

SPEECH BY JOHN MOMIS at General Assembly of the Catholic Church (Vunapope, Rabaul, 2004)

Thank you chairpersons, Archbishop Karl Hesse, bishops, fathers, sisters, brothers and the rest of the federal delegates. It gives me great pleasure of course to speak to you and share with you some of my own thoughts about vision, mission and the strategy that we need to adopt to achieve our vision and have an effective mission to transform the world. From the outset I must say that in my view the vision that we have been working at in the last couple of days or few days the elements of which were enshrined in the national goals and directed principles of the Papua New Guinean Constitution. If you read the national goals and directive principles you would have no difficulty in knowing the source of it. It was very much inspired by the Papal and encyclicals and the statements the popes as Bernard mention we were somehow lucky to slip in the church's social teaching. Unfortunately as it's been said so often, the Catholic Church's social teaching is one of the best kept secrets of the church. It's very rarely mentioned in sermons, it's very rarely expounded on in classrooms and in other educational institutions. This to me is a great pity. A lot of work was put into formulating the Papua New Guinea Constitution. It is probably one of the very few constitutions on the face of this earth which was drafted after a very, very long effective and meaningful consultation to the people. We want a lot of pressure from Somare and Whitlam to come up with a legal document to enable Papua New Guinea to be independent. Narokobi and I said, "no, we are not interested only in quantitative change which is necessary to effect independence. We are also interested in qualitative change. We are interested to see what kind of leadership Papua New Guinea would need, what kind of system of government Papua New Guinea would need." Of course Papua New Guinea is a very highly diversified, cultural and geographical and even religious situation. And consequently, a system of government that is highly bureaucratized and centralised would be totally unfit. So unfortunately we were at logger-heads with the Prime minister. He appointed me as deputy chairman but in fact the defector chairman, because I suspect he thought I would be a very obedient priest and I would merely rubber stamp what the government wanted. And I believe the Papua New Guinean Constitutional planning committee, comprising of many, many newly elected representatives for the people of Papua New Guinea have to have some autonomy to really present what the people thought and that is exactly what we did, resulting and the National Government rejecting our proposal and working out in so-called white paper comprising of one and a half sheets of paper. Fortunately, parliament and its wisdom rejected that or at least took some of it and in a logistical way out together with ours what later became the report that out of which the Papua New Guinea Constitution was made. What I am saying is that a lot of work was done unfortunately it went to the shelves. National ministers and departments, only quote sections of it in a very selfish manner in order to advance what they want. They are not prepared to accept

the underlined principles to actually guide developmental plans and strategies of Papua New Guinea. So it was to me and I might as well say that I am very grateful that bishops invited me to become one of the special delegates to speak at this assembly because I am great believer that the church has a very, very, special mission and its mission is universal. It must not be restrained or constrained by parameters set up by the government or anybody else. The church's mission is no other than the mission of Christ which is universal and which has an eschatological dimension to it. It starts here and now in this world in our midst but it is driven by our belief and our commitment to the last things when Christ will come as King to pass judgment on this world. And in fact my virtue of our baptismal right we actually share in the pastoral mystery of Christ. Christ died and rose from the dead and consequently post Easter we should be like St Paul. There is nothing impossible in Papua New Guinea especially in a situation which is fluid and tractable, we must impact changes in Papua New Guinea, we must exert influence in Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea church is part of the universal church which to me enjoys an indepth reservoir of knowledge, experience and information in the social teachings of the church. No other church has this experience, no other church enjoys this ownership of so much experience, knowledge and information culled from the churches, institutions over the centuries. And yet in Papua New Guinea it is a great pity that the social teaching of the church is truly a hidden secret. What is the use of having something if we are not going to make a full use of it? And consequently we have Catholics in parliament who are midgets when it comes to knowledge and information and experience of the social teachings. We are professional people, who are professionally qualified, lawyers and economists and whatever, teachers. This parliament comprises of very, very highly educated people but if you test them for the knowledge of the church's social teachings, I suspect all of them would fail. And this is a great pity, these people have proven that they are highly educated. Why haven't they learnt these things? The question must be answered by the church, by the leadership of the church, by those of us who are allowed to play some influential roles in the church. Of course from scriptures it is clear that God has a dream for our world. A beautiful vision and hope for new things of how things should be. He lives us in no doubt as to what His dream is. In the Old Testament His dream was expressed in the covenant, God made with His people. In the New Testament it was expressed in Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom of God. The driving enthusiasm of Jesus' life was to bring about the Kingdom of His Father. He called for repentance and for love expressed in caring, sharing, and service within the family of God. For Christians today the symbol of the Kingdom sums up the dream of God for the world. This dream of God has been expressed in other words, such as integral human development, and Papua New Guinea constitution has its first goal. Integral human development, development is about all the aspects of humanity not just about economic development, not just about human development and psychological development, it is also about cultural development, physical development

liberating people from attitudinal impediments and structural impediments that are oppressing our people that they become so dependent therefore, subject to manipulation and exploitation. The church must not fall under this treat by some politicians who say, "Stick to the sacristy, stick to the spiritual. Don't meddle in politics." This is not true. The mission of Christ, the mission of the universal priest of the world encompasses the totality or humanity of the universe. Let us not fall for this nonsense that they will only praise us when we talk about the principles but when you actually talk about the practicalities they will say, "noken involve long politics. Pater yu gutpela Catholic. Brother Narokobi o husat yu go na toktok long samting bilong lotu tasol." Dispela em i no tru. I am not saying that all priest or all of us should be actively participating in an active political life. Nogat! But what I am saying is that we must take an active interest in politics. Because politics affects the structural strata of human development. Dom Kamara said, when I give food to the poor the government praises me and wants to honour me with all kinds of...

The middle of the process of development must be the yeast when Jesus the man was a bout to announce His mission to the world. He was baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan and then his way He was commissioned. "This is my son," said the Father. "Listen to Him." Christ, Jesus, human being He was commissioned, He was anointed and baptized. From then on He had no fear, He had no doubts about His mission. But before he started His mission He went back to His 'asples'. Em i go bek long Nazareth na i sanap long pablik ples insait long tempol na em i tok, "the spirit of the Lord is upon me." He has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor, to bring liberty to the captives, to give sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. And He announced the year of the Lord's favour, He announced the new times, the new paradigm shift that we must now accept. I no moa aninit long dispela taim bilong lo bilong Ol Testamen no ol profets, nogat, nupela taim. Em i tok, "mi kam nau, long wanem samting mi toktok long en yupela harim." Jesus' mission was about preaching the Good News and transforming the World. Transforming the political, social, economic structure of the world. Em i isi long go na toktok tasol long samting bilong lotu, spiritual, because you are not attacking anybody, you are not confronting anybody and it's much harder for us to talk about what the Catholic social teaching demands of us, because then we are challenging the established institutions and attitudes. Na pe bilong dispela kain em i no isi. Rejection, condemnation and even death. But that is the mission of Christ and that is our mission. The synod of bishops in 1971, meeting in Rome Billy.....said, "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Good News." Preaching of the Good News means action, confronting unjust structures, confronting corruption, confronting those who try to come up with policies and laws to make people mere recipients of goods and services. We are made in the image and likeness of God and especially after Easter by virtue of the pastoral mystery, thanks to the

pastoral mystery, we are sacramentally, also co-creators, and redeemers. Our redeemer was not God, our redeemer was a man. He had to become one of us in order to save this world and in this mission we share, we are by virtue of the pastoral mystery and our baptismal right, we are our own redeemers, we are our own saviours. God the all-knowing in His wisdom shows that the redemption of the world must be by people of this world, working from the cultural milieu situation, working from the socio-economic environments and so on. So Papua New Guineans today and I suspect a lot of us in the church as well are dead scared. We want to run away, don't get involve because this prone, is a trouble prone country, prone to rascalism, prone to instability, truly the country of the unexpected, the unpredictable. But that us precisely where evangelism should work. Evangelism is the correct prescription for this trouble prone country because evangelization is about Jesus, Christ who has risen from the dead and it is about the power of the resurrected Christ. We have been empowered, we are no longer, we are recipients of goods and services, we are active agents of change and development. We are both subjects and objects of development. If somebody asks me to define developments I wouldn't know the scientific definition but my political definition would be, development equals enjoying the end result plus human participation. There is no development when there is only enjoying the end result. If you deprive people of the right to participate then you are making them dependent and therefore vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation. Papua New Guineans need to be enabled and empowered to be independent, to be autonomous. Autonomous em i no deti word. Autonomous us a right by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, people should be autonomous. Bigger bodies, national governments have no right to usurp the role of smaller bodies. Yumi noken urita long olgeta samting. National government noken urita long olgeta samting. National government i mas redi long tim wok, church i mas redi long tim wok, it is the team that wins in the end, not the captain, not the striker, the best player, nogat. The team wins and that is all of us. Principle of subsidiarity by which we mean the national government or bigger body have no right to use usurp the role of smaller bodies and smaller governments. This paradigm shift that we must have now is so important in this country. First world ol i bin gat, taim bilong ol pinis, vocation i sot na nau yumi wok long lukluk yet long first world. And we are not looking, we don't have the courage to look at the potentiality that is available in Papua New Guinea today but it won't happen unless people take creative plans, determined steps to bring this about. Pastoral mystery, yumi long church, yumi laki tru. Evri yia taim spirit bilong yumi low, taim bilong Ista, church i tokim yumi. Thanks to the pastoral mystery. You are now liberated, totally liberated from sin and its symptoms in the world. Symptoms of sin em lawlessness, rape, ol kain sik nogut, ol kain bad attitudes. We are being liberated from those things. It is now time to appropriate those properties, those things which have been made available to us by the death and resurrection of Jesus the Man. It is man who has been created in the image and likeness of God and who has been changed by the pastoral mystery, who must

now take charge of his own destiny. Thomas Aquinas, I remember reading something about him many, many years ago said, "politics is the noblest of sciences in the natural order. Because it is through politics one can do the greatest amount of good and the vice-versa one can do the greatest amount of evil." Engineer, scientist, doctor, lawyer, sapos em wokim wanpela gutpela samting, em wokim long limited population. Dokta, sapos em i bagarapim wanpela patient em i bagarapim wanpela patient tasol. Politician em i wokim wanpela lo nogut em i bagarapim whole nation. So church, what are doing about educating, forming and instructing Catholic politicians in accordance with the social teachings of the church? Teachers, you can't just pick up somebody from the road to go and teach. Dokta yu nonap kisim wanpela man nating na tok, "Cut the man." Mipela ol bus lawyers yes mipela i laik mekim ol kot tasol lo turu bai nonap recognaisim yu. So politician, yumi elektim nating ol man, nogat redi, nogat skul. And yet these people are put in a very, very powerful position to make decisions which affect the destiny of this country. Wanem kain skul yumi givim ol? Wanem kain encouragement yumi givim ol? Yumi strong tasol long rabisim ol. We become a bunch of cynics, rabisim ol politician, rabisim ol tasol. If we fail to play our part, we could be charged or we could be accused of sinning by our omission. Presidents Joma Kenyatta of Kenya told the Catholic Bishops of Kenya that the church is the conscience of society. And if you don't speak up against the misuse of power by the politicians you might one day be called upon to answer for it. Man yia askim, "em man yia Katolik man yia, em man yia Kristien man yia." "Em i bin skul long wanem lotu bilong em?" As I said many of our highly educated members of parliament are midgets when it comes to appreciation of the church's social teachings, na em rong bilong husat? St Augustine i bin tok, "those of you who are teachers, engineers, priests, sisters, highly qualified professionals, yu tok olsem, "politics em bilong ol kainkain man, ol giaman man. Mipela ol klinpela man noken involve long politics. And you know what St Augustine said? "Then you must be prepared to live under the laws and policies of lesser men." Sapos yu no laik involve long traim moldim kain society we i gat standards, i gat ideals then don't complain when these man nogut o korapt man i wokim ol policy na karamapim yu. We stand at the threshold of the new millennium, we stand at the threshold of the third church. Who is going to bring about this third church? Em yumi nau, yumi church na church em no long ol bishops tasol, ol pater, ol sister, nogat. Church em yumi olgeta, team. A1 team yumi nidim long Papua New Guinea. A team that is well informed and consequently I would recommend very strongly the leadership of the church might consider setting up a social institute. Many years ago I remember the Jesuits had a social institute and I'm told the bishops didn't like it and they folded up and went home. Caritas i wokim gutpela wok. Em i bilong givim mani na halivim ol man but that is not enough. People must be made agents of change and development and not mere recipients of goods and services. Long dispela evangelization, evangelism needs precisely a troubled, pruned situation for it to bear fruit. What else would you used to convert the people? The proper

prescription and the only right prescription is the message of the resurrected Christ. God loves us, olsem ol trouble maker, ol yangpela, God loves us, God does not discriminate. As a matter of fact God prefers the trouble makers, he prefers the poor people, preferential option for the poor. In fact the Church in Papua New Guinea should really be the church of the poor. It is not enough I think to have a preferential option because there is just one of the options. There should be no options, it should be the church of the poor.

In conclusion, mi laik tok olsem mission bilong Christ em i universal mission. Priesthood of Christ is universal priesthood in which all of us share. And He encompasses the totality of humanity and His universe. Na yumi noken restrictim wok bilong mission i go long wanpela sait tasol. Mi save sori tru long Papua New Guinea parliament. Mipela i wok long raun, raun, raun nabaut, well intentioned some people, are but totally not qualified to deal with the complex issues. And on our own we are not capable of resorting to the kind of information and experience if the church prefers to hide away its best kept secret, and that is the Catholic social teaching.

Thank you very much