Thank you for inviting me to come and celebrate the Eucharist with you on Foundation Day, which commemorates the establishment of this greatly respected Catholic institution. My intention this morning is to pray for all the staff and Students of Divine Word University, and for the University’s continued success. May the University’s mission of seeking truth and sharing it with others, imparting knowledge, promoting justice and peace while advancing Christian virtue and values be blessed abundantly.

I want to recall another **foundation day**, the most important one the world has every known. It took place on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down on all the believers, about 120 in altogether, gathered in Jerusalem after the Ascension of the Lord Jesus to the Father. This event is recorded in chapter two in the Acts of the Apostles. On that day the Church was established, a New Covenant between God and humanity was made public and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people, in all the world and for all time, began. At that time the Holy Spirit rained gifts down on the believers, the first being the gift of Wisdom, which, as we heard in the first reading, King Solomon of the Old Covenant sought above all else.

“O Lord, my God”, he said, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed my father David; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act....Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.”

So God, who was very pleased, said to Solomon,

“Because you have asked for this-

not for a long life for yourself,

nor for riches,

nor for the life of your enemies,

but for understanding so that you may know what is right-

I do as you requested.

I give you a heart so wise and understanding

that there has never been anyone like you up to now,

and after you there will come no one to equal you.”

What a wonderful world it would be if all of us who seek knowledge as a way to achieve success and happiness in our lives, would also hunger for and receive the gift of wisdom, which is the ability to discern what is right and good and act courageously to do only what is good. Let us always pray for the gift of wisdom.

Now I will take you on a little tour.

During the past year I’ve travelled by plane from Madang to Wewak and back many times. It is an enjoyable trip. What a beautiful country we live in.

Following the coastline one sees the high mountains inland, the vast forests, the rivers and the small villages here and there in the bush.

Then suddenly the mighty Sepik River appears, confidently strolling out of the hills onto the plain, meandering toward the sea. But just before it accomplishes its mission of depositing its contents into the ocean, it turns back on itself, as if it has lost courage at the last minute. It twists and turns in indecision before finally making its way through the sandy beach to the sea. And I said to myself, I’m like that sometimes. Many of us are like that sometimes and often our fear and indecision is a cause for doing wrong and hurting others.

Ramu River – It is bold, dirty and undisciplined. It is selfish and greedy. It eats away at the banks and the foundations of the village houses. It builds up sand and silt like so many excuses until its only escape is to slink off in another unplanned direction. We all know people like that. But sometimes we also see him or her when we look in the mirror. How many of us fail to meet the challenges of life with honesty? It’s easier to run away from responsibility and accountability. We need wisdom and strength.

Manam Volcano – white smoke and black smoke – arrogant, moody, sometimes angry and dangerous. It is not reliable.

Karkar Island – Elderly, quiet, stable, settled and generous. It’s like everyone’s grandmother.

And then comes the broken coastline of Madang – the little islands and lagoons, the coral reefs – inviting, peaceful and compassionate.

We humans are created in the image and likeness of God, but sin makes us less beautiful than we are meant to be. But there is hope for us. Wisdom that comes from ***loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,*** will restore God beauty in us. And ***loving our neighbour as ourselves no matter what, strengthens*** the gift of ***wisdom*** within us.

As you circle to land on the sea side of the airport you might catch a glimpse of Long Island in the distance to the Southeast – across an angry sea to this volcanic island which erupted 300 years ago and made its mark on the world, causing a ***time of darkness***. It is too far away to see it in detail. But with the help of modern technology, Google Earth, one can see the great beauty of this volcanic island.

Long Island features a beautiful blue lake in its spent crater - and as you scroll closer and closer to it, the name of the lake pops up on your computer - Lake Wisdom. Wouldn’t it be great if we could drink the water of that lake and gain wisdom? But the path through the jungle, up the crater wall and down the cliffs to the water’s edge would be very difficult. It would takes much courage.

Just a few more words.

I have been to many places in the Madang Province to give the Sacrament of Confirmation to young people. During the rite, the Bishop extends his arms over the people and prays to the Holy Spirit to send seven gifts on those about to be confirmed, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit - Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Reverence, Fortitude and Fear of the Lord. The first is Wisdom.

The first is Wisdom, to know right from wrong, good from evil, truth from falsehood. Let us seek the gift of Wisdom, hunger for it, pray for it and live by it.

When I look at the young people to be confirmed I wonder what life has in store for each one of them. And I pray that they will gain wisdom. I pray that all here today will grow in wisdom too.