

Vox Populi (The Voice of the People)

05 September 2024

Pope Francis has begun his tour of Oceania and South East Asia, landing in Jakarta earlier this week on the first stop of his four-nation 12-day trip.

He has already met with Indonesia's leaders as well as various Catholic groups working with the marginalised, the poor and refugees.

Over the weekend, the Pope will travel to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, where he will be joined by Bishop Anthony Randazzo, who is attending in his capacity as President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania.

Oceania is a vast area which includes Australia and New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia ,and Polynesia. It covers about 50 million square kilometres, or roughly one third of the enormous Pacific Ocean, and is home to nearly 43 million people, around 29 percent of whom are Catholics.

Bishop Anthony will be present as Pope Francis meets the Bishops of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, as well as the priests, deacon, seminarians and catechists of the area, at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Port Moresby on Saturday, 7 September.

He will then participate in the Holy Mass in the Sir John Guise Stadium on Sunday, 8 September.

Papua New Guinea is a majority Christian country, with 95.6 per cent of the population identifying themselves as Christian. More than a quarter of the country's population identify as Catholic.

Pope Francis has made a point wanting to reach out to those on the margins during this trip. In Papua New Guinea, he will visit the remote town of Vanimo in the country's far northwest, where many Argentinian missionary priests and religious sisters are working in trying conditions, with poverty and hostility towards Catholics being pressing issues for the local Diocese.

This trip will be the longest trip the Holy Father has taken during his pontificate.