

Catholic Teachers gather at St. Joseph's, Tenaru

- Dr Caroline Smith

Nearly one hundred Catholic teachers from the Archdiocese of Honiara gathered from 22nd to 25th September, 2009, at St Joseph's School, Tenaru, for the annual Catholic Teachers' Sodality conference. These included primary and secondary teachers from Catholic and Government schools. Some came from as far afield as Makira and also the weather coast.



The Conference has been sponsored for the last three years by the Catholic Diocese of Sale in Victoria, Australia. This year, Caritas Australia joined in the sponsorship.

The conference was opened by Mr. Esibaea, Director of Primary Education and Mr. Aceri, Director of Secondary Education within the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD). His Grace, Archbishop Adrian Smith closed the conference by celebrating Mass with all the participants.

Experienced teachers from schools in the Diocese of Sale were joined as presenters by two staff from the Australian Catholic University to present a series of workshops to the teachers. The workshops covered a wide range of topics including primary curriculum, understanding how children learn, using Microscience kits, leadership, gender equity and wellbeing and restorative practice. Each of the workshops was presented by an Australian visitor along with one or more teachers from Solomon Islands, or by Solomon Island teachers themselves.

Mr. Jackson Meke, President of the Catholic Teachers' Sodality, referred to the Solomon Island co-presenters saying that "not only does this provide a real local flavor to the workshops, making them even more relevant, but it provides a great professional development opportunity for our teachers and shows that our people certainly have the ability."

In addition to the workshops, Mr. Cypriano Nuake, Secretary for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Honiara, presented an outline of Solomon Islands' new National Education Action Plan (NEAP).

One teacher commented after the conference that she had been introduced to many new ideas over the three days. "I will be able to use these to improve what I do for children in my classroom," she said. She added, "This has been a wonderful experience and I am really looking forward to trying these things – and to learning even more in next year's conference."

At the close of the conference, one of the Australian presenters, Mr. Peter Ryan, Director of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Sale, told the teachers, "We have all really enjoyed the privilege of being here with you. We have been warmly welcomed by the Sodality and have been impressed by the quality of the people we have met. We have learned much about you, about your country and about ourselves. We have learnt that, though we are different in many ways, we share a common humanity – so we are the same in far more ways."

Caption for photo: *Mr Jackson Meke, (left) Principal of Bishop Epalle Catholic Community School and Mr Cypriano Nuake, Secretary for Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Honiara address the Catholic Teachers' Sodality Conference at St Joseph's, Tenaru.*