they have lived a life of mission together in the United States and across the world. They currently make their home in Plymouth, Michigan, with their five children.

When asked about our mission work to Papua New Guinea (PNG), the overall experience can be summed up in two words: glorious and grueling.

Tucked away in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, PNG is a beautiful island country struggling to catch up with the modern world and beset by poverty, inadequate healthcare, corruption, and generations of witchcraft, tribal and domestic violence, and polygamy. Traveling here is a feat in and of itself. Including layovers, it takes anywhere from forty-five to sixty hours to reach the Diocese of Goroka, crossing the international dateline, and throwing our circadian rhythm off by fourteen hours. By the time this mission ends, we will have gone from sitting in cramped spaces and standing in secu-

rity lines for mind-numbing hours on end to running with all our luggage at full speed through the heat and crowds only to miss a connecting flight and hear that the next flight out is in two days. We will have lain awake night after night missing our families back home, slogged through jetlag day after day, preached while exhausted, and prayed for the sick while feeling sick ourselves. However, this is exactly what we signed up for when we answered the missionary vocation and opened our hearts to the compelling love of Christ whose journey took him from the glories of heaven to the Cross.



From left to right:

Fr. Adam Samsel

Anthony & Anna
Feola

Tom Hornacek

Bishop Walenty Gryk

This mission began long before we landed in PNG. The weeks and months leading up to this were filled with prayer and preparation—individually and as a team—to hear from heaven and receive the Father’s heart for the people He would send us. We were led to prioritize our preaching and teaching on the narrow road of discipleship, the four last things (death, judgement, heaven, hell), and what it means to truly make Jesus the Lord of our lives and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

One of the words that came in prayer for this mission was:

“Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar... [say] to the prisoners, ‘Come forth,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’ But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.’ Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands.”

(Is 49:1, 9, 14-16)

Perhaps forgotten by much of the world, the Lord remembered His children in this remote place and poured out His Spirit upon them “as with a new Pentecost.”

The first weekend retreat was lightly attended by approximately fifty lay faithful and a couple priests. Our hosts were initially disappointed in the turnout, but the smaller number combined with the incredible spiritual hunger of the recipients allowed us to go deeper into the Scriptures as we shared messages on *The Narrow Road*, *The Cost of Discipleship*, *Forgiveness*, *Personal Evangelization*, and *St. Joseph & the Blessed Mother: Models of Discipleship*. What began as a slow burn steadily grew into a wildfire as young and old alike surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus and cried out for a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit. We were deeply touched by the spiritual hunger of the people as they received the Word of God with joy. Even the children who sat on wooden planks on the floor for



Anthony Feola leads prayer ministry with children to receive more of the Holy Spirit.

long sessions day after day were fully engaged in prayer and worship, listening intently to the proclamation of the Gospel!

On the heels of that retreat, we launched into a more extensive week-long “Charismatic Workshop” for approximately 200 people from multiple dioceses, covering even more material on discipleship which included talks on *The Gifts of the Spirit*, *Prayer*, *Healing*, *Spiritual Warfare*, *The Power of Praise*, and more. Every day included Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and confessions, and up to four teaching sessions with praise and prayer minis-

try. During the night sessions, numbers swelled to standing room only as word of mouth spread. This retreat was uniquely marked by an outpouring of the Spirit in powerful prayer, gifts of the Spirit, and boldness to be a witness. Many were baptized in the Holy Spirit and prayed with great passion, while two elderly women and a young college student testified of instant healings of painful afflictions.

The culmination of the retreat was an afternoon of street evangelization. Approximately seventy teams were sent out two-by-two to proclaim the Gospel and pray with people in the streets. A tent was erected in town where the music team praised God in song, attracting a crowd and the mission team took turns testifying, proclaiming the Gospel, and calling people to repentance. We met a Protestant minister who cried tears of joy to learn that this was the Catholic Church sharing the Gospel in the streets—something he had never experienced before! Another street preacher was across the way, speaking loudly *against* the Catholic Church. His Seventh Day Adventist followers were known to persecute the local Catholics, even resorting to physical altercations. We invited him to join us, and, despite the obvious conflict, he and Fr. Adam began a dialogue that continued after we left!

Our team was surprised to find an old copy of Ralph Martin’s book on prayer, *Hungry for God*, in a Catholic book store in Goroka, PNG!

