

**Week One: Wednesday — January 25, 2017**  
**Franciscan Formation House**  
**Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea**

**Hello, Goodbye, Hello . . .**

The past nine days have been filled with approximately *forty hours of flying* which started on January 15<sup>th</sup> and thankfully ending on January 24<sup>th</sup>. My *convoluted itinerary* included *Albuquerque, Dallas, Hong Kong, Singapore, Saigon, DaLat, Brisbane, and finally Port Moresby*. And I am dealing with a *17-hour time zone difference* between Albuquerque and Port Moresby. Truthfully, I'm not sure how I feel. Periods of exhaustion come and go throughout the day.



*Two of my former students, Friar Bong and Friar Lam greeted me at the Saigon airport. They stayed with me during the entire five hour layover for my flight to DaLat.*



*Tan Son Airport in Saigon still has remnants of plane bunkers from the Vietnam War era.*

I arrived in **DaLat** on **Thursday, January 19<sup>th</sup>** and was welcomed by the Novice Director and two of the novices. My heart was once again made whole as I feel as if Vietnam is truly my second home. I received a most kind letter of welcome



*The 5 lb Hershey Bar lasted all of about 15 minutes before it was dispatched, divided, and eaten by the novices.*

from the Vietnamese Provincial, Ignacio Lam. In his note he said: *"It feels as you are a brother, coming home from a mission. It's good to have you back."* Now, how neat is that? It truly was like a homecoming because I taught this current group of nineteen novices two years ago when they were Aspirants. I brought a five-pound bar of solid Hershey chocolate with me as a *"Glad to be Home"* offering. I was amazed at the lightening speed with which the delicacy was quickly dispatched to the kitchen, cut up, and distributed to everyone for their culinary delight. I brought along a few more surprises for them which I will distribute throughout my stay.



*Departing for DaLat*



*Singapore Friar students enjoying a Chinese New Year dish.*

Three days after arriving in Vietnam I was once again boarding a plane. This time I was on my way to **Singapore** where I did have an opportunity to spend the night with the Friars at their formation house. Again, *I was stuck with a profound feeling of welcome and acceptance as a Friar*. Singapore is a densely





*As sophisticated as Singapore is, they do still have a problem or two to deal with.*

populated city/country which reminded me very much of New York City. There were high rise buildings everywhere and not much green space. The Friar community thankfully lives in one of the few green areas of the city. The green spaces are lush with flowers and vegetation and evidently home to some unwelcome creatures such as snakes. I found the sign on the bulletin board to be a bit sobering. I believe that there are

approximately ten student Friars in the Custody. They are mostly from Indonesia. I found their British English to be pleasing to the ear. Singapore is definitely a 21<sup>st</sup> Century city. It is high tech and First World.



*Fr Norbert is the Guardian and Director at the Franciscan Formation in Port Moresby, PNG.*

It was off to **Brisbane** on Monday evening with an 8:00 P.M. departure. The flight was approximately seven hours. We landed at 7:00 A.M. and my three-hour flight to Papua departed



at 8:00 A.M. It was a little bit too close for comfort for my taste but fortunately my luggage and my body got to the gate on time. After about a forty-five minute wait at the airport in **Port Moresby** I was greeted by the Guardian of the



*My room was not exactly Five Star!*

Formation House, Fr. Norbert. He is a jovial fellow who is



filled with enthusiasm and hope. The ride to the Formation House took us through some of the poorer outlying areas of the city where many small groupings of people congregated around some small makeshift huts. My first impression is that this place is similar to Haiti. Papua is still largely unsettled and there are numerous tribes of people living in the jungles. I have been told that there are more than *eight hundred languages* spoken on the island.



*The room with the whirlpool was already being used. Ha Ha!*



To me it explains why *Pidgin English* has been adopted as the *common tongue*. It supposedly originated with the early German missionaries who needed to have a common language from which to use for their evangelization efforts. I'm still trying to attune my ear to the sounds but it is difficult to pick up because the students are very soft spoken. I'm not sure yet whether it is because they are shy or whether it is just their preferred mode. Time will tell.

My room is *adequate but quite simple*. Thankfully, my bed has a real mattress which I am enjoying. On the other hand, *it is a hospital bed and so I am praying that it is not an evil omen of*



*things to come*. Unfortunately, there is **no AC** and so I have to adjust to the *faithful hard-working ceiling fan*. Another plus is that the windows have screens and so most of the flying insects are kept at bay.

The solar heated water showers are also a welcome relief to the

heat and humidity . . . *at least for the first fifteen minutes after the shower.*



Since this is my first day here, I honestly don't know what my schedule will be like. Certainly by the second week I will know better. What I do know for certain is that I feel very much at home with my Papuan Franciscan Brothers. I have been welcomed warmly and with much kindness. The twelve young Friars are most curious to hear about their Franciscan Brothers in other parts of the world. I am struck by their apparent hesitancy to explore other Franciscan missions beyond their island nation. They listen attentively but I can sense some

fear and trepidation. *I suspect that my presence and stories of Franciscans in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines will generate a lot of discussion among them.* We are truly blessed to be members of an international Order.

Peace and All Good!

Bruce