

Opening of Mamma Margherita

- Sr Anna Maria Gervasoni fma

On Wednesday, May 28th, 2008 the ceremony for the opening and blessing of the Salesian Sisters' house of *Mamma Margherita* took place in the presence of Sr. Ciri Hernández, General Councilor for the Missions *ad gentes*. A year



and a half after their arrival on the Solomon Islands, the desire that they should remain permanently in this Country, for the good of the girls of the capital and surrounding areas has been confirmed.

The 28th was the culmination of days of enthusiastic preparation on the part of Sisters and young people of the *Don Bosco* Technical Institute, where the Sisters are involved in teaching and spiritual animation. The students spontaneously organized themselves in ethnic groups (in this country, each island has a different language, traditions and culture) and prepared dances and songs to entertain the guests. In the days before the blessing, the house (into which the Sisters had moved shortly before) was always full of music and students busy rehearsing, tidying the garden, and preparing decorations typical of this people: woven palm leaves decorated with *hibiscus* and colored bunting. One of the students prepared a banner with the motto of the house: "This is the house of the love of God" and there was no shortage of green and blue national flags, which symbolize nature on these islands, so rich in evergreens and deep seas. The celebrations began on the previous Sunday, attended by all the religious men and women working in Honiara. Gathered together in *Mamma Margherita* House, in a family-like and fraternal atmosphere, they were the first to bless the community, wishing that this house may be open to young people and always full of joy, peace and prayer.

The day of the inauguration took place in typical style: a celebration of young people for young people. Wednesday was a school and working day, so there were many young people and few guests! The celebration began with Mass in honor of Mary Help of Christians, celebrated by the Archbishop of Honiara, Monsignor Adrian Smith, who encouraged the students not to be simply spectators in their lives, but like Mary, to go out to others and to be active protagonists in their own lives and in that of their country. After Mass the assembly set out in procession, preceded by a group of panpaipers (a typical instrument in some of these islands), for the house of the Sisters, where some of the students were already in position for



the Welcome Song. The young people were the protagonists at the celebrations, with their dances, but above all with their joyful and friendly presence: they were at home. Sr. Ciri cut the ribbon and, in the name of Mother General, received the

keys of the house from Mr. Neil Buendia, the contractor who had followed the building work.

The local FMA tell us: «It is impossible to sum up the atmosphere of the day in a few lines. Those who live in our Salesian houses can imagine the simplicity and joy, the family spirit and the laughter that fill such moments of celebration. The Salesian spirit is to be found in the Solomon Islands too. *Mamma Margherita* is ready to welcome the sons of Don Bosco, to be a strong and kind mother by their side in the journey towards holiness».