

THIRD REPORT: April 03, 2007 8:02 PM

A third message sent out by Archbishop Adrian Smith sm, Archbishop of Honiara .

Having spent the night (2nd April) under the stars on the hills above Gizo, Bishop Bernard this afternoon (3rd April) came down to his house. He called a few times today. The picture is a little clearer, the waves did not in fact sweep through the bottom floor of the what is Bishop's home and diocesan offices. Most of the damage done was from things crashing to the ground during the very strong earthquakes in the morning of the 2nd. The people of Gizo were blessed with having a beautiful moon lit night, no rain. The details I picked up were that most of the permanently build houses are still in good shape, though some have suffered. It is the locally build village houses which are down. Bishop Bernard was full of praise of the Chinese Community in Gizo, they are freely feeding the people from what they have in their stores. I was burning late night oil in my Second Report. My details about Vanga Point were unfinished, the workshop on the shore was damaged but not destroyed, the wharf was destroyed. Vanga Point for those who don't know is a Rural Training Centre and today 3rd April the student body is moving around nearby villages to see in which way they can help.

Bishop Bernard reported that there were three severe quakes during the night, he hopes to sleep in his own house tonight. As he reported it was very clear that his main concern are the villages which form part of the outskirts of Gizo, one know as the Fishing Village and others I can't recall the names, they have been destroyed. List of the missing persons seem to be growing. Shock was the order of Day One, now the concern is trying to find what there is left to find. The greedy waves took so much with them.

On Loga Island, the home of the Dominican Formation Houses both for the Sisters and the Friars, it seems there is more structural damage than I reported in my earlier reports. They too spent the night (2nd April) under the stars. Around 10 a.m. this morning (3rd) there were more severe quakes in the Maravovo Lagoon area and tidal waves followed. There does not seem to have been further loss of life.

Gizo power supply is intermittent, but it seems that Bishop was able to pump water today. That is good news. The telephone system has independent power and they have been able to keep things going. Maybe Bishop Bernard will be able to get his email up and running again. He was not sure about that.

The response from the International Bodies has been good. Australia is showing a willing hand. Caritas Australia is there wanting to help. The Solomon Islands Police with the help of RAMSI (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands led by Australia) are on the move. Food, shelter, water cans, bottled water are on their way to Gizo. There is even hope the airfield might be open perhaps Easter Monday.

What can people do to help. I am sure that Gizo Diocese is going to need very major assistance. Honiara Archdiocese is happy to assist Gizo in receiving funds on their behalf. Already the

Bishop is being approached for financial assistance. He is trying to sort all that out. Getting funds to Gizo directly just now will be difficult. We are happy to offer 'parking space'.

There are many very small islands, atolls, in the Gizo vicinity, Bishop Bernard is very concerned about the people from those small communities. There is still a lack of a good assessment of those places. The swaying quakes are not over yet, as Bishop Bernard was talking to me in the afternoon he interrupted the conversation with "Uppsss.....there she goes again!"

Here in Honiara some who live at the mouth of the river which is beside Holy Cross, Mataniko, spend the night (2nd April) in the Cathedral. Francis, a wheel-chair person, felt much safer there than on sea front with the waves lapping the posts of his house.

One part of the storm seems to be subsiding, though I must say there were a lot of edgy people at the 6.15 a.m. Mass this morning. I could not help noticing they were with one eye watching the sea from Holy Cross. The second part of the storm, that of rebuilding is now in front of Gizo. It is not sure if it would be safe to use the Gizo Cathedral for the Easter Liturgies. It is going to be very much a day by day situation. Gizo is in for the long haul.

As an Irish Parish Priest after having finished his Morning Mass, had his breakfast and read the newspaper, he would then slacken off for the rest of the day. Perhaps it has come to the time for me to slacken off with these reports. We'll keep in touch, but only if there is something substantial to report.

Please pray for Bishop Bernard, his priests and all this people in Gizo, they need to know we care.

In Christ,

+Adrian Smith sm

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