

January 14, 2025.

Dear friends,

Greetings from Boa Vista, state capital (pop. 460,000) of Roraima State (pop. 637,000), the most northern state in Brazil, bordering Guyana and Venezuela.

I arrived from Manaus (pop. 2 million) on the brief flight leaving at 02:15 am arriving at 03:30 am (!!). Bishop Evaristo Spengler met me at the airport.

This is a lunch photo: Bishop Spengler is the bearded man second on the right. He is Franciscan OFM, of German descent from Santa Catarina State south of São Paulo. He served ten years as a missionary in Angola (a former colony of Portugal) and had malaria 27 times!!! What a hero!!! He is very “Franciscan” in his humility and solidarity with the poor and in his leadership along the lines of liberation theology.



Administrator Vivaldo is on the right in the green shirt and his wife, Dora, also in administration, faces him. On my left is Italian priest, Jorge Dal Den, formerly a Consolata Missionary, now a diocesan priest. Padre Jorge arrived in 1969 and became the driving force behind the foundation of the *Roraima Indigenous Council* and the 40+ year (often violent) struggle for the creation of the *Raposa/Serra do Sol* (“Fox/Sun Mountain”) *Indigenous Reserve* legalized in 2005. Over 25,000 Makushi, Yanomami and other Indigenous live there. I served in the region 1995-97 and 2003-2006. It’s a huge reserve, comprising 1,747,464 hectares. Read more at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raposa\\_Serra\\_do\\_Sol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raposa_Serra_do_Sol)

Facing Padre Jorge is Makushi seminarian Djavan. He will be ordained deacon on April 26, 2025, at Surumu, a community inside the reserve. It is a commemorative date: on April 26, 1977, the Makushi Chiefs, in a meeting with Padre Jorge, made a decision: “*No to alcohol, yes to community.*” That was the beginning of the struggle

for the Raposa/Serra do Sol Reserve. Djavan is from the main community way up in the mountains. He will be the second Indigenous priest ordained for the Diocese.

Beside Djavan and hidden but for the blue trim of her veil is Sister Luzmariana, Guatemalan Missionary of Charity (Mother Teresa's congregation) who works with Venezuelan refugees on the border. In the red blouse beside her is Sister Margarete (Daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary), then visitor Nico from Italy, diocesan priest Padre Luis, Sister Cleiane (also Daughter of IHM), and the most important person (!), our cook Mrs. Raimunda. The (invisible) photographer is Caio who works in administration.

I am very blessed to be part of this joyful family here in Roraima Diocese. I'll be here a month. On my agenda: a week-long visit with Makushi friends in the communities I have visited since 1993, about three hours away on mostly dirt road on the savannah plains. My other task is to digitalize notes and material from the language workshops carried out since 2003 with eight language groups in Roraima and Amazonas States. I hope to compile a brief history of the Indigenous Language Revitalization movement which I have been privileged to be part of, so that it is not lost in time. Well, we'll see how much can be done!

It's the dry season here, partly cloudy today at 33 C. I enjoy the heat and, especially, renewing many friendships.

Grandes abraços,  
Ron

