

# CBCP Monitor

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PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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## CBCP head calls drug dealers 'Satan's'

By Roy Lagarde

**The head of the Catholic hierarchy uttered harsh words against the continuing drugs trade in the country, labelling them as dealers of "death and darkness".**

Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, who heads the bishops' conference, urged people not to be lured by the drug trade and never negotiate with "evil".

"In the news we see not just thousands but billions worth of drugs. They are satans!" Archbishop Valles exclaimed.

He lamented that this could mean more young people and even families "destroyed".

"We know very well that it destroys you physically, your future, you may become a murderer, all the darkness of drugs, we know the ending," he said.

The archbishop was speaking during Mass to launch the archdiocese's drug rehabilitation program at the St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Davao City on Sunday, March 24.

On the same day, President Rodrigo Duterte in a speech in Cagayan de Oro City admitted the country's drug situation has "worsened".

"My policemen are on the brink  
Dealers / A6



Officials of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines led by its president, Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao (center), hold a press conference after the CBCP's plenary assembly in Manila, Jan. 28, 2019. ROY LAGARDE

### Archbishop urges graduates to bring change as poll nears



Archbishop Antonio Ledesma speaks during the Baccalaureate Mass for this year's graduates of the Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro City, March 28, 2019. SCREENSHOT/XU YOUTUBE ACCOUNT

A CATHOLIC archbishop stood on the stage of Xavier University on Thursday and urged the graduates to raise their voices for positive change at the ballot box.

Jesuit Archbishop Antonio Ledesma of Cagayan de Oro said that their future are in the hands of the people that they elect.

He stressed that Mindanao and entire country cannot have peace and development without good governance.

"And election is the time to make sure that we have good governance from our leaders and from ourselves," Ledesma said.

The archbishop was  
Poll / A3

### Church official lauds PH-Japan labor pact



Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga. FILE PHOTO

A CATHOLIC official has lauded a Philippine agreement with Japan to pave the way for Filipino workers to travel to the world's third largest economy

for employment.

Bishop Ruperto Santos, who heads the Church's migrants ministry, said the deal is "very valuable" and

Labor / A7

### Bishop Alminaza demands probe into killing of 14 Negros farmers

A CATHOLIC bishop wants full investigation into the weekend slaying of 14 persons, including a church lay minister, in Negros Oriental province.

Authorities said the 14 were killed while allegedly resisting to be searched for illegal firearms in separate operations in Canlaon City and in the towns of Manjuyod and Sta. Catalina.

The joint army and police operations, they said, were part of the government's campaign against loose firearms held by suspected members of the New People's Army.

Human rights groups, however, deplored the killings saying that the fatalities were farmers and

Farmers / A6



Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos. PHOTO FROM BP. ALMINAZA'S FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

### Pope Francis asks youth for help in 'preventing atrocities' of abuse

VATICAN CITY— Pope Francis has called upon young people to be vigilant in the face of "horrible crimes" of clerical sexual abuse, and to confront priests "at risk" of betraying the trust of their office. The pope issued the plea in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on youth, *Christus vivit*, published April 2.

"If you see a priest at risk, because he has lost the joy of his ministry, or seeks affective compensation, or is taking the wrong path, remind him of his commitment to God and his people, remind him of the Gospel and urge him to hold to his course. In this way, you will contribute greatly to something

Atrocities / A6



Pope Francis greets young people in Panama at World Youth Day 2019. VATICAN MEDIA

# March for Life rallies draw more than 2 million in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina— March for Life gatherings throughout Argentina on March 23 drew more than 2 million participants advocating legal protections for both women and their unborn children.

“We say ‘No to Abortion!’” said organizer Alejandro Geyer at a rally in the capital city of Buenos Aires.

According to the organizing committee, more than 300,000 people turned out in Buenos Aires, with more than 2 million total participating in 210 cities across the nation. Between 70 and 90 percent of Argentinians are estimated to be Catholic.

2018 was a significant year for the pro-life movement in the Latin American country. Last August, the Argentinian Senate rejected a bill to legalize first-trimester abortion. The 38-31 vote followed 16 hours of legislative debate.

The legislation, which had narrowly passed the House of Representatives earlier in the summer, sought to allow abortion on-demand up to 14 weeks

gestation, and through the ninth month of pregnancy on the grounds of rape, if doctors deem the mother’s life or health to be endangered, or if the baby receives a diagnosis of non-viability.

It would have allowed minors under 16 to get an abortion without having to inform their parents, and would have prohibited conscientious objection by healthcare institutions.

The current law in Argentina prohibits abortion, except when the mother’s life or health is determined to be in danger, or in cases of rape.

Speakers at this year’s event expressed a desire to build on last year’s legislative victory, particularly by supporting pregnant women in difficult situations.

Geyer outlined the three main goals of the movement: “The right of everyone to be born; the right of families to educate their children without gender ideology; and the need to be aware that in our country, especially this election year, we determine the future of the homeland,

of the family and of millions of unborn children.”

A group of veterans also spoke, stressing that the lives of both a woman and her child must be valued.

“Today we are here as soldiers to implore everyone to defend both lives, which is to save the homeland,” they said.

Prior to the march, the Pro-Life Unity organization said that the entire pro-life movement is demanding “the development of comprehensive public policies to assist women in vulnerable situations and the advancement and development of children at risk, without losing sight that this year half of the House of Representatives and a third of the Senate is up for election.”

Speakers also denounced reports of three premature C-section deliveries being performed in the country without a valid medical reason, as a means of ending the pregnancies and skirting the law prohibiting abortion. The three babies died soon after, according to media reports. **(CNA)**

## Franciscan friar from Kenya wins \$1m Global Teacher Prize

NAIROBI, Kenya— What happens when you give a Franciscan \$1 million?

He gives it away.

At least that’s what Brother Peter Tabichi, OFM, plans to do with the \$1 million prize he won March 23, which came alongside the 2019 Global Teacher Prize, which he received at a conference Saturday in Dubai.

“This prize does not recognize me but recognizes this great continent’s young people. I am only here because of what my students have achieved. This prize gives them a chance. It tells the world that they can do anything,” Tabichi said.

The brother is a science teacher at a school in rural Kenya.

Chosen from among 10,000 nominees, Tabichi will also become global ambassador for the Varkey Foundation, which established the award. The international organization,

founded in 2010 by Indian businessman Sunny Varkey, looks to raise the standards of education for students across the developing world.

In Kenya’s Rift Valley, afflicted by drought, violence, and drug abuse, many students have either been orphaned or are being raised by only one parent.

Tabichi teaches science and math at Keriko Mixed Day Secondary School in Pwani Village, Kenya. The school is in need of resources and equipment, and has a student-teacher ratio of 58:1.

Tabichi often walks four miles to a cyber-cafe, to download educational material for his lessons. He also donates 80 percent of his income to aid poor students, and intends to donate his prize money to support the school.

Under Tabichi’s instruction, the school’s



students have had success at national and international science competitions. More students have also been able to attend college, and girls’ tests scores have particularly seen an increase.

Last year, his students won first place in the public school category at the Kenya Science and Engineering Fair 2018. The students submitted a device allowing blind and deaf people to measure objects. The team is preparing to participate

in the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair 2019 in Arizona.

Over a video conference at the event, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta congratulated the Franciscan brother.

“Peter – your story is the story of Africa, a young continent bursting with talent. Your students have shown that they can compete amongst the best in the world in science, technology and all fields of human endeavor.” **(CNA)**

## Underground bishop, vicar general detained in China’s Hebei province

XUANHUA, China— A bishop of the underground Church in China’s Hebei province and his vicar general were placed in detention this week, and a lay Catholic activist was jailed in Hong Kong.

According to UCA News, Coadjutor Bishop Augustine Cui Tai of Xuanhua and his vicar general, Father Zhang Jianlin, were detained by officials of Hebei province this week.

“The government’s aim is to paralyze the diocese. If the diocese fails to manage the community, then the government will use this as an opportunity to take it over,” an anonymous priest from the underground Church told UCA News.

According to the UCA News, the bishop had been taken in custody the morning of March 29 after he received a text message in regards to his arrest. He had also been detained for indoctrination in April last year and was recently released in January.

UCA News reported that Father Zhang was seized March 28 for violating a traveling restriction. Since his identity papers were confiscated, the priest has not been allowed to travel even to a neighboring city.

In November two of Bishop Cui’s priests, Fr. Su Guipeng and Fr. Zhao He, were abducted to be “indoctrinated on the religious policy of the Chinese government ... because they refuse to enroll in the Patriotic Association.” Two priests of the Diocese of Chongli-Xiwanzi, also in Hebei, were also taken.

Meanwhile in Hong Kong, Yip Po-lam, a member of the Justice Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong, was jailed March 28. A court had refused to hear an appeal regarding a conviction she received five years ago for disturbing the peace during a protest.

The peaceful demonstrations were protesting the controversial Northeast New Territories Development Plan,



which displaced villagers and damaged property. Chairman of the Hong Kong Catholic Institution Staff Association, Alexander Yu, decried the court’s decision, stating Yip had acted justly, according to UCA News.

“We agree with Yip’s action as her motives were genuine when calling on the general public to examine the injustices of the development plan,” he said. “The social teaching of the Catholic Church points out that our love for neighbors urges us to seek social justice.”

The Church in mainland China has been divided for some 60 years between the underground Church, which is persecuted and whose episcopal appointments are frequently not acknowledged by Chinese authorities, and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, a government-sanctioned organization.

In September 2018 the Holy See and Beijing reached an agreement meant to normalize the situation of China’s Catholics and to unify the underground Church and the CPCA.

The agreement has been roundly criticized by human rights groups

and some Church leaders, including Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong.

In December, two bishops of the underground Catholic Church agreed to step aside in favor of bishops of the CPCA, in the wake of the September agreement.

One test of the result of the Holy See-Beijing agreement may be the appointment of a bishop to the Diocese of Jining (Wumeng) in Inner Mongolia.

The South China Morning Post reported March 29 that the diocese is nearing its selection of episcopal candidates, making it the first time that the Vatican and Beijing might agree on a bishop appointment since the September 2018 accord.

Religious freedom is officially guaranteed by the Chinese constitution, but religious groups must register with the government, and are overseen by the Chinese Communist Party. The Sincization of religion has been pushed by President Xi Jinping, who took power in 2013 and who has strengthened government oversight of religious activities. **(CNA)**

## Vatican Briefing

### Autonomous weapons systems threaten peace, says Vatican official

The growing use of autonomous weapons systems poses serious risks to global peace and stability, a Vatican representative told a U.N. meeting in Geneva. “How would autonomous weapons systems be able to respond to the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience?” asked Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic, the Vatican observer to U.N. agencies in Geneva. Speaking March 26 to a group of governmental experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), Archbishop Jurkovic criticized the use of weapons that can shoot and kill without any moral or ethical deliberation. **(Liam McIntyre/CNS)**

### Pope to visit Africa in September, Vatican announces

The Vatican confirmed that Pope Francis will visit the eastern African nation of Mozambique and the island nations of Madagascar and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean Sept. 4-10. Accepting invitations on behalf of the bishops and heads of state in the three countries, the Vatican said March 27, the pope will visit the capital cities: Maputo, Mozambique; Antananarivo, Madagascar; and Port Louis, Mauritius. A detailed program for the visit will be published later. **(Carol Glatz/CNS)**

### Chilean court orders church to pay compensation to abuse survivors

A Chilean appeals court ruled in favor of three survivors of abuse by former priest Fernando Karadima and ordered the Catholic Church to pay damages. In a decision announced March 27, the court ordered the church to pay 100 million pesos (about US\$147,000) for “moral damages” to each of the survivors: Juan Carlos Cruz, Jose Andres Murillo and James Hamilton. According to the ruling, the appeals court said that “the omissions and the errors of the leadership of the Catholic Church” in Chile proved the church had been “negligent in its conduct in terms that can be qualified as a cover-up that gave way to the configuration of a civil offense.” **(Junno Arocho Esteves/CNS)**

### Founder, editorial staff of Vatican women’s magazine resign

Claiming a lack of support for open dialogue and for an editorial line run by women, the director and editorial staff of a Vatican women’s magazine have resigned. But the editor of L’Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, which publishes the magazine, countered that he has given the staff “the same total autonomy and freedom” that have marked its work since it began. “There is a return to the clerical self-referentiality and an abandonment of that ‘parrhesia’ (courage) so often asked for by Pope Francis,” said Lucetta Scaraffia, founder and director of “Women-Church-World,” a monthly supplement to L’Osservatore Romano. In December, Pope Francis appointed Andrea Monda, an Italian journalist and religion teacher, to be editor of L’Osservatore Romano. **(Carol Glatz/CNS)**

### Pope accepts resignation of embattled Chilean cardinal

Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of a Chilean cardinal who has faced widespread criticism for his handling of cases of clerical sexual abuse in the country. The pope accepted the resignation of Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati of Santiago, the Vatican announced March 23; the Vatican did not give a reason for the cardinal stepping down. All bishops are required to offer their resignations when they turn 75; Cardinal Ezzati is 77. The cardinal’s is the eighth resignation Pope Francis accepted after almost every bishop in Chile offered to step down in May 2018 after a three-day meeting at the Vatican to discuss the clerical sexual abuse scandal. Chile has 27 dioceses and other church jurisdictions led by a bishop. **(Junno Arocho Esteves/CNS)**

### Pope sends aid to southeast Africa after cyclone

As an immediate sign of his concern and an encouragement to other donors, Pope Francis has sent \$50,000 each to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi to assist with initial emergency relief efforts after a cyclone hit the region and caused massive flooding. As of March 22, at least 300 people were known to have died, thousands have been injured and hundreds of thousands left homeless, according to the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The Vatican described Pope Francis’ donation as a “first contribution” and only “part of the aid that is being gathered throughout the Catholic Church” from bishops’ conferences and charitable organizations. **(CNS)**

### Cardinal Barbarin remains archbishop, takes leave-of-absence

French Cardinal Philippe Barbarin will remain the Archbishop of Lyon, the Vatican announced March 19. According to a statement released by the Holy See Press Office, Pope Francis has not accepted the cardinal’s resignation, though Barbarin has stepped back from the day-to-day leadership of the diocese. Barbarin was convicted by a French tribunal on March 7 on charges of failing to report allegations of sexual abuse committed by a priest of his diocese. He was given a six-month suspended prison sentence and plans to appeal the verdict. Barbarin met with Pope Francis March 18 to submit his resignation as archbishop. **(Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)**

### Pope: Education, encounter are key in furthering access to clean water

In a message for World Water Day, Pope Francis stressed the need to remember the suffering of billions of people who do not have reliable access to clean water in their homes. “Joint work is essential to eradicate this evil [of a lack of access to clean water] that afflicts so many of our brothers and sisters,” the pope said. “It will be possible if we join efforts in the search for the common good, when the other has a real face, takes center stage and is placed at the center of debate and initiatives. This is when the measures adopted will take on the flavor of encounter, and the value of responding to an injustice that needs to be healed.” Pope Francis sent a message to Professor José Graziano da Silva, director general of the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization on March 22, World Water Day. **(CNA)**

# Pope Francis issues child protection laws for Vatican City State, Roman Curia

VATICAN— Pope Francis on March 29 issued new laws and guidelines on the protection of minors for those working within Vatican City State and the Roman Curia, including the obligation to report abuse.

Under the new law, promulgated by the pope March 29, officials of the Roman Curia and Vatican City State are obliged to report “without delay” any knowledge or well-founded suspicion of abuse against a minor or vulnerable adult learned in the exercise of their position — though with the obvious exception of information learned only within confession, which is protected by the sacramental seal.

The failure to report abuse in a timely manner is punishable by a fine of 1,000 to 5,000 euros (about \$1,123-\$5,616). Promulgated in an apostolic letter issued “*motu proprio*,” the law and guidelines go into effect June 1.

In addition to mandatory reporting, the new laws introduce protections and services for victims of abuse, and require the hiring process within the governorate of Vatican City to include a determination of a candidate’s suitability to interact with minors.

The law also establishes an expanded definition of the term “vulnerable persons,” which it says is anyone “in an infirm state, of physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal freedom, that in fact, even occasionally, limits their capacity to intend or to want or in any way to resist the offense.”

For the purposes of the law, a “vulnerable person” is considered equal to a “minor.”

Pope Francis wrote that the laws and guidelines are intended “to further strengthen the institutional and regulatory framework for

preventing and counteracting abuse of minors and vulnerable adults” in the Roman Curia and Vatican City State.

“The protection of minors and vulnerable persons is an integral part of the evangelical message the Church and all her members are called to spread around the world,” he wrote. Everyone has “the duty to welcome minors and vulnerable persons with generosity and to create a safe environment for them.”

“This requires a continuous and profound conversion,” he continued, “in which personal holiness and moral commitment can help to promote the credibility of the evangelical message and to renew the educational mission of the Church.”

Pope Francis also addressed in his letter the importance of guaranteeing to the accused the right to a fair and impartial trial,

in respect to the presumption of innocence.

The law gives a statute of limitations of 20 years, which in the case of a minor begins from the 18th year of age.

Up to this point, the Vatican City State’s penal law was more concise and only described the crime of abuse, a professor of canon law, Fr. Fernando Puig, explained to CNA.

“With the norms and guidelines promulgated today, the Vatican is endowed with means to prevent and prosecute these crimes [against minors], facilitate its reporting, care for victims and punish the guilty, with systems similar to those of ‘normal’ states, but also in a similar way to dioceses,” he said.

He clarified that the new norms apply to “crimes committed by public officials, laymen or clerics, at the service of Vatican City or the Roman Curia.”

The apostolic letter and guidelines were part of the concrete measures announced at the end of the Vatican abuse summit in February and mark “the first important step” following that meeting, papal spokesman Alessandro Gisotti said March 29.

He pointed out that even the child protection guidelines for the Vicariate of Vatican City have the signature of the pope.

“Together, these acts reinforce the protection of minors by strengthening the normative framework,” he stated.

“The Holy Father hopes that — thanks also to these norms which pertain to Vatican City State and to the Roman Curia — everyone might develop in their awareness that the Church must always be ever increasingly a safe home for children and vulnerable persons.” (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

## Pope amends canon law on religious who abandon their community

VATICAN— Pope Francis has made it easier for a religious order to dismiss a member who leaves the community without permission, stays away and does not communicate with his or her superior.

In a document titled “*Communis Vita*” (Community Life), the pope amended the Code of Canon Law to include an almost automatic dismissal of religious who are absent without authorization from their community for at least 12 months.

The change was to go into effect April 10 and is not retroactive, said Archbishop Jose Rodriguez Carballo, secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The archbishop’s explanatory article was published March 26 along with the text of Pope Francis’ document.

Canon 694 of the Code of Canon Law currently states that “a member must be held as ipso facto dismissed from an institute” if they have “defected notoriously from the Catholic faith” or have married or attempted to marry.

Pope Francis added a new clause adding the dismissal of a member of an order who is “illegitimately absent” from the community for 12 uninterrupted months and is unreachable.



Pope Francis greets nuns as he meets with priests, religious men and women and the ecumenical Council of Churches at the cathedral in Rabat, Morocco, March 31, 2019. PAUL HARING/CNS

In such cases, the superior and the council of the order draw up a declaration of the facts and submit it to the Holy See for institutes of pontifical rite or to the local bishop for institutes of diocesan rite.

“Community life is an essential element of religious life and ‘religious are to live in their own religious house and are not to be absent from it except with the permission of their superior,’” the pope wrote, quoting canon 665.

Unfortunately, he said, “experience in the last few years has demonstrated that there are situations” where members of orders leave the

community they are assigned to, withdrawing from obedience to their superior and making it impossible for the order to contact him or her.

After six months of such an absence, the Code of Canon Law instructed and continues to instruct superiors to do everything they can to find the person to help them “return to and persevere in his or her vocation.”

Archbishop Rodriguez said most cases of such prolonged absence involve religious men or women who were given temporary permission to leave, but they never returned.

Unless they have requested a dispensation from their vows or have been dismissed, they legally are still part of the order, he said. “In such a condition, not being legitimately separated, they can find themselves in situations incompatible with religious life or can demonstrate behavior in contrast with it.”

Their life outside the community, he added, also could have implications of “an economic nature that could harm the institute,” which is why the church needed a process for the order to initiate the dismissal. (Cindy Wooden/CNA)

## Cardinal Tagle to seminarians: Be vigilant, beware of temptations



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila delivers the homily during Mass for the 60th anniversary of the St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami, Florida, March 24. PHOTO FROM SJVCS

MIAMI, Florida— Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila visited the U.S. over the weekend and warned Florida seminarians about temptations “that makes you messianic.”

Speaking at a Mass to mark the 60th anniversary of St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami on March 24, he urged the seminarians “not to bite into what the world offers.”

He said that because of the thought that they are called by God to serve, the temptation is always there “to pretend that we can pronounce everything.”

“No, you do not! We don’t know everything,” Cardinal Tagle said.

“At this early stage of your formation, please be vigilant. Do not allow the temptations to take the better of you, to claim you,” he said.

Prior to the liturgical celebration, the head of Caritas Internationalis was also the guest speaker at the

seminary’s Annual Fides et Ratio Conference on Saturday.

Present during the Mass were the seminary formators and staff, parents of the seminarians, and a number of Filipinos working and residing in Miami.

Directing his attention to the Filipino community, the cardinal reminded of their “mission” as “witnesses” of Christ.

“We should witness to the world wherever we are, don’t be ashamed to tell the world how good God is,” he said.

Cardinal Tagle also appealed to the Filipino families to instill in the minds of their children and grandkids the possibility of priestly and religious life vocation.

From Miami, the cardinal left for Austria on March 25 for a meeting of international Caritas representatives and the Humanitarian Congress Vienna. (CBCP News)

## Pope gets Mindanao-inspired vestment as gift

ROME— A Cebuano family gave Pope Francis a Mindanao-inspired set of vestments on Tuesday as a gesture of thanksgiving.

Monsignor Jan Thomas Limchua, a Cebuano priest, presented the garments to the pope after the latter celebrated Mass in the chapel of the Casa Santa Marta in the Vatican.

The priest, who is serving as secretary of the apostolic nunciature in Cairo, concelebrated with the pope and with his parents present during the private event.

He said it was a gift from his family on the occasion of their parents’ 50th wedding anniversary.

“It’s very beautiful,” Limchua quoted the pope as saying.

“I told the pope that it comes from Mindanao. He was impressed and appreciated it,” he said.

Made by liturgical vestment designer Leni Fuentes Bernardo, the vestment has strips of authentic Maranao fabrics.

Bernardo runs a vestment shop called “Linea Sacra by Colors Crew” in Davao City.

For five years now, she said their products highlight the Mindanao tradition of weaving colorful and intricate tapestries.

Bernardo said it took them two weeks to come up with the final design of the vestment for the pope.

“...All were embroidered including the



Pope Francis receives a special set of vestments from Msgr. Jan Limchua after celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Casa Santa Marta in the Vatican, March 26. VATICAN MEDIA

gold piping on the side and we combined it with strips of authentic Maranao cloth,” she added.

Bernardo said this is the second time that their product has reached Pope Francis.

Last February, a Davaoña also asked

them to design a vestment and gave it to Pope Francis during an audience at the Vatican.

Aside from the vestment and mitre, Msgr. Limchua also gave Pope Francis a portrait of the pontiff painted a Cebu-based artist. (CBCPNews)

PHOTO / A1

speaking in his homily during the Baccalaureate Mass for this year’s graduates of the Jesuit-run university.

He told the young people that their duty is not simply to get a good education, but also to bring about change.

Archbishop Ledesma noted that electing good leaders are necessary steps for the transformation of society.

“We too can demand from our leaders the kind of public service that we deserve,” he said.

In choosing candidates, he told the graduates to take a cue from the ideals of their university: “to

produce men and women of conscience, competence and commitment.”

“That as well can be ascribed to our political leaders,” he said.

The prelate urged the graduates to be true to the values of their university “with compassion and the right companionship.”

The midterm elections will be on May 13.

Some 18,000 senatorial, congressional, party-list, regional, provincial and municipal positions are up for grabs in the polls, according to the Commission on Elections. (CBCPNews)

## EDITORIAL

## Neutralizing the propagandists

FACEBOOK, the top social media platform in the country and throughout the world has announced on March 29, 2019 that it has taken down 200 pages and accounts in both Facebook and Instagram that were credited to Nic Gabunada, who is known to be President Duterte's social media manager in his 2016 electoral campaign.

The head of Facebook cybersecurity, Nathaniel Gleicher, announced that Gabunada's pages and accounts were deleted for proliferating fake accounts and political messages that promoted or attacked personages that are allied or critical to President Duterte. "(The Pages) frequently posted about local and political news, including topics like the upcoming elections, candidate updates and views, alleged misconduct of political opponents, and controversial events that were purported to occur during previous administration. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our investigation found that this activity was linked to a network organized by Nic Gabunada," said Facebook.

Rappler in a March 30, 2019 story, reported that the 200 pages include 67 Facebook pages, 68 Facebook accounts, 40 Facebook groups and 25 Instagram accounts. About 1.8 million accounts joined at least one of these groups and around 5,300 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts. It is not surprising then that engagement of these social media platforms of President Duterte's supporters have been exponentially influential even, and most alarmingly, into the fiber of public opinion.

In October last year, Facebook already started scrubbing these pro-Duterte propagandists or online trolls as they are now euphemistically called. Drove of them started migrating to Youtube where they are not yet scrutinized.

The popular historical revisionism which is politically motivated and a work of propagandists is alarming enough. But most frightening is the emergence of a new culture where public opinion is manipulated and the truth is blurred with the lies of top-notch propagandists that thrive in social media—and use the power and resources of government.

## Moral and technological progress

THESE should go together. The tragedy of our times is precisely because our technological progress is not matched by progress in the spiritual and moral life. We need to do everything to put the two together.

We cannot deny that our technological progress, which offers us a lot of good as well as a lot of dangers, poses new challenges and can trigger new issues. It can awaken our dormant good potentials, but it can also stir up some latent weaknesses we have been carrying along for years without us noticing them. Thus, almost like all of a sudden we realize that there are new possibilities for making business, for doing politics, and yes, even for doing more apostolate. But without the matching spiritual and moral progress, we will also realize that we are easily trapped into some forms of addiction to games, to pornography, and to all kinds of harmful distractions.

Progress in the spiritual and moral life, in this case, should mean more vital identification with Christ, more docility to the Holy Spirit, more obedience to Church teaching so that we can manage to be more discerning of what is genuinely true, good and beautiful for us and not deceived by their false and fake versions. This would require a number of things. To be prudent and discerning in the use of the new technologies, we have to see to it that everything has to start and end with God. Without that as the fundamental perspective to have, we would be exposing ourselves to dangers that can be so subtle and deceiving that we would think these dangers are benefits themselves.

There should also be a great need for self-dominion that is rooted on our identification with Christ. We cannot deny that nowadays all sorts of tactics are used to tickle and attract our senses, feelings, emotions, passions and imagination, while starving our spiritual life. Images and messages, memes, slogans and the so-called 'hugot' lines are crafted to appeal to our body while numbing the pristine yearnings of our soul. We are made to become more bodily, materially and worldly-oriented with the corresponding drying up of our spiritual and supernatural life with God.

There is no doubt that the general atmosphere created by our technological progress is that of secularization, that of setting aside God and our duty to relate ourselves and everything else to him. We somehow are made to believe that God has nothing to do with our heavily technological culture of today. We need to be wary of this danger and do something to correct it, more than just protecting ourselves from it or avoiding altogether the use of our new technologies. These latter ideas are unrealistic. We definitely need the new technologies and we should be very thankful for them. But we have to use them properly.

We should really make matching progress in our spiritual and moral life. We need to bring God to the new technologies. In fact, God should be the principle, center and end of our new technological culture. Without God, there is no way but our increasingly sophisticated technological culture to be a spoiling and corrupting agent. It will be a very sweet poison. Only the people who are with God can survive the quiet onslaught of the many dangers the new technologies bring. Only they can properly take advantage of these powerful tools. We need to be ready for this challenge. Thus, it is important that we bring this issue to our prayer, begging God to guide us in these very tricky waters of our digital world. We have to ask for guidance and quick to implement the measures of prudence that such prayer would bring to mind.

From a personal, individual concern, let's make it a social one, covering more and more people in the family, schools, offices, churches, etc., developing the appropriate networks.



## Treasure your dreams; they are gifts

## Living Mission

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM



IN preparation for the Synod on the Youth, Pope Francis held a personal dialogue with the youth. He took questions from young people; he began his response, centering on the word: "dreams."

"Dreams are important. They keep our view broad; they help us to embrace the horizon.... And, the dreams of young people are the most important of all.... Dreams awaken you; they sweep you away; they are the most luminous stars, those that indicate a different path for humanity."

"So, dear young people, you have these brilliant stars, which are your dreams, in your heart; they are your responsibility and your treasure. Make them also be your future! This is the work you must do: to transform today's dreams into the reality of the future, and for this it takes courage.... Carry on with courage, courage in the face of resistance, of difficulties, of all that extinguishes our dreams."

**Fostering Dreams.** Pope Francis asserts: "Dreams are to be nurtured, to

be purified, to be put to the test, and also to be shared." The Pope asks: "Where do dreams come from...? Are they big dreams or small, meager dreams that settle for less? Dreams of comfort, dreams of only wellbeing?"

Francis, citing a personal experience, noted that once a priest asked him to say what the opposite of "I" is; when he responded that the antonym of "I" is "you," he was told that the correct answer is "we." Indeed, "the opposite of selfishness is 'we' ... true dreams are the dreams of 'we' ... great dreams need God.... You can dream great things, but by yourself it is dangerous, because you can fall into the delirium of omnipotence. But with God, do not fear. Dream big!"

**Never Stop Dreaming!** "Do not let yourselves be robbed of your dreams" are words of Pope Francis to the youth. The pope continued, narrating the story of a young man in his early twenties "who began to dream and to dream big. And, his father, a great businessman, tried to convince him, and he said: 'No, I want to dream. I dream what I

feel inside.' And, in the end, he left, to dream. And, his father followed him. And that young man took refuge in the bishop's house, removed his clothes, gave them to his father [and said]: 'Let me go on my path'."

Pope Francis explained: "This young man, a thirteenth-century Italian, was called Francis [of Assisi], and he changed the history of Italy. Francis took risks in order to dream big; he did not know the frontier and he ended his life dreaming. As I told you, do not let yourselves be robbed of your dreams."

Francis asserts: "Young people who are able to dream become teachers through their witness. Do not stop dreaming, and teach others how to dream. Dreams are a great force."

The pope continues: "Dreams cannot be bought. Dreams are a gift, a gift from God, a gift that God sows in your hearts. Dreams are given to us freely, so that we may also give them freely to others.... Be pilgrims on the path of your dreams. Take risks on that path: do not be afraid!"



## And That's The Truth

Teresa R. Tunay, OCDS

ARE Filipinos that forgiving or are we simply forgetful?

In our Social Studies (in the 50s in my case), we were taught about the destructive habits or attitudes of the Filipinos—the Manana Habit, Talangka Mentality, Filipino Time, Ningas-kugon, Colonial Mentality, etc. I was too young to care, but being a conscientious pupil, I retained what I learned. Especially the very graphic explanations of the teacher about the "talangka" pulling one another down to clamber to the top of the bucket, and of dried cogon grass bursting into flames and just as quickly dying out.

Over the years, many disappointing experiences

with fellow Filipinos would convince me that those bad habits we heard about in elementary school somehow do have basis in fact. In our country's current socio-political situation, for instance, the Ningas-kugon mentality reigns supreme. Scandalous incidents of national importance would hog the headlines for days or weeks, and then fizzle out even before anything conclusive is reached. Or is it the public's interest that wanes through time?

Remember the so-called Mamasapano Massacre, when on January 25, 2015, 44 SAF police commandos were slain in the botched anti-terror raid in Maguindanao?

The nation was shocked over the tragedy, and felt betrayed by the government officials who planned the raid. The public indignation soared when the 44 coffins arrived at the Manila airport and there was no Noynoy to pay respects to them—he was busy attending a car manufacturing event. Headlines and social media comments burned with righteous anger in sympathy for the bereaved—such a cold-hearted president! The bloody incident came to be tagged as "SAF 44."

On July 14, 2017, it was reported that former president Benigno Aquino III would face criminal trial over Mamasapano

tragedy. A statement from the investigating body said Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales had ordered Aquino charged with usurpation of authority and violation of the anti-graft and corrupt practices act.

January 25, 2019, on the fourth anniversary of SAF 44, families of the fallen troopers called on the Supreme Court on Padre Faura in Manila to seek justice. They called on the authorities to act on the case: "Please notice our pleading because we have been seeking justice for four years now." Are they joined in their plea by the public? It doesn't seem so. No sustained reporting from

And That's the Truth / A6

## We really should learn to pray

## Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimaglia



IF there's a skill which is fundamentally indispensable in life, it is the art of praying. When we really manage to pray, we would truly be in touch and in union with God.

And in that state, even while we are still here on earth, we would already have a foretaste of our definitive state of life. That is when, as described in the Book of the Apocalypse, "He (God) will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away." (21,4)

Praying is our way of uniting ourselves with God, our Creator and Father, with whom we are supposed to be always with, since our life, as an image and likeness of God, is meant to be a shared life with God.

Praying is to our spiritual life what

breathing and the beating of the heart are to our biological life. That is why St. Paul clearly said, "Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thes 5,17-18)

When we manage to truly pray, we can also manage to protect ourselves from all kinds of evil, and to heal whatever wounds and weaknesses we may have because of our sins. A sense of holy invulnerability can come to us. We can find peace and joy in spite of the drama of our life.

That's because when we pray, we unite ourselves with Christ, and with him no evil can affect us badly. We may not be spared from suffering, but we would know how to convert that suffering into a means of our purification and eventual salvation. With him, everything will

work out for the good. (cfr. Rom 8,28)

It is when we manage to truly pray that we comply with what St. Paul said about putting on the armor of God. It might be good to remit here his very words: "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms...." (Eph 6,11-12)

We really have to learn how to pray, and I mean, real prayer, not just an appearance of prayer, which happens to be common these days. Perhaps the reason why our prayer does not seem to have the response we want is because our prayer is not really prayer.

Candidly Speaking / A7

## CBCP Monitor

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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## By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

"An election is coming. Universal peace is declared, and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry."—George Eliot, Felix Holt the Radical

"For kingship belongs to the Lord." (Psalm 22:28)

IT is Lent. It is, by intention, a time of penance and prayer; ordinary Filipinos know it as such. In 2019 Philippines it is also campaign season for the May 13 elections. Filipinos know them too as their version of ancient Rome's "bread and circus". Eastern Samar, my home province, together with many other parts of the archipelago, is set to witness again the proliferation of what my generation calls election "bread", that is, money to buy and sell votes in a massively pervasive fashion that, however the Church and the local civil society decry it, seems to have its own life, apparently immune to moral or ethical considerations. I am sure I am not alone in making this observation. For now, it is the circus angle with real song-and-dance and showbiz glitz that rule the streets, town or city squares and marketplaces.

Not everyone is pleased. A number of citizens complain about the suffocating traffic, the noise pollution, the internecine media and social media troll wars, the use and weaponization of fake news, rather than a determined insistence on the priority of the rule of truth and fair play. But they seem a voice in the wilderness. There is a de-facto idolatry of victory among candidates "by hook or by crook" ("Mostly by crook," onlookers are wont to say).

But what does Christ's Passion, the centerpiece of the Lenten drama, have to say to us who face these realities?

1. Philippine elections, in many ways, are life-demeaning; Christ's Passion, on the other hand, is life-affirming. For, at the same time that "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners (technically

God's enemies), Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8), many Filipino candidates value less their opponents'—or, shall we say enemies'—lives than their own electoral victory. How many political assassinations had been done, are being planned and will be executed to get rid of an enemy or enemies in politics? And when the very idea of physical assassinations are too gory, then there are other ways to do this, chief among them is everybody's favorite sport of character assassinations disguised as "exposes". Political ads, paid trolls, strategists and agents abound to work not only to gain votes for one's candidates but also to deny them to rivals. Followers of Jesus Christ need not only seek to fact-check candidates; they also need to check them against Christ's person and his Gospel. We in the Church always speak of the promotion of integral development. But I wonder if we also provide clear and effective parameters to discern pro—or anti-integral human development candidates to guide the sincere voting believers.

2. Politicians are ostensibly into giving (anything from money to influence to t-shirts to their unsolicited ideas or plans). They talk about serving their country and their constituents. But Philippine elections, perhaps like their counterparts around the world, are really about getting power in order to gain more access to greater wealth, influence, fame etc. Christ's Passion, however, provides more than ample proof of God's love for mankind eloquently expressed by the giving of his life for us. "For God so love the world," John the evangelist reminds us, "that he GAVE his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16). This is not, of course, to say that Philippine politicians are incapable of truly giving or serving; it is simply to say that our system of politics thrives on the separation of rhetoric that extols service from the real world of partisan dynamics fueled

by the lure of self-aggrandizement. We must be very wary of those who loudly profess service; they may be only after power.

3. In Philippine elections candidates routinely immerse themselves in the poverty-stricken enclaves and homes of their constituents; but, admittedly, a lot of it is for show; their real intent is to gain votes or publicity. Christ's Passion, on the other hand, is the Son of God assuming the depths of our sinful humanity in order to raise it to a sharing in his sinless divinity. The essence and fruit of sin is separation from God; this the Son of God takes up on the cross so he could end this separation by his sacrifice. Paul the Apostle puts it eloquently: "For our sake he made him who has no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). We must, then, beware of politicians who, for the sake of and in the name of progress, actually leads our individual and national lives into separation from God and his values. This is more than a reference to the issues surrounding abortion, divorce, capital punishment, contraception or same-sex unions but rather to the secularist and relativist attitudes at play among those who pursue anti-God or anti-Christ values even to the quoting of Scriptures.

4. People in authority often point to "our free democratic elections" as if we owe it to ourselves to keep them in power so as to allow them to make us continue enjoying this freedom and its other blessings. In reality freedom in Philippine elections could be an illusion. The creeping and crippling poverty of the masses certainly renders them un-free to choose worthy candidates; often they have to succumb to the highest bidder(s), or to the most "mesmerizing promise-maker" and dull their conscience. Often our "free and democratic elections" are un-free and un-democratic because of poverty and fake news as well as the imposition of other peoples' choices on ours

By the Roadside/ A7

## Christ's passion vis-a-vis Philippine elections



## Whisper from the Desert

Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSsR, STD

## Addressing the clerical sex abuse crisis

(Part I)

THE recent meeting in Rome on clerical sex abuse called by Pope Francis and attended by presidents of bishops' conferences from all over the world and by representatives of union of superior generals has highlighted the seriousness as well as the global reach of this crisis.

This is not only the problem of the clergy in North America and Europe, this is also a problem that needs to be addressed in Africa, Latin America and Asia – including the Philippines. Thus, each local Church have been asked to address this crisis. This is the responsibility of the bishops' conferences, every diocese and religious congregation. This will also require the active involvement of the laity.

Before coming out with concrete measures it is important to clarify what the crisis or problem is all about, its extent and causes. Before any prognosis, a diagnosis is necessary. There are questions that need to be answered. What is clerical sex abuse all about? How widespread is it? There are many who see it as the sexual abuse of children or minors by the clergy that has been covered up and allowed to continue due to clericalism. Others would argue that this is linked with homosexuality basing their conclusion on the John Jay study commissioned by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops which reported that 81 percent of the victims were male minors and adolescents. Many would deny any connection between homosexuality and child abuse since there are also female victims. Being homosexual does not make one a pedophile.

The problem of clerical sex abuse should not be reduced to pedophilia. It would also be simplistic to identify either clericalism or homosexuality as the main cause. There is a need to look at the crisis from a deeper and broader perspective. There is also a need to gather data and come up with an accurate assessment of its nature and extent rather than just speculate or theorize from one's ideological bias or agenda.

When looking at clerical sexual abuse we need to consider not just pedophilia—the abuse of children. There is a need to make a distinction between pedophilia (the exclusive sexual attraction to pre-pubescent children age 13 and below) and ephebophilia (the sexual attraction to post-pubescent and adolescent youth). A pedophile can be attracted to both boys and girls. He is fixated on children which is indeed a psychiatric disorder. An ephebophile on the other hand has gender preference. A homosexual with ephebophilia is attracted to male adolescents. A heterosexual ephebophile is attracted to female adolescents—the "Lolita" syndrome. The reason why some associate homosexuality with clerical sexual abuse is that majority of the victims were usually male adolescents—altar boys, seminarians and members of parish youth groups. In the Philippines, one can add the convent boys (working students living in rectories). Ephebophile priests also have homosexual relationships with young adults. Some of the celebrated cases of clerical sexual abuse follow this pattern. The former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick was defrocked for abusing seminarians—not just minor seminarians but also theology students. Cardinal Keith O'Brien who was forced to resign before the 2013 conclave was accused sexually abusing seminarians and young priests. Marcial Maciel—the founder of the Legion of Christ—was removed from active ministry and ordered to live a life of prayer and penance by Benedict XVI for abusing seminarians and young priests of his order. The Chilean priest, Fernando Karadima, was defrocked by Pope Francis for abusing adolescent males. So, while studies show that there is no link between homosexuality and pedophilia, there are studies that show that most of the cases of ephebophilia were perpetrated by many homosexual priests.

The clerical sexual abuse goes beyond the abuse of minors and adolescents. We should not forget that women - young girls, adolescents, adults – could be victims of sex abuse by the clergy. This also includes some nuns. We should not just focus on young girls because older women can also be victims. Since priests are authority figures, any relationship with women that violates boundaries in the course of their ministry can be regarded as an abuse of power, authority and trust. Those who are working in the parish rectory or office or as pastoral workers or as members of parish committees can be abused

Whisper from the Desert / A6

## The incorrupt heart relic of St. Camillus

THE incorrupt heart relic of St. Camillus of Lellis visited our Diocese of Kalookan; the second time that the Relic visited the Philippines, the first was in 2013. St. Camillus is the patron saint of the sick, doctors, nurses, health workers and hospitals. I thank God and St. Camillus for giving me the rare opportunity to kiss the Relic twice: first when we welcomed the Relic at Sto. Niño de Pasion in Daanghari, Navotas City and second, when we accompanied the Relic to its next destination, St. Andrew Cathedral in Parañaque. For making this possible, I sincerely thank Fr. Dan Vicente Cancino, MI, Executive Secretary-Director of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Health Care, Fr. John Paul Alvarado,

MI, Executive Director of Camillian Philanthropic & Health Development Office of St. Camillus Pastoral Care Center, and Fr. James Anthony Del Rosario, Quasi Parish Priest of Sto. Niño de Pasion.

In his Homily in the Farewell Mass at San Roque Cathedral, Bishop Pablo Virgilio "Ambo" David, D.D., Bishop of Kalookan, compared St. Camillus to San Roque, the patron saint of the Diocese. St. Camillus cared and treated the sick as "living images of Christ" and considered serving the sick as serving God. Thus, he was bestowed with the gifts of healing and prophecy. During the period of pestilence in his community, San Roque did not leave those who were afflicted and sick; he cared

for them until he himself got sick.

Bishop Ambo challenged the Camillian fathers to do their apostolate and share their 4th charism in the Diocese of Kalookan. The Diocese has been looking after the surviving families and relatives of EJK victims. They are suffering not only from physical sickness but spiritual and depression as well. He said, the Diocese badly needs a person who could direct and supervise the several projects it had opened to care for them: Task Force Salubong (a community-based rehabilitation program of persons with substance use disorder), Children Scholarship, Orphans' Fund, Widows' Fund, Sanctuary Program and the Mission Stations in the different parts

## Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago



of the Diocese's three cities of Caloocan, Malabon and Navotas, bringing the Church and caring for those in the peripheries not only of society but also of the Church. On our way to the next destination of the Relic of St. Camillus, I asked Fr. Dan to say YES to the challenge of Bishop Ambo. We hope and pray that their Superior will agree.

St. Camillus was born in 1550 in Chiatti, Italy; he died in 1614, and was canonized by Pope Benedict XIV in 1746. He was the founder of Order of Clerks Regular Ministers to the Sick. The Heart Relic is from Saint Camillus' major shrine, the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Rome, Italy, where he was buried.

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Duc in Altum / A7



## Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco

DISNEY'S second installment of Wreck It Ralph, once again delivers another smashing message about relationships and adds a timely lesson on how the Internet can either help human bonds to grow or, end sadly.

Faithful to the story's first part, the movie introduces a continuing digital relationship between Ralph and his Sugar Rush Racing princess, Vanellope von Schweetz, or the Glitch. So far, the first part ends with a lively connection with no short circuits and thrives through a programmed lifestyle of games, conversation and watching the sunset.

One day, Ralph decides to surprise Vanellope who was getting bored with her Sugar Rush racing

track. He improvises a track for Vanellope, but this generous initiative unexpectedly ruins the car game and sends them on a digital roller coaster chase into the Internet to save Vanellope's game.

It is amazingly enjoyable to watch how Wreck It Ralph managed to underline some very valuable lessons as the plot evolved. The story revolved around the challenges that friendship faces in the world of social media and how this can powerfully shape one's ideas and actions.

Ralph never fails to thicken the plot when, as he also does in the first part, he innocently introduces a "foreign element," wreaking havoc in the Internet. He had intended to introduce

the seemingly harmless virus to disrupt Vanellope's newfound game and convince her to return to their former video consul gaming worlds. Interestingly, the virus tracks any sign of "insecurity" in a game or site and replicates it to destabilize the program or force it to reboot. Unfortunately, it discovered Ralph's 100% insecurity level after his argument+break-up with Vanellope. Ralph's insecurity is replicated and wrecks the Internet.

Friendships can fail and break due to insecurity issues. The movie brings out this reality with today's millions of virtual connections bridged through social media platforms. These sites vary in their content and focus, but all hold one

common goal: to connect people (obviously, making money in the process). Connectivity is made up of the positive content in comments, photos, likes, and shares which are viewed by millions net-wide. Sadly, with the misuse of personal freedom, there are also countless abuses, violence, bullies, trolls, and trash polluting the virtual seas of the Internet. These do not make the Internet bad in itself, but they can be psychological, emotional, and social viruses that affect many defenseless surfers the world over.

Ralph's insecurity can become a real problem for many who may expose themselves to social viruses in the net. Although their personal issues stem from real family and social problems, the net

can aggravate their condition as one clams up before warm helping hands and escapes into the net, seeking solutions that may make him more insecure and broken.

Ralph's personal issue is solved when he and Vanellope personally decide to face each other and admit their own insufficiencies in their friendship. Thus, the movie underlines that if we are going to solve the host of problems stemming from insecurity and depression among the young, the medicine will never be a digital one.

Rebuilding relationships will always be done face to face, with firm guiding hands, a compassionate but demanding voice that will help one realize he is not alone and is always loved.

## Wrecking friendship

# Nassa elected to Caritas Internationalis' council

THE social action arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has been elected to the Representative Council (RepCo) of the Caritas Internationalis.

The National Secretariat for Social Action/Caritas Philippines, along with its Korean counterpart, will represent Asia to the council of the worldwide body of Catholic humanitarian organizations.

As a body, its executive secretary, Fr. Edwin Gariguez, would seat as their representative to the RepCo.

The RepCo is the highest governing body of Caritas Internationalis with Cardinal

Luis Antonio Tagle as its president, a number of bishops and Caritas leaders worldwide.

The election took place during the Caritas Asia Regional Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand on March 24.

The gathering also elected the new leaders of Caritas Asia, led by its president Dr. Benedict D'Rozario of Bangladesh.

With D'Rozario are new Regional Commission members including Fr. Gariguez and leaders from Caritas Mongolia, Caritas Nepal and Caritas Korea.

The Caritas Asia Regional



Commission is the advisory and executive body that works with the President in coordinating the activities and plans for Asia and in carrying out the decisions of the Regional Conference. (CBCPNews)

## 'Virgen dela Rosa de Macati' canonically crowned

TOP Catholic officials crowned a statue of Mary before a packed crowd in Makati City recently.

The canonical coronation took place during Mass at the Plaza Cristo Rey, located right in front of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Church on March 16.

More than a thousand people watched Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle place a crown on the head of Christ child, and then also on the head of Mary by Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines.

Prior to the crowning of the images, Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales place a rose on the right hand of the Marian image.

In the country, the statue is known as "Virgen dela Rosa," who is also known as Makati's Queen, Mother and Patroness.

In his homily, Cardinal Tagle called the celebration as a "special grace" from Pope Francis.

"Let us ask the Lord to fill us with His presence, the way He filled Mary," Cardinal Tagle said.

"And may we be consoled by our solidarity with those that world



Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia leads the canonical coronation of "Virgen dela Rosa" at the Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Church in Makati City on March 16. KENNETH RAEMIEL FRODOSO

considers ugly, detestable, so that we may convey to them the beauty of mercy, compassion, and hope," he said.

The local process to have the image be pontifically crowned started as early as June 2016.

On Oct. 23, 2018, the Manila archdiocese submitted the petition to

the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of Sacraments.

Six days later, Pope Francis, through the congregation, approved the petition for the canonical coronation of Virgen dela Rosa.

Last year, the parish marked the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the image in the country.

### Farmers / A1

not communist rebels.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos demanded further investigation into the incident, amid claims of human rights violations.

"We demand a quick investigation on this and appeal to our government authorities to restore peace and order," he said.

One the fatalities, he said, was a lay minister at Canlaon parish and its administrator "can vouch for his moral character".

"Others were not even shown the supposed arrest papers. Some of those killed belonged to our Mission Station in Masulog," Alminaza said.

The bishop appealed to the authorities to ensure due process and human rights are respected in the conduct of their duties.

"We don't want to turn our beautiful island of Negros into a killing field!" he added.

The prelate also warned that human rights

abuses committed by the government forces would only make them "best recruiters" for the underground movement.

"Please make sure you are not adding more reasons for our people to get disillusioned with our government and peacekeepers," Alminaza added.

"But I believe there are still those among you with a lot of common sense, right values and principles, capable of creating avenues

for dialogue as a way to lasting peace and not through violence and human rights violation," he said.

On Oct. 20, 2018, still unidentified gunmen killed nine sugar farmers, including four women and two minors, at a hacienda in Sagay City's Bulanon village.

Bishop Alminaza said the "tragic incident" only unmask the "ugly face" of the prevailing agrarian problem in Negros. (CBCPNews)

### Atrocities / A1

fundamental: preventing these atrocities from being repeated."

The apostolic exhortation was published in response to last year's synod on young adults, the faith, and vocational discernment.

The pope also asked young people to seek inspiration from "the vast majority of priests" who have not "committed these horrible crimes."

Monsignor Fabio Fabene, under-secretary of the Synod of Bishops, highlighted this paragraph in his presentation of the document by the Holy See Press Office April 2.

"Pope Francis calls for the collaboration of young people also in relation to the gruesome phenomenon of sexual abuse of children, first of all through careful vigilance," Fabene said.

This is an example of how the pope "expresses his confidence in young people," affirming that they have much to contribute to reform and "healing this wound."

CNA asked Fabene if - given the "horrible crimes" of the abuse crisis - calling on young people to confront violent priests could put them at greater risk.

Fabene said the invitation to hold priests to account directly was "prophetic on the part of the pope," who was entrusting young people with "this mission, this task, this closeness" in rejuvenating the heart of "priests who find themselves in difficulty" in their vocation and mission.

"I don't see any problems with

this," he said. "I see an act of trust that the pope has in young people ... that shines throughout all of the document."

The apostolic exhortation's eight-paragraph section titled "Ending every form of abuse" makes extensive use of quotes from the final document of the Synod of Bishops on young people, faith, and vocational discernment, first published October 28.

The text of Christus vivit adds that young people "can be a source of great healing if they employ their great capacity to bring about renewal, to urge and demand consistent witness, to keep dreaming and coming up with new ideas."

"Our sins are before the eyes of everyone; they appear all too clearly in the lines on the age-old face of the Church, our Mother and Teacher," the pope wrote in paragraph 101.

"Let us never forget that we must not abandon our Mother when she is wounded, but stand beside her, so that she can summon up all her strength and all her ability to begin ever anew."

The new document "reaffirms the firm commitment made to adopting rigorous preventative measures intended to avoid the recurrence of these crimes, starting with the selection and formation of those to whom tasks of responsibility and education will be entrusted."

The exhortation does not, however, include the phrase "zero tolerance."

Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary general of the Synod

of Bishops, explained that "zero tolerance" was omitted because "the pope wanted to highlight other aspects" of the abuse crisis.

"The pope could not say everything in one document," Baldisseri noted, but said that the pope had emphasized his commitment to fighting abuse.

"Youth need to know that this problem exists and the Church doesn't tolerate it," Baldisseri said.

The document, addressed to "all Christian young people," observes that because of "sexual and financial scandals" and "a clergy ill-prepared to engage effectively with the sensitivities of the young," a substantial number of young people want nothing to do with the Church.

Pope Francis used the document to express his gratitude, "together with the Synod Fathers," to all of those who had "the courage to report the evil they experienced."

"They help the Church to acknowledge what happened and the need to respond decisively," said the pope.

The "holy People of God" will "liberate us from the plague of clericalism, which is the fertile ground for all these disgraces."

"This dark moment, 'not without the valuable help of the young, can truly be an opportunity for a reform of epoch-making significance,' opening us to a new Pentecost and inaugurating a new stage of purification and change capable of renewing the Church's youth," Pope Francis said. (CNA)

## Mount Carmel shrine elevated to minor basilica

CATHOLIC devotees and parishioners of an already vibrant church in suburban Quezon City took things to a whole new level on Monday evening.

Highlighted with a mini orchestra and a choir, the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel welcomed some new symbols that could only be displayed in a basilica.

As part of the opening procession, the church's new "tintinnabulum" rang for the first time and the "umbraculum" was placed at the right side of the main altar.

"Today is a historical moment not only for this church but for the whole Diocese of Cubao as well," said Bishop Honest Ongtioco in his homily.

More than 2,000 faithful attended the ceremony elevating the church to a minor basilica.

The decree was granted by Pope Francis through the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on Nov. 30, 2018.

By virtue of the elevation, Ongtioco said the shrine would have special link with the Vatican.

The elevation also makes the shrine the first minor

basilica in the Cubao diocese and the 15th in the Philippines.

"Our diocese is blessed with three national shrines... Today, the diocese is blessed even more because we now have this church as our first minor basilica," he said.

With its new status, the church also enjoys "all the attached rights and liturgical concessions". These include the granting of plenary indulgence to whoever visits the basilica under the usual conditions.

The concession also grants the church the use of "the papal symbol, that is, crossed keys," which may be exhibited on banners, on furnishings, and on the official seal of the basilica.

Bishop Ongtioco also said that a minor basilica is literally "an edifice for the poor".

"Our new basilica must show in itself to be a mother to the poor by being attentive to their needs," he added.

"A basilica must be marked not only by the excellence of its liturgy and devotions... a basilica must also show excellence in charity," Ongtioco said. (CBCP News)

### Dealers / A1

of surrendering," said the president.

He admitted the country's drug situation has "worsened," while the police may already be "at the brink of surrendering" following the recent shipments of illegal drugs being smuggled in the country.

On March 22, customs and anti-drug agents intercepted an estimated P1.8 billion worth of methamphetamine, locally known as shabu, in Manila port.

Earlier in the month, authorities also intercepted at least P1.1 billion worth of illegal drugs at a house inside a village in Muntlupa City.

While prevention of drug abuse is a priority, Archbishop Valles also stressed on rehabilitation of drug victims and ultimately bring back to the folds of

society.

He said the church and other sectors must reach out to drug victims "even if to the world it is impractical".

"Each person is precious to the eyes of God. That is a teaching that cannot be touched. Life is precious. No discussion about that," Archbishop Valles said.

Originally started to help children in conflict with the law years ago, the Sagop Kinabuh (Save Lives) Program (SKP) was relaunched in 2016 to help rehabilitate former drug users.

Since then, the program has expanded to more parishes to enhance the spirituality, morality, skills and educational capacities of drug surrenderers.

"This is the mark of the Catholic community, to be merciful and loving," he said.

### Whisper from the Desert / A5

sexually. Those who come for spiritual direction or counseling can become victims.

Clerical sex abuse has many causes. It can be a manifestation of psychiatric or pathological disorder - like the exclusive, fixated sexual attraction to children. It can be caused by a priest's un-checked homosexual attraction to male adolescents especially those under his authority and care - whether in parish churches, rectories, seminaries, houses of formation, etc. It is obviously an abuse of power and authority. It is perpetuated by a clerical culture that emphasizes confidentiality and that has a tendency to hide cases of sex abuse for fear of scandal. Thus, every complaint of sex abuse becomes a matter of damage control. It is a culture that lacks transparency and accountability. Ultimately, it is a manifestation of the dark side that is present in the Church and that tries to dominate the clergy.

There has been no study regarding clerical sex abuse in the Philippines. There are no data or records about sex abuse cases. There are no documentation coming from the dioceses or from the CBCP about sex abuse allegations and how they were handled. If there are,

they are not made available. All we have are scattered news reports, anecdotes, gossip and innuendos. One of the limitations here in our country is that unlike the US, we are not a litigious society. There are no laws that make a diocese accountable for sexual abuse committed by priests. Thus, lawyers and victims cannot be assured of monetary gain unless they approach those accused and threaten to make it public and demand some amount for their silence. Thus, the culture of silence persists.

In recent times, sex abuse allegations have been weaponized against the Church by those in power and their supporters especially when the Church strive to fulfill her prophetic role. When the bishops come up with a statement against EJK, trolls would immediately respond by accusing priests of being child rapists and molesters thereby changing the topic and diverting from the real issue. Thus, raising the clerical sex abuse issue has been used as a threat to ensure the silence the Church vis-à-vis the social evils in society perpetrated by an abusive and murderous regime. (To be continued next month's column -- Part II: How clerical sex abuse can be addressed)

# Bishop urges bets to avoid violence after killing of Negros official

DUMAGUETE City— A Catholic bishop decried the killing of a reelectionist Negros Oriental board member and called on midterm-poll bets to denounce all sorts of violence.

Unidentified gunmen killed board member Michael Dungog, president of the province's Councilor's League, in Dumaguete City on March 25.

The victim was reportedly shot in the head while walking towards the Siliman University Medical Center from his parked car.

Bishop Julito Cortes of Dumaguete aired a radio message on March 28, expressing closeness and concern to the family left behind by Dungog.

While authorities cannot yet confirm that the killing was politically motivated,

he appealed to candidates to avoid the "culture of violence".

"The threat of death towards one's opponent should never be an instrument in any political campaign," Cortes said over Church-run radio Radyo Bandilyo.

"Let your political platform be your means of attracting voters, not your guns, nor your gold," he said.

The bishop also appealed to the people to vote their conscience.

"Search your conscience as you think of your candidates you shall vote for in the coming elections," Cortes said.

He particularly urged voters to support candidates who are for peace, not linked with corruption, and respect the value and dignity of life. **(CBCP News)**

# Church bells turn Samar town into tourist attraction



The historic Catholic church in the town of Balangiga in Eastern Samar. ROY LAGARDE

BALANGIGA, Eastern Samar— Schoolteacher Isolde Mangyao traveled about three hours with her two children to the town of Balangiga in the central Philippine province of Eastern Samar just to see three church bells.

Mangyao admitted that she made the trip to satisfy her curiosity after hearing news reports about the place. It ended up being a very interesting history lesson.

"When we finally arrived, we looked at our journey as being as very meaningful, particularly when we saw the monument fronting the church where the three bells are placed," said the teacher.

In December last year, the United States returned three church bells swiped by American forces as war booty from the central Philippine town of Balangiga in 1901.

The taking of the bells and the American sacking of Samar came after Filipino freedom fighters ambushed and killed at least 40 American soldiers sitting down to breakfast on Sept. 28, 1901.

They were part of a 75-man American garrison stationed in town. It is said the bells were used to signal the attack. Rebels disguised as women had smuggled weapons in small coffins into the church to attack the Americans.

At least 28 Filipinos were also killed in what historians say was the "single worst defeat" inflicted on American forces during the 1899-1902 Philippine-American War.

In reprisal, the Americans rounded up and killed some 5,000 Balangiga villagers. All were male residents over 10 years old. The incident became known as the Balangiga Massacre.

Teacher Mangyao said she realized that the visit to Balangiga was "very important ... to understand

the historical and religious contributions of the bells to our country."

The return of the bells has also become a tourism boon to the poor town, which has already played host to about 22,000 visitors since December.

"It has placed Balangiga on the tourism map," said Karen Tiopes, tourism director for the Eastern Visayas.

She said the publicity generated by the return of the bells has helped boost people's awareness of history.

A documentary film titled *Balangiga: Honor and Sacrifice* is currently being shot in the town to "provide a definitive explanation of how and why things went horribly wrong in Balangiga."

Written and directed by local historian Rolando Borrinaga and British author Bob Coultie, the film aims to shed light on what really happened in the small town more than a century ago.

American filmmaker Michael Sellers, who is involved in the production, said the film "will foster a new level of understanding and acceptance of a painful moment in history."

"We will tell the true, complete story of what happened in 1901, why it happened, and why the return of the Balangiga Bells to Eastern Samar has created a unique opportunity for a moment of healing and renewal," said the filmmaker.

Tour operators are expecting at least 50,000 tourists in the coming months with "concerted efforts" not only by the government but also various sectors in the community to bring in visitors.

Franklin Robedizo, provincial tourism officer of Eastern Samar, hopes the tours will help ease poverty in the province. **(Ronald Reyes/UCAN)**

## And That's the Truth / A1

mainstream media; no angry outbursts from netizens. Why? The grass has burned out. Ningas-kugon.

Who remembers the bank cyber-heist that happened in February 2016? It involved Bangladesh Bank, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC) in the Philippines. Reactions to the news smacked of warnings, and not a few bank clients feared for their money. There followed televised hearings (in aid of legislation?), which the man on the street found upsetting if not incredible—for how can something that big happen when Philippine banks are so strict? Even opening an ordinary savings account with one-thousand pesos would require the client to fill up so many papers with personal information. How much more if the new accounts involved millions of US dollars? After the initial furor, the case was forgotten.

Until January 10, 2019, when the RCBC branch ex-manager Maia Santos-Deguito was reported guilty in the \$81-million Bangladesh Bank heist. The news said Makati Regional Trial court Branch 149 Presiding Judge Cesar Untalan found Deguito guilty beyond reasonable doubt of violating the Anti-Money Laundering Act. Again it raised eyebrows, even in banking circles, where "everybody knows a mere branch manager cannot do such things on her own." Some believe there's a cover up somewhere, and that Deguito was persuaded to be tied to the whipping post for a huge consolation sum. Whatever, the fire seems to have gone out—the people who were alarmed before continue to use banks to safekeep

their money. And those with money to burn go on burning it away in our casinos.

Another half-forgotten scandal: the alleged role of the Bureau of Customs in the shipment from China on May 17, 1017 of illegal drugs worth over six billion pesos. On record as containing "kitchenware", the container with methamphetamine was reportedly passed through the green lane, escaping the xray scanning—a violation of BoC protocol. The Senate and House hearings invited so many "persons of interest" and disclosed names of companies and individuals (including the president's son Paolo Duterte) implicated in the shipment, some of them Chinese. Again, the public reaction was one of outrage.

On September 5, 2018, the news said "The government has lost its drug transportation case over the 6.4 billion pesos shabu shipment from China that ended up at a warehouse in Valenzuela City, due to double jeopardy... While Taguba and Tan are detained at the Camp Bagong Diwa jail, Richard Tan, whose Hongfei Logistics company leased the warehouse where the shabu was found, and his other Chinese or Taiwanese co-accused remain at large since the Manila RTC ordered their arrest for the drug importation case."

Now the case seems buried beneath an avalanche of sensational news items. Should we not be looking deeper into the court decision? Or at least, gather concerned agencies and citizens to ask, for instance, where the confiscated shabu has gone? Are the accused still in the country, or have they forever

escaped prosecution through the help of Immigration? We do not want to think ill of our government agencies but circumstances like this make us doubt their sincerity in serving the public.

Ningas-kugon destroys more than grass—it keeps us in 'stupor. We are quick to say the country is a mess, but are we doing our part to right the wrong being done? These are but a few of the scandalous things that caused us to burst into flames of anger in the recent past. If you will peep into history you will see that there have been many more that aroused our ire in the distant past, hindering our growth as a nation, but which we soon forgot—or forgave. Where is our ningas-kugon mentality leading us to?

One day, about two years ago, we just woke up to find our waters invaded, with artificial islands containing military installations by a bully nation. We were furious—but didn't stay so for long. Last weekend of March we were told that for the first quarter of 2019 alone, more than 600 "Chinese fishing vessels have been recorded surrounding the sandbars of Pag-asa Island." That many? We would be naïve to think these vessels are only after our galunggung—which, incidentally, they export back to us. More than just cursing China over its bullying tactics, we should do our homework and intelligently plan to preserve our sovereignty and save our people. We can't afford to treat serious matters with our ningas-kugon attitude. We must keep the fire burning. Otherwise, Pilipinas might one day wake up to find it is already a province of China. And that's the truth.

## Duc in Altum / A5

I thank the Lord for the gift of life, the gift of family and the gift of faith. It was an unexpected surprise that Pope Benedict XVI appointed me as a Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice (for the Church and for the Pope) Awardee 11 years ago, on May 3, 2008. As such, it made me a member of the Papal Household. All the while, I have the impression that only rich people can become Papal Awardees because of the donations they give to the Church. I was proven wrong; years of commitment and service to the Church were the most important criteria to be appointed by the Pope. On the occasion of my birth, I thank the Lord for all the blessings. I renew my commitment to serve the Church and its community. I pray that He would continue to give me good health and more years to serve Him, always, Fiat... Thy will be done.

I will not be who I am had the Lord not given me, rather, lent me life. I will not be who I am were it not for my family, especially my parents Benito

Sr. and Gloria Santiago. They raised all of us, their 7 children (we would have been 8 but Deborah was still-born), to be good children to them and be faithful members of the Catholic Church. We are now all professionals and actively serving the Church and the community.

In the early years of our life, both my parents were hands on in teaching us the basic rules of life. They taught us how to read and write; how to tell the time from the calendar and the wall clock; how to distinguish different colors and sizes; how to determine the five senses of the body - sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell; taught us the value of these senses in our relationship with our family, relatives, friends and acquaintances. They also taught us about our Catholic religion. They told us that we were born Catholic and we will pass on as Catholic. They taught us the Scripture: that God created the earth in 7 days; the disobedience of Adam and Eve; the enviousness and hatred of Cain that led him to kill his brother Abel; the faith and belief of Noah that saved

his family from the great flood; the obedience of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Joseph; the public ministry of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God; the many miracles performed by Jesus, his sufferings and death in order to save us from our sins and to redeem the world; Jesus' glorious resurrection which gives hope to us.

We spent our childhood days in the province, in Hagonoy, Bulacan. My maternal grandmother whom we called Inang Donie (Dionisia Angeles). She told us that we must learn how to pray the rosary so that we could accompany her in the Block Rosary in the neighborhood. Either they prayed in Tagalog but we would complain when they prayed the Hail Mary in Latin "Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, Benedicta..." (Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed...) ending with "Ave Maria Purissima sin peccato concebida" (Hail purest Mary, conceived without sin). During our

childhood, the best part of the Block Rosary was eating the lugaw (congee), sopas (elbow macaroni soup) with either ensaymada (bread topped with sugar, butter and cheese) or puto (a kind of rice cake).

After classes in school, we played with our cousins and neighbors. The strict rule: once we heard the ringing of the church bells of our Sta. Ana Parish Church, built by Agustinian priests more than 400 years ago and now a National Shrine, we must run home and pray the Angelus with our family. Inang Donie would always tell us that anything we asked for in deep prayers will be granted because Apo Ana, our patron saint, will ask her daughter Mary and grandson Jesus, to grant our prayers.

After praying the Oracion (how we called the Angelus), my mother would clean us, washed our feet in a basin of warm water and we would giggle afterwards and checked whose feet are dirtiest depending on the dirty water in the basin.

## Labor / A1

will give better protection of blue-collar Filipino workers.

"With this our overseas Filipino workers to be hired will be truly guided for the process of recruitment and deployment," Santos said.

"We are grateful and appreciative with their caring efforts to promote and safeguard our OFWs," he said.

The agreement, signed recently in Tokyo, opens the door for Filipino workers of getting jobs in Japan under a new specified skills residency in the host country.

The labor deal was also aimed to strengthen cooperation between

the two countries against illegal recruiters.

"The hiring of 'specified skilled workers' is also a recognition of the qualifications of our OFWs as highly knowledgeable, trustworthy and dependable workers," added Santos.

As of June 2018, there were about 280,000 Filipinos residing and working in Japan, of whom around 34,000 are professional and highly skilled workers.

The Labor department said that Filipino workers may corner at least 30 percent of some 350,000 jobs that Japan will offer to foreigners starting April 11. **(CBCP News)**

## By the Roadside/ A5

through aggressive campaigning. In contrast, the Passion leads us to our true freedom and dignity in that the very sufferings of the Savior answer the just punishment we all sinners deserve and the just requirement for our rehabilitation as God's children. Isaiah the prophet's words tell us of this truth. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5). How do Philippine elections school us into detecting leaders who are ready,

like Isaiah's Suffering Servant, to make sacrifices for the sake of the real common good? Our system should be an enabler of servant leadership more in practice than in claim.

5. Philippine candidates habitually promise to "make changes" that "make things new". Often because of an utter lack of competence or understanding of the Philippine situation, they end up breaking well-touted campaign promises or making excuses for their failures. The deficient definition of newness that focuses mostly on external political,

economic or social indicators is bound to fail because of what it excludes: the moral and spiritual dimensions linking people to God. On the other hand, Christ's Passion leads us to the truth that newness, to be genuine, cannot stand apart from God's plan of "a new heaven and a new earth" on the foundation of him who says, "I make all things new" (Rev 21:1, 27).

Christ's Passion has a lot to teach Filipino voters and Philippine elections. But, I submit, we need to constantly pray for "God's amazing grace" to make us listen and learn.

## Candidly Speaking / A4

When we truly pray, we would really get in touch with God. We would know how to deal with him. We would know what he is showing us and how he is intervening in our life. Our life would go in synch with God's providence, with his will and his ways.

It's always worthwhile to spend time and effort to learn how to truly pray. Especially these days when we are dragged by a strong current of activism and secularization, we need to really force ourselves to learn this indispensable skill.

We just cannot resort to prayer during special occasions when we are faced with some difficulty. Prayer is not meant to be the remedy of last resort. It is what we have

to do always, both in good times and bad.

At the beginning of the learning process, things might be a bit difficult. We might feel awkward. That is to be expected, but we just have to go on, sometimes forcing ourselves a little, making many acts of faith, hope and charity, until we can overcome that learning curve and start to fly like a professional in our prayer.

To be truly human and Christian, we need to pray. Otherwise, we may just look like a human being but in reality are not. Humanity and Christianity are not a matter of biology. They are a matter of being intimately united with God!

## New military bishop assumes post

Bishop Oscar Jaime Florencio, the former auxiliary bishop of Cebu, was installed as the new head of the Military Ordinariate of the Philippines April 3.

The crowd who attended the Mass in St. Ignacius de Loyola Cathedral at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City burst into cheers as the new bishop formally assumed his post.

He was then welcomed by officials of the Department of Defence, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and the Philippine National Police.

Concelebrants of the Mass included Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Caccia and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, who delivered the homily.

Cardinal Tagle reminded Florencio that bishops must be at the service of God, and not power or personal gains.

"Yes, we need power but we need to ask from whom does the power come?" he said. "The power of Jesus enables others to serve."

"That power must be used to make disciples of all nations to enable people to work for the common good," Cardinal Tagle added.

Also in attendance were retired Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato and about 30 members of the



Bishop Oscar Jaime Florencio receives the crozier from Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, during his formal installation as the head of the Military Ordinariate of the Philippines in St. Ignacius de Loyola Cathedral at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City on April 3. Also pictured is Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila. **SCREENSHOT/RADIO VERITAS**

bishops' conference, led by its president Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao.

The installation ceremony also coincided with Florencio's 29th priesthood anniversary.

Pope Francis on March 2 named Florencio, 53, to head the military diocese, which has been "sede vacante" for nearly two years.

He succeeded Bishop Leopoldo Tumalak who died

due to illness in June 2017.

In June 2017, the prelate was appointed as the concurrent apostolic administrator of the military diocese.

In his message, Florencio said that heading the military diocese was something he never imagined.

"This is quite a big responsibility for me," Florencio said.

"Please continue to pray for me and the military

chaplains that we may be able to do the task entrusted to us by the church, by the government and above all by our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is the shepherd himself," he said.

As military ordinary, Florencio is responsible for the pastoral care of Catholics serving in the country's military, police, coast guard units and prison service. **(CBCP News)**

## Pagadian Bishop Ronald Lunas installed



Newly installed Bishop Ronaldo Lunas of Pagadian poses for a photo with Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, and other bishops at the Sto. Niño Cathedral in Pagadian City on March 25. **NEMRIC KIEL UMALI**

'HOME at last.'

Around a month after his episcopal ordination, Ronald Lunas was installed on March 25 as bishop of Pagadian in southern Philippines.

Lunas, 52, succeeded Redemptorist Bishop Emmanuel Cabajar, who retired last November after serving then diocese for 14 years.

He was installed at a Mass at Sto. Niño Cathedral, accompanied by Cabajar and Archbishop Martin Jumoad of Ozamiz.

At one part of the three-hour ceremony, he was seated in the bishop's chair, and received the crozier, emblematic of his new post.

"Home at last," Lunas said in his message. "This is how I feel today in my first meeting with you dear people of God."

Attendees included different dioceses, and

visiting bishops led by Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Caccia and Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

Some government officials and lay leaders were also in attendance, including representatives of the Interfaith Forum composed of Muslims, Christians, and indigenous Subanen tribe.

The diocese has about a million Catholics and its hierarchy have traditionally played a major role in interreligious dialogue.

Pope Francis appointed Lunas as the fifth bishop of Pagadian on Nov. 22, 2018.

He was ordained to the episcopate last Feb. 22, making him the first homegrown bishop from the Diocese of Digos in its 40 years of existence. **(CBCP News)**

## New bishop ordained for San Jose de Antique

HAVING chosen "Servant of Jesus Christ" as his episcopal motto, Msgr. Marvyn Maceda was ordained bishop for the Diocese of San Jose de Antique on Tuesday.

Elegant flowers adorned the altar of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Cathedral in Naval, Biliran as Maceda was ordained to the episcopate.

Principal celebrant at the ordination was Palo Archbishop John Du, assisted by Naval Bishop Rex Ramirez and Naval Emeritus Bishop Filomeno Bactol.

The ordination followed the announcement by the Vatican of his appointment last January. He is the first cleric from the 31-year-old diocese to become a bishop.

Maceda, 50, succeeds Jose Romeo Lazo who was named archbishop of Jaro in February 2018.

The attendance included members of the Philippine bishops' conference as well as Papal Nuncio Archbishop Giordano Caccia and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila.

The cardinal, in his homily, urged his former student at the Loyola School of Theology to remain steadfast in his



Bishop Marvyn Maceda imparts his blessing to the faithful after his episcopal ordination at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Naval, Biliran, April 2. **SCREENSHOT/MATT MECA MULTIMEDIA FACEBOOK PAGE**

mission amidst "uncertainties of our times".

"Remain honest before him. And even if your love is humiliated continue serving him... even if it is impossible humanly speaking," Tagle told Maceda.

"But that is at the core of being a bishop, to admit of what is impossible humanly speaking and to believe that with God everything is possible," he noted.

In his message, Maceda has appealed for prayers as he took his new role.

"If you prayed for me that I become a priest, I have become a priest. And now that God has appointed me as bishop, all the more that I need your prayers," he said.

Maceda will formally assume his post in a ceremony at the St. Joseph Cathedral in Antique on April 9. **(CBCPNews)**

## Pope names 2 new Filipino bishops

POPE Francis has made two appointments in the Philippines on March 25.

At 7pm today, he named Fr. Cosme Almedilla as the new bishop of Butuan and Claretian Fr. Leo Dalmao as prelate of Isabela in Basilan.

Almedilla, a clergy of the Diocese of Talibon, succeeds Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos who died in October 2017.

A native of San Miguel, Bohol, the bishop-elect is a product of the St. John XXII College Seminary in Malaybalay City and the Loyola School of Theology (LST) in the Ateneo De Manila University.

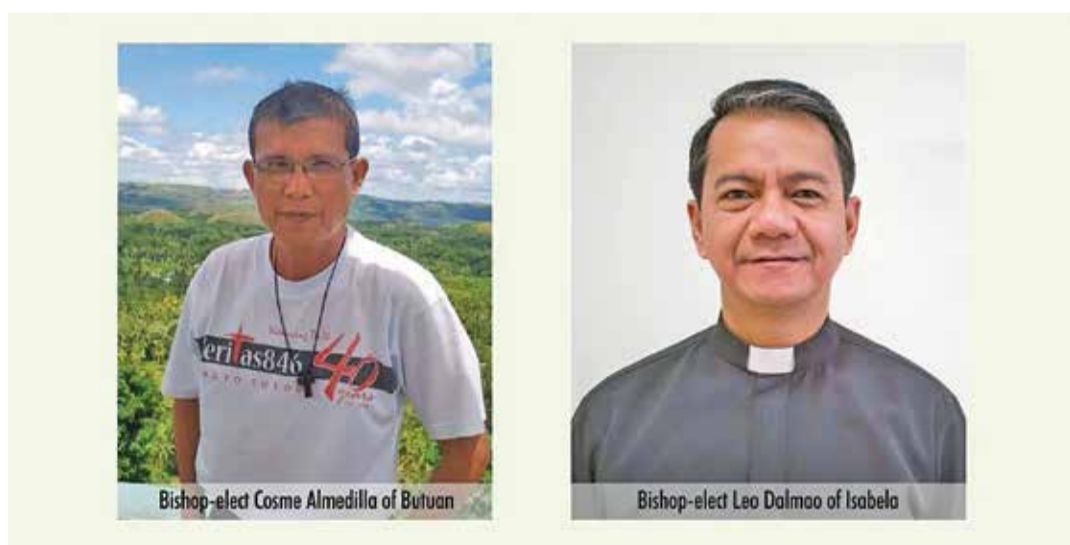
He was ordained a priest on Aug. 4, 1987.

Upon his appointment, the 60-year-old priest has been serving at the Holy Child Parish in Ubay, Bohol.

Among his previous assignments include being the spiritual director at the John XXII College Seminary, Director of the Holy Child Academy in Bohol, and chaplain at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center in Muntinlupa City.

Since 2015, Almedilla, who is also known for promoting the Basic Ecclesial Community movement, has been Assistant Pastoral Director of the Talibon diocese.

Dalmao, meanwhile, will



Pope Francis appointed Fr. Cosme Almedilla as the new bishop of Butuan and Claretian Fr. Leo Dalmao as the new prelate of Isabela in Basilan.

take over the post from Martin Jumoad, who was appointed archbishop of Ozamiz in October 2016.

The bishop-elect is currently serving as Consultor and the Prefect of Formation at the Istituto Guiridico Claretiano in Rome, Italy.

At 49, he will be the first Filipino Claretian to join the College of Bishops.

Born in Tagbilaran City, also in Bohol, he entered the Congregation in 1986 and studied philosophy at Claret Formation Center, now known as St. Anthony Mary Claret College.

After his theology studies at the LST, he was ordained priest by the late Bishop

Emeritus José María Querejeta Mendizábal of Isabela in 1997.

Mendizábal was a Spanish missionary who served as the first Claretian bishop in the Philippines.

Bishop-elect Dalmao is not new to the prelature. After his ordination, he was assigned in Basilan where he served as project coordinator for indigenous people Samal-Badjau.

"Fr. Dalmao's years of stay in the place provided him a chance to know and experience the life and mission of the Claretians in the whole southern Philippines," his Congregation said.

In 2000, he was named

Prefect of Students and three years later, became Novice Master while serving as Consultor and Prefect of Formation of the Philippine Province.

Ten years later, he was elected as superior of the Philippine Province of the Claretian missionaries.

While serving the post, he was also elected as co-chairperson of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines until he was transferred to Rome in 2015.

Dalmao remains to be the first and the only Filipino priest elected to the general government of the Claretians worldwide. **(CBCP News)**

## PH bids farewell to St. Camillus heart relic



Retired Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato venerates the heart relic of St. Camillus de Lellis after the farewell Mass at the Manila Cathedral, March 31. **PHOTO FROM THE MANILA CATHEDRAL**

PHILIPPINE Catholics bid goodbye to the incorrupt heart relic of Saint Camillus de Lellis on Sunday, March 31 at the end of a nearly two-month tour which drew thousands of devotees.

After being kept overnight at the Manila Cathedral, the reliquary containing the saint's heart left Manila on April 1 for Indonesia.

Head coordinator of the trip Camillian Fr. Dan Cancino said he was surprised by the level of interest of many people.

He said the tour was witnessed by thousands of people in 22 archdioceses and dioceses.

"In our lifetime we are fortunate to witness the heart of St. Camillus," said Fr. Cancino, executive secretary of the bishops' Commission on Healthcare.

Fr. Cancino accompanied the relic of the patron saint of the sick and health workers on every stage of the trip.

"The tour may have ended in Philippines but we should

continue the journey by also visiting hospitals, prisons and helping the needy," he said.

At the farewell Mass on Sunday, retired Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato urged the faithful to learn the lessons of "conversion, charity, and service" from the saint.

"Let our love be truly Christian. Let our love reach out in service to the poor, the sick and the needy," Cardinal Quevedo said in his homily.

The heart relic arrived in Manila last Feb. 2 and for the second time after its first visit in 2013.

For several weeks in the country, the relic was also brought to 29 hospitals, 15 parishes, and 12 houses for the elderly, including homes for sick priests and nuns.

St. Camillus' heart was removed an hour after his death on July 14, 1614 and the relic has been enshrined at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Rome, Italy, where he was buried. **(CBCP News)**

# Apostolic Letter in the form of “Motu Proprio” of the Supreme Pontiff Francis on the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable persons



Clerical sex abuse survivors and their supporters rally outside Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome Feb. 21, 2019. PAUL HARING/CNS

THE protection of minors and vulnerable persons is an integral part of the gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to spread throughout the world. In fact, Christ himself entrusted us with the care and protection of the smallest and most defenseless: “*whoever welcomes one child like this in my name, welcomes me*” (Mt 18: 5). Therefore, we all have the duty to generously welcome minors and vulnerable people and to create a safe environment for them, taking their interests first. This requires a continuous and profound conversion, in which personal holiness and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the credibility of the Gospel announcement and renewing the educational mission of the Church.

Therefore, I would like to further strengthen the institutional and regulatory framework to prevent and combat abuses against children and vulnerable people so that in the Roman Curia and in the Vatican City State:

- a community that is respectful and aware of the duty to report abuses to the competent Authorities and to cooperate with them in prevention and contrast activities;
- any abuse or abuse against minors or against vulnerable persons is effectively

prosecuted;

- the right to be received, listened to and accompanied is recognized to those who claim to have been victims of exploitation, sexual abuse or abuse, as well as their families;
- appropriate pastoral care is offered to victims and their families, as well as adequate spiritual, medical, psychological and legal support;
- the defendants are guaranteed the right to a fair and impartial trial, in compliance with the presumption of innocence, as well as the principles of legality and proportionality between the crime and the sentence;
- the person convicted for having abused a child or a vulnerable person is removed from his duties and, at the same time, he is offered adequate support for psychological and spiritual rehabilitation, also for the purpose of social reintegration;
- everything possible is done to rehabilitate the good reputation of those who have been wrongly accused;
- adequate training is provided for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons.

Therefore, with the present Letter I establish that:

1. The competent judicial authorities of Vatican City State exercise criminal jurisdiction even in regard to the offenses referred to in Articles 1 and 3 of Law No. CCXCVII, on protection of children and vulnerable

persons, of 26 March 2019, committed, on the occasion of the exercise of their functions, by the subjects referred to in point 3 of the *Motu Proprio “To our times”*, of 11 July 2013.

2. Without prejudice to the sacramental seal, the subjects referred to in point 3 of the *Motu Proprio “To our times”*, of 11 July 2013, are obliged to present, without delay, a complaint to the promoter of justice at the court of the State of the City of the Vatican whenever, in the exercise of their functions, they have news or reasonable reasons to believe that a child or a vulnerable person is a victim of one of the crimes referred to in Article 1 of Law No. CCXCVII, if also committed alternatively:

- i. in the territory of the State;
- ii. in prejudice of citizens or residents in the State;
- iii. on the occasion of the exercise of their functions, by the public officials of the State or by the subjects referred to in point 3 of the *Motu Proprio “To our times”*, of 11 July 2013.

3. Spiritual, medical and social assistance is offered to persons who have been abused by the crimes referred to in Article 1 of Law No. CCXCVII, including therapeutic and psychological urgency assistance, as well as useful information of a legal nature, through the Managed Accompanying Service by the Directorate of Health and Hygiene of the Governorate of the Vatican City State.

4. The Labor Office of the Apostolic See organizes, together with the Accompanying Service of the Directorate of Health and

Hygiene, training programs for the personnel of the Roman Curia and of the Institutions connected with the Holy See concerning the risks in the matter of exploitation, of sexual abuse and mistreatment of children and vulnerable persons, as well as on the means to identify and prevent such offenses and the obligation to report.

5. In the selection and recruitment of personnel from the Roman Curia and institutions connected with the Holy See, as well as those who collaborate on a voluntary basis, the suitability of the candidate to interact with minors and vulnerable persons must be ascertained.

6. The Dicastries of the Roman Curia and the institutions connected with the Holy See to which minors or vulnerable persons have access have adopted, with the assistance of the Accompanying Service of the Health and Hygiene Directorate, good practices and guidelines for their protection.

I establish that the present Apostolic Letter in the form of “*Motu Proprio*” is promulgated through the publication in *L’Osservatore Romano* and, subsequently, included in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

I agree that what has been established has full and stable value, even repealing all incompatible provisions, starting from June 1, 2019.

Given in Rome at St. Peter’s, March 26, 2019, the seventh of the Pontificate.

FRANCIS

# Facing the spectre of a Divorce Law in the Philippines (V)

## Marriage Invalidity due to Lack of Form

By Fr. Jaime B. Achacoso, J.C.D.

After dedicating the past four issues of this column to the possible marriage invalidity due to lack of capacity or invalid consent (for lack of due discretion or incapacity to assume the essential obligations of marriage due to psychological reasons), we conclude this 5-part series on the alternatives to a divorce law, with a brief consideration of the canonical form of marriage.

### The canonical form of the celebration of marriage

In Christian antiquity, there was no specific external form (or format) for the celebration of the sacrament and even when the liturgical rite became more or less defined, it did not really have a juridic form. Three reasons made the establishment of a juridic substantial form—i.e., a set of external and verifiable circumstances as requirements for the substantial and juridic validity of matrimonial consent—necessary:

1) to make the coming about of a given marriage public within the ecclesial community—i.e., since the couple would henceforth live as husband and wife in the midst of that community;

2) to make the expression of matrimonial consent verifiable with certainty—i.e., by providing for witnesses who could attest to the manifestation of such consent by the contracting parties;

3) to safeguard the specific content of canonical marriage—i.e., by making the presence of the qualified witness depend on his moral certainty that all other canonical requirements for marriage have been fulfilled.

Thus, the configuration of canonical marriage as a formal juridic act (aside from being a consensual act) has been a constant principle in Church law since the Council of Trent established it in 1563. The present Code of Canon Law summarizes this canonical form of Marriage in the following terms:

Can. 1108 — §1. Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local ordinary, or the pastor, or a priest or deacon delegated by either of them, and in the presence of two witnesses, according to the rules expressed in the following canons, with due regard for the exceptions mentioned in cc.144, 1112,§1, and 1127,§§2 and 3.

§2. The one assisting at a marriage is understood to be only that person who, present at the ceremony, asks for the contractants' manifestation of consent and receives it in the name of the Church.

In simple terms, what the canonical form of marriage means is that for

marriage to validly come about, the following formal requirements must be present in the actual marriage ceremony.

### 1<sup>st</sup>: Physical presence of the bride and groom — in person or by legitimate proxy

Can. 1104 — §1. In order for marriage to be contracted validly, it is necessary that the contracting parties be present together, either in person or by proxy.

§2. Those to be married are to express their matrimonial consent in words; however, if they cannot speak, they are to express it by equivalent signs.

Although this is not usually discussed under the heading of the canonical form—usually forming part of the issue of consent—I find it pedagogically better to deal with it here. In fact the configuration of the canonical form as the substantial juridic form of Catholic marriage is a function of the need to provide witness to the expression of mutual consent by the contracting parties. Thus, their physical presence at the wedding is normally presumed.

What could be a novelty for most Catholics is the provision in Canon Law for either or both of the contracting parties to be represented by legitimate proxy, a feature that is absent in civil law. Canon Law regulates this matter in great detail:

Can. 1105 — §1. In order for marriage to be entered validly by proxy, it is required that:

1<sup>o</sup> there is a special mandate to contract marriage with a certain person;

2<sup>o</sup> the proxy is appointed by the person who gave the mandate and that the proxy fulfill this function in person (i.e., the proxy cannot appoint another proxy).

§2. To be valid a mandate must be signed by the person who gave it, as well as by the Pastor (i.e., parish priest) or the Local Ordinary where the mandate was issued, or by a priest delegated by either of these, or at least by two witnesses; or it must be arranged by means of a document which is authentic according to civil law (i.e., duly notarized).

§3. If the person giving the mandate cannot write, this is to be noted in the mandate itself and another witness is to be added who must also sign the document; otherwise, the mandate is invalid.

§4. If the person who gave the mandate revokes it or becomes insane before the proxy has contracted marriage in that person's name, the marriage is invalid, even though either the proxy or the other contracting party was unaware of these developments.



TYLER ORSBURN/CNS

### 2<sup>nd</sup>: A qualified witness — to ask for the consent in the name of the Church

The Code enumerates who can act as the qualified witness:

Can. 1109 — ...within the confines of their territory, the Local Ordinary and the Pastor (parish priest) in virtue of their office, validly assist at the marriages of their subjects as well as of non-subjects provided one of the contractants is of the Latin rite. Thus, the Bishop of the Diocese (in his whole diocese) and the Parish Priest (in his parish) is a qualified witness for marriage.

Can. 1110 — In virtue of their office and within the limits of their jurisdiction, an Ordinary and a Personal Pastor validly assist only at marriages involving at least one of their subjects. Thus, a Bishop (not the Bishop of the Diocese) can validly assist if one of the parties comes from his own diocese; likewise a Military Chaplain can validly assist if one of the parties belongs to the Military Ordinariate.

Can. 1111 — §1. ...the Local Ordinary and the Pastor can delegate to priests and deacons the faculty, even a general one (i.e., not just for a specific marriage), to assist at marriages within the limits of their territory. This is the usual case in a big place like Metro Manila, where people get married at the church of their choice (not their own parishes). Every time a couple get married outside of their parish, the Parish Priest of the church where the marriage is celebrated either assists at the marriage or delegates another priest to do so (usually the priest of choice of the couple).

§2. To be valid the delegation of the faculty to assist at marriages

must be given expressly to specified persons (e.g., if the couple brings their own priest, he must be identified beforehand and his credentials verified.); if it is a question of a special delegation, it is to be granted for a specific marriage; however, if it is a question of a general delegation, it is to be granted in writing.

### 3<sup>rd</sup>: Two other witnesses — also called common witnesses

The Code does not stipulate any requirement. Hence, we can presume the common doctrinal and jurisprudential criteria of: (1) use of reason, and (2) the capacity to perceive the marriage they are witnessing. In sum, the common witnesses should be able to testify regarding the celebration of marriage, especially regarding the exchange of matrimonial consent.

Thus, more than godparents (a common term in the Philippines) we are dealing with simple witnesses, whose only juridic obligation is to be ready to testify that the marriage took place. They don't even have a moral obligation to assist the new couple to live up to their commitments—which is what the word sponsors (another common term in the Philippines) implies.

Another matter is the presence of many sponsors (also quite common in the Philippines) for the purpose of really helping in the material aspects of the wedding—e.g. help defray the cost of the wedding reception, etc. In this case, there would be no need to enter the names of all the so-called sponsors in the Registry of Marriage of the parish (there would not be space for them), but rather just two of them would suffice.

### Conclusion

After the foregoing discussion of the possible causes of marriage invalidity from the start, one understands why a duly celebrated Church marriage enjoys the favor of law: if a canonical marriage has in fact taken place, the presumption of the law is that it is valid.

Nevertheless, its validity can be impugned in an ecclesiastical tribunal, and such claim of invalidity can be demonstrated by considering the elements that go into its juridic structure, all of which are juridically verifiable. However, given the great importance of the marriage bond, the demonstration of its non-existence can only be done through the judicial process—i.e., the most stringent human means for arriving at moral certainty, since every allegation has to stand muster in an adversarial judicial process. This principle has been reiterated of late by Pope Francis (cf. *Mitis Iudex*), despite his well-publicized streamlining of the process for the declaration of marriage nullity.

Rather than legislate divorce, which implies the breaking of a valid marriage bond, what the State can do is align the *Family Code* provisions on the declaration of marriage nullity more with the provisions of Canon Law, which respects the fundamental principle that a validly constituted marriage bond is indissoluble. With the stringent requirements for the valid constitution of the marriage bond in Canon Law, there are more than enough juridic grounds for a possible declaration of nullity. Thus, without breaking the bond, what could be done is to prove its non-existence from the start.

## Taped music at Mass

(Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy and dean of theology at the Regina Apostolorum university, answers the following query: )

**Q:** In the case of a small parish where there is not an organ or piano or a musically talented person to lead singing, is it acceptable to use taped music during Mass for people to sing to? — N.B., Arlington, Texas

**A:** We answered a similar question on November 23, 2004. We will reuse some of this material with some updates.

The relatively few norms that exist on this point tend to explicitly forbid using recorded music during the liturgy. This would also include, most of the time, pre-set accompaniment to live singing, a possibility offered by many modern organs.

The principal documents that deal with music in Church always emphasize the importance of singing and presume the presence of live musicians who are considered as being part of the assembly.

The 1958 instruction “De Musica Sacra” issued by the Congregation of Rites states: “Finally, only those musical instruments which are played by the personal action of the artist may be admitted to the sacred liturgy, and not those which are operated automatically or mechanically.”

This document followed Pope Pius XII's 1955 encyclical “Musicae Sacrae,” in which he insisted that liturgical music be “true art” if it is to be a genuine act of worship and praise of God.

Although these documents precede the Second Vatican Council, there is practically nothing in the conciliar or post-conciliar documents which would contradict the principles enunciated or invalidate their general normative value.

Indeed the council's insistence that choir and musicians form part of the liturgical assembly would even strengthen the presumption against the use of mechanical music.

According to the above documents, it is preferable to sing without musical accompaniment than resort to artificial means.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states in Nos. 39-40:

“The Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (cf. Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus Saint Augustine says rightly, ‘Singing is for one who loves.’ There is also the ancient proverb: ‘One who sings well prays twice.’

“Great importance should, therefore, be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly. Although it is not always necessary (e.g., in weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are of themselves meant to be sung, every care should be taken

that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.”

Later, the same document (in No. 312) states:

“The choir should be positioned with respect to the design of each church so as to make clearly evident its character as a part of the gathered community of the faithful fulfilling a specific function. The location should also assist the choir to exercise its function more easily and conveniently allow each choir member full, sacramental participation in the Mass.”

The same principles are also valid for organists and other musicians.

All the same, there is one circumstance where universal norms have permitted pre-recorded music, if somewhat timidly, in the Directory for Children's Masses. No. 32 of this document states:

“Care should always be taken, however, that the musical accompaniment does not overpower the singing or become a distraction rather than a help to the children. Music should correspond to the purpose intended for the different periods at which it is played during the Mass.

“With these precautions and with due and special discretion, recorded music may also be used in Masses with children, in accord with norms established by the conferences of

bishops.”

Some bishops' conferences have also published guidelines on this topic, for example, the U.S. bishops' conference 2007 document “Sing to the Lord” says:

“93. Recorded music lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. While recorded music might be used advantageously outside the Liturgy as an aid in the teaching of new music, it should not, as a general norm, be used within the Liturgy.

“94. Some exceptions to this principle should be noted. Recorded music may be used to accompany the community's song during a procession outside and, when used carefully, in Masses with children. Occasionally, it might be used as an aid to prayer, for example, during long periods of silence in a communal celebration of reconciliation. However, recorded music should never become a substitute for the community's singing.”

A similar document from the Canadian bishops' conference was issued in 2015, stating:

“33 The human voice: The human voice should always hold a primary place in the music-making of the Church. For this reason, recorded music must never replace the singing of the assembly, nor should it displace the ministry of other musicians. Only in cases of necessity

may recorded music be used in the liturgy for the purpose of supporting the song of the assembly.”

It later repeats this principle when referring to music at a wedding in No. 137.

Strangely, however, when citing the possible exceptions “in cases of necessity” the footnote refers to the Directory for Masses with Children, No. 32. This would appear to be an extension of a limited exception to wider circumstances.

On the other hand, the Italian bishops' conference has gone further and has explicitly forbidden the use of recorded music in the liturgy. This prohibition even covers children's Masses by calling attention to the need for the “veracity” of important liturgical signs such as singing, and furthermore “stresses the duty of educating in song the assembly of little ones that participate in the Sacred Celebration.”

For this reason, the conference states, “It is good to use recorded music to teach the songs outside of the sacred celebration but it is not permitted to use it during Mass.”

The reason the Church insist on this point is that the use of music in the liturgy is always to enhance the quality of liturgical prayer and can never be considered as entertainment.

It is practically impossible for recorded music to serve the same function.

# A 2019 Easter Manifesto

## A Passover Meditation for the Filipino People

By Religious Discernment Group

1. We are a people whose living faith has seen us through critical periods in our history. Today, an even greater faith in a merciful God and in ourselves as a nation is called for. Obstacles that in the past have blocked our path towards nationhood pale in comparison with the amoral brutishness the relentless battering the Duterte regime is subjecting the moral fiber itself of our people. The indomitable spirit of the Filipino is under tremendous pressure. Political patronage is rampant. No institution of our democratic system and no well-meaning individual have been spared the smear of dirt the presidential snout untiringly spouts. Long standing traditions of propriety and good breeding have been set aside. *Isinantabi ang delikadesang ating kinagisanan at pawang kagaspangan at kahalayan ang ipinairal.* (That sense of decency upon which we were raised has been set aside; rudeness and obscenity have taken over.) The shady and secretive deals our economic and political leaders have entered into with foreign powers are compromising our sovereignty as a people. No sector of Philippine society has been left unscathed and unmolested. The Filipina is disrespected. Not even a statue in honor of the misnamed and maligned “comfort women” has been left untouched. Children are by law (legal maneuvers!) rendered criminals and are unduly punished.

2. We deplore the shame that has befallen us. We denounce the morally bankrupt leadership of Rodrigo Roa Duterte. We accuse him and his cohorts of unprecedented corruption, enriching themselves by exploiting the poorest of the land—indigenous communities, farmers, coconut growers, peasants, and laborers. They lie and cheat with impunity. They perpetuate dynasties that enable a few families to appropriate vast political and economic powers. They have prostituted our democratic and

cultural values. They have betrayed our trust. They have stolen the future of the yet unborn Filipino by squandering at bargain prices our country’s natural resources.

The Duterte government will have to account for the thousands of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances that have taken place since this administration began its brutal war on drugs in 2016 which has seen from 20,000-30,000 dead, according to human rights group Karapatan. Its blatant disregard for the value of human lives is alarming. There is total disregard for the observance of human rights and due process proper to any civilized society. The data speak for themselves: an average of almost 82 cases of human rights violations per day or a total number of 29,869 victims from January to December 7, 2018, killings of human rights defenders per sector this 2018 -Farmers = 71, Indigenous People = 29, Fisherfolk = 4, other civilians = 30. (Source: Karapatan)

3. The poor majority of Filipinos are facing increasing difficulty in surviving under the continuation and intensification of economic policies that only aggravate the already dehumanizing poverty of the Filipino peasant and workers. Filipino laborers, who were recently described as slow and lazy by Ramon Tulfo, Duterte’s special envoy to China, already work in extreme slave-like conditions. They do not receive the minimum wage and remain contractual all their lives. Farmers, farmworkers and indigenous peoples, likewise, subsist under impoverished and unhealthy conditions. They are deprived of the right to land and life, forced to fight for land rightfully theirs but are met with bullets and slaughtered like animals.

4. The coming elections are crucial to the life of the nation. It could mean the end of the internationally notorious Duterte administration, shameful for its shamelessness,

and a fresh start for the citizenry. But there are foreboding signs. Intensified election-related violence and massive electoral fraud are already a given. And there are indications that the election will be manipulated to advance the purposes of those in power. The controversial PECOS machines are already installed and in place.

5. A failed election will surely be used as an excuse to impose martial law nationwide and the perpetuation of the Duterte administration in a hold-over capacity. Moreover, former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is pushing, no holds barred, for a parliamentary system of government. She is itching to become its first prime minister. Her addiction to power knows no human limits and her subtle and not-so-subtle maneuvers are already bearing fruit. Plunder charges against her were dismissed and, like mushrooms after the rain, she sprouted from darkness to become the speaker of the House.

6. Let us say a resounding NO to a holdover government, NO to military rule. Together let us work for credible elections. God forbid, but a failure of election could as well signal our failure as a nation. The dictator-in-waiting has publicly claimed that he would do everything in his power to prevent the Philippines from joining the ranks of failed states. In the event that such a catastrophe take place—God forbid—Rodrigo Duterte would be hard put to deny that he caused it. But then Panelo, the official blabbermouth, would explain that, “in fairness”, the former mayor of Davao made use of hyperbole to prepare us for the eventuality.

7. Ritually, in observance of Holy Week, we have shared the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. In real life, in this our beautiful and dangerous land, we have accompanied Him bearing our own pain and suffering in the hope of

resurrection.

8. In Gethsemane, Jesus admonished his Apostles to watch, stay with him, and pray. Today, he is asking us to do the same. ***The call of the hour is prophetic vigilance.*** In one prophetic voice we must denounce this *dutertic* orgy of betrayal, name the Judases that surround him in order to unmask them. We have what it takes to thwart the diabolical wiles of the incipient Duterte dictatorship in its attempt to degrade our standing as people within the international community of nations.

9. We are a people blest, notwithstanding the negative picture the cowardly trolls of the administration would like to imagine. God has endowed us with a magnanimous spirit. We have long-suffering, grit and intelligence. We have what it takes to bear the cross of suffering but also what it takes to bring about our resurrection, with God leading the way.

10. We have what it takes to restore hope in the heart of every Filipino, to recover her or his dignity as a citizen of this country. We have had the patience to wait for our moment of grace.

11. We call on everyone to discern our options and make carefully considered plans for collective action. Let us come together in united, common purpose. Let us build on what we have. Let us find and support true leaders from amongst us to replace those unworthy of our trust. Let us organize on the grassroots level and affirm the right and the duty to vote. Let us move to sustain the fervor of those who want their votes to count so the people’s sovereign will could prevail in this land of the morning sun.

We hope and we believe in the God of Mercy who never abandons his people. We have made an offering of the violated lives of our martyrs on the crucible of Calvary. May their blood be the seed of our people’s deliverance from hunger, oppression and violence.

As the ancient people of Israel prayed, we pray for liberation, for freedom. We pray for our Passover.

Lord of the Universe, keep us safe and deliver us from evil. Amen.

(Note: This document was signed by the 61 participants of a Lenten gathering of Clergy and Religious held on March 16, 2019, at the UST Angelicum College in Quezon City.)

## People’s Choice Movement

By Bishop Broderick Pabillo



THE Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has been bringing out statements to guide the people on issues that affect the country. There have been voices, even among the bishops, questioning if these statements are being heeded at all. In spite of the doubts about the effectivity of these statements, the CBCP has decided once more in its plenary session last January to issue another statement on the forthcoming elections, with a faint hope that at least some people may be guided by it and act on it. Its statement, released last January 28, 2019, is entitled: “Seek the Common Good.” Among other things, it paints the crucial situation we are in:

“The midterm election in May 13 is crucial. In our country today the checks and balances in the government are being undermined. So far the senate is the institution in the government that is holding out as our country is inching towards total control. It is very crucial therefore that we elect candidates who are principled, courageous and who have the common good as their main concern and not their own political interests.”

So it encouraged lay people to bond and reflect together to pick the right candidates:

“We encourage voters to be very discerning in their votes. Let the lay groups engage in discernment circles to help one another know the candidates well and choose the

candidates with the common good of the whole country in mind and not according to what the candidates promise, much less according to what they have received from these candidates.”

Then it pointed out a type of engagement that lay people can engage in:

“Participation in politics for Christian lay people is not just to be limited to non-partisan involvement. Christians are also encouraged to engage in principled partisan participation. This means that they can campaign for good candidates as an exercise of their Christian faith.”

A not insignificant group of some 130 lay Christian leaders heeded the call. They organized themselves and discerned together the best senatorial candidates to support among the 62 contestants. Since 2015 these Christian leaders from the Catholic, Evangelical and Protestant persuasions have come up with GABAYKRISTO, a set of Christian criteria by which to measure the politicians. They researched the stance of the 62 candidates on various important national issues. They got the profiles of the candidates and they met several times to set up the criteria for screening the candidates. This is a serious kind of discernment circle that the bishops have been calling out. They call themselves the PEOPLE’S CHOICE MOVEMENT.

People / 87

## Lenten resolutions for a healthy environment

By Bishop Ambo David

1. I will not use toothpicks because I know that they tend to get mixed up with food wastes and can end up getting stuck in the throats of animals fed with food wastes.

2. I will not use plastic straw tubes, plastic sachets, plastic wrappers for candies, junk foods, and snack items, plastic bags because I know that it takes between 450 to 1000 years for plastic to biodegrade.

3. If I use plastic at all, I will make sure I do so only sparingly and responsibly, making sure that it is disposed of in such a way that it does not end up in canals, esteros, rivers, seas and oceans, or even in the intestines of animals.

4. I will not use disposable diapers or disposable sanitary napkins because I know that they are sanitary only for the user, but very unsanitary for the environment. (The biodegradable waste is hard to segregate from the nonbiodegradable product.)

5. I will not buy or use products made of styrofoams and aerosol cans that contain CFC (Chlorofluorocarbon), which is very harmful to the earth’s ozone layer.

6. I will not mix toxic wastes like busted fluorescent lamp bulbs, batteries, chemical bottles, etc., with residual solid wastes.

7. I will not let tapwater flow while soaping my hands or brushing my teeth.

8. I will use water and soap to clean my butt instead of toilet paper, not just because we get to save more trees, but because it is more sanitary, in the first place.

9. I will bring and use my own reusable bag or basket when buying grocery items.

10. I will practice and promote proper waste segregation at home or wherever I can.

11. I will responsibly produce compost with the biodegradable wastes that I generate, right in my backyard.

12. I will consciously recycle all recyclable solid waste items.

13. I will familiarize myself with the environmental laws of our country, especially with the Ecological

Solid Waste Management Act, the Clean Air Act, & the Clean Water Act.

14. I will refrain from burning solid wastes and polluting the air.

15. Whenever possible, I will install inside toilet water tanks a one-liter plastic bottle filled with water so as to save 1 liter of water with every flushing.

16. I will refrain from throwing towels, beddings, and clothes in the laundry basket if they are not really soiled or smelly yet.

17. I will turn off the office airconditioning units one hour before end of office hours.

18. I will save the seeds of the vegetables that I eat, wash them, dry them, sow them, and transplant them in proper compost containers in order to produce and share my own veggies.

19. I will consciously save the seeds of fruits that I eat and, when traveling in the countryside, take time to sow them or just throw them in open and vacant spaces.

20. I will consciously refrain from buying things I do not need.

21. I will consciously refrain from keeping things I do not need or use. I will find ways to give them away for charity, such as Segunda Mana of Caritas.

22. I will turn off the light when not needed.

23. I will support or join advocacy groups that push for collective action against environmental abuse.

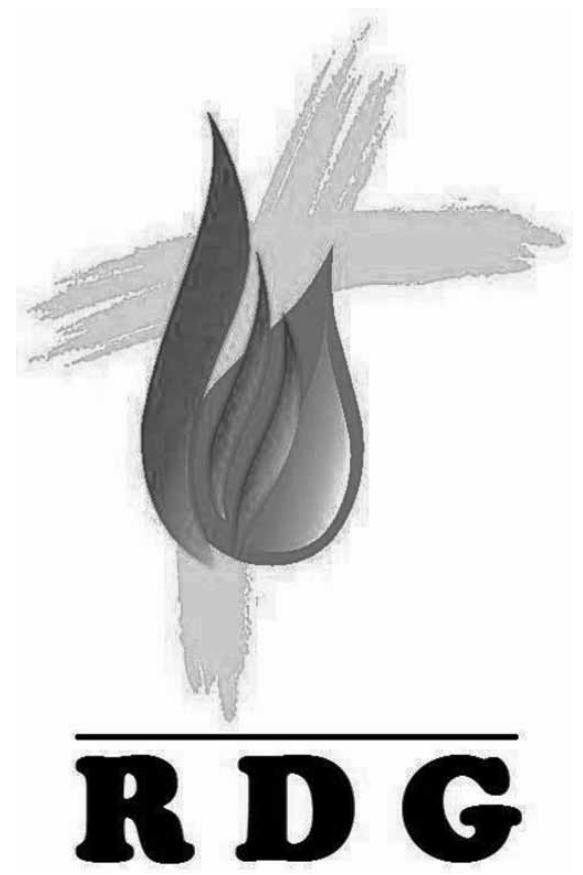
24. I will consciously start switching from energy generated by fossil fuel, to clean (e.g. Wind-, Water- or Solar-powered) energy.

25. I will refrain from taking a taxi, a jeepney, or a tricycle for short distances which I can walk anyway.

26. I will consciously decrease my intake of animal meats and gradually go for a more plant-based diet as I get older.

27. I will go out of my way to report to the proper authorities such incidents as busted water pipes, the start of a brush fire, and other similar hazards that can cause harm on the environment.

28. I will pass on these resolutions to as many people as I can.



Law N. CCXCVII

# On the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons

March 26, 2019



Pope Francis leads the opening session of the meeting on the protection of minors in the church at the Vatican Feb. 21, 2019. At left is Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago, a member of the meeting's organizing committee. VATICAN MEDIA

## THE Holy Father Francis

- having regard to the *Basic Law of the Vatican City State*, dated 26 November 2000;
- having regard to the *Law on Sources of Law N. LXXI*, dated 1 October 2008;
- having regard to the *Motu Proprio «In our times»*, of 11 July 2013;
- having regard to Law No. VIII, containing complementary norms in criminal matters, of 11 July 2013;
- having regard to Law No. IX, concerning amendments to the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, of 11 July 2013;
- having regard to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, concluded in New York on November 20, 1989, ratified by the Holy See, also on behalf of and for the account of the Vatican City State, on April 20, 1990;
- having regard to the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography*, concluded in New York on 25 May 2000, ratified by the Holy See, also on behalf of and for the account of the Vatican City State, 24 October 2001;

adopted the following  
**Law**

### Article 1 (Scope of application)

1. This law applies to the offenses referred to in Title II of Law No. VIII, which contains complementary rules in criminal matters, of 11 July 2013, as well as to the offenses referred to in articles 372, 386, 389, 390 and 391 penal code, if committed to the detriment of a minor or a person treated as such.

2. For the purposes of the present law, the « child » is treated as « vulnerable person ».

3. Every person in a state of infirmity, of physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty is vulnerable who in fact, even occasionally, limits their capacity to intend or to want or in any case to resist the offense.

### Article 2

### (Procedures and statute of limitations)

1. The offenses referred to in Article 1 may be prosecuted ex officio.
2. The limitation period for the offenses referred to in Article 1 is twenty years and begins, in the case of offense to a minor, from the age of eighteen.

### Article 3 (Obligation to report)

1. Without prejudice to the sacramental seal, the public official who, in the performance of his duties, has news or reasonable grounds to believe that a child is a victim of one of the crimes referred to in Article 1 must file a complaint without delay if the offenses are also alternatively committed:
  - a) in the territory of the Vatican City State;
  - b) to the detriment of residents or citizens of the State;
  - c) on the occasion of the exercise of their functions, by the public officials of the Vatican City State or by the subjects referred to in point 3 of the *Motu Proprio «To our times»*, of 11 July 2013.

2. Unless the fact constitutes a more serious offense, the public official who omits or unduly delays the complaint referred to in the preceding paragraph shall be punished with a fine from one thousand to five thousand euros. If the offense is committed by a judicial police officer or officer, the punishment is imprisonment for up to six months.

3. Without prejudice to the sacramental seal, any other person, even wholly extraneous to the facts, who is aware of behavior against a child may make a complaint.

4. If the proceeding is against a cleric or a member of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life, the promoter of justice, having received the complaint, promptly informs the Ordinary or the Major Superior Competent for the adoption of the measures provided for by canon law.

### Article 4 (General protection measures)

In criminal proceedings, the injured person:

- a) is informed about the rights and services available to it, as well as, if requested, about the results of the individual phases of the procedure;

b) is informed of the adoption and termination in any capacity of provisions restrictive of personal liberty, provisional or final, imposed on the defendant;

c) directly or through the counsel, can provide evidence, solicit the completion of specific investigative activities and ask to be heard;

d) has the right to the protection of its image and private sphere, as well as the confidentiality of personal data;

e) has the right to take appropriate measures to avoid direct contact with the accused, subject to the mandatory requirements of the procedure.

### Article 5 (Hearing of the child)

When the child is audited:

a) the minor can be accompanied by one of his lawyers, as well as by an adult of his trust admitted by the proceeding authority;

b) the hearing of the 14-year-old minor is always conducted with the help of a psychologist and in a manner appropriate to the purpose. In the same way the judicial authority proceeds in any other case in which it deems appropriate such modalities;

c) the deposition is also documented by video recording, which must be acquired as evidence in court.

### Article 6 (Investigations)

1. The promoter of justice requires the adoption, also provisionally, of the measures necessary to:

- a) guarantee the safety and physical integrity of the offended person;
- b) remove the suspect from the offended person or other minors;
- c) preventing the repetition of crimes;
- d) protect the injured person and his family from any intimidation or retaliation.

2. The promoter of justice, in the event that the legal representatives are in conflict of interest with the child, asks the single judge to appoint a special administrator who, at the expense of the State, represents his interests.

3. The promoter of justice, for the protection of the injured person:

- a) ensures that investigations are carried out with priority and in respect of the dignity and physical and mental integrity of the offended person;
- b) assumes without delay the depo-

sition of the injured person;

c) directs the offended person to the Accompanying Service referred to in Article 9.

4. The promoter of justice, together with the Directorate of Security and Civil Protection Services and with the accompanying service referred to in Article 9, adopts guidelines on the procedures to be followed in judicial police activities involving minors.

### Article 7 (Judgment)

When proceeding for one of the crimes referred to in article 1, the judicial authority, to protect the minor:

a) may order that proceedings be held in camera;

b) may arrange for the minor to lay in videoconference or through the use of a mirror glass together with an intercom system;

c) in cases where legal representatives are in conflict of interest with the child, appoint a special trustee who, at the expense of the State, represents their interests;

d) if the accused is a cleric or a member of an institute of consecrated life or of a society of apostolic life, he transmits, together with the sentence, a copy of the proceedings of the trial to the ordinary or the major superior competent for the adoption of the measures provided for by canon law.

### Article 8 (Directorate of Health and Hygiene)

1. The President of the Governorate, on the proposal of the Directorate of Health and Hygiene, adopts guidelines for the protection of minors.

2. The Directorate of Health and Hygiene has an accompanying service for victims of abuse. It identifies within it a qualified expert to whom the coordination of this service is entrusted, as Manager.

### Article 9 (Escort service)

The accompanying service:

- a) offers a listening service;
- b) guarantees medical and social assistance to injured persons and their families, including emergency therapeutic and psychological assistance;
- c) illustrates to the injured person his / her rights and the way to enforce them;
- d) facilitates the appeal of the

offended person to the judicial authority;

e) takes into account the opinion and needs of the injured party, protecting their image and privacy, as well as the confidentiality of personal data;

f) adopts guidelines for the treatment of minors who use them.

### Article 10 (Training)

1. The Accompanying Service provides children, their parents, trainers, educators and managers with adequate information on the risks of exploitation, sexual abuse and mistreatment, as well as on the means to identify and prevent such offenses.

2. The Labor Office of the Apostolic See organizes, in consultation with the Accompanying Service, training programs for the staff of the Governorate concerning the risks of exploitation, sexual abuse and child abuse, as well as the means to identify and to prevent these offenses and the obligation to report.

### Article 11 (Staff recruitment)

1. In the selection and hiring of the staff of the Governorate, as well as of those who collaborate voluntarily, the suitability of the candidate to interact with the minors must be ascertained.

2. The Personnel Selection Commission uses the Accompanying Service to adopt guidelines and define procedures in order to ascertain the suitability of the candidates.

### Article 12 (Entry into force)

This law comes into force on June 1, 2019.

We command that the original of the present law, bearing the seal of the State, be deposited in the Archive of the laws of the State of Vatican City and the corresponding text is published, as well as in the Supplement of the Acta Apostolicae Sedis, by posting in the courtyard of St. Damasus, at the door of the offices of the Governorate and in the post offices of the State, sending himself to anyone who is responsible for observing it and having it observed.

Vatican City, 26 March of the year 2019, VII of Our Pontificate.

Vicariate of the Vatican City

# Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons

March 26, 2019

THE Holy Father Francis

- having regard to the Chirograph of St. John Paul II for spiritual care in the Vatican City, dated January 14th 1991;
- having regard to Law No. CCXCVII, on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, of 26 March 2019;
- awaited the particular nature of pastoral activities carried out within the Vatican City State;
- wishing to introduce specific measures within the Vatican City Vicariate for the care and protection of minors and vulnerable persons;

has adopted the following  
**Guidelines**

Premise

Safeguarding minors and vulnerable people is an integral part of the Church's mission. The Vicariate of the Vatican City, entrusted with the pastoral care of the faithful residing in the State, as well as in the Pontifical Villas of Castel Gandolfo, participates fully in this mission, firmly rooted in the conviction that each person has a unique value as created in the image and likeness of God. In fact, "the effective protection of minors and the commitment to guarantee them human and spiritual development in keeping with the dignity of the human person are an integral part of the Gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to spread in the world." (Chirograph for the establishment of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, of 22 March 2014)

## A. Scope of application

Canon law and the legislation of the Vatican City State regarding the protection of minors and vulnerable persons must be scrupulously respected.

The policies and procedures contained in these guidelines are aimed at establishing and maintaining an ecclesial community that is respectful and aware of the rights and needs of children and vulnerable persons, attentive to the risks of exploitation, sexual abuse and mistreatment, in the context of the activities carried out within the Vicariate of the Vatican City. They are addressed to: the canons, the coadjutors and the clergy of St. Peter's Basilica; parish priests and assistants in the parishes of San Pietro and Sant'Anna in the Vatican; chaplains and spiritual assistants who have received a pastoral assignment from the Vicar General; the priests, deacons and educators of the Preseminario San Pio X; members of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life who have permanent residence in the Vatican City State; all those who work for any reason, individual or associated, within the ecclesial community of the Vicariate of the Vatican City.

For the purposes of these guidelines, "vulnerable persons" are equated with "minors".

## B. The referent for the protection of minors

The Vicar General appoints a Referent for the protection of minors who coordinates and verifies the implementation of these guidelines so that, within the Vicariate, a community that is respectful and aware of the rights and needs of children is maintained, as well as careful to prevent any form of violence or abuse. The Coordinator will coordinate the prevention and training activities of pastoral workers and will take particular care to welcome and accompany those who claim to have been victims of exploitation, sexual abuse or mistreatment, as well as their families.

The Referrer makes use of the professional support of the Accompanying Service, managed by the Directorate of Health and Hygiene of the Governorate, and of the Labor Office of the Apostolic See.

## C. Pastoral workers

1. In the choice of pastoral workers, the suitability of the candidates



Pope Francis talks with children as he meets with priests, religious men and women and the ecumenical Council of Churches at the cathedral in Rabat, Morocco, March 31, 2019. PAUL HARING/CNS

to interact with the minors must be ascertained, through an adequate investigation and verifying also the absence of prejudicial judicial charges.

2. Pastoral care workers must receive adequate training on the risks of exploitation, sexual abuse and child abuse, as well as on the means to identify and prevent these offenses. They are also required to participate in training programs organized by the Labor Office of the Apostolic See, in conjunction with the Accompanying Service.

3. Occasional collaborators are informed about the behaviors to be taken in interaction with minors, as well as about prohibited behaviors.

## D. Pastoral activities

1. In pastoral activities involving minors, the protection of these must be given priority. Therefore, in the course of their activities, pastoral workers must:

- use prudence and respect in relating to minors;
- provide them with positive reference models;
- always be visible to others when they are in the presence of minors;
- report to the responsible any potentially dangerous behavior;
- respect the sphere of confidentiality of the child;
- inform the parents or guardians of the proposed activities and the related organizational methods;
- use due prudence in communicating with minors, also by telephone and on social networks.

2. It is strictly forbidden for pastoral workers:

- inflict corporal punishments of any kind;
- establish a preferential relationship with an individual minor;
- leave a child in a potentially dangerous situation due to his or her mental or physical safety;
- turn to a minor in an offensive manner or engage in inappropriate or sexually suggestive behavior;
- discriminate against a minor or a group of children;
- ask a child to keep a secret;
- give gifts to a minor discriminating the rest of the group;
- photograph or film a minor without the written consent of his parents or guardians;
- publish or disseminate, via the web or social network, images that recognize a child in a recognizable way without the consent of parents or guardians.

3. Pastoral activities are carried out in rooms suitable for the age and stage of development of minors. As

far as possible, pastoral workers must take particular care to ensure that minors do not enter or remain in places hidden from sight or out of control.

4. Any inappropriate behavior or bullying that may occur among minors, even if they do not integrate the details of a crime, must be dealt with promptly, with balance, prudence and delicacy, immediately informing the parents or guardians.

## E. Informed consent of parents or guardians

1. The written consent of parents or guardians for the participation of minors in pastoral activities is indispensable. Parents or guardians receive information on the proposed activity, as well as on the names and contact details of the managers.

2. The written consent of parents or guardians is also required to photograph or film minors and to publish photographs or videos that portray them, as well as to contact the child, even by telephone and on social networks.

3. Authorizations containing sensitive data are kept with care and attention.

## F. Treatment of reports of alleged cases of exploitation, sexual abuse or mistreatment

1. Those who claim to have been victims of exploitation, sexual abuse or ecclesial abuse, as well as their families, have the right to be welcomed, listened to and accompanied. The Vicar General, directly or through the Referent for the protection of minors, will listen to them, pledging to guarantee adequate spiritual assistance and protecting their image and privacy, as well as the confidentiality of personal data. The Vicar General will be able to entrust the spiritual accompaniment of the offended persons and their family members to a qualified priest.

2. The injured persons will also be offered medical and social assistance, including urgent therapeutic and psychological assistance, as well as useful information of a legal nature, also availing of the accompanying service managed by the Health and Hygiene Department.

3. Without prejudice to the sacramental seal, pastoral workers, collaborators and volunteers who have news of a child being a victim of exploitation, sexual abuse or mistreatment, shall inform the Vicar General directly or through the Referent for the protection of minors.

4. The Vicar General or the Referent asks the author of the report to

formalize it in writing, also for the purpose of communicating it to the promoter of justice in the court of the State of Vatican City. The author of the report will be encouraged to complain directly to the promoter of justice in the Vatican City State court.

5. If the alleged perpetrator of the facts is a cleric or a member of an Institute of consecrated life or of a Society of apostolic life, the Vicar General, having received the news, communicates it without delay to his own Ordinary or to the Major Superior.

6. Whenever the news of a crime is not manifestly groundless, the Vicar General reports it to the promoter of justice in the Vatican City State Court and removes the presumed author of the facts from the pastoral activities of the Vicariate.

7. In case of written and justified opposition of the injured person or his legal representatives, or of decline to formalize the notification in writing, the Vicar General will not transmit it to the promoter of justice unless, having heard the Contact for the protection of minors, believes that the report is necessary to protect the injured person or other children from danger.

8. In the cases of his competence and without prejudice to the investigations conducted in civil proceedings, the Vicar General personally or through a presbyter expert in procedural matters and prudent in discernment carries out the preliminary investigation according to the norm of canon 1717 CIC. The investigation is conducted as a priority.

9. When required by the circumstances, the competent Ordinary may delegate the competence to conduct the preliminary investigation to the Vicar General.

10. In the proceedings, the criminal conduct, the generality and the age of the offended persons, the damage caused and the possible commingling with the sacramental forum are verified. Documents, evidence and testimonies from the various areas and environments where the suspect has worked can be collected. The Vicar General can also make use of depositions, testimonies, documents and expert opinions collected in the civil court, as well as any judgments or decisions regarding the subject of the investigation by the jurisdictional organs of the State. To this end, the Vicar General may suspend the proceedings pending the conclusion of the civil investigation.

11. During the proceedings we will take care of:

a) work for the healing of every person involved;

b) collect the testimony of the offended person without delay and in a manner appropriate to the purpose;

c) refer the offended person to the Accompanying Service managed by the Health and Hygiene Department;

d) illustrate to the injured party what his rights are and how to enforce them, including the possibility of providing evidence and asking to be heard directly or through an intermediary;

e) to inform the injured party, if he so requests, of the results of the individual stages of the proceedings;

f) encourage the injured person to avail themselves of the assistance of civil and canonical consultants;

g) preserve the injured person and his family from any intimidation or retaliation;

h) protect the image and the private sphere, as well as the confidentiality of the personal data of the injured party.

12. The presumption of innocence must always be guaranteed, protecting the reputation of the suspect. Unless there are serious reasons to the contrary, the suspect is promptly informed of the charges against him, in order to be able to defend himself against them. He is invited to avail himself of the assistance of civil and canonical consultants. He will also be offered spiritual and psychological assistance.

13. Where there is reason to believe that the offenses can be repeated, the appropriate precautionary measures are taken without delay.

14. If the investigation reveals the likelihood of the crime, the Vicar General submits the case to the competent Dicastery. Otherwise, the Vicar General issues a motivated filing decree, keeping in its archive the documentation certifying the activities carried out and the reasons for the decision taken.

15. Anyone found guilty of committing one of the crimes referred to in Article 1 of Law No. CCXCVII, on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, of 26 March 2019, will be removed from his posts; he will be offered adequate support for psychological and spiritual rehabilitation, as well as for social reintegration purposes.

I arrange that these guidelines are observed ad experimentum for a period of three years.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, March 26, 2019, seventh of the Pontificate.

# Compassion for a sinner of passion Renewed and saved by God's merciful love

5th Sunday of Lent, Year C, (John 8:1-11)  
April 7, 2019

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD



IF ONE cares to observe people closely, it may be noticed that the most compassionate and merciful persons to those who have fallen into such mortal sin as murder, adultery and apostasy, or those whom society reject are those who lead holy lives. One, for example, need not doubt the compassion of the late Mother Theresa for the scum of the earth. On the other hand, those who easily condemn people who commit mistake and who cannot easily forgive those who wrong them are those who are self-righteous. The latter usually demand high standards that they themselves are not able to meet. Nowhere is this true than in the Gospel of the Fifth Sunday of Lent, which relates an incident about a woman who was caught in the very act of adultery (John 7:53-8:11). (This story, it may be observed, seems not a part of the original Gospel of John. For one thing, it is not found in all the best manuscripts. Those that contain

it place it after 7:36, others at the end of the Gospel. Moreover, other manuscripts have it in the Gospel of Luke. Many scholars note that the style is more Lukan than Johannine. But there is a point to the opinion that the narrative took a long time before it could be included in the Gospel because of the quick and uncomplicated forgiveness of the woman, which seems to contradict the harsh and rigorous penitential discipline in the early Church. But it is an authentic story that goes back to the historical Jesus.)

It may be noted that, in the Gospel of John, the preaching of Jesus had such an impact that the Jewish leaders plotted his death (5:18; 7:1). In their determination to expose him as a false prophet and thereby condemn him, they tried to score a point in law. While Jesus was teaching in the Temple area, the Scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They thought

of putting him in a dilemma: if he should agree to have her stoned, he could appear as an enemy of Rome, which alone had the authority over capital punishment. If he would not, he could break the Jewish law, which prescribes stoning for adulterers: "If within the city a man comes upon a maiden who is betrothed, and has relations with her, you shall bring them both out to the gate of the city and there stone them to death" (Deut 22:22-23; see also Lev 20:10). (The dilemma resembles to the one on the question of paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:13-17). If Jesus favors the paying of taxes to the Emperor, the common people would reject him, for they saw the paying of taxes as a violation of the commandment that there is only one Lord who gave Israel their land. But if he counsels non-payment of taxes, the Roman would mark him a rebel.

Poor woman! Dragged out from the experience of personal intimacy,

Compassion / B7

## Jesus: The innocent One who extends God's mercy till death

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Year C, Luke 22:14-23:56,  
Alay Kapwa Sunday, April 14, 2019

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

SO CENTRAL TO all the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke) that the stories of the Lord's passion, not without reason, have been described as passion narratives with an introduction. (By passion narrative we mean the sections of the canonical gospels which recount the last days of Jesus, beginning with his entrance to Jerusalem and ending with his crucifixion, death and burial.) But although they basically agree in the general outline of the story of the passion, yet they differ in many details and in their theological emphases. This year, we read the passion narrative according to Luke (22:14-23:56), whose unique features are the lack of any formal night hearing (22:54) and a separate hearing before Herod (23:6-11). But its theological interest lies, among others, in presenting Jesus as the innocent righteous one who suffers and extends God's mercy until death.

That the innocent suffers is one of the enigmas of human life. That the guilty should go to jail, suffer and even die for his crime is logical as it is moral. But, for the innocent to suffer for a crime he did not commit—that is beyond human understanding. Reason does not provide any basis for it. That is why it is beyond comprehension why Jesus should undergo his passion. The Jewish leaders, according to Luke, lodged three accusations against Jesus: subversion, opposition to the payment of taxes to Caesar, and



claim to kingship (23:2). The plot, of course, makes us understand that these accusations were false. In an episode which is found only in Luke, Herod declared Jesus innocent (23:6). Jesus' innocence runs like a refrain in the utterance of Pilate: "I have examined him in your presence and have no charge against him arising from your allegations. Neither has Herod who therefore has sent him back to us; obviously, this man has done nothing that calls for death" (23:14b-15; see also 23:4,22). One of the criminals crucified with him likewise recognized Jesus' innocence: "We are only paying the price for what we've done, but this man has done nothing wrong" (23:41). When Jesus expired, the centurion, having seen what had happened, exclaimed: "Surely, this was an innocent man" (23:47). Of course, in Luke's Gospel, more than innocence is implied here—Jesus is

the righteous one (cf 23:50; 20:21).

Innocent though he was, Jesus was made to suffer and die. Luke portrays Jesus as a rejected prophet, which he already indicated in the pericope on Jesus' visit to Nazareth (4:16-30). In the passion narrative, soldiers taunted him to prophesy (22:64). Herod and his guard treated him with contempt and insult (23:11). At the crucifixion, Jewish leaders kept jeering at him, soldiers made fun of him, one of the criminals blasphemed him (23:35,36,39) and the crowd called for his death (23:21). Now fulfilled was what the prophets foretold: "He was counted among the wicked" (Isa 53:12). Here, Jesus is depicted as the suffering servant of Yahweh, the innocent servant who suffers on behalf of many, and the reference to the drinking of the sour wine implies that he was the suffering innocent,

Innocent / B7

THAT day, Jerusalem was set to witness the public execution of a confessed sinner—a woman caught in adultery. The case was clear. The punishment was known to all: death by stoning. (See *Lv 20:10ff* and *Dt 22:22ff*.)

But that day, the zealous scribes and Pharisees were determined to catch two birds—the adulteress and Jesus—with one stone. The same stone could be used for both, since Jesus, too—in their view—had gone against the law, and more than once.

The trap was set. (See *Jn 8:5f*.) It was just a matter of delaying the execution by a short while – until Jesus expressed his view, and caused his own ruin. . . . But that day, Jesus hesitated to speak. There was an icy, deafening silence after the initial insidious utterances of the zealous accusers. The silence of the woman was understandable. She could offer no justification, and any pleading for mercy would have fallen on deaf ears. *The silence of Jesus*, however, was not only unexpected, but above all, *provocative*. The case was clear. Why did he hesitate to concur with the provision of the Law?

His enemies demanded an answer. But when the answer came, they regretted it. When finally Jesus rose and spoke up, it was the turn of the noisy crowd to grow speechless. Their angry voices fell silent; their faces drooped; the stones landed quietly on the ground, with a muffled sound. . . . *All the scribes and Pharisees present made an about-turn*, and then strode off like a routed army, starting with the elders, as the evangelist points out.

Only Jesus and the adulteress remained. As the woman heard the

voice of her defender, all her fright vanished and was replaced by a *confident trust in God's mercy*. *God's forgiveness had made her "new,"* alive once again and free—free from sin and from the fear of human condemnation and mercilessness.

*There is much of that woman in us, though our sins may be of a different kind*. We, too, may have experienced the terror that our sins might be known, and thereby we might lose our good name, if not our life, at the hands of the many who enjoy exposing and condemning the failings of others. . . .

*But God is different from us*. He is "one of a kind," *even when it is a matter of judging our sins*. We see *His attitude revealed in Christ, "the face of God's mercy" (Pope Francis)*. He stands discreetly by us even as we recoil in shame and fear. He shows himself to be infinitely more understanding than ordinary, sinful human beings can be.

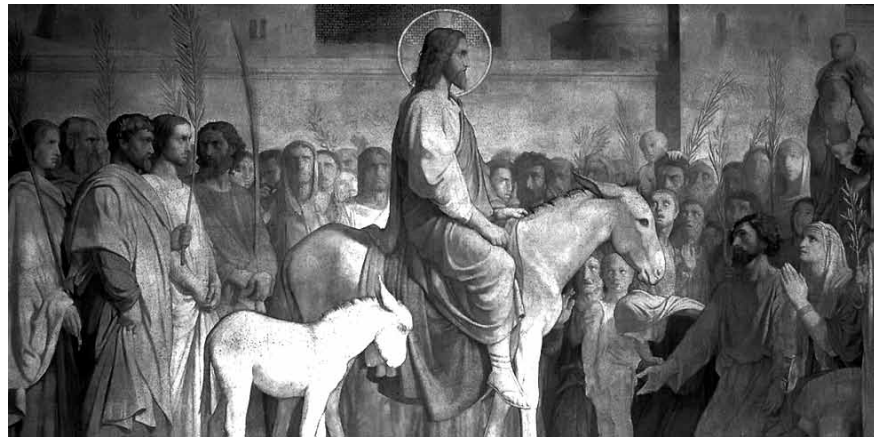
*His readiness to forgive*, of course, *should not be interpreted as indifference to sin*, and even less as an encouragement to continue sinning. *His forgiveness is always accompanied by the exhortation to avoid sin in the future*. (See *the last verse in today's Gospel passage*.) He knows well that we are molded out of clay but he also challenges us to do better.

*When God touches us with His forgiving love, He heals us thoroughly and gives us peace*. He sets us free not only from our past sins, but also from our fears and remorse. With His loving presence He strengthens us, and makes us determined to live as He pleases, even when there are no human judges to condemn us.

## Saved by Christ's heroic love

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Year C, (Luke 22:14-23:56)  
Alay Kapwa Sunday, April 14, 2019

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB



*JESUS had a mission to accomplish—to save mankind from the disastrous consequences of sin and establish the Kingdom of God on earth*. That was the very reason why he was born. And the whole of his life was a continuous effort to fulfill the divine plan, even if he knew that this entailed the greatest humiliation and suffering on his part.

All this had been foreseen by the prophets, particularly the prophet Isaiah. Jesus did not back out at the last moment. *He went through it in full awareness and in perfect freedom*. In speaking of himself as the "Good Shepherd" who lays down his life for the sheep, he had stated forcefully: "I lay down my life freely. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again" (*Jn 10:18*).

The last act of his dramatic life began with his entry into Jerusalem, through which he fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-10. But the rejoicing of that triumphant and peaceful entry would not last long. The clouds of human envy and hatred had already begun to darken the horizon. (See *Lk 19:39*.) Soon it would be pitch dark. (See *Lk 23:44*.) And Jesus would find himself in it, alone and trusting only in the love of the Father. (See *Lk 23:46*.)

*Today we are faced with the Paschal Mystery in reverse: from triumph to defeat*. But even in Christ's most humiliating defeat we find in his LOVE the seed of the forthcoming final victory. *Jesus undergoes his suffering and death out of love for all and with love for all, including his executioners (see*

*Lk 23:34)* and the repentant thief. (See *Lk 23:43*.) It is his suffering love that is the source of our salvation!

*His behavior is a lesson for us all*. Christ made his choice and stood by it. *We too are called to make our choices and honor our commitments*. The doctrine of "non-alignment" may be acceptable in the balance of power between opposite blocks of nations, but it is not valid when it is a matter of right or wrong, life or death. In particular, it cannot be applied to our attitude toward Jesus. He is not one of the many possible and equally good choices. Jesus is *the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE (Jn 14:6)*. *He is the only one who can give meaning and direction to our life*. But he is demanding. And this may hurt our pride, our complacency, and our tendency to procrastinate and compromise. To refrain from declaring ourselves for him, out of selfish considerations or cowardice, amounts to a rejection.

*Today our heart is like Jerusalem*. At its gates, waiting for our decision, stands Jesus. What will be our attitude toward him? Shall we welcome him with a radiant smile and an open heart as our "No. 1," the one with whom we are prepared to stay, even if all others should desert him? . . . Or shall we opt for what is easier, more fashionable and gratifying, while sending word to him: "Tomorrow, maybe. . . .?"

We should not take God for granted. That "tomorrow" may never come! Jesus is waiting for our answer NOW. He did not hesitate to enter Jerusalem to die for us. Shall we hesitate to live for him?

# The empowermentment of women and children

By Fr. Shay Cullen

THERE is a rising tide of people power in the world today and it is female power. Women are standing up and speaking out as never before and more people are sitting up and listening to what they have to say. Their message is basic, straightforward and its most important words are: freedom from abuse, equality, justice, education.

Across the world, the “#MeToo Movement” is empowering women and girls to stand up and challenge those who have harassed, abused or exploited them. Women themselves are challenging the historical oppression they endured for so long in submissive docility. They are now speaking out, holding their abusers, mostly men, to account and finding the courage to call them out and bring them to justice.

It takes bravery, too, to shake off the shackles of slavery and walk free. We are in a new age but the real struggle for the rights and equality of women and children lies ahead. Jenny, a 14-year old girl from a poor slum in Manila had very little in this world. The poor are the most vulnerable. She was not well-loved at home, feared her strict father and joined a street gang. They introduced her to Juan Gonzales. He appeared to befriend her, gave her money, a cell phone, new clothes and brought her to fast food restaurants. He was grooming her and one day he brought her to a hotel room and sexually violated her. Then, he warned to tell no one and gave her money. She was confused, shocked and felt guilt and obligated because he paid her.

The abuse went on for many months and Jenny was scared and submissive and wanted to end it and had nowhere to turn. One day in a school seminar, she heard about the rights of girls to be free and self-reliant and how to report any physical or sexual abuse. She sent a text message. “I want to be free, help me,” it said.

Jenny contacted the Preda Foundation charity that helps sexually exploited women and girls. Soon, she was in care and protected from the threats of Gonzales. Jenny had Emotional Release Therapy for weeks. She poured out her anger and hatred of Gonzales. In time, she grew in self-confidence, was empowered and determined to file a criminal complaint against Gonzales and with the help of Preda, courageously gave clear powerful testimony against him.

A few weeks ago, the court decision was promulgated. He was found



Holy Spirit Sister Evelyn Jose participates in a Valentine's Day protest in Manila, Philippines, Feb. 14, 2019. Sister Evelyn joined hundreds of other activists calling for an end to all violence, especially violence against women and the extrajudicial killings of suspected drug users that have plagued the Philippines since the election of President Rodrigo Duterte. PAUL JEFFREY/CNS

guilty beyond reasonable doubt and sentenced to life in prison. Justice was done and many more children will be saved from his abuse. It was made possible by the public awareness and advocacy campaign for the rights of women and children. We all should be advocates inviting victims to tell their story, listening, believing and helping them. There are many thousands of similar cases like that of Jenny and they can be helped if they are believed, encouraged and supported when they want healing and justice.

While many women and girls are fighting back against violence and sexual abuse, many more are unable. It is estimated that 35 percent of women and girls worldwide have suffered sexual or physical violence from a male. In some countries, research puts that figure

at 70 percent. It causes misery, depression, and powerlessness.

Where does all begin if not in the home? It is a vicious circle of violence begetting violence. Those male children who witnessed their mother being beaten by their father or her live-in partner and experienced violence themselves were found to be highly likely to perpetuate violence against women themselves in adult life. It is what children experience, see and hear from their parents that have the most profound influence on them in later life.

Last 6 March, twenty minors ages 14 to 17 were admitted into the Preda home for abused and trafficked girls. They had been rescued from a sex hotel and a resort where foreigners of all nationalities were supplied with trafficked children for their sexual gratification. Many

of the girls had suffered sexual violence. They are now recovering and following the example of Jenny.

Think about this: it is reliably estimated that 71 percent of trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls. Out of every four children trafficked, three of them are girls, the majority of them are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Statistics do tell the truth. When we look at the extent of abuse worldwide, we see a horrific reality.

It has been established in 2018 that approximately 15 million girls have experienced sexual violence and rape at least once if not more in their lives and 9 million of these adolescent girls were sexually assaulted in the past year alone. Unlike Jenny and the other children in care at Preda, only one percent ever asked for help. Migrants and refugees in Europe and the United

States are also at risk. They need help and protection.

Less than 40 percent of exploited women and children ever seek out help. Most of those who do ask help from teachers, family and friends. Less than 10 percent of these women and minors asked help from the police.

It's not so long ago when women and child abuse was ignored totally. Now, there are laws to protect them but it is seldom implemented. Local governments give permits to the sex bars and hotels to operate. It's legalized sexual exploitation.

There is much to do to educate society on women and children's rights and eradicate misogynist attitudes and provide genuine help and support for abused women and children everywhere. May the wave of protest keep rising until the evil is overcome.

## People / B3

They came out with two layers of screening. The first screening is to vet the candidates on two know-out issues: belief in God and federalism/charger change. They believe that a person who does not have the fear of God in him can easily abuse others. They also believe that the present state of the country is not ready for federalism and charter change. 30 candidates were eliminated on these two knock-out issues.

The 32 candidates who remained in the pool were then subjected to the second screening. They were rated using criteria based on GabayKristo, a guide of 20 specific questions which are divided into four categories –

- Character and Honor,
- Competence and Abilities,
- Faithfulness to public service,
- Faithfulness to God, the Constitution and the laws.

Each of the 20 questions was graded from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. The ten candidates with the highest scores were declared the selected candidates.

The following were the selected “10 BEST SENATORIAL CANDIDATES THAT OUR COUNTRY & PEOPLE NEED DURING THESE TIMES”. They are presented below in alphabetical order --

1. Alejano, Gary

## Innocent / B6

righteous one (Ps 69:21). Of course, Jesus accepted his suffering and death as the will of his Father: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). This was part of the plan of God (24:43,46). He was faithful to the end, dying as God's righteous Son.

Despite the fraudulence involved in the trial and the travesty of justice, Jesus never harbored any ill feeling toward those who brought him suffering and death. When, during his arrest at the Mount of Olives, his companions asked whether they would use sword, he said “Enough!” He even healed the high priest's servant whose ear was cut off (22:49-51). On the contrary, he continued to offer the mercy of God: “Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing” (23:34). Such an attitude on the part of Jesus is consistent with his teaching on

loving one's enemies, on prayer for those who maltreat him (6:27-28) and on forgiveness (17:4). Even the criminal who was crucified with him received compassion: “Today, you will be with me in Paradise” (23:43). Clearly, Luke portrays Jesus as the embodiment of God's mercy, the One who took the initiative in the work of reconciliation between God and man, and between man and his fellow man.

Far from being meant as an objective account of what actually transpired, Luke's passion story is intended to present a Christology that invites the Christian reader to participate in the salvific event. Unlike Simon of Cyrene had to be forced to carry the cross (23:26), the disciple follows the way of faithfulness and forgiveness voluntarily and from the heart. Of course, the invitation exacts a high

price for discipleship. For in this way of following Jesus, one has to go beyond an ethic solely based on the Ten Commandments. To forgive and pray for those who hate us, freely to suffer for them even though one is not conscious of any guilt, to repay injustice with absolute pardon, to seek their salvation when one is being condemned—and still be consistent in all these—that is what is distinctively Christian. A costly demand, it is true, but not impossible. This, however, requires a deep spirituality whereby one follows no longer his own will, but that of the Father, and really serves people. It assumes that one has been touched by the Spirit, which enables him to empty himself of his own desires, wants and needs, if only for the sake of others, especially the scum of the earth.

## Compassion / B6

she must have been distraught and disoriented to find herself amid men pointing their accusing fingers to her! She must have covered her head to escape recognition. But what is odious here is not simply that they exposed her shame. It is rather the motive of the Pharisees and Scribes. And they justified their means with it. They were simply using her in their controversy with Jesus over the Jewish law. In fact, they were not even interested in the law. All they wanted was to pin Jesus. They had no qualms about dragging a woman through the mud, treating her as an object to parade their zeal for the law. But the God that Jesus preached is not a God of legalism. He is a God who puts priority on the human person over the law. Before him, who really is without sin? (“All men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God” [Rom 3:23]). Who does not stand under condemnation? If God were to judge us according to his Word, who would survive? (cf Ps 130:3).

As in the story about the question of paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus in this narrative threw the burden of the problem to the questioners by his advise: “Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone at her” (John 8:7b). In uttering these words, Jesus exposed the self-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Thinking over these words, they must have realized their unexposed, hidden faults, and under the gaze of Jesus, became ashamed of them, as one by one they drifted away, beginning with the eldest (John 8:9). For one thing, how in the world they knew adultery was going on? By going away without a

word, they admitted that they were no less sinful than they woman the dragged out. Which is enough to disqualify them from judging her. “By your judgment you convict yourself, since you do the very same things” (Rom 2:1b). But as we noted last Sunday, God is a God of love and compassion. He loves us even in our sinfulness: “It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

Jesus avoided the dilemma by raising the issue from mere legalism to what really matters. In sharp contrast with the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus faced the woman as a human person, an object of God's love, compassion and mercy. It must have been a liberating experience for the woman to realize that all her accusers have walked away; she, who was miserable, was left alone to face Jesus who embodied the mercy and compassion of God. In the famous words of St Augustine, *Relicti sunt duo: misera et misericordia*. The Lord—even though he could have judged because he had no sin, unlike those who wished to stone her—never uttered a word of condemnation. All he offered was the love of God, and that love would have enabled her to start a new life: “You may go, but from now on, avoid sin” (John 8:11). Sin in society is not stamped out by killing sinners; that would only multiply sin. To kill criminals is to perpetuate murder and criminality. The community grows when all realize that they are all a party to sin, and when sinners are given the chance to repent and experience the love and mercy of God.

**CINEMA**  
Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

**TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT**      **MORAL ASSESSMENT**

5: Excellent  
4: Above Average  
3: Average  
2: Below Average  
1: Poor

**CINEMA RATING**

VA: For all ages  
V13: Ages 13 below,  
Parental Guidance

V14: Ages 14+  
V18: Ages 18+  
NPV: Not for Public Viewing

**Captain Marvel**

Directors: Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck  
Lead Cast: Brie Larson, Samuel L. Jackson, Ben Mendelsohn, Jude Law, Annette Bening, Lashana Lynch  
Screenwriters: Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck, Geneva Robertson-Dworet  
Producer: Kevin Feige  
Editors: Debbie Berman, Elliot Graham  
Musical Director: Pinar Toprak  
Genre: Action, Adventure, Sci-Fi  
Cinematographer: Ben Davis  
Distributor: Walt Disney  
Location: California, USA  
Running Time: 2 hr 4min



Technical assessment: 4.0  
Moral assessment: 3.5  
CINEMA rating: V13  
MTRCB rating: PG13

Vers (Brie Larson) is a member of Starforce—an intergalactic Kree battle squad. She is mentored by Yon-Rogg (Jude Law) who repeatedly reminds her not to let her emotions affect her duties, specifically of the firing of powerful energy beams from her hands. Their mission is to defeat the Skrulls, a species of shape-shifting aliens led by Talos (Ben Mendelsohn) who's obsessed with probing Vers' memory in hopes of getting information on one Dr. Wendy Lawson (Annette Bening) and her work with a light-speed project. Incidentally, Vers interacts with that woman, not as Lawson, but as the artificial intelligence generated leader of the Kree, all while experiencing fleeting memories of a different life that's foreign to her. Then everything comes clearer when she literally crashes into Earth in the year 1995, meets an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), and discovers that she once had a life on that planet. And her name was Carol Danvers. She was an Air Force pilot where she worked alongside her best friend, Maria Rambeau (Lashana Lynch), for Dr. Lawson. With the Skrulls having followed her to Earth, Carol must then figure out the truth as to what's really happening and use her powers to save the day.

Captain Marvel is both intriguing and interesting as Marvel finally releases an on-screen super powerful hero that is both female and feminine. Those who were not familiar with Captain Marvel backstory before watching must surely be shocked to learn that the most powerful superhero of Marvel is actually a woman. That handle alone makes the film a worthwhile watch. The strategies implemented by the film's producers such as hiring a woman as co-director and getting an acclaimed actress instead of a blockbuster superstar for its lead really worked well for the film's success in communicating its message across all audiences. The non-linear storytelling approach may be confusing at first but everything becomes

cohesive in the middle. The film does not dwell too much on exposition and it worked pretty well as revelations become more interesting as the story progresses. Lead actress Larson aptly balances out three roles in three timelines—that of Vers, of Carol Danvers, and of Captain Marvel. Law as Yon-Rogg provides perfect support. Mendelsohn as Skrull leader Talos and a cat named Goose give the film a different flavor of balanced humor and sentiment—along with the 90's musical scoring. The fight scenes and the computer graphics may not be that spectacular but the gem of the film lies on its talented cast, and focused storytelling of Marvel's "herstory"—clearly putting more emphasis on the heart as more powerful than the mind.

Captain Marvel is said to be a "girl-power" movie—and it really is. For most part of the film, it is emphasized that Carol has been going through a lot of pains, rejections and discriminations as a woman trying to fit in a man's world. She is always told to not let her emotions get in the way of what she wants to accomplish. Women stereotyped as the "emotional" kind is tackled in the film head-on—and is brutally deconstructed with the presence of the most powerful superhero to date—Captain Marvel. Despite the many hardships and struggles to fit-in, Carol's determination paid off. The tenacity and strength of a woman's heart is clearly demonstrated in the film—making the seeming weakness of a woman being emotional more of a strength than a weakness. Women bonding is also apparent in the film with the presence of Carol's best friend—a woman and a mother, who once experienced discrimination as well for being one. The kind of bonding women have creates a sense of trust and brings out the best in each other. Family values are also depicted in the film as Talos leads his flock as a father deeply concerned for his family's safety and well-being. Still, the film inevitably has scenes of violence about which young children must be guided while watching. CINEMA deems the Captain Marvel as appropriate for viewers 13 below with parental guidance.

**Familia Blondina**

DIRECTOR: Jerry Lopez  
Sineneng  
LEAD CAST: Karla Estrada, Jobert Austria, Kaira Balingier, Marco Gallo, Xia Vigor, Chantal Vidella & Shane Weinberg, Awra Briguella, Heaven Peralejo  
SCREENWRITER: Mel del Rosario  
PRODUCER: Doc Denis Aguirre  
EDITOR: Marya Ignacio  
GENRE: Family Comedy  
DISTRIBUTOR: Sine Screen  
LOCATION: Bulacan, Philippines  
RUNNING TIME: 106 minutes



Technical assessment: 3.5  
Moral assessment: 3.5  
CINEMA rating: PG13

Mahusay ang paghahatid ng pinaghalong pormula ng romance, family-oriented at intercultural comedy sa Familia Blondina. Malinis

ang daloy ng kwento at malikhain ang konsepto ng mix-marriages. Malinaw mula sa simula ng pelikula ang magiging estado ng karakter ni Cindy. At bagamat sa pagpasok ng karakter ni

**Buhay San Miguel**

Talagang sobrang hirap na dito sa Pilipinas! Sobrang hirap ang presyo ng pagkain ...

sobrang hirap ang pamasaha; sobrang hirap ang trapik; sobrang hirap ang presyo ng krudo, ng kuryente; sobrang hirap ang TUBIG, sobrang hirap ang upa sa tirahan ...

at sobrang hirap na kumita ng PERA ngayon! Paano na lang mangyayari sa Pilipinas kung...

... wala nang pambili ng load para makapaglaro ng MOBAYL LEDYENDS!

**TERIBOL OG**

RAMBO ANG IPINANGALAN SA AKIN DAHIL MAHILIG SA ACTION MOVIE SI FAFA.

AKO NAMAN... PUROY! IBIG SABIHIN, POOR KAMI AT WALANG KAPERA-PERA NIUNG PANAHONG IPINANGALAN AKO!

E IKAW NAMAN, OG. BAKIT 'YAN ANG IPINANGALAN SA IYO?

TINGIN KO'Y ALAM KO NA, KAYA SIGURO OG ANG IPINANGALAN SA YO DAHIL...

... IPINANGANAK KANG OGAG! HA HA HA!

HI HI HI!

**Buhay Parokya**



- FIND 3 MISSING THINGS:
1. SAINT TERESA
  2. HOLY ROSARY
  3. ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

Tony Boy ay naghudyat ng predictable na wakas ay naging kaabang-abang pa din ang mga eksena at palitan ng mga linya lalo na pagitan ng mga bata. Natural ang mga pagganap, komportable ang lahat at nabigyan ng akmang pagpapakilala ang mga tauhan na kani-kanilang ginampanan. Nakatulong ang mga kuha ng kamera sa pagbibigay-diin sa mga eksena na sadyang may hatid na mensahe. Tama lamang ang disensyo ng produksyon, nakakatuwang tingnan ang mga blonde na hitsura ng mga bata, at akma ang mga nilapat na tunog at ilaw lalo na sa mga eksena sa loob ng bahay. Sa kabuuan ng Familia Blondina, ang comedy ay naghatid ng makabuluhang mensahe at aliw sa manonood.

Isang malaking hamon

sa babae man o lalaki ang mag-isang magtaguyod ng pamilya, lalo na sa sitwasyon na kailangang harapin ang mga pagbabago mula sa nakasanayang buhay at kulturang banyaga na kinasasangkutan ng mga anak na menor de edad. Gayunpaman, nagampanan at naharap ang hamong ito ng pangunahing tauhan na si Cindy dahil sa paninindigan niyang panghawakan ang mga values o pinahahalagahan sa buhay na matiyaga niyang ibinahagi at itinuro sa mga anak na may lahing dayuhan. Kapag matatag ang isang tao sa kanyang personal values, mas madaling makapagdesisyon na may pagsasa-alang alang ng tama at mali. Ilan sa mga pinakita sa Familia Blondina ang pagiging mapagmahal sa pamilya,

matiyaga, mapagpasensya, mapagbigay, mapagpalaya at palakaibigan. Kahit nagsimulang magtaguyod ng mga anak sa America ay di nya kinalimutan ang mga magagandang kaugaliang Filipino katulad ng pagiging magalang sa kapwa.

Gayundin kinilala ni Cindy ang kultura ng lahing banyaga ng kanyang anak na pagbibigay-kalayaan at respeto sa pagiging responsible sa sariling desisyon katulad ng magpasya ang anak na bumalik ng America. Pinakita din sa puntong ito ang selfless love ni Cindy bilang ina. Samantala, kaakibat sa mga hamon ng buhay ang di maiwasan makaharap at makasalamuha ang mga taong mapagnibugho, mapanghugsa at

mapanumbat, na nagbibitiw ng masasakit na salita nang di man lamang inaawat ng kanilang mga magulang na dapat sana ay mamagitan. Maaring natural lamang na maghayag ng galit at sama ng loob sa kapwa lalo na kung nasaktan naman talaga subalit ang maganda rin paalalahan ang sarili na kilalanin at tanggapin din ang matapat na pagbabalik-loob at pagsusumikap ng kapwa na harapan ang naging bunga ng mga ginawang desisyon sa buhay. Sa kabuuan ay mayaman sa positibong mensahe ang pelikulang Familia Blondina at isang magandang panoring pampamilya. Subalit dahil sa masalimuot na tema ng intercultural marriage ay kailangan ng mga batang manonood ng gabay ng nakatatanda.



# Our Faith Leap to the Holy Land

By Alma M. Alvarez

I recently saw a headline which read “Get a faith lift in the Holy Land”. The article was published in a popular glossy magazine, written by someone who went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land at about the same time as we were. (Ed’s note: Alma and fulltime workers and staff of the Global Mission Center went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land from March 1 to 10.)

As I was praying about how I would write my own Holy Land pilgrimage experience, I remembered the many miracles that allowed me to join the pilgrimage in the first place. It was indeed miraculous because never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine I would set foot in this holiest of places.

On February 3, I received an email from Ninaliz Donaire, who was coordinating the pilgrimage with Excellent Tours. She wrote that there were a couple of slots that had opened, and asked if I would be interested to join the pilgrimage.

Interested? Of course I was interested to join! But there were so many reasons why I did not think I could. First, the pilgrimage was less than a month away, and I was concerned about whether I would be able to complete all the travel documents. Second, I immediately thought of my many deadlines and worried if my immediate supervisor Rommel Ancheta would allow me to leave for such length of time. Third, and more pressing, I didn’t have the money to fund my trip!

Going to the Holy Land would mean one item off my bucket list, but I didn’t see how it would be possible at such short notice.

### Miracles, one by one

But then the miracles began to happen, one after the other.

The next day, I replied to Niña’s email, thanking her for the opportunity, but telling her of my apprehensions. I told her I would email Rommel and Tita Zeny Gimenez, the Ugnayan editor-in-chief. If they say yes, that would be my first signal to go. I whis-



By the Tomb of Lazarus



Pontifical Institute of Notre Dame



Dome of the Rock



Birthplace of Mother Mary



Sacred pit



Church of the Nativity



Mass at Cana



Boat ride at the Sea of Galilee

Photos courtesy of Lester Guillermo, Lanie Montaas, Francis Buñag

pered a short prayer, emailed Rommel and then called Tita Zeny Gimenez. I was particularly apprehensive about calling Tita Zeny because the first week of March happened to be the deadline for the submission of the layout of the Ugnayan to CBCP.

I got my first miracle when Tita Zeny said of course I should go because this is such a rare opportunity and should never be missed. My second miracle came when Rommel also said

yes the following day. After that, it was a barrage of miracles big and small that paved the way for me to join the 47 others on this most anticipated trip. What added to my excitement was the fact that this year, I would be turning 50, and the Lord was giving me the best birthday gift nine months in advance!

I was not alone in feeling hugely blessed for this wonderful opportunity.

My co-pilgrim, Renjie Villafuerte, a Youth for Christ fulltime missionary,

shares the same sense of awe and gratitude. He said, “When you ask, seek and knock, you’ll never know where grace will bring you! God is a promise-keeper who knows our desires from the smallest to the biggest, and even the seemingly impossible. I never thought that God will allow me to experience His abundance by taking me to the very place where Jesus walked and lived.”

For Ninay Quimpang, everything was all about God’s perfect timing.

She shared, “I had been investing online for many years now, earmarking part of that savings for my husband Jeremy’s and my fare to the Holy Land when we retire. Amazingly, the Lord fixed everything. It seemed He was telling me, ‘Why wait for later when I can make it happen now?’”

### Setting foot on holy ground

As soon as we stepped out of the Ben Gurion Interna- HOLY LAND, CA

## MC TEACHING NIGHT

### The “Man” Behind Our Name (Honoring Fathers on the Solemnity of St. Joseph)



THE MEN of the Metro Manila Mission Core got a special treat on March 19, 2019, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary. CFC Chairman Melo Villaroman Jr. honored all husbands and fathers through a special teaching on fatherhood during the regular Mission Core Teaching Night held at the Christ the King Parish in Greenmeadows, Pasig.

Villaroman’s talk proposed answers to the following questions: What is a father? What is his role in his family? What is the ideal basis of fatherhood? Where is it anchored on? Who is our model of a father here on earth?

Villaroman began by saying that “Pope John Paul II once said, ‘Saint Joseph is a man of great spirit. He is great in faith, not because he speaks his own words, but above all because he listens to the words of the Living God. He listens in silence. And his heart ceaselessly perseveres in the readiness to accept the Truth contained in the word of the Living God.’”

There are very few accounts about St. Joseph in Scripture, but everyone knows he is the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the foster father of Jesus, a carpenter, and a very simple man. While he was not materially wealthy, it is written in Scripture that Joseph came from the royal lineage of King David.

In the Church, he is the patron of many

things—the patron of the Universal Church, of fathers, for a happy death, and of social justice.

Villaroman said, “So tonight, we honor St. Joseph, with this talk about his fatherhood, inspired by the anchor verse from Matthew 13. However, the other verses before and after this particular verse do not talk about honoring, but the rejection of Jesus.

In verses 54 and 55, it says, “Coming to His hometown, He taught the people in their synagogue, and they were astonished. ‘Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds?’ they asked. ‘Is this not the carpenter’s son?’”

“If Jesus had heard the murmurs back then about him being just a carpenter’s son, perhaps Jesus would have said, ‘Yes, my father Joseph is a carpenter, and he helped raise me! I love him, I am proud of him, and he is proud of me!’” Villaroman noted.

### The role of a father

Villaroman recounted an episode in his childhood when his father Melo Sr. made him walk home alone to their apartment (while keeping close watch from behind, ready to protect the young Melo from any danger). Taking off from this story, Villaroman shared two lessons that influenced how he viewed his father, and his concept of God being a Father:

1. My father believes in me.
2. I might not see my father always, but he will never leave me. He is close by, ready to help and protect me.

Villaroman quoted Pope Francis who said that a father must “be present to his family, be close to his wife, to share everything, joys and

sorrows, hardships and hopes. And that he be close to his children as they grow: when they play and when they strive, when they are carefree and when they are distressed, when they are talkative and when they are silent, when they are daring and when they are afraid, when they take a wrong step and when they find their path again...”

Looking to St. Joseph as foster father of Jesus, Villaroman noted that fathers must be:

- a **LEADER** - Head and Visionary  
A father, as the head, should have a clear vision in leading his family. He aims for heaven because his vision is for his family to be holy. He makes concrete plans and steps to attain this vision.
- an **INFLUENCER**  
He is a role model of love and prayer to his wife and children; leads the way, enrolls family to true teachings, exemplifies the fullness of life through service to others!

- a **SHEPHERD** - Pastor, Protector, and Provider

The shepherd uses a staff with a hook on the end to guide the sheep and pull back the stray. He has a rod to fend off wild animals that might harm the flock. The image of shepherds is that they are kind, loving, patient, strong, and self-sacrificing. As pastor, a father is the family’s household head.

### Fatherhood anchored on the love of God the Father

John Eldredge wrote, “We aren’t meant to figure life on our own. God wants to father us. The truth is, he has been fathering us for a long time—we just haven’t had the eyes to see it. He wants to father us more intimately, but we have to be in a posture to receive it.”

The basic question, as enunciated by Villaroman, is, “How does a father father?” Since man’s ways are bound to fail, MCT, C2

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Available on Spotify and iTunes.



## THE PRESIDENT'S CHAIR

Michael "Shok" Ariola

### Rak Chazak Amats!

SAY this with me eight times —*Rak Chazak Amats!* Sounds like one of those tongue twister games we used to play, right? But don't let anyone hear you as you will sound like one of those "na may amat" (street lingo for someone gone crazy because of drink or drugs).

Rak Chazak Amats is actually an ancient Hebrew war cry. Deuteronomy 31 speaks of Moses, aged 120, giving his final instructions to the Israelites, informing them that God had decreed that he would not be the one to lead the people in crossing the Jordan but Joshua. He spoke of God's promise that He himself "will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you and you will take possession of their land."

And in verse 6, he gave them this assurance, this war cry: Rak Chazak Amats! Translated, it means: Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

This is a cry we can adopt in these trying times. I heard this for the first time during the second session of our Children of Light Weekend Retreat last January. When I heard it, I admit I was quite excited. I felt this is an exhortation that one will need in the face of great tribulation and challenge.

I understood it even

more when Joe Yamamoto explained it. According to him, this war cry implies a spiritual audacity, of running headlong into battle without consideration of the consequences, without fear of death. This was the cry of the ancient Israelites because they knew that they were doing battle with the Lord beside them.

Today, every day, we fight a battle we do not see. So where is your war cry, kapatid? As members of Couples for Christ, do we still recognize that we can only be victorious in battle if we rely on God to lead us?

In facing our daily trials, are we slowly losing our "oomph"? Have we forgotten that we have everything we need for life and godliness to push the enemy forces back?

David recognized this. When he faced the giant Goliath, he had some serious Amats. He rushed headlong towards Goliath, not thinking about the impossibilities but saying instead, "No, I don't need to even think about this. This is for my God who battles beside me!"

When we face our own battles, when we say Rak Chazak Amats! our knuckles should immediately turn white. We should find ourselves gritting our spiritual teeth and going forward with belligerence against the enemy. There are souls to be saved! There is good to be done! It's confidence in victory, even before the field is taken

When I speak of battles, I

do not refer to the political field and to the battle to save our country by putting in place only those who deserve to be elected. I do not refer to the social ills that we now must confront to protect our children and our children's children.

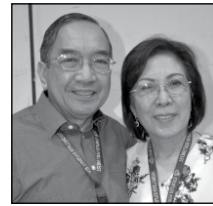
These are important and deserve our attention. However, I am thinking now of all of us who face daily battles as we try to fulfill our mission—as parents, as providers, as community leaders. I am thinking of parents who are deep in debt because of family obligations, who are even now

worried about where to get money for tuition. I am thinking of those who have family members struggling with dreaded illnesses like cancer. I am thinking of those who have been laid off from work, or who are looking for work and finding it difficult.

And I am thinking of those missionaries and leaders who are now preparing to mount Christian Life Programs and other teachings and finding that recruitment is an uphill battle, attendance is a serious concern.

These are the people who, like you and me, need to shout RAK CHAZAK AMATS! every single day.

The beauty of it all is, because we have found God and have put our trust in Him, we know that by uttering this war cry, He will indeed rush to our side and lead us to victory.



## AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

Jun & Jean Uriarte

### It is finished John 19:30

DEATH IS a topic that most people are reluctant to talk about. Yet we know that nobody leaves this world alive. We will all die sooner or later. We all have the same attitude towards death—we do not want to talk about it. We pray for long life. We are afraid to die.

Fear of death is a very human emotion. Being truly human, Jesus experienced fear of suffering and death on the evening he was betrayed. At the Garden of Gethsemane, three times he asked God: *Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will*" (Mark 14:36).

During this Holy Week, let us reflect about death. But most especially, let us ponder upon that one unique death that has brought us eternal life—Jesus' death on the cross, which is in fact the fullest manifestation of God's infinite love for mankind.

The Gospel of Mark describes a very human Jesus. To Mark, Jesus is the Son of Man who is "troubled and distressed" at Gethsemane. He recalls Jesus on the cross praying the second verse of Psalm 22: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mark 15:34)

Psalm 22 is a prayer of an innocent person, a very human one. It starts with a description of how God has become so distant from him in space and in time. He depicts a contrast between his present suffering and his past experience of God's mercy. He paints a mental picture of the attacks against him and pleads for God's help. He then invites all to join him in praising God. He ends his prayer in a universal chorus of praise by all—those in the present (all who sleep in the earth), those in the past (all who have gone down into dust), and those in the future (the generation to come).

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is more the Son of Man who "gave a loud cry and breathed his last" (Mark 15:37), but in the Gospel of John, Jesus is more the Son of God who is always in control of everything. Jesus' final moment is described thus: *When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.*" (John 19:30). As Son of God, Jesus, always in control of his own destiny, declares that his work "is finished." Still in control, Jesus bows his head and hands over his spirit.

The Gospel of Luke recalls verse 6 of Psalm 31 as Jesus prays on the cross: *Into your hands I commend my spirit* (Luke 23:46). Psalm 31 is a prayer of a person in distress and a thanksgiving to God. In his trouble and distress, he finds safety in the hands of God. While expressing his great trust in God, he describes his lament and experience of suffering. He ends his prayer in praise of God's protection and goodness.

On our deathbed, we might be tempted to think that God has abandoned us. We might get the feeling that God is too distant—too far from us in both time and space. At that moment, we should recall the goodness of God. We must remind ourselves of God's prodigal love, perfectly expressed in the sending of His only Son into the world to suffer and die so that those who believe in him may have eternal life.

At the moment of death, our mind must focus on Jesus on the cross. We must remember that like all the others who were crucified before him, Jesus was expected to shout curses and cry out blasphemies, which served to somehow lessen the pain of the crucifixion. And indeed Jesus cried on the cross. But instead of a curse and a blasphemy, Jesus cried out a prayer of forgiveness: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34).

At the hour of our death, we must think of Jesus who, as a baby in the manger at Bethlehem, accepted the wise men's gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But as a man on the cross in Calvary, he declined the sedative of wine mixed with myrrh, which would have lessened the pain of the crucifixion. Instead, because of his great love for us, he chose to endure the fullest extent of the pain of the cross that would save us. Jesus' acceptance of the gift of myrrh in Bethlehem foreshadowed his refusal of the dose of myrrh in Calvary. He did not want to deaden the pain of our salvation.

When our son Joel died at the age of 24 some years ago, Jean and I were not at his bedside. We were on mission in Indonesia to give teachings to the CFC community and to select and install the new members of the national council of CFC Indonesia. We learned of his sudden death when our eldest son, Joubert, called us while we were at the airport in Jakarta awaiting our flight to Brunei to give some teachings to the CFC community there. How much we wished to be at his bedside, to comfort him, to embrace him, to hold his hand, to pray over him! But God wanted us to be elsewhere, because He desired His holy angels to be the ones to surround Joel as he breathed his last. We were certain that a flight of angels brought Joel's soul to the gate of heaven to meet Jesus, his Redeemer.

How could we be so certain? We knew Joel could not have offended God during his entire life on earth. He was born deaf, mute and blind and suffered from autism and Tetralogy of Fallot (Ed's note: *According to Mayo Clinic, Tetralogy of Fallot is a combination of four congenital abnormalities. The four defects include a ventricular septal defect (VSD), pulmonary valve stenosis, a misplaced aorta and a thickened right ventricular wall (right ventricular hypertrophy).*)

Joel remained innocent like a child. He did not know right from wrong. After baptism, his soul must have remained unblemished, already prepared to meet God in beatific vision, cleansed by the blood of Christ on the cross.

Death did not terrify Joel. Being multi-handicapped, he had no sense of fear of death. In fact, his soul must have been longing to be freed from the imprisonment of his body devastated by the rubella virus since conception. And thereby freed, Joel must now be enjoying the happiness and comfort that were denied him throughout his 24 years on earth. He must now be resting "like a weaned child on its mother's lap" (Psalm 131:2).

If indeed we truly believe that death is nothing but a passage from a life of fleeting joy on earth to a life of eternal happiness in heaven, then we must welcome it. If we value our relationship with God much more than we cherish our relationship with friends and family, then we must long to end our pilgrimage on earth and yearn with great anticipation to reach our final destination in heaven.

But we are unable to do this because we have not been faithful in doing the Father's will – to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. We have not been able to follow the footsteps of the Son—to serve others to the point of giving up our life. We have not been able to obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit—to go to the ends of the earth and proclaim the gospel. Thus, we refuse to bow our head and are dreadful of handing over our spirit. And unlike Jesus, we abhor saying, "It is finished."



## CFC Institute Offers June Courses

The Couples for Christ Institute (CFCI) has announced the following courses which are scheduled for June 2019. CFC leaders and missionaries are encouraged to sign up for the courses they desire to attend.

Date	Course	Course Fee	Slots
June 13	Essentials of Mission	P1000.00	70
June 14	Basic Pastoral Skills	P1000.00	60
June 14	Fundamentals of Discernment	P1000.00	60
June 16 - 19	Missions 101	P4000.00	60

The CFCI deems important the basic essentials of mission every CFC leader must take to heart—Word of God, Jesus, Church. The goal of the Institute is to open avenues to further deepen their understanding of their role and of their mission. Essentials of Mission will therefore be a fundamental course before CFCI students can enroll in other courses in the list.

After going through the Essentials of Mission, students can choose either to take Basic Pastoral Skills or Fundamentals of Discernment. CFC leaders who have already gone through, or will take up Missions 101 can opt not to take the Essentials of Mission since Missions 101 will tackle the same subjects, among others, more thoroughly. They can instead choose to take up

either Fundamentals of Discernment or Basic Pastoral Skills.

The course fee covers lecture kits, lunch and simple snacks. The deadline of payment is on or before May 13, 2019. After May 13, the following learning investment costs will apply: Essentials of Mission, Fundamentals of Discernment, Basic Pastoral Skills : Php1, 500.00; Missions 101: Php5,000.

In case of unforeseen situations, refunds are allowed subject to the following conditions:

- 100% : until May 1, 2019
- 75% : until May 13, 2019
- 50% : from May 14 onwards

Payments may be made via Bank of the Philippine Islands Peso Account (Account Name: Couples for Christ Global Mission Foundation Inc.; S/A 0123466276; Aurora, Cubao QC Branch) or Banco De Oro Dollar Account (Account Name: Couples for Christ Global Mission Foundation Inc.; S/A 6810020704; Octagon, Ortigas branch) or through Couples for Christ Global Mission Foundation Inc. Bank of the Philippine Islands S/A 0124031393; Swift Code BOPIPHMM.

To easily track payments, please email all deposit slips/transaction records to Karen Mangu-lab at couplesforchristinstitute@gmail.com. All course offerings are on a first-come, first-served basis. Slots will be secured upon confirmation of deposit.

Please contact Ruel U. Aguirre at ruelaguirre@gmail.com or at +639197612421 for any queries.

#### MCT, CI

he should be anchored on the One True Father in heaven.

Villaroman exhorted, "A father's love for his wife and children must be rooted in the Father's love so that it will always be free, total, faithful, and fruitful."

#### -A father's love is FREE

"Because of His great love for us, Christ laid down His life for us on His own accord to give us eternal life." This should remind every father that his love for his family should be unconditional.

#### -A father's love is TOTAL

"Christ's love holds nothing back, not even His own life. He gives His whole self without reserve." A father's love is characterized by patience, understanding, acceptance, and forgiveness.

#### -A father's love is FAITHFUL

"He is true to His promise, He loves us forever, and He continues to love us even when we are unfaithful." A father's love is without lie and deceit. He celebrates the good and corrects what is wrong. He is firm in his love as well as in his corrections. Fathers can accompany their families because they have a God who accompanies them, even in sins and weaknesses.

**-A father's love is FRUITFUL**  
"God's love for us brings us fullness of life, a life of eternal happiness with Him."

A father's love should build up his family. His love should allow his wife and children to be the best version of their selves every day. His love should lead them to be productive and to believe in themselves.

"Remember Talk 10 of our CLP? What or who is at the center of our wheel? God the Father! If we will source our love and strength from Him, we will be successful in our work, our mission, as a father, as a husband," he added.

#### St. Joseph, the model for all fathers

Joseph a simple and ordinary man, accepted the most challenging role of being father to Jesus! Despite the uncertainties, St. Joseph, in his humility and lowliness, did not only accept, but embraced the role.

Villaroman said, "After he said yes to angel Gabriel, his silence is remarkable. We do not hear anything about him as to how he raised Jesus and journeyed with Mary. However, the way Jesus lived his life is reflective of how he was raised because he was largely identi-

fied as a "carpenter's son," he added.

In concluding his talk, Villaroman said, "The fatherhood of St Joseph is like our fatherhood. Joseph wondered, 'Lord, how will I, a carpenter, raise a King?' Yet, Joseph is one who surrendered fully to the power of Heaven, claiming God's Victory!"

"(Our fatherhood) questions, 'Lord, I do not understand this fully, but you put me here to hold my wife's hand, and as I do so for the rest of my life, hold my family's future in your hand!' It is a fatherhood that is aware that the world can be cruel and dark, that as a father, we need to be strong in protecting our family from the Herods of the world. Yet, it declares, 'God's love in me will be my family's best shield and strength. My wife and I will raise our sons and daughters as children of light.'" he added.

Finally, Villaroman prayed for the fathers present, that they turn to the best of earthly fathers, the good Saint Joseph, and beg for his powerful intercession.

"St. Joseph, ornament of the domestic life, patron of families, patron of fathers, pray for us!" Villaroman ended his prayer.

 **Ugnayan**  
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## FROM A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Rouquel Ponte

## DEEPENING OUR CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

THE liturgical reading on Ash Wednesday, which begins the Season of Lent, remains constant every year. The Gospel is from Matthew 6 which contains the three pillars of Lent: Almsgiving, Prayer and Fasting. These three bring to our consciousness our relationship with God, Self and Others. We may also call them as essentials to deepen our call to discipleship.

In a previous article, we mentioned the first and most important call to us by Jesus—to be with Him and strive for greater intimacy. Jesus took the initiative when He issued the invitation “Come, and you will see.” (John 1:39). For the next three years, Jesus pursued the deepening of relationship with His chosen disciples and in the end, He gave them the Great Commission, “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations ...” (Matthew 28:19)

The second call is to imitate and follow Him. This will entail our readiness and willingness to:

1. Choose what Jesus chooses - a life of sacrifice, simplicity and obedience to God's will; foregoing some comfort and pleasures in life,

2. Let go of any self-entitlement and be content with whatever role is assigned us.
3. Be willing to go all the way, even to the ultimate suffering on the cross.

After giving the mission to the twelve apostles, Jesus laid down the conditions to discipleship - “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

One of the essentials to deepen our call to discipleship and also a very important pillar of our Lenten observance is prayer. We are invited to enter into a sacred space within ourselves, where we seek to encounter two persons: our inner self and God. According to Henri Nouwen, “Praying is no easy matter. It demands a relationship in which you allow someone other than yourself to enter into the very center of your person ...”

In Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew 6:5, he said “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I

say to you, they have received their reward.”

Jesus does not want hypocrisy. True prayer, according to this teaching of Jesus, is done in the secret of the conscience which is only visible to God. It shuns falsehood for with God there should be no pretense. At the core of our dialogue with God is silence and stillness. It is like the look of two people in love—man's gaze meets God's, and this is prayer.

But why are there no words? At times words are not so important, as we look at God and let ourselves be looked upon by Him. This is prayer, a beautiful prayer, according to Pope Francis.

Although at times, the disciple's prayer is done in secret, it is never lacking in intimacy and completeness. In the silence of conscience, we do not leave the world outside the door of our room but we carry people, situations and their problems in our heart—all are brought to prayer.

In Pope Francis' catechesis on the Lord's Prayer, he emphasized that “In prayer, a Christian hears all the difficulties of the people who

live beside him: when night falls, he tells God about the suffering he has come across that day; he sets before Him many faces, friends and even those who are hostile; he does not shoo them away as dangerous distractions. If you do not realize that there are many people suffering around you, if you are not moved by the tears of the poor, if you are not accustomed to everything, then it means your heart ... what is it like? Withered? No, worse: it is made of stone. In this case, it is good to implore the Lord to touch us with His Spirit and soften our heart: ‘Soften my heart, Lord’.

“It is a beautiful prayer: ‘Lord, soften my heart, so that I may understand and take on all the problems and all the suffering of others’. Christ did not pass unscathed beside the miseries of the world: each time he perceived loneliness, physical or spiritual pain, he felt a strong sense of compassion ... this feeling of compassion is one of the key words of the Gospel: it is what inspired the Good Samaritan to approach the wounded man by the roadside, unlike others who are hard of heart.”

To conclude, Pope Francis in his book, *The Name of God is Mercy*, tells us: “By welcoming a marginalized person whose body is wounded and by welcoming the sinner whose soul is wounded, we put our credibility as Christians on the line. Let us always remember the words of St. John of the Cross: ‘In the evening of our life, we will be judged on love alone.’”

**Suggested Prayer Format:**

1. Contemplate on the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37).
2. Imagine and enter prayerfully into the Gospel story, beholding the place and the people there. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Touch? Taste?
3. Spend time going into details of each character's words and actions. And then slowly and silently in the end, focus on Jesus and how he looked at the scholar of the law and said to him, “Go and do likewise.”
4. End by slowly reciting the Lord's Prayer.

## CFC OSM Conducts 2nd CEM for AFPRESKOM

THE Couples for Christ-Order of Saint Michael (CFC-OSM), in line with its mission and vision and in partnership with the Armed Forces of the Philippines Reserve Command (AFPRESKOM), conducted the Character Enhancement Program (CEP) Module 2 last February 28 at the Lapu-Lapu Hall, 3/F AFPRESKOM National Headquarters, Camp Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

It was attended by 25 participants, composed of officers, enlisted personnel and civilian employees of the command. This is the second salvo for the AFPRESKOM after its maiden conduct of the first module in the same venue attended by the same participants late last year.

The program kickstarted with LTC Roland J. Ong INF (GSC) PA(R), CFC-OSM's National Coordinator for NBI, AFP and Laguna's Provincial Head as the program moderator, with Senior Master Sergeant (SMS) Diomedes Valdez (Inf) PA, the AFPRESKOM OSM program director officially opening the CEP module with the theme “Strength to Succeed”.

Col. Arturo Alabanza PAF (Ret), CFC-OSM's National Chairman, tackled the first topic “True

Freedom” with Roderick Aguilar as sharer.

The second topic, “Harnessing the Power of Temperance,” was given by Ron Navarro and Danny Sayson, as speaker and sharer respectively.

Over lunch, BGen Roland R. Rodil AFP, the AFPRESKOM commander and the CFC-OSM team discussed the plans and programs for the CEP.

The third topic, “Stewardship as Key to Freedom,” was given by the tandem of Sixto Caypuno and LTC Roland J. Ong INF (GSC) PA(R) as speaker and sharer respectively.

VAdm Jess Millan AFP(Ret), CFC-OSM's National Coordinator for the Philippine Navy (PN) and maritime educational institutions (PMMA, MAAP) delivered the fourth talk, “Strength to Succeed.” Efrén Dacanay was the sharer for this session.

The participants actively participated in the visioning activities and skit presentations that followed every talk.

The plenary sharing was, as usual, the most awaited portion of the entire activity. There were very striking and touching feedbacks from some of the participants on how the program moved and affected them and how it made them real-

ize how they should lead their lives and how they saw the need for their individual transformation.

After the plenary session, BGen Roland R. Rodil AFP, in his commander's message, stressed the importance of the CEP in the AFP's Transformation Roadmap and reiterated that since it's already part of the entire AFP's program, it's an initiative that will serve as a compass in personnel development specifically in the AFPRESKOM, where the CEP will become a monthly endeavor.

He reiterated that it will be part of the reservist personnel development as well. The general thanked the leadership of CFC-OSM for the unwavering support to the AFP and to the AFPRESKOM in particular.

BGen Rodil led in the distribution of awards to the deserving group participants and also received on behalf of the AFPRESKOM participants the Certificates of Completion from CFC-OSM.

In every CEP module that OSM conducts, the team focuses on the honor of working for the Lord, despite being unworthy servants. The team also feels privileged that they are able to share His love with the men and women in the defense establishment. *(Roland Ong)*

## CFC MP Holds Skills Workshop for Volunteers



IN LINE with the 2019 plan of Couples for Christ Migrants' Program (MP) to conduct Capacity and Skills Building, the MP gathered 34 volunteers from the different sectors of Metro Manila and nearby provinces of Luzon on March 30, 2019 for a session on enhancing communication skills. The workshop was held at the CFC Global Mission Center and was handled and supervised by Nono and Cora Simbulan.

Ms. Lilet Lavina, event facilitator and speaker, shared her expertise in communication gained from her experience as a training consultant specializing in English proficiency, personality development and business communication/customer service programs for local and multinational companies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations.

The session was titled Hugot, and is the first of three sessions on Enhancing Communication Skills. The first workshop provided participants

the basic foundation skills on speaking with conviction and presenting from the heart.

The participants learned to be more aware of the nature of each of the presentations that they will conduct whether it be a talk, a training course, or a facilitation activity. They were also given a better grasp of the essential components of effective and impactful presentations, and how they can consistently motivate themselves to ensure that they always find joy and fulfillment in serving the Lord through the CFC Migrants Program.

The new skills the volunteers learned deepened their understanding of effective communication, and, with deeper reflection, allowed them to understand why they chose to serve in the Program in the first place.

Capping the session, Lavina pointed out that the primary purpose of the communicator, to speak from the heart, is rooted in one's passion and purpose. *(Gitte Pagdagagan)*

## Co-ops for Christ Manila Elects New Board



THE CO-OPS for Christ Manila elected a new Board of Directors during the 19<sup>th</sup> General Assembly which took place at the Dr. Avelino P. Ventura Hall of the Philippine Heart Center on March 23, 2019. The new Members of the Board are Concepcion Saturay, Etheyln Balenton, Atty. Mar Bihag, Ric dela Rosa, Jun Navarro, Victor Hizon, Jaycee dela Cruz, Nestor Intia, and Albert Cruz. Among the members of the Board, Navarro, Hizon and dela Cruz were re-elected, while Intia and Cruz were newly-elected. The election of officers will take place during the organizational meeting and oath-taking of the new members in mid-April, before the Holy Week.

TEMPC Cebu Holds 15<sup>th</sup> GA

THE Tekton Entre Multi-Purpose Cooperative Cebu held its 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly on March 23, 2019 at the Cebu Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The theme for this year's General Assembly was “Rekindle the Gift, Fulfill the Ministry. Share the Lord's light through Cooperativism”. During the elections of the new Board of Directors, the following were elected into office: Frank Noob-Chairperson; Roberta Verano-Vice Chair; Edwin Chavez, Rowena Ong, Maria Corazon dela Fuente, Antonio Felipe, and Ruben Capio as members of the Board of Directors.

## CFC Attends Installation of New Military Ordinary

Bishop Oscar Jaime Llaneta Florencio, DD was installed on April 3, 2019 as the new Military Ordinary of the Philippines. The installation took place at the St. Ignatius of Loyola Chapel, Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City. Bishop Florencio was the Apostolic Administrator of the Military Ordinariate of the Philippines, as well as the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Cebu prior to his appointment as Military Ordinary. *(Photo: Connie Saturay)*



## Dicastery on the Laity, Family &amp; Life welcomes CFC

CFC Evangelization and Missions Director Arnel Santos and wife Bing, together with CFC Vatican Coordinator Joe Tale, met with Fr. Alexandre Awi Mello, the new Secretary of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, and Fr. Giovanni Buontempo, who is in charge of relations with the ecclesial movements and new communities on March 19, 2019 at the Dicastery's Vatican office. During the meeting, Santos updated the Dicastery on the activities of Couples for Christ, and introduced Family is a Gift to the clergy.



HOLY LAND, C1



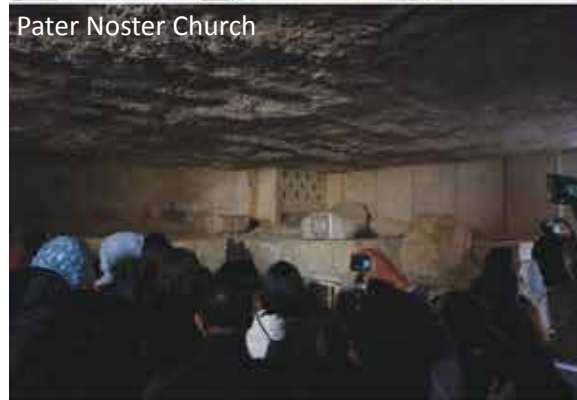
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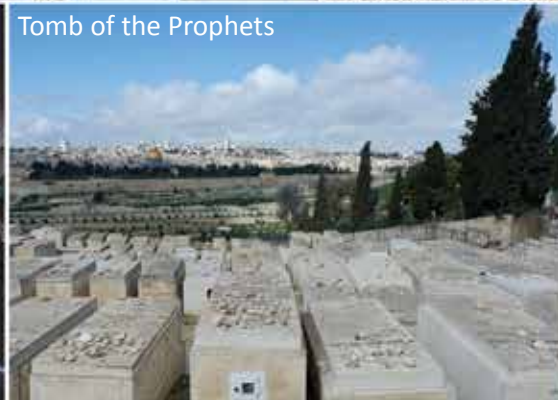
Renewal of marriage vows in Cana



Via Dolorosa



Pater Noster Church



Tomb of the Prophets



The Old City of Jerusalem



Cana



Church of the Annunciation, Nazareth



Fellowship with CFC Israel

tional Airport in Tel-Aviv after a 13-hour flight, my co-pilgrims and I were assaulted by the cold, crisp weather. Add to that the wind and the slight rain shower! But the cold and the rain didn't matter. We were in Israel! And soon, we were on our way to the different sites scheduled for the day.

We were all in awe of everything. The scenery was truly a sight to behold! The highlight of that first day was entering through the small door of the Church of the Nativity to see the place where Jesus was born, and the spot where He was laid in a manger. Jet lag was steadily creeping into our systems, but we stubbornly fought tiredness and sleepiness as we stood in line just to be able to kiss the ground where the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, and to kneel in front of the spot where the manger used to be.

Ninay's husband Jeremy, who heads the CFC Youth for Christ ministry, shared, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...—these words from John 1:14 were what came to my mind when we arrived at the Holy Land! It felt like a dream, but at the same time, a clear manifestation of how Jesus became man and how He embraced His death and resurrection. Being there was also an affirmation of how Mama Mary and St. Joseph were a big part of God's plan from the start."

We all knelt and prayed like we never did before, overwhelmed by deep emotions at being in the very place where the first Christmas happened. Bethlehem did not really look like a 'little town' as the song says, but it was there where the shepherds heard the angels singing "Gloria in excelsis Deo." It was there where Joseph and Mary were denied room in every inn, where Jesus had to be born in humble surroundings, and where wise men from the East came to pay homage to the infant Jesus, bringing Him gifts fit for a King! It was only the first day, but I believe I can speak for the others when I say our hearts were already so full!

**Walking where Jesus walked**

The next seven days became a series of getting on and off the bus, walking for hours, kneeling, praying for personal as well as our families' and friends' prayer intentions. Bethany, The Old City of Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, the Mount of Olives, the Garden

of Gethsemane, the Upper Room, the Mount of Beatitudes, the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of Temptation, the vast Judean Desert, the Jordan River, Capernaum Cana, Mount Tabor, Golgotha—these were places that we read about in the Bible. But in those seven days, we were able to not just see, but walk through these places where Jesus Christ preached, performed miracles, grieved, suffered, died by crucifixion and rose again. And as we walked, we imagined in our minds the various scenes, the sounds, the people in the stories.

Kaye Bentinganan wrote in her reflection, "I cannot fathom the grace of being able to walk where Jesus walked! The only difference is, our walks happened 2,000 years apart! The experience was truly extraordinary." She added, "Now, whenever I read and contemplate scripture, I feel God's tangible way of sharing His life with me. And every time I pray, whether a memorized or a personal utterance, I can truly feel the love of the Lord."

The churches we visited—the Church of the Annunciation, the Church of the Visitation, the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu as well as the Church of the Primacy of Peter, the Dominus Fleuit, the Church of All Nations beside the Garden of Gethsemane, the birthplace of the Virgin Mary, the Dormition Abbey, and the Church of the Assumption—were a testament to the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They made the mysteries of the Rosary come to life, that it is now impossible not to remember these places whenever we recite the Holy Rosary. It was truly the Bible alive!

For Jeremy and Ninay, the highlight of the pilgrimage was the renewal of their marriage vows in Cana. According to Ninay, "July of this year marks our 10<sup>th</sup> year as a married couple. What made our anniversary this year more special was renewing our marriage vows at the very place where Jesus performed His first miracle!"

**More than a "faith lift"**

Singles for Christ fulltime missionary Lanie Montaos described how the pilgrimage has created an impact on her faith walk. She said, "Walking where Jesus walked while He lived here on Earth has made greater sense to my

faith. After the pilgrimage, my heart yearns to know Him more and more!"

For Sol Noel, a YFC missionary, the pilgrimage was also an encounter with people of present-day Israel—the convenience store owner who didn't charge more just because we were foreigners; the taxicab driver who brought his children along when he went to the hotel where his mother (who was also on pilgrimage) stayed; and the hotel staff who helped load our luggage on to the bus when we checked out but refused to accept the tip, saying he was just doing his job.

Sol shared, "It was Ash Wednesday that day and the reflection I read from *Bible Diary 2019* connected all of them together: "To give without compensation; to pray without expectation of results; to act without the desire to be noticed—all these are forms of detachment. It requires that we focus on the good of the deed itself, the correctness of our attitude, the purity of our intention. To live in this state of consciousness is its own reward."

YFC Missionary Gerald Manapsal, who went to the pilgrimage together with his fiancée Maan Palacios, also a missionary, experienced an epiphany of sorts. He shared, "Last 2016, the Lord showed me a vision when I prayed for my vocation. In that vision, I saw Jesus, and heard Him telling me to go down from the mountain and experience the mission that He entrusted to me. In my heart, Jesus was telling to me to be brave and ask Maan if I can pursue her. To cut the long story short, I asked her on that day and Maan said 'Yes'."

He added, "As we were going up Mt. Tabor, it was all very surreal to me. I felt that I was in the very place of Christ's Transfiguration, the very place in my vision! I can only be grateful that God is blessing the vocation we have received and that Maan and I will soon receive the sacrament of marriage."

The reflections of my fellow pilgrims are truly a testimony that this pilgrimage to the Holy Land has given us more than a 'faith lift'. For most of us, it was a leap of faith. Indeed, the Lord has taken care of all that we needed for that trip. We know He has received all of the prayer intentions we lifted up during those 10 days to and from the Holy Land. He took care of our families here at home, the work we

left behind momentarily, our health (We left Manila at 32 C, and arrived at Tel Aviv at 10 C!). It was all of us telling the Lord, "I said 'Yes' to this pilgrimage, Lord, because I know You will take care of everything for me."

**Every CFC should go**

On the last day of the pilgrimage, we visited the members of CFC Israel living in Tel Aviv. The titos and titas graciously opened their homes to us, and broke bread with us. Spending time with our CFC brethren once again reminded us that anywhere we go in the world, we have a bigger family who will welcome us with open arms.

Now that we are back to our usual grind at the Global Mission Center in Manila, I realized that the pilgrimage was an opportunity for all of us to appreciate each other more, and to acknowledge our co-pilgrims as we go about our personal journeys.

I personally believe that every Catholic should at least, once in his or her lifetime, go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The memories we created while walking where Jesus walked will forever be etched in our minds and hearts. But more than the memories, I know that all of us will never be the same, and evermore strive to walk how Jesus walked.