

## Prayer of the Month • June 2015

### Ini Kopuria

God, we ask you to give your love and power to all catechists and readers. Protect them in times of loneliness or temptation. Help them to have true fellowship with the people whom they serve, that they may pray, live and work together in peace and happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*A Melanesian English Prayer Book (1985)*

This prayer from a Melanesian Prayer book in English captures something of the spirit of Ini Kopuria, founder of the Melanesian Brotherhood, one of the largest religious orders in the Anglican Communion. There is a sense of the need for the empowerment of God, for the work of teaching and catechising. Then a sentence about protection from temptation. In a new religious order, with a rapidly expanding mission, there are bound to be stresses and strains. Ini Kopuria sorted out the problems and made decisions for the brotherhood by the force of his personality, being at once most reverend and also joyous and full of fun. The brothers live amongst the people they are evangelising, but have to move on every three months to a new village. The prayer also includes a sense of the intensity of their fellowship in work and prayer.

Ini Kopuria was born in the early years of the twentieth century at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. He initially became a policeman. He had a vision of Jesus calling him to do a different work for his people, and this led him to a life of evangelism, taking the gospel to the remotest parts of Melanesia. He founded the Ira Retasasiu (meaning 'company of brothers'), commonly called the Melanesian Brotherhood, in 1925, a monastic style community committed to prayer and evangelism. They took a rule together, dedicating their life and the land they lived in to God. Initially they made annual vows, but this was changed later to three-yearly vows. Ini remained as leader (Head Brother) until 1940, when he left, absolved from his lifelong vow, and married. He spent the rest of his days as a village deacon in Guadalcanal, until he died in 1945.

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