The Role of Religious Communities in Peacemaking: The Solomon Islands

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THE RECENT “ethnic conflict” and near civil war in the Solomon Islands have brought out the power of Religious communities to take on a peacemaking rôle. The Church of Melanesia in the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific has four Religious communities, the Melanesian Brotherhood (the largest Religious community in the Anglican Communion), the Community of the Sisters of Melanesia, the Community of the Sisters of the Church, and the Society of St. Francis. All four communities found themselves in the midst of armed conflict and all four communities took on a very active rôle in peacemaking and reconciliation.

As the Solomons Islands conflict is not widely known, a very short summary is in order. In 1999 and 2000, the Solomon descended into near civil war, as ethnic conflict developed between some of the indigenous people of the main island of Guadalcanal and settlers on Guadalcanal from the large neighbouring island of Malaita. Some 20,000 Malaitans were driven out of Guadalcanal back to Malaita, resulting in armed conflict between the two militant groups, the Isatabu [Guadalcanal] Freedom Movement (IFM) and the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF). The MEF eventually occupied the capital city of Honiara on Guadalcanal and brought about a coup, resulting in the exodus of most expatriates and the economic collapse of the country. The conflict was settled by the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA), signed between the warring parties in October 2000. New national elections were held in late 2001. The country has peace but with many problems.

During the time of conflict, IFM and MEF armed camps faced each other in bunkers on both sides of Honiara. Fighting went ahead with the loss of perhaps 100 lives. The MEF sought to isolate the IFM from the resources of Honiara (food and fuel) and the IFM continued to press against Honiara to further drive Malaitans off Guadalcanal. Acts of atrocity also took place on both sides—torture, rape, shelling of Guadalcanal villages by the MEF-controlled government patrol boat and the conscription of child soldiers by the IFM. The so-called “happy isles”, to everyone’s shock had become a war zone.

Where were the Religious communities in all of this? All four communities have their headquarters in the area of rural Guadalcanal that was controlled by the IFM—the Melanesian Brothers at Tabalia, the Sisters of Melanesia at Verana’aso, the Society of St. Francis at Hautambu (all on west Guadalcanal) and the Sisters of the Church at Tetete ni Kolivuti (east Guadalcanal). Yet all four communities have houses or a significant presence in Honiara, especially the SSF and CSC at Patteson House and the Melanesian Brothers in households scattered around Honiara. All four communities had members from both islands who had always lived and worked peacefully together. Suddenly the Religious communities found themselves divided by a front line and a war zone, with bunkers, road blocks, homemade landmines, destroyed bridges and armed militant canoes.

The Religious communities’ first response was a humanitarian one. As Malaita settlers were driven from their homes on Guadalcanal, they took shelter with the few possessions they
were able to carry in the Religious communities, especially Tabalia, headquarters of the Melanesian Brotherhood. The mana of the communities is so strong that they become places of refuge that the Guadalcanal militants would not invade or defile. The communities were effective in this area where other church institutions such as schools and even the theological college were not. These institutions responded with fear and often suffered harassments from the militants. Similarly, the communities’ houses in Honiara became places of refuge for Guadalcanal people trapped in MEF-controlled Honiara. As the ethnic conflict spread, the Malaita Diocese Melanesian Brotherhood headquarters at Airahu provided refuge to Guadalcanal people married to Malaitans and living on Malaita, who were suffering harassment. All the communities took on the rôle of sanctuary.

Both militant groups set up armed road blocks on both sides of Honiara to prevent the movement of people and goods between the two militant-controlled areas. Only church vehicles, especially the trucks and canoes of the four Religious communities, were allowed to cross the checkpoints freely. Because both militant groups continued to have a high regard for the Religious communities, it was possible to evacuate fleeing Malaitans to Honiara, to bring people with medical emergencies into town, to continue to feed people in the Religious communities and rural areas and, more sadly, to reunite the bodies of those killed in the conflict with their families.

Eventually the communities, especially the Melanesian Brotherhood, took on a much more active rôle in the conflict, joining the militants on both sides in their bunkers and on the front line, praying with them and encouraging them to cease from the conflict and go home. Teams of Brothers, often with Malaita and Guadalcanal Brothers included together in the team, occupied the “no-man’s land” between the two front lines, moving back and forth between the armed camps facing each other, placing their lives at great risk. No Brother was killed or even injured, so great was the respect (and indeed, fear) of the militants for the Brothers. (The Brothers’ mana is sometimes thought to be greater than that of the clergy.) Similarly, in Honiara, the Brothers tried to penetrate the MEF camps where torture sometimes took place, trying to impose some minimum standard of behaviour on the militants. In rural Guadalcanal, the Brothers sought to curb the excesses of the IFM, for example, becoming the go-between in the recovery of hostages held by the IFM, such as a Solomon Islands Airlines pilot from the Western Solomons that an IFM leader had captured. Brothers also travelled on all trips of the MV Ramos between Honiara and Auki, the capital of Malaita, to try to prevent MEF kidnappings and violent behaviour towards passengers.

Other communities, from their respective headquarters in rural Guadalcanal, tried to build relationships with Guadalcanal militant leaders, urging them to move to the peace table. The communities were sometimes the only channel of communication with them. In some cases, communities nursed Guadalcanal militants back to health. The other communities also had active programmes of ministry with the MEF in Honiara, particularly responding to MEF kidnappings and killings.

The work of the communities, especially the Melanesian Brotherhood, was a very important factor in the decision of the two militant groups to move to a ceasefire and the peace talks that led to the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement in October 2000. Militant leaders from both sides openly thanked the communities, especially the Melanesian Brothers, for their work for peace. A couple of weeks after the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement, there was a tremendous public reconciliation in Honiara and the nearby countryside in which the two
militant groups came together, tearfully embraced and celebrated their new unity. The bunkers and road blocks were torn down. The Melanesian Brothers, in a sense, presided over the great celebration. While there have been many problems since then, there has been no major ethnic conflict between Guadalcanal and Malaita. In 2001 the Governor General awarded the Solomon Islands Medal to the Melanesian Brotherhood for their rôle in peacemaking and reconciliation for the nation.

The Townsville Peace Agreement made provision for the formation of a Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) and the collection of weapons from both the MEF and IFM. The Government made an agreement with the Melanesian Brotherhood for pairs of Brothers to join the PMC teams in Guadalcanal and Malaita (many ex-MEF members had returned to Malaita with their guns) to help in the collection of weapons, supported by an International Peace Monitoring Team. With the collapse of the police, these PMC-Melanesian Brotherhood teams brought peace and order to troubled parts of Guadalcanal and Malaita. Later, in 2002, when the collection of weapons had still not been successful, the Brothers, no longer a part of the PMC, initiated their own programme of weapons collection on both Guadalcanal and Malaita. The technique was to locate the weapon, go to its owner and simply ask for it, in the name of peace. Most militants could not resist but some fled when they saw the Brothers coming. The weapons were dumped into the sea.

After the Townsville Peace Agreement, the women’s communities, particularly the CSC, played an important rôle in family reconciliation and providing a safe base for Guadalcanal women and families bringing their market to Honiara. Many mixed Guadalcanal-Malaita marriages were torn apart by the conflict, as IFM militants harassed Malaita men married to Guadalcanal women and MEF militants harassed Guadalcanal men married to Malaita women, demanding cash compensation to allow the marriages to continue. Many Malaita men married to Guadalcanal women took their wives and families back to Malaita, breaking the Guadalcanal matrilineal and matrilocal tradition of husbands’ married to Guadalcanal women settling on their wives’ land. Children of mixed marriages were particularly vulnerable, harassed or fought over by both militant groups and sometimes killed. The women’s communities reached out to women and families torn apart by the conflict, often helping to reunite divided families, locate missing people or providing healing after trauma.

Despite “peace”, problems in the Solomons have continued—violent conflict within the remnants of the two militant movements along tribal or intra-island ethnic lines, corruption in the police and the government, economic collapse, killings, some torture and a general lawlessness. People continue to look to the Religious communities, especially the Melanesian Brotherhood (and more generally, to the whole church, including the bishops and clergy) as the only institutions having the integrity to save the country. The Melanesian Brothers have quashed rebellious movements within the police and the Community of the Sisters of the Church have reached out to a variety of brawling ex-militants at Tetete ni Kolivuti, eventually helping to bring peace. In Auki, the CSC found itself in the midst of a shower of bullets as ex-militants pursued a land dispute. Sisters challenged the drunken ex-militants and accompanied the small nearby village into the bush overnight for safety. Through counselling, the sisters have helped move the nearby village from fear to confidence.

All four communities had the radical freedom of the Religious life to enable them to risk their lives for the Gospel. They also had considerable faith in God, that divine protection would be available in very dangerous situations and that even if death was the result, it was not the end.
They had the confidence to face high-powered weapons pointed at them at checkpoints and to argue against militants who wished to remove someone from the vehicle to kill or to take as a hostage (often the same thing). They had the strength to protect those from either ethnic group who were seeking sanctuary in the community. Needless to say, the life of the Eucharist and monastic offices continued in all four communities amidst all the chaos and killing. The holiness and spirituality of the communities gave their members the strength to minister in very violent and dangerous situations. In some cases, clergy were forced or chose to flee their parishes; such flight did not happen with the Religious communities.

However, there was a price to pay, especially for the Melanesian Brotherhood. The Brotherhood was founded in 1925 to do primary evangelism in Melanesia. Over the years, from its headquarters at Tabalia on West Guadalcanal, the Brotherhood has very effectively evangelized the Solomons, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. It has also worked in Fiji and Australia and is now working in the Philippines and England. Brothers take a three-year renewable vow of poverty, chastity and obedience. The open-ended renewal of the vow (with the hope that the Brother will stay in the Brotherhood for at least four more years) enables Brothers to serve twenty years or more; but virtually all Brothers eventually choose to be released, with the Blessing of the Archbishop. The structures of the community, in addition to the community’s headquarters at Tabalia, are diocesan “section households”, headed by a Section Elder Brother, and “working households” around the diocese, especially in areas of primary evangelism or, more recently, areas where the level of Christian understanding and practice is low, such as in towns. Brothers are supposed to travel “two by two”, live very simply and “receive what they are given” (Luke 10). The “working households” are bases of evangelism and renewal and deeply appreciated by the people.

The Melanesian Brothers’ emergency response to “ethnic tension” on Guadalcanal emptied many of the section and working households in the Solomons, as Brothers were re-assigned to work in the conflict on Guadalcanal. This was supposed to be a temporary measure but with the inclusion of Brothers in the post-TPA Peace Monitoring Council teams, the absence from the households continued. For some of the Brothers, the excitement of being a hero was too much—when peace came, the release of tension was so great they ended in drunken revelry. Some Brothers got too used to guns and violence and became attracted to them, ending up violent within the Brotherhood. (As this was all a very new experience, the realization that some Brothers needed post-trauma counselling came too late.) In both the work with the militant groups between the front lines and with the Peace Monitoring Council, Brothers sometimes got separated from their proper communities, with the militants or PMC becoming their new communities. The PMC lifestyle was a particular problem, with PMC staff plying Brothers with alcohol, fancy additions to their Brotherhood uniforms and others gifts. Eventually, the Archbishop of Melanesia (the “Father of the Brotherhood”) and the Head Brother decided to withdraw the Brotherhood from the PMC relationship, feeling that the Brothers had been co-opted by the Government and that the PMC relationship was destroying the community life of the Brotherhood.

For some Brothers, after the excitement of dangerous ministry between the front lines, going back to a small leaf household in the remote bush of Malaita or Guadalcanal, without electricity, a radio or much food, was not an enticing prospect and they left the Brotherhood. To this day, some of the problems remain, with Brothers not always obedient to their assignments, preferring to stay in towns where life is more exciting. For some, alcohol continues to be a
problem. The Head Brother and leaders of the Brotherhood (not to mention the Archbishop and Diocesan Bishops) are very aware of the problem and it will be discussed at the Great Conference in October 2003.

A few Brothers from Guadalcanal and Malaita, through friendships with militants from their respective islands, came to identify strongly with that militant group. The rank-and-file militants also sometimes tended to see the Brothers as their Chaplains as they faced possible death in battle, receiving support and encouragement from them. Throughout the conflict, there were some accusations that the Brothers favoured one side or another, for example, by providing holy water to combatants. However, the Brothers tried very hard to preserve their neutrality in the conflict, urging an end to the fighting and, where battle was inevitable, urging combatants to fight cleanly and not engage in human rights abuses. Brothers who over-identified with their own island’s militant group were released. Most rank-and-file ex-militants still regard the Brothers who worked with them with gratitude and awe, in some cases regarding them as having saved their lives. However, the Brothers are still the nemesis of corrupt and violent police and politicians who backed the conflict for their own economic ends and continue to bring disorder to the country.

Other communities have been less affected as they did not risk so much. However, communities working in Honiara, especially the CSC and SSF, who share two ends of a single building, Patteson House, have faced an enormous flow of people in need, such that it has been sometimes difficult to maintain an adequate community and Religious life. Thirty years ago, both communities at Patteson House had fairly open buildings; one could go in for a cup of tea or a meal or stay overnight and feel that one was in a community. Over the years, with increasing numbers and needs of visitors (and with “ethnic tension”, their desperate situation), the communities have had to add doors, fences, counselling rooms, partitions and locks and the sense of community has vanished.

The CSC, in particular, has taken on the counselling of women who are victims of violence and abuse and street children involved in prostitution. With the collapse of the national economy because of the armed conflict, violence and frustration has increased in families as unemployment increases. This worsening social situation provides another challenge to the Religious communities—how to minister in an increasingly desperate situation (with constant urgent interruptions) while preserving community and prayer life. In order to preserve some semblance of community life at Patteson House, the CSC have developed a Family Care Centre at a different site, yet Patteson House continues to be crowded with people in need. The real shift of community life has been to the CSC’s headquarters and novitiate at Tetete ni Kolivuti in East Guadalcanal which has grown from a few houses to a large centre. The SSF’s experience at Patteson House has been similar.

Without the communities’ contribution, the Solomons might have ended up as yet another genocide, as leaders in both groups were preparing for all out war and mass destruction of the other. The communities called the Solomons back to their Christian vocation. And while the communities suffered and continue to suffer some wounds from their participation in reconciliation and peacemaking in the midst of violence, no one doubts that they will recover and continue to enrich the Church of Melanesia and beyond.

Epilogue
The above was written as the Melanesian Brothers and other Religious communities in the Solomon Islands were winding up their programmes of disarmament. With the appointment of a highly qualified expatriate Police Commissioner from the United Kingdom in early 2003, all believed that the country’s law and order situation could slowly be brought under control.

However, the matter was not so simple. Harold Keke and his Guadalcanal Liberation Front (FLF) followers on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal intensified their reign of murder and pillage on neighbouring villages (several of them Anglican) in an attempt to gain full control over the area. An earlier government decision to arm Keke’s ex-militant rivals and make them ‘Special Constables’ (the so-called Joint Operation) to fight him made the area into a new war zone. Because of corruption, incompetence and lack of resources, despite the new Police Commissioner, the police were able to do little beyond protecting isolated villages from Keke and his followers. Despite government requests going back many years, Australia continued to refuse to provide any in-line military or police assistance and the situation worsened.

At the same time, in Honiara and Malaita corrupt police and Special Constables continued to try to destabilize the work of the new Police Commissioner. On February 10, 2003, on the eve of a demobilization of Special Constables, a police assassin shot dead a former Police Commissioner, Sir Fred Soaki, in Auki, Malaita. Soaki had been under consideration for an appointment to assist the new Police Commissioner to clean out the corrupt police. Extortion by police and ex-militant Special Constables also continued in Honiara and many criminal cases remained uninvestigated because of the senior police and politicians’ involvement in them.

Because of this situation, the government, through the Father of the Brotherhood, the Archbishop of Melanesia, asked the Melanesian Brotherhood to continue to provide help in the area of peacemaking and conflict resolution. The Solomons Islands Region of the Brotherhood agreed and a group of six Brothers, headed by Br. Francis Tofi, who had already had much experience in this area, was selected to do this work. Br. Francis and others provided support to the new Police Commissioner (helping him gain public trust and giving support he lacked from many of his own staff). A few Brothers accompanied the police in their operations to protect Weather Coast villages from Keke’s raids and spoke words of encouragement to those villages. However, Brothers also spoke out against excesses of the Joint Operation when they attacked villages suspected of supporting Keke.

Beginning in early 2003, because of the failure of government efforts to communicate with Keke (one such effort resulted in the death of a government minister, Father Augustine Geve, a retired Roman Catholic priest), the Archbishop of Melanesia, Sir Ellison Pogo, began to communicate with Keke to try to bring him to the negotiating table. Just before Easter, the Archbishop sent a letter to Keke through two Melanesian Brothers who were well received and delivered the letter personally to Keke. They were accompanied by a third Brother, Br. Nathaniel Sado, well known to Keke, who decided to stay on after the other two Brothers returned.

At this point something went wrong. In retrospect Br. Nathaniel should not have stayed on. Keke and his followers, still seeing themselves as fighting for the liberation of Guadalcanal from central government control, regarded the Prime Minister, Sir Allan Kemakeza, as their prime enemy. Br. Nathaniel was from the same island as the Prime Minister. Keke and followers, prone to paranoia, decided on the basis of a bank passbook that he was holding, that Br. Nathaniel had been hired by the Prime Minister ‘to spy’ on them. They tied up and beat Br.
Nathaniel for three days, trying to gain a confession from him, which (according to an eyewitness) he never gave. After three days, he died from his wounds.

Rumours of the killing soon reached the Melanesian Brotherhood head-quarters at Tabalia. On April 23, 2003, six Brothers, lead by the Assistant Head Brother, who also had responsibility for the Solomon Islands Region, Br. Robin Lindsay from Papua New Guinea, left Tabalia by canoe for the Weather Coast. Their mission, as authorized by the Father of the Brotherhood, was to confirm Br. Nathaniel’s death and, if true, to bring his body back to Tabalia for burial. The other Brothers on the mission were Brothers Francis Tofi, Tony Sirihi, Alfred Hill, Patteson Gatu and Ini Paratabatu.

The next day the group walked inland from the coast towards Keke’s village. They came upon a group of Keke’s followers (Keke was not with them) who without provocation attacked them, killing Brs. Robin Lindsay, Francis Tofi and Tony Sirihi when they refused to lie face-down on the ground. The other three Brothers, Brs. Alfred Hill, Patteson Gatu and Ini Paratabatu, were taken to Keke’s village where they were subjected to a night of humiliation and torture, some of which was tape-recorded. They next day, they were lined up in front of their graves and each shot in the chest, falling into their graves. Those later arrested for the killings told police investigators that they killed the Brothers because Harold Keke told them they were ‘spies’ for the government. Details of the killing have been provided to the Brotherhood and families and will become public in the upcoming trial of those accused of the killings.

When the six Brothers did not return, there were, of course, concerns that they too had been killed. But Keke and his followers sent word that the Brothers were safe and were being kept as hostages. Keke was taken at his word and it was assumed that the Brothers had become human shields to stop the police operations that were slowly closing in on him. Brothers and novices at Tabalia began all-night prayer vigils, which continued until the news of the six Brothers’ deaths finally emerged in early August.

In the period immediately after the Brother’s deaths, Keke and his men continued to burn and pillage nearby villages, including Anglican villages (Keke is from a South Seas Evangelical Church background), apparently seeing the Archbishop and the Church of Melanesia as colluding with the Prime Minister (also an Anglican) in opposing him. Even before the death of Br. Nathaniel, Keke had also begun to murder his own followers and family members who had begun to express disagreement with his movement. These killings continued. The number of murders eventually attributed to Keke and his followers is about fifty or sixty.

During this time, Keke’s followers also kidnapped an additional seven Brothers and novices who were part of a larger group en route back to Tabalia after a ‘novice practical’ on another part of the Weather Coast. They were initially treated badly. However, when Keke arrived, he took an interest in them, asking them to preach to him. This group of seven lived closely with Keke for several weeks, trying to win him over. Their witness may have had a major influence on his eventual decision to surrender to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The remaining Brothers and Novices moved on to the Anglican village of Marasa, where they witnessed Keke and his followers’ attack on the village. Keke lined the villagers up on the beach, killed two young men while the village was required to clap and cheer, burnt the village to the ground and kidnapped the parish priest, Father Lionel Longarata, who was fortunate to escape with his life. All the Brothers and novices on the ‘novice
practical’ were eventually released and returned to Tabalia. Brothers at Tabalia showed much
diety in rescuing them.

In June 2003, the Australian government announced a major change in its foreign policy
and agreed to a request of the Solomon Islands government to intervene in the country’s security
and governance crisis with military, police and administrative personnel. Following a formal
request by the Solomon Islands Governor General and Speaker of the Parliament, a resolution of
the Solomon Islands Parliament and approval by the South Pacific Forum foreign ministers, the
Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was formed. The first RAMSI
personnel, largely military and police, arrived in the Solomons in late July 2003. There are
presently RAMSI personnel in the country from ten South Pacific nations, including Australia,
New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

RAMSI quickly dealt with the situation on the Weather Coast. On August 8, 2003, Keke
admitted to RAMSI that the six Brothers were dead and had, indeed, been killed soon after their
capture. A week later, Keke and his senior followers surrendered to RAMSI and are now in
custody, facing murder charges for these and many other deaths. RAMSI personnel eventually
recovered and identified all seven Brothers’ bodies and have pieced together from witnesses the
terrible details of their deaths.

After months of hope that the Brothers were still alive, the announcement of their deaths
was a great shock, to the Brotherhood, to the Church of Melanesia and the Anglican Church of
Papua New Guinea, to the nations of the Solomon Islands and PNG and to Christians around the
world who had been praying for them.

Insofar as all seven Brothers died in the overall service of peacemaking, all seven have
come to be seen as martyrs by the Church of Melanesia and the Anglican Church of Papua New
Guinea. While the date is not yet formally fixed, it is likely that the Feast of the Seven Martyrs of
the Melanesian Brotherhood will be kept on April 24th, the day before St. Mark’s Day, the
patronal festival of the Chapel of the Melanesian Brotherhood Headquarters at Tabalia.

While Keke and his followers continue to maintain that the Brothers were ‘spies’ for the
government, there is no evidence whatsoever to support the charge, except the Brothers’
vocation (shared with the government and the church) to help end the murderous regime of Keke
and his followers on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal. Br. Nathaniel stayed on because of his
friendship with Keke and he apparently thought he could influence him positively. The other six
were killed trying to recover Br. Nathaniel’s body. All seven were willing to minister without
fear (and, indeed, several had done so for many years) in a very dangerous corner of the globe,
giving their lives for peace in the Solomon Islands. They had in their hearts the enormous
suffering the people of Guadalcanal have undergone because of the activities of Keke and his
followers. They had in their hearts the need to continue to work for peace in the midst of great
violence and hopelessness. They were killed for exercising their Christian ministries.

Their deaths have also brought the Melanesian Brotherhood and the churches in the
Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (and beyond) to the Cross of Jesus Christ - away from
simplistic and magical understandings of the Brothers’ power, mana (whether making them
immune from bullets or able to find lost property) to the terrible sacrifice that is sometimes
required of Christians.
All seven martyred Brothers lie together at Tabalia. The six Solomon Islands Brothers were buried on October 24, 2003 in the context of the Great Conferences of the Melanesian Brotherhood and Companions of the Melanesian Brotherhood (both held once in four years) and the Brotherhood’s patronal festival of St. Simon and St. Jude. Brother Robin’s burial was delayed until November 5th to allow all his family from Papua New Guinea to be present.

On October 24th, Brothers and novices, families of the slain Brothers, Companions of the Brotherhood, members of other Religious communities (including the nearby Roman Catholic community of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate), Archbishops, Bishops, clergy (including the Governor General of the Solomon Islands, Father Sir John Ini Lapli), laity, government ministers and RAMSI personnel gathered from the Solomons, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and elsewhere for the deeply moving funeral and burial (broadcast live to the nation on the national radio station, SIBC) on a dark Friday afternoon. Crowds continued to flow into Tabalia as some 3,000 celebrated the Festival of St. Simon and St. Jude on Sunday, October 26th. That Sunday marked not only Christ’s Resurrection but that of the Seven Martyred Brothers, and Melanesian Brotherhood and the Church of Melanesia.

While the country’s situation has improved, there are still many problems, especially on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal. With the rest of the church, Religious communities in the Solomon Islands, inspired by the lives of the Seven Martyred Brothers, will continue to exercise their peacemaking ministries in situations of confusion, misunderstanding and violence.

November 5, 2003