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PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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Abp. Soc calls priests to be 'real witnesses amid threats



By Roy Lagarde

PRIESTS are called to face “these dreary times of darkness” by being “real witnesses” amid “an angry disbelieving society,” a church official said on Holy Thursday.

Those priests, said Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan, should also not be afraid to die or be killed for the Lord.

“Brother priests, make friends with death. Let death not threaten you,” Villegas said in his Chrism Mass homily at the St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Dagupan City.

“The call to the priesthood is a call to die. It is clear. There is no priesthood without victimhood,” he said.

To drive his point, the archbishop said that there’s nothing surprising with priests being threatened with death.

In the first place, he said that priests should not have accepted ordination if they were afraid to die or be killed.

“Death is not a threat. It is our destiny,” said Villegas, who is also a former president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines.

Witnesses / A6

Archbishop Socrates Villegas embraces a priest as he celebrates the Chrism Mass at the St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Dagupan City April 18. COURTESY OF SABINS STUDIO

Pampanga’s old churches closed after earthquake



Cracks were seen on the Sta. Monica Parish Church and convent in Minalin, Pampanga following a strong earthquake that hit several parts of Luzon on April 22. PHOTO FROM STA. MONICA PARISH CHURCH MINALIN FACEBOOK PAGE

SEVERAL old churches in Pampanga province have been closed following a strong earthquake that jolted parts of Luzon on April 22.

The Archdiocese of San Fernando said that at least 24 heritage churches will be off limits to give way to inspections after a 6.1 magnitude tremor.

The archdiocese’s Committee on Cultural Heritage said no activities would be allowed inside the churches “until they are deemed safe.”

“The Technical Secretariat is coordinating with experts and national agencies to assure everyone’s safety,” it said.

Pampanga is home to many historic churches, and most are considered as national treasures for their history and beauty.

So far, the archdiocese reported that only the parish churches in Lubao and Porac

had suffered major damages. Churches in Angeles, Sta. Rita, Guagua, and Betis, meanwhile, were reported to have sustained some cracks.

The tremor left at least 16 people dead and 26 others were listed missing, most of whom were residents of Porac.

Catholic bishops have expressed their sorrow and promised their prayers for the victims and their families.

“We pray especially for the grieving people, who have lost dear ones in the earthquake, and we hope recovery and help would come to these people,” said Archbishop Romulo Valles, president of the Philippine bishops’ conference.

“We pray that those injured and lost properties will be comforted, and that help will come,” he said.

The Davao archbishop also lauded rescue workers, who

Churches / A6

PH bishops condemn Sri Lanka attacks

CATHOLIC leaders in the Philippines joined the international community in condemning a series of blasts in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle on April 22 offered Mass at the Manila Cathedral on Monday for the victims of the bombings that killed almost 300 people.

In his homily, the cardinal voiced his concern and prayers for the victims of the attacks that ripped through churches and hotels across the country.

“On the day they were celebrating the joy of the resurrection, they became victims of the darkness of evil,” Tagle said.

“But in the light of the resurrection, we are filled with the hope of new life for the victims, for the families, for the Church and the people

Condemn / A6



An explosion rocked St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, Sri Lanka, on Easter Sunday, April 21. COURTESY OF ST. SEBASTIAN CHURCH

Don't be swayed by candidates' 'winnability', bishop urges voters

SAYING that voting is not about winning like a lottery but about being heard, a Catholic bishop called on people to vote according to their conscience and not because of the candidates' “winnability.”

“It is not a matter of betting on winning horses. It is the free expression of our convictions,” Manila Auxiliary Broderick Pabillo said.

He reminded the voters of the May 13 midterm polls not to allow surveys to sway them from voting for the right candidates.

Let us not be conditioned by survey results and polls. These are part of the propaganda and are meant to condition our votes,” Pabillo said.

“Many have regretted their

votes in the 2016 elections. Let this be a lesson to us now. Let us be wiser,” he said.

As a Christian obligation, the bishop then urged the lay people to help promote for whom they see as “good candidates” in all possible means.

“On their own they can tell people whom to vote,” he said, adding that this can also be done in social media.

“If more and more lay people do this, this subtle campaigning that is not caught by survey groups can be very effective,” Pabillo added.

Catholic bishops have earlier called on lay groups to campaign for deserving candidates “as an exercise of their Christian faith”. (CBCPNews)

Cardinal Tagle calls faithful to deeper encounter with other people



Churchgoers hold candles during the Easter Vigil Mass presided over by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle at the Manila Cathedral April 20. ROY LAGARDE

CARDINAL Luis Antonio Tagle led Manila’s Catholics into Easter on Saturday night, April 20, urging them at the vigil to foster a culture of encounter with other people.

He said people’s encounter with God is marked by faith

and by taking care of those who are in need.

“We are called as Christians to encounter others and walk with them humbly, without judgement or pretensions of having the answer to all their

Encounter / A6

Vatican Briefing

China invites Vatican to have pavilion at Beijing garden expo

Accepting an invitation from the Chinese government, the Holy See is one of a number of nations and organizations participating in an international garden expo in Beijing. Though the expo's focus is on flowers, horticulture and the environment, the Vatican's presence will be "one step further" on a journey of dialogue between the Vatican and China, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, told reporters at a news conference April 16. While high-level talks and agreements between the two countries, which do not have formal diplomatic relations, are "delicate" and ongoing, taking part in the April 29-Oct. 7 expo and other cultural exchanges have the important task of creating "an atmosphere" that facilitates dialogue, he said. **(Carol Glatz/CNS)**

Helping others is the true goal, pope tells soccer league

Like those who play soccer, people must learn to work together, help one another and race toward a clear goal, Pope Francis said. While one may not always achieve every goal in his or her life, having a clear set of objectives makes people see "where are we going and where our efforts are taking us" as opposed to today's culture which often pushes young men and women to "run without stopping," the pope said April 15 during an audience with members of the Italian National Amateur Soccer League. "To clarify and improve our goals is an exercise that is never-ending and carried out every day -- I would say almost every moment -- to become more and more aware of what we are doing and the most suitable ways to achieve the desired result," he said. **(Junno Arocho Esteves/CNS)**

Pope makes surprise visit to community for people with Alzheimer's

Drawing attention to the special needs of people with Alzheimer's disease, Pope Francis made an afternoon visit to a community of group homes designed to keep residents active and living as normal a life as possible. The pope's visit April 12 to Emanuele Village on the northern edge of Rome was part of his continuing series of "Mercy Friday" visits, which he began during the Holy Year of Mercy in 2015-16 to highlight the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Emanuele Village consists of 14 group homes, each with six residents, as well as a small supermarket, hair salon, coffee bar and restaurant, "allowing the residents to live as normally as possible, reproducing many of the little aspects of daily life," and helping them maintain ties with others. **(CNS)**

Vatican firefighter says St. Peter's at much less risk than Notre Dame

After the devastating fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris April 15, Romans and tourists could not help looking at St. Peter's Basilica and wondering, "what if?" But Maj. Paolo De Angelis, head of the Vatican fire department, told the Italian news agency ANSA April 16 that the structural differences between Notre Dame and the basilica and, especially, the differences in the materials used, make a catastrophic fire at St. Peter's less likely. While the attic of Notre Dame was known as "the forest" because of the lattice of oak beams supporting the roof, in St. Peter's, he said, most of the supports are in stone or masonry. The few wood beams, he said, are covered in a fire-resistant varnish and are constantly monitored by an ultramodern fire alarm system. **(Cindy Wooden/CNS)**

Organ donation fosters culture of life, pope says

When done ethically and free of charge, organ donation is a selfless gesture that contributes to fostering a culture of life, Pope Francis said. Christians who donate their organs offer "a gift to the suffering Lord who said that everything we have done for a brother or sister in need we have done for him," the pope said April 13 during a meeting with members of the Italian Association of Organ Donors. However, he added, organ donation must remain "as an unpaid, free act." "In fact, any form of commercialization of the body or any part of it is contrary to human dignity. In giving blood or an organ of the body, it is necessary to respect the ethical and religious perspective," the pope said. **(Junno Arocho Esteves/CNS)**

Pope sends aid to flood victims in Iran

Pope Francis has sent a large donation to assist tens of thousands of Iranians who lost their homes and businesses in waves of severe flooding that began in mid-March. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development said Pope Francis was sending 100,000 euros (US\$113,000), which will be distributed with the help of the Vatican nunciature in Tehran. The flooding has killed 77 people and more than a thousand were injured. The homes and property of more than 10 million people have been damaged and at least 2 million people require emergency assistance, the dicastery said. **(CNS)**

Vatican imposes 10-year suspension on Legionaries priest for abuse

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has banned a Legionaries of Christ priest from publicly exercising his priestly ministry for 10 years after he was convicted in Chile of sexually abusing a young girl. Irish-born Legionaries Father John O'Reilly was convicted in Chile in 2014 and sentenced to four years of "supervised liberty." When the four years was up in December, he was told to leave the country or face deportation. He moved to Rome, where he still lives, according to the Legionaries. In accordance with church law, he also underwent a trial by a tribunal of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which also found him guilty of child sexual abuse, the Legionaries of Christ press office said in a statement April 11. **(Cindy Wooden/CNS)**

Human trafficking is 'crime against humanity,' pope says

Human trafficking is a "crime against humanity," because it denies the human dignity of the victim, seeing him or her only as a piece of merchandise to be used to enrich or give pleasure to another, Pope Francis said. Human trafficking, "in its multiple forms, is a wound in the humanity of those who endure it and those who commit it," the pope said April 11, addressing the closing session of a Vatican conference. The Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development organized the conference April 8-11. The office brought together more than 200 bishops, priests, men and women religious, project coordinators, pastoral workers, representatives of Catholic organizations and foundations and trafficking experts from around the world to brainstorm and coordinate efforts to stop trafficking. **(Cindy Wooden/CNS)**

Sri Lanka Easter attacks draw international condemnation, prayer for victims

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka— Religious and civil leaders have responded with condolences, prayer, and calls for justice after several explosions at churches and hotels in Sri Lanka killed more than 200 people and injured hundreds more on Easter Sunday.

Calling it "a very, very sad day for all of us," Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo, canceled all remaining Easter Masses for the day in the Colombo district.

He expressed his "deepest sorrow and sympathy to all those innocent families that have lost someone, and also to those who have been injured and rendered destitute," Vatican News reported.

"I condemn—to the utmost of my capacity—this act that has caused so much death and suffering to the people," Ranjith said. He called for a strong and impartial inquiry to find those responsible for the attacks.

At the conclusion of his Urbi et Orbi address on Easter Sunday, Pope Francis said the violence in Sri Lanka has brought "grief and sorrow" to the people there.

"I wish to express my affectionate closeness to the Christian community, struck while it was gathered in prayer, and to all the victims of such cruel violence," he said.

"I entrust to the Lord all those who have tragically perished," he said, adding his prayers for those who are injured and suffering from the attacks.

Shortly before 9 a.m., explosions were detonated during Easter Mass at Catholic churches in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, and in Negombo, a city 20 miles to its north. At the same time, a bomb exploded at a service at the evangelical Zion Church in Batticaloa, on Sri Lanka's east coast.

Pews were shattered by the blast at St. Anthony's Shrine in Colombo, and floors and ceilings were covered in blood. The Catholic shrine is the most well-known church in Sri Lanka, and is designated the country's



An explosion rocked St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, Sri Lanka, on Easter Sunday, April 21. COURTESY OF ST. SEBASTIAN CHURCH

national shrine. The first chapel on the Church property was built during Sri Lanka's Dutch colonial period, when Catholicism was mostly forbidden on the island.

There were also explosions Sunday morning at three luxury hotels in Colombo, and explosions outside a zoo and a private home Sunday afternoon.

In a post on Twitter, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo condemned the attacks "in the strongest terms."

"These attacks demonstrate the brutal nature of terrorists whose sole aim is to threaten peace & security," he said. "We offer our deepest condolences and stand with the government & people of #SriLanka."

A spokesperson for UN Secretary General António Guterres voiced outrage at the attacks and calls for justice for perpetrators.

"The Secretary-General expresses his deepest condolences to the families of the victims, the people and the Government of Sri Lanka, and wishes a speedy recovery to the

injured. He commends the leadership demonstrated by the authorities and unity of the people of Sri Lanka in the wake of the attacks," the spokesperson said, adding that Guterres "reiterates the support and solidarity of the United Nations with the people and the Government of Sri Lanka in this difficult moment for the nation."

No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but a police spokesman said seven people have been arrested in connection with them, according to the AP. Some reports suggested that an additional six suspects were later arrested.

The island nation, which is home to a population of more than 21 million, has been plagued with periodic violence since its 26-year civil war concluded in 2009. More than 70% of Sri Lankans are Buddhists, roughly 13% are Hindus, almost 10% are Muslims, and fewer than 8% are Christians. There are 1.5 million Catholics in the country, constituting the overwhelming majority of the Sri Lanka's Christians. **(CNA)**

Wooden church- an 'ephemeral cathedral' could go up as Notre-Dame is restored

PARIS, France— After a massive fire gutted the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris April 15, the cathedral's rector says a temporary wooden church might soon be constructed in the esplanade, or plaza, adjacent to the cathedral.

Monsignor Patrick Chauvet told France's CNews April 18 that he was exploring plans to build an "ephemeral cathedral" adjacent to Notre Dame, where cleanup and construction are expected to begin soon.

Mass would be celebrated and confessions offered at the temporary structure, Chauvet suggested, adding that Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo is a supporter of the idea.

"We mustn't say 'the cathedral is closed for five years' and that's it," Chauvet said.

There is no formal estimate yet for how long the cathedral restoration will take. While France's President Emmanuel Macron has said that he would like to see restoration completed within five years, experts say that possibility is extremely unlikely.

Nearly one billion euro have been pledged to the restoration effort.

While the images of the cathedral' exterior suggested nearly total devastation after the fire, inside the cathedral's vaulted stone ceiling mostly held, and protected many



Firefighters in Paris work to contain the burning Notre Dame Cathedral April 15, 2019. BENOIT MOSER, COURTESY BSWP

of the cathedral's religious and historical treasures from the flames.

The cathedral's famed rose windows, its bell towers and massive bells, and its organ were all intact

after the fire. The Church's most important religious items were spared from the fire: the Eucharist, and relics of Christ's crown of thorns and cross were saved during the fire. **(CNA)**

'Nones' rise amid declining church attendance, survey shows

WASHINGTON D.C.— Church membership in the United States has dropped considerably in the last two decades, and the number of people who say they have no religion has increased, a new report from Gallup shows.

The decline in "membership" of a specific church or parish community appears especially pronounced among Catholics and young people.

Nearly one out of three millennials, defined as people born between 1980 and 2000, describe themselves as having no religion. Of the 68% who said they do have a religious faith, only 57% said they belong to a church.

Twenty years ago, when members of "Generation X" were the same age as millennials, 62%—nearly two out of three—were members of a church. Today, 54% of Generation X members belong to a church, and 79% said they have a religious belief of some sort.

Those born in 1945 or earlier were the most religious age group surveyed. Only nine percent said they did not have a religion, and nearly three out of four believers consider themselves to "belong" to a church.

Since 1998-2000, the percentage of Catholics who say they belong to a

church has dropped by 13 points. In 1998-2000, 76% of Catholics said they were members of a church. By 2016-2018, this figure had dropped to 63%.

Church "membership" is difficult to tabulate among Catholics. Parish membership is primarily defined in canon law according to residence in the territory of a parish.

While many parishes operate registration programs for sacramental or pastoral purposes, "registration" does not actually define or confirm belonging to the parish community, which is conferred de facto by domicile within the territory of the parish.

In Catholic theology, Church "membership" is not ordinarily defined by registration or self-identity.

Even without taking this into account, according to the data American Catholics still appear belong to churches at higher rates than nondenominational Protestants. Only 57 percent of Americans who call themselves "nondenominational" are members of a church.

Both of these figures lag behind Protestants affiliated with a denomination, as well as Mormons. Seventy percent of denominational Protestants, and 90 percent of

Mormons say they belong to churches. Mormons, unlike Catholics and Protestants, have kept relatively stable church membership numbers of the past 20 years.

Women were considerably more likely than men to say they belong to churches, with 58 percent of women and 47 percent of men identifying themselves as church members. Membership among men and women experienced a large decline in the last 20 years, with men dropping by 17 points, and women by 15.

All demographic categories now say they belong to churches at a lower rate than they did 20 years ago.

The demographics that experienced the smallest decline were Protestants (which Gallup combined with people who identify simply as "Christian") and Republicans, who dropped six points and eight points, respectively.

Conversely, Hispanics and Democrats both dropped 23 percentage points in church membership over the last 20 years. Democrats dropped from 71 percent to 48 percent, and Hispanics from 68 to 45. Those between the ages of 18 and 29 were not far behind, declining by 22 points from 1998. **(CNA)**

Pope urges students to fight their addiction to phones

VATICAN— Pope Francis told high school students to break their phone addiction and spend more time on real communication with others and in moments of quiet, personal reflection.

Young people need to learn about “healthy introspection” so they can listen to their conscience and be able to distinguish it “from the voices of selfishness and hedonism,” he said.

The pope made his remarks April 13 during an audience with teachers, students and their family members from Rome’s oldest classical lyceum -- the Ennio Quirino Visconti Lyceum-Gymnasium. Some notable alumni include Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, and Jesuit Father Matteo Ricci.

The pope told the high school students to “please, free yourselves from your phone addiction!”

Looking up at his audience as they applauded, the pope said he knew they were aware of the many forms and problems of addiction. But, he warned, an addiction to one’s mobile phone was something “very subtle.”

“Mobile phones are a great help, it marks great progress. It should be used, and it is wonderful everyone knows how to use it” for the “wonderful” activity of communication, he said.

“But when you become a slave to your phone, you lose your freedom,” he said.

“Be careful because there is danger that this drug -- when the phone is a drug -- the danger of communication being reduced to simple ‘contacts’ and not true communication with others, he said to more applause.

He told them to not be afraid of silence and to learn to listen to or write down what is going on inside their heart and head.

“It is more than a science, it is wisdom, so as to not become a piece of paper” that moves in whatever direction the wind blows, he said.

The pope also told the teenagers that God gave everyone the ability to love.

“Don’t dirty it” with shameful behavior, but rather, love “cleanly” with modesty, fidelity, respect and a big generous heart.



Pope Francis greets people during an audience with students and staff from Ennio Quirino Visconti Lyceum-Gymnasium, a school in Rome, at the Vatican April 13, 2019. **CNS/VATICAN MEDIA**

“Love is not a game. Love is the most beautiful thing God gave us,” he told them, so be vigilant, protect people’s dignity and defend “authentic love, so as not to trivialize the language of the body.”

He asked them to help their

school remain free from all forms of bullying and aggression, which are “the seeds of war.”

And he encouraged them to reject mediocrity and indifference, and instead, “dream big,” living with passion and embracing diversity.

“Dialogue among different cultures, different people, enriches a nation, enriches one’s homeland,” he said. It helps people move forward in mutual respect and be able to see the world is “for everyone, not just for some.” **(Carol Glatz/CNS)**

Killed in the Rwandan genocide, a couple is being considered for sainthood

KIGALI, Rwanda— The story of Cyprien and Daphrose Rugumba is a story of atheism and devout faith, of a strained marriage and a love that overcomes obstacles, of a powerful conversion that was able to change an entire life.

Cyprien and Daphrose were murdered 25 years ago, at the start of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Today, their cause for sainthood is open, and their impact lives on through the Emmanuel Community, an international Catholic association of the faithful focused on adoration, compassion and evangelization, which the couple brought to Rwanda.

The Rugumba’s story is recounted by the Emmanuel Community.

As a young man, Cyprien entered seminary. His time there was difficult. Shocked by scandals among the other seminarians and discouraged by the writings of philosophers who criticized the Catholic Church, he left the seminary and fell away from the faith.

Cyprien found success in the arts, working as a poet, author, and composer. He became an influential government administrator, helping to protect and encourage the creation of traditional Rwandan art.

When his fiancée was killed in 1963, he asked to marry her cousin Daphrose, a devout Catholic, in order to honor his engagement to her family.

They were wed in 1965. The marriage was a rocky one, leading to an eight-month separation at one point. Even after the two were reconciled, Cyprien was repeatedly unfaithful to his wife, fathering a child out of wedlock. He also ridiculed his wife’s devotion to prayer and the Catholic Church.

Daphrose, however, remained undeterred in her faith and resolute in her beliefs about the sanctity of marriage. She prayed continually for her husband’s conversion and raised their 10 children in the faith, taking them to Mass with her.

In 1982, Cyprien became seriously ill. Doctors were unable to determine the cause of his sickness. Fearing death, Cyprien had a powerful moment of conversion, believing in God’s existence and love for him. This experience, which he would later attribute to his wife’s tireless prayers on his behalf, led to a complete transformation of his life.

After a difficult 17 years of marriage, the relationship between Cyprien and Daphrose was renewed, united in a new fidelity and

growing deeper in faith and joy together. Those who knew Cyprien said he became humbler and positive, trusting in God’s plan for his life.

In 1989, Cyprien and Daphrose encountered the Emmanuel Community, a Catholic organization with an international presence, focused on discipleship and evangelization through prayer and charity.

The following year, they founded a chapter of the community in Rwanda. Over the next four years, they devoted their time to the quickly growing community.

But while the Rugumbas’ marriage was filled with joy and peace, the country around them was not. Decades of ethnic tension dating back to Belgian colonialism was beginning to lead to calls for violence in Rwanda, fostered by propaganda backed by political extremists.

In April 1994, the tensions erupted into frenzied bloodshed, as members of the Hutu ethnic majority took up machetes and turned on their minority Tutsi neighbors, friends, and colleagues. In the 100-day genocide that followed, it is estimated that 1 million people were killed.

Cyprien, who was renowned in the country for his work preserving traditional art, had fought the growing tension. He denounced the violent and divisive radio broadcasts and the inclusion of ethnicities on identity cards.

In his work with the Emmanuel Community, Cyprien insisted that Hutus and Tutsis were both welcome. He stressed unity based in Christ as the center of the community. “We have only one party, that of Jesus,” he would say.

But his outspoken criticism of those perpetrating the violence had drawn attention and made the Rugumba family a target.

On the morning of April 7, the start of the genocide, Cyprien and Daphrose were murdered in their home, along with six of their 10 children, following a night spent before the Eucharist in Adoration.

The canonization cause for Cyprien and Daphrose was opened Sept. 18, 2015, and the diocesan inquiry in currently underway.

The couple’s work— particularly Daphrose’s ministry to homeless children on the streets and Cyprien’s music, poems and books— are still recognized today. In addition, the Emmanuel Community in Rwanda, founded by the Rugumbas, is currently the second largest in the world. **(CNA)**

They were going to get married. Now he’s a priest and she’s a sister

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina— Before discovering their vocations, Fr. Javier Olivera and Sister Marie de la Sagesse were engaged and planning their wedding. God had other plans.

Speaking to ACI Prensa, CNA’s Spanish language sister agency, Fr. Olivera said that they both grew up in Catholic families and that “our parents knew each other when they were young.” They saw each other frequently when they were children.

“I had really left the practice of religion. When I was 19, I came back from a back-packing trip to Peru and I met her. I asked her if she believed in virginity until marriage, because for me this was kind of an invention by the Church. She laid out the principles so well about purity, from faith and reason, that it impacted me. I met a woman who knew how to defend what she believed and who was at the same time very intelligent,” Olivera commented.

Soon after that conversation, they began dating. At that time both of them were studying law. He was at the National University at Buenos Aires and she was at the National University at La Plata.

Fr. Olivera said that “it was like any other courtship but we tried to take advantage of cultural life through music, literature and philosophy. We read books together, we’d go out for coffee.

We had a group of friends with whom we attended conferences of Argentine Catholic authors.”

“I started to practice the faith, to pray, to go to Mass on Sundays. All in large part thanks to her, to God mainly, but to her as an

instrument,” said the priest. He added that they also prayed the rosary together.

For her part, Sister Marie de la Sagesse, whose baptismal name is Trinidad Maria Guiomar, told ACI Prensa that what she most appreciated about her then-boyfriend was “his sincere search for the truth without fearing the consequences.”

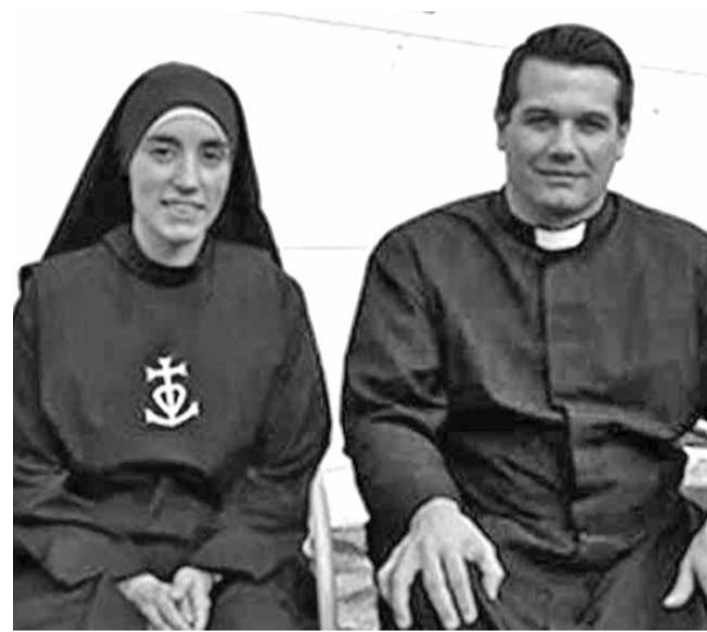
The couple got engaged when they were 21 and decided to get married after college, two and a half years away.

The discovery of a vocation One day Trinidad Maria’s older brother broke the news that he would be entering the seminary, and she remembered, “we were reeling from it because we weren’t expecting that.”

“I had a car and with my fiancée we decided to take him to the seminary, which was in San Rafael, Mendoza Province,” she said. They both decided to stay in the area a few days so Javier could visit some friends who were in the seminary, and Trinidad Maria could visit some friends in the convent.

“When we got back, we talked about how crazy all that was, that her brother had left everything, the possibility of having a family, an important career. We began to ask ourselves, ‘What would happen if God called us to the religious life?’ The first thing we said was ‘no’ and that that was crazy because we were having a really beautiful engagement and we were already buying things to get married,” Fr. Olivera recounted.

Weeks went by “there was this constant thought in my soul about what would happen if God called me, if I had to leave everything, why not be a priest? How



Father Javier Olivera and Sister Marie de la Sagesse. **CNA**

to know if the best way to get to heaven for me is the priestly life or the married life? Where can I do the most good?”

After so many doubts he decided to tell his fiancée about his vocational concerns, who confessed to him that she “was thinking the same thing” after her brother entered the seminary.

However, neither one of them made a decision. “Since we still had two years before finishing law school, that was a great excuse to not yet enter the seminary or the convent,” Fr. Olivera said.

They had “a very prudent monk” as a spiritual adviser, who told them: “Look, that is an issue between each one of you and God. No one can interfere with souls.”

For her part, Sister Marie de la Sagesse told ACI Prensa that “it was a long period of discernment, at least two years, until God clearly showed me the consecrated life, and I could not doubt that he was asking of me this total surrender.”

After finishing their

studies, both embraced their vocations. In 2008, when they were 31, he was ordained a priest in the Diocese of San Rafael, and she made her final vows in the congregation of the Sisters of the Merciful Jesus.

Fr. Olivera is currently a university professor and has a blog called “Que no te la cuenten” (Find out for yourself). He has written a book on vocational doubts entitled “¿Alguna vez pensaste? El llamado de Cristo” (Have you ever thought about it? The Call of Christ).

Sister Marie de la Sagesse lives in southern France and has an apostolate in Saint Laurent Parish in the Diocese of Fréjus-Toulon.

Regarding their story, she said that “I consider it a special grace that both of us were called almost at the same time. So kind and thoughtful of Divine Providence, who doesn’t miss a detail. And what I really appreciate is that we’re still friends and not just us, but our families too.” **(ACI Prensa/CNA)**

Church charity steps in to aid disaster-hit Filipino farmers

CARIGARA, Leyte— It took some time for farmer Rosenda Apay, 59, to realize that she was finally tilling her own farm. It took more than 16 years of lobbying and asserting her rights to have land.

Today, Apay and 21 other farmers, affected by the disaster wrought by Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, are tilling a 25-hectare communal farm in the central Philippines.

They said their perseverance paid off as they admitted that many of their fellow farmers “have given up the fight.”

The realization of the farmers’ dream came about with the help of non-government groups and the Canadian Catholic Organization For Development and Peace, or Caritas Canada.

“They gave us hope,” said Apay, leader of the Bugho Farmers Association in the

city of Ormoc, on the central Philippine island of Leyte. “This is the first time that an organization really worked for our rights.”

Florina Reyes, project coordinator of the Rights Network group, said its partnership with Caritas Canada made possible the distribution of land to communities most affected by Haiyan, the most powerful typhoon on record to have hit the Philippines.

A total of 1,981 certificates of land ownership covering 3,722 hectares of land are set to be released to more farmer beneficiaries in Leyte province. At least 3,588 families are expected to benefit.

“If Haiyan had not hit us, we would not have known that farmers like us have rights to land,” said Lolita Candaza, 59, from the town of Barugo.

Danny Carranza, former national coordinator of Rights Network, said the organization has been working on land rights since 2008.

When Haiyan hit, areas affected by the typhoon became “special cases” because of the “intersection of land rights, development issues and humanitarian response.”

Bishop Noel Simard, head of Caritas Canada who visited the Philippines last month, said the support is Canada’s response to the “great need and suffering” the people experienced.

“Seeing the happy faces of the families, of the children in their new homes, we can only say that Development and Peace did the right thing pushing for this project,” said Bishop Simard from Valleyfield Diocese in Quebec. **(Ronald Reyes/UCAN)**

EDITORIAL

What Easter is for us

EASTER is the greatest event for all humankind. It is the triumph of God's love over evil and death. Jesus' death on the cross is the greatest love that can be offered. Though sinless and blameless, Jesus took the blame for the sins of humanity for all time, since the beginning of the human race till the end of time. Jesus offered himself. Is this offering acceptable? Is this kind of love effective? Will it overcome the force of evil and death? If the death and burial of Jesus were the end of the story, we are not sure whether his love and offering were effective. Easter is the confirmation that Jesus' love is triumphant. It is able to overcome all evil, even death!

Jesus has emptied himself to the fullest. "Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil 2:8) On the part of God, He accepted him and lifted him up. His offering was acceptable and effective. "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name." (Phil 2:9) We therefore loudly acclaim ALLELUIA! Praise the Lord!

Easter is not only about Jesus. It is about all of us. First and foremost, Easter has truly set us free from the power of evil and death. The prophet Ezekiel has prophesied: "You shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people." (Ezekiel 37:13) We are no longer enslaved by sin. Death is not our end. We are set free! Not only that! The power of Easter is now operative in us. As Jesus has overcome evil we too can overcome evil. We are assured by these words of Jesus: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33) This gives us confidence to face life and all its vicissitudes. The assurance of victory is given to us. All acts of love and trust will be rewarded.

Pope Francis urges us: "The evils of our world—and those of the Church—must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervor.... Our faith is challenged to discern how wine can come from water and how wheat can grow in the midst of weeds. (Evangelii Gaudium, 84) Because of Easter we do not fall into pessimism and defeatism. We are assured of Jesus' victory, which will also be ours if we stay close to him and follow his path. The Holy Father warned: "One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into disillusioned pessimists. Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents." (Evangelii Gaudium, 85) With the Easter event, we are convinced of victory beforehand!

"We are Easter people and Alleluia is our song!" the Church Fathers tell us. So we face sufferings, setbacks, evil and even death with confidence. We shall overcome! Jesus has shown us the way. We are assured that love will triumph, no matter how bitter is the hatred; truth will shine forth, no matter how sinister are the lies; righteousness will prevail, no matter how injustice is prevalent. This is good news, for it seems at the moment that lies, violence, and hatred on the one hand, and apathy, indifference and skepticism on the other hand, seem to prevail. But this is not so! The power of the resurrection in operative among us Easter people!

The challenge of today's youth

WITH the holding of the National Youth Day celebration here in Cebu this week, we are again given a chance to take a long and serious look at the situation of today's youth not only in our country but also all over the world. And let's see what we can do with the pluses and minuses, the lights and shadows that such consideration would give us.

It is obvious that today's youth are way different from those in the previous generations in so many respects, like in terms of mentality, behavior and lifestyle, attitude, culture and manners, etc. It should come as no surprise since today's youth are exposed to a lot more things than those of the past. While every generation is different from the others, the present one seems to be more sharply different.

Today's youth, in general, seem to know and to use a lot more things in terms of technologies. Aside from the wealth of knowledge that has been accumulated through the ages worldwide and now made more accessible due to the new technologies, they are now freely riding the wave of the many new developments in the areas of the sciences, the arts, and of the course the technologies. They are the digital natives.

These new things, of course, can have double effects. They can be good and bad, depending on how we understand and use them. While we can see a lot of today's youth empowered greatly because of these new things, we can also see many of them sinking in all forms of anomalies and disorders.

There are those who manage to make good use of the many possibilities the new things offer them, but there also those who are simply confused and lost, trapped in their own self-indulgence. And between the two, I am afraid the latter is far more plenty than the former. It's the latter case that we should be more concerned about. They are the ones who seem to mature late when, in fact, the challenges and complications of the times call for them to mature early.

How can we help them? What measures should we

Editorial / A6



ILLUSTRATION BY BLAINNER US

Campaign... campaign... campaign

Panaghoy

Bp. Broderick Pabillo



AFTER the lull of the Holy Week, if ever there were any, political campaigns for the May 13 elections are on, but now with more heat, since it is the last stretch before the elections. We have barely three weeks to go before that fateful day. With the encouragement of the last CBCP pastoral letter, many lay leaders are now actively involved in campaigning. The bishops made this call: "Christians are encouraged to engage in principled partisan participation. This means that they can campaign for good candidates as an exercise of their Christian faith." Many lay leaders are now heeding this call. Even with limited resources and experiences, they campaign for the candidates whom they think can make a difference in the present governance of the country. They especially support candidates who advance democratic governance by not allowing themselves to be cowed by fear or used by interests of those who have authoritarian or dictatorial leanings.

In some areas of the country, this is an uphill battle. In a northern province, I was told by a local leader of the opposition that she has a lot of posters but they cannot post them because

people are afraid to be identified with the opposition, even by just having posters attached near their homes or offices. They are afraid of reprisals. Fear can have a paralyzing effect. The best way to overcome fear is not by going along with it, but by opposing it and standing up to it. If now we are afraid just because of the threats, what will happen when people are actually led with a semblance of legality because those in power are now in total control? It is now then that we have to stand up and oppose those who use violence and threats.

In all midterm elections the ones in power have the unfair advantage in that they can use government resources, government money, and even government time to campaign for their candidates. This should be illegal! Usually, those in the opposition have not enough resources for their campaigns. Here the lay people who are convinced about the worthiness of their candidates can help. On their own they can tell people whom to vote. This influence is highly effective because it is a one-on-one personal approach. This can also be done in the social media by posting the names and programs of good candidates

so that they may be more known. This does not cost any money and does not need much time. If more and more lay people do this, this subtle campaigning that is not caught by survey groups can be very effective.

At this stage of the campaign, let us not be conditioned by survey results and polls. These are part of the propaganda and are meant to condition our votes. Let us remember that elections are different from betting in lotteries or gambling. It is not a matter of betting on winning horses. It is the free expression of our convictions. No matter if my candidate does not have a high rating, my vote for him/her is not wasted even if she/he loses. What is worse is that I vote for a winnable candidate who indeed wins but who is a bad public servant. In this way I have contributed to the ill in society. Many have regretted their votes in the 2016 elections. Let this be a lesson to us now. Let us be wiser. Let all good people campaign and vote not for winnable people—iyong may mga matunog ng pangalan lang—but for those who really can help in the good governance of the country. Let us make good candidates known. Campaign for them!



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 console 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

Whatever / A7

When an idiot is better than a genius

THE comparison may sound crazy, but it is helpful to highlight a basic truth of our faith. And that is, irrespective of whatever human condition we may be in, we should not forget that we have to be with God. Our life is supposed to be in communion with God always. We have to do our part to make that ideal real in our life.

Thus, to dramatize this point more vividly, we can say that we should rather have the IQ of an idiot but with God than that of a genius but without or, worse, against God. It does not really matter how our condition is in our life here on earth. What really matters is that we believe and love God and make use of whatever condition we have to show that belief and love for God.

We should therefore try our best that

with his grace we slowly and steadily become more and more like God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, since God wants us to be his image and likeness, children of his, meant to participate in his very own life.

In concrete terms, we should see to it that the very substance of our consciousness is not only of ourselves, but also and most especially of God, and that whatever we think, desire, say and do is done not only by ourselves but also with and for God.

That might sound too much for us to believe, let alone, to carry out. We, with all our weaknesses, mistakes and sins, will always feel unworthy to share in God's nature and life. We might be tempted to say, "Tell it to the Marines!" But that is what our Christian faith

consistently teaches us, supported by the fact that despite all our sinfulness, God continues to love us and to forgive us through the sacrifice of Christ, the son of God who became man to save us. Besides God through Christ in the Spirit has given us all the means so we can be as we should be.

This point is underscored in that parable about the two sons who were asked by their father to work in the vineyard. (cfr. Mt 21,28-32) The first son at first said no to the request, but later on obeyed his father. The second said yes at first, but then did not actually comply with what he said.

Of course, between the two, it was the first son who actually loved his father by doing what was requested despite

Candidly Speaking / A7

Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimagala



CBCP Monitor

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By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

"Christ is risen! And life is liberated! Christ is risen! And the tomb is emptied of its dead; for Christ having risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be Glory and Power, now and forever, and from all ages to all ages. Amen!"—ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (Easter Sermon)

"...We must confront with holy anger the more than thirty thousand senseless murders of the poor in the name of a false drug-free society..." (Archbishop Socrates Villegas, DD, Chrism Mass Homily)

"Christ has died. CHRIST IS RISEN. Christ will come again," so we the faithful declare the ancient confession of the mystery of faith during the Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ's Death and Resurrection. Inside our churches that confession is solemnly sung but almost always taken for granted by everyone who sings it. Outside of us, particularly in the dark alleys or even the sun-lit corners of the archipelago, we also mostly take for granted the ways in which Christ continues to die in the poor and voiceless victims of the drug war, hate campaigns against dissenters and other forms of oppression or criminality under the protective cloak of impunity. But Christ also dies in those who merely watch helplessly by the sidelines, quietly protesting but blatantly powerless against the country's mysterious but mighty angels and peddlers of death. Christ especially dies in those who praise the murders thinking they are the more effective means to achieving peace and order in our streets, families, neighborhoods and communities. Unfortunately Black Saturday in our shores seems to announce no impending end. (Even the leader of the land recently admitted that the country's illegal drug problem is worsening. That seems to also hold true to the corruption and poverty problem). The stone covering Christ's tomb in the Philippines and in many parts of the world is yet unmoved. Darkness still rules in the graveyard. And it is stark.

Someone might say such words look at realities from dark-colored glasses. Perhaps. But our common concern is to see our realities from Paschal-Mystery-

tinted eyes.

With these eyes a Christian who reads the Scripture readings at Easter Vigil, for instance, sees the paschal movements of God's acts among his creatures, in particular among his "images and likenesses". Paschal in Paschal Mystery, as most priests know from classes in OT exegesis, is from the Hebrew 'pesach' or 'pass over'. The movement from one point to another results in liberation from an evil. Genesis' first chapter tells of the paschal movement of all creatures from darkness to light, from non-existence to existence, the movement from existence to life, from life to "God's images and likenesses". Genesis' twenty-second chapter recalls the paschal movement from the darkness of God's test of Abraham involving the sacrifice of his Isaac to the light of Isaac's release from imminent death on the blind-and-obedient faith of Abraham his father. Exodus' fourteenth chapter takes us to the model par excellence of all liberations: the paschal movement of Israel through Moses from slavery in Egypt to liberation towards journeying in the desert to the Promised Land. The other OT Scripture readings invariably speak of prophecies on Israel's paschal movement from the darkness of exile in foreign countries to their eventual liberation through God's acts as proclaimed by his prophets.

Of course, the fullest realization of the liberation of God's People, which includes us, is the Paschal passage of Jesus the Christ from his Passion to his Death to his Resurrection on Easter.

Unhappily, the liberating and saving fruit of the Paschal Mystery won by the Master for us is not imposed even by the Savior on us. We still have to decide to take it upon ourselves. We are taught that we have done so by virtue of our Baptism. We revisit that decision when at Easter the Church asks us to renew our baptismal vows.

Therein lies a great part of our problem, I submit. To the question of "Does our 'I do' to our baptismal promises on Easter make a paschal movement from words to deeds?" the answer is, at best, "more or less" to "more on the less". Are we moving from

Dying and rising in the Philippines: Are we on reverse Paschal Mystery?

darkness into light, from sin into grace, from slavery to liberation, from evil to good? Are there enough indications that we are journeying to the tune of Jesus Christ's genuine Paschal Mystery or are we, by most signs, following a reverse paschal mystery fueled by fake news instead of the Good News?

Are the real movements in the country from death to life or, rather, mostly from life to death, from light to darkness, or from darkness to greater darkness, from wrong to greater wrongs, from the presence of God to the rejection of God's presence? Is it already Easter morning in our land? Or are we still riding the jeepney of a prolonged Good Friday continuously doomed to run towards Black Saturday and vice versa?

Paul the Apostle's words to the Christians at Colossae and Corinth are our guide. We need to take them seriously. But would we? "Since you have been raised in company with Christ, set your heart on what pertain to higher realms where Christ is seated at God's right hand. Be intent on things that are above rather than on things of earth" (Col 3:1-2). To the Corinthian Christians he explains how we must live out Jesus Christ's resurrection in our everyday existence. Embracing the Risen Lord whose Body is in a completely transformed state means saying no to our old life of sin and penance for the fleshpots of our former dark nights of slavery. "Get rid of the old yeast to make of yourselves fresh dough, unleavened loaves, as it were, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast, that of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread if sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5:7-8).

Jesus Christ is risen! But why are our poor dying? Jesus Christ is risen! But why are our consciences, and their voices, being murdered repeatedly physically, psychologically, morally and legally, with our tacit permission? Jesus Christ is risen! But how come social justice, decency, integrity, truthfulness, among others, are still deeply buried in tombs we have embellished with perpetuity?

"HAPPY EASTER" is not a greeting.

It is a decision to RISE with the Risen Lord.



Collection Box

Fr. Jerome R. Secillano, MPA

Filipino youth in search of meaning and identity

'Year of the Youth'

The youth now take center stage in the Philippine Catholic Church as the latter celebrates the Year of the Youth (YoY) from November 2018 till November 2019.

Since 2013, as the Church prepares for the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the country (1521), vital elements of faith and religion are highlighted and celebrated during a nine-year span that will then culminate in a grand feast in 2021. Previous to YoY was the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons.

By focusing on young people, the Church shows them deep recognition who were referred to by the Synod Fathers in Rome in 2018 as no longer the future but the "present of the Church", the "here and now" so to speak. The recognition does not, of course, undermine the presence and contribution of the older portion of the people of God in building up the body of Christ. In an open letter to the Catholic Church of the Philippines, the Filipino youth admitted their "need for being guided and formed." By whom? If not by their peers, surely by their elders. In context, the youth are now tasked this early to build upon the foundation which their elders had laid.

As the new face of the Church, the young are not expected to change the Church's core beliefs and teachings in an attempt to make the Church more modern and attuned to the times. They are simply exhorted to infuse vitality and energy to an otherwise "aging institution" that's already under threat of secularism and other post-modern values.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Mt. 24:35)

To live in an era where everything seems to be going against the values espoused by Christ requires a tremendous commitment to go against the tide. The youth is thus torn between clinging to Jesus or riding the waves of secular practices. There's also tension in wanting "to belong" or to be different from their peers.

The secular identity for which the youth is unfortunately known for undermines whatever commitment they have to embrace and to cling to what the Church stands for. In the same letter, the Filipino youth said, "We are all searching for our identity—who we are. We search for our meaning and ultimately our purpose in life. We know that we are called for something more than ourselves. We are called to act, but we still need to be guided and formed. We lack critical thinking and decision-making skills that usually make us hesitant to commit. We do not see ourselves as "the future" but as "the present" of the Church, the world, and of society. Hence, we are gifts, life-given to the Church and to the Philippines, and we want to be truly life-giving."

To be the life given to the church and to be truly life-giving requires embodying the Gospel values in their daily life. The lure of "worldly values" will always be strong, but young people have to be reminded that "worldly values" are ephemeral, not lasting, a fad that easily goes out of style. It is the Word of God that is eternal, consistent, fundamentally sound and does not simply change over time. The Word of God is, therefore, the best foundation to found a family, to build the Church, community, and society. As St. Matthew put it, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away" (Mt. 24-35).

The Gospel as counter-cultural or trans-cultural?

As young people attempt to permeate the world with Gospel values, they will be confronted by a sea of public opinion that will question the validity, effectiveness, and practicality of such values. They will be confused and it will lead them to wonder if carrying on such a mission is worthy of their time and effort while the world laughs at them, questions, and challenges them.

In a milieu where same-sex union is gaining acceptance, where divorce, live-in relationships, pre-marital sex, abortion, and many other morally unsound practices have become the new normal, the Gospel, therefore, should either become a counter-cultural or trans-cultural force that should re-direct the course of man's life to the path paved towards Jesus.

Should young people stay committed to this path, then they have to stay away or reject a culture that is entirely different and contrary to the one founded on the principles of the Gospel.

The Gospel is pro-marriage. It teaches that such union entails a life-time commitment between a man and a woman. It is ordained for the pro-creation of children, who are God's gifts to the couple and to the family. To put procreation within the bounds of God's precepts, sex or the conjugal act is to be done only inside of marriage. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians reiterates these basic teachings when he wrote, "But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife" (1 Cor. 7:2-4).

While it is a fact that there are emerging values in opposition to the standards set by Christ, yet have been accepted by some, young people have to be taught that Gospel values do not have to be imprisoned and rendered inutile by man's choice of more practical and convenient standards for living in the world. The Gospel is also trans-cultural. It transcends worldly standards set by man for the simple reason that it is the standard set by God.

Searching for meaning and identity

Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism provides a relatable framework that can help in understanding who the Filipino youth are. But first, we ought to know that young people seem to demand freedom in excess. They most often do not want to be caught up in the web of parental control, restrictions, and impositions. They want to be free and to chart their own destiny.

For Sartre, human beings are "totally determined and totally free". For him, man is free to define himself and that he is defined only insofar as he acts. Man does not depend on

Collection Box / A7

Churches' heritage is country's heritage

IN August 2018, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed between the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) and the Diocese of Kalookan (Diocese). Under the MOA, after a series of research and study, the NHCP will reconstruct the old ruins of the Sacristy of San Bartolome Parish (SBP) Church into its original structure and strength. It includes the strengthening of the pillars made of adobe, reconstruct the doors and windows and installation of new tiles, ceiling and roof.

The Diocese considered the renovated old sacristy of

SBP Church as the Diocesan Archives and Museum. During its Blessing and Inauguration and turnover of the completed Restoration Project of the Old Sacristy Ruins, NHCP Acting Executive Director Mr. Ludovico Badoy narrated the great history of SBP Church. Previously a chapel of Tondo in 1509, it was separated as a parish under the patronage of San Bartolome the Apostle in 1614. The construction of the Church started in 1622 and was made of adobe in 1861. The two belfries in front of the Church was constructed by Luciano Oliver. The Church was burned down in 1898 and reconstructed in 1906. It was

again destroyed during the Second World War and was finished in 1951.

Mr. Badoy stated that as a national heritage, everyone must know how to care for the Church; its wealth is beyond compare. In his response, Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan Diocese thanked the NHCP in doing its share in reconstructing the ruins of the old sacristy of San Bartolome. He said that he now learned that San Bartolome Parish and the two churches in his hometown in Pampanga are siblings (magkapatid). Santiago Apostol Parish in Betis, Guagua, Pampanga and San Agustin in Lubao were also

formerly chapels of Tondo, like San Bartolome.

Bishop David also mentioned that another national heritage that needs to be looked into by the NHCP is the La Loma Catholic Chapel at La Loma Catholic Church Compound and he hopes that the NHCP will have it reconstructed, for the heritage of the Church is the heritage of the country.

The Certificate of Turnover and Acceptance of Completed Restoration Project of the ruins of the old sacristy of SBP Church was signed by the Bishop David and Acting Executive Director Badoy, and witnessed by SBP Church

Duc in Altum / A7

Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago



Beauty: A gift of the Catholic Church to the world (Part I)



Faith and Culture

Cristina Montes

AFTER the burning of the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, people of diverse religious and ideological persuasions mourned and pledged to help rebuild it. Many "Notre Dame" stories also came to light: testimonies of people—again, of diverse religious and ideological persuasions—who had been to the cathedral and were moved by its beauty.

I myself have been to Notre Dame and was impressed by it. In the middle of Paris, amidst monuments to the Enlightenment and the modern worldliness characteristic of modern Western cities, stands a gem of faith, a masterpiece built out of a desire to make something beautiful for God and His Mother. The ingenious architecture and the intricate stonework and stained-glass work debunk modern preconceived notions of the Middle Ages as an unsophisticated era. Seeing the cathedral that was obviously built with much love prompted me to ask myself:

what am I doing to express my love for the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God who is also notre, "ours"?

Beauty, is, indeed, an important gift of Catholicism to the world. The desire to express faith, hope, and love has inspired many beautiful paintings, sculptures, churches, musical compositions, and literary works. These works, in turn, have been a source of grace for many.

Beauty plays a major role in evangelization. Since beauty is a reflection of God, the beauty in art—especially sacred art—gives the viewer, the listener, or the reader a glimpse of God that will draw him or her to the Source of that beauty. Beauty engages the whole person—not just the intellect, but also the imagination, the emotions, and the senses. A well-made painting, a song, or a poem can convey theological truths as effectively as a well-argued theological treatise.

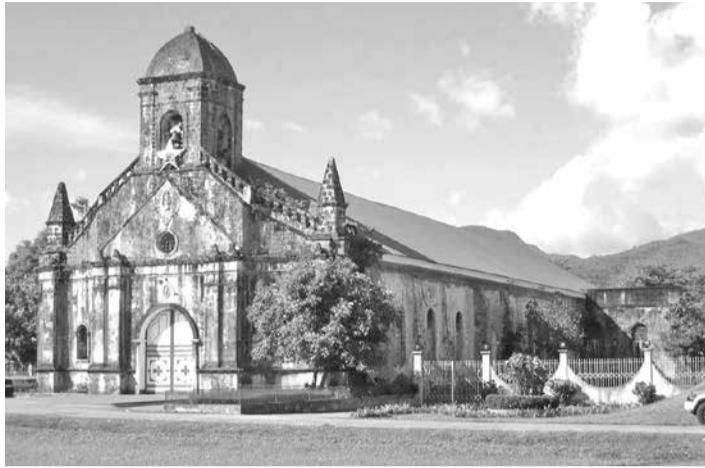
There are those who scoff at sacred

art, saying it would be better for the Catholic Church to sell it and distribute the proceeds to the poor. To this I would reply: the Catholic Church keeps these treasures not for herself, but in trust for everyone, including the poor. The poor would be impoverished all the more if the Catholic Church did not preserve these treasures for them. The poor also deserve the opportunity to experience beautiful art which, in many cases, can only be done in churches. For one does not live on bread alone.

The Catholic Church must never stop offering beauty to the world that hungers for it. She must resist the tides of uglification and banality engulfing the world. She must, by offering beauty to the world, satisfy its longing for the transcendent.

In my next column, I will discuss some practical ways Catholics—both priests and laity—can help the Catholic Church remain a source of beauty for the world.

Churchgoers' safety is paramount, says Caceres archbishop



Sts. Philip and James the Apostles Parish Church in Lagonoy, Camarines Sur. PHOTO FROM THE CACERES ARCHDIOCESE

CHURCHES in a Bicol archdiocese are looking into tougher safety measures to protect congregations from natural calamities.

Archbishop Rolando Tirona said recent earthquakes that hit parts of the country are "wake up calls" and that the time to prepare is now.

"I enjoin you dear parish priests and heads of institutions to initiate periodic inspection of the structural integrity of our churches, seminaries and 'conventos', especially our old historical churches, conventos and buildings," Tirona said.

The archbishop also cited the series of terror attacks in Sri Lanka as urgent calls for the church "to remain vigilant and ever conscious of the parishioners' safety."

"Without causing undue panic and confusion, I enjoin you dear pastors to put in place security measures in your respective Churches to protect our faithful and to

ensure peaceful liturgical celebrations," he said.

According to him, the archdiocese will partner with structural and security experts to help them safeguard the parishioners and preserve their cultural heritage.

"We must always ensure the safety of our churchgoers, and be pro-active in safeguarding our churches and the faithful against human violence and natural calamities," Tirona added.

On April 22, a powerful temblor jolted Central Luzon that claimed at least 16 lives and damaged properties and old churches.

The next day, a 6.5 magnitude earthquake caused injuries and damages to properties in Samar and Leyte provinces. The tremors were also felt as far as Cebu and some parts of Bicol region.

On April 23, twin earthquakes struck waters off Davao Oriental and Davao Occidental provinces minutes apart. (CBCPNews)

Editorial / A4

use? I am sure we can come out with many ideas and initiatives. But initially these are what come to my mind. We have to intensify our efforts to give effective accompaniment to our youth. How this can be done is something that should be the object of constant reflection, study, research and consultation.

In spite of difficulties arising from the sharp differences between the young and the old of today, we have to find a way of how these two sectors can

go together in the journey of life. We have to find a way of putting together for the benefit of today's youth the old and the new things in our life, the traditions and the innovations, etc.

Some practical pieces of advice are also very much in order. Like, we have to remind the young ones to go slow in their pursuit for the new things today, and to avoid a multi-tasking work style especially if they do not yet have a proper sense of priority about the different human needs.

Churches / A1

were immediately on hand to provide aid to others.

"We would like to note also the work of those who went to rescue and helped those people in the damage areas," he said.

In Manila, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle ordered the inspection of all church facilities in the archdiocese.

He also directed church officials to undergo refresher activities on safety drills.

"The procedures taught

at earthquake drills should be reviewed with the community. We pray for the safety of all," said Tagle.

In the wake of the strong quake that hit northern Philippines, another powerful temblor was recorded in Visayas on Tuesday.

The 6.5-magnitude earthquake struck Eastern Samar, and was also felt in Samar, Northern Samar, Leyte and parts of Bicol region. (CBCPNews)

Encounter / A1

problems," Tagle said.

"It is through these encounters that our hearts are opened and presented with a new horizon and a renewed energy to move forward," he said.

The culture of encounter, he said, must characterize the people of faith, enabling them to see other and their situation "with deep understanding, compassion and solidarity."

"It is through these encounters of love and caring that persons, families and communities are transformed from prisoners of despair into bearers of hope," he said.

The cardinal also invited the faithful "to seize the power of love unleashed by

the risen Christ this Easter".

And with the love that people have received, he urged them to "spread seeds of hope across our country" amid killings, poverty, unemployment, addictions, indignities, hate speech, false accusations, killings, corruption and human trafficking.

"Love is not just a word, it's a lifestyle of seeing, encountering and understanding other people," Tagle added.

"It is the lifestyle of Jesus, crucified and risen. It is the lifestyle of being with and living for others in the belief that light will always overcome darkness," he also said. (CBCPNews)

Cardinal Tagle tells youth: Face your upsets, never lose hope



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle washes the feet of 12 young people during the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper at the Manila Cathedral. ROY LAGARDE

USHERING in Holy Week, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle celebrated Mass of the Last Supper with a message on hope to young people.

In his homily, he urged young people to face their fears with courage, and follow Jesus' example of reaching out to the poor and suffering.

"Be compassionate, not self-focused. Be a servant rather than wait to be served. Love others and not just expect to be loved," Tagle said.

The cardinal acknowledged how hard it is to talk about hope when family problems, injustice, poverty and misery are pervasive.

Yet, he told them, the youth must be agents of hope, unafraid to believe in God's mercy.

"Even when the stresses of life have made you doubt whether you're loved, believe that Jesus loves you," Tagle told the crowd at a jam-packed Manila Cathedral.

"And He can wash not only your feet but your wounds and your history. Jesus

wants you to be His friend," he said.

The church official then trained his attention to the parents and the elders, asking them to guide the young people, especially in troubled times.

"To those who have responsibilities in society, the youth should be guided, not exploited. They should be loved, not sold, not fooled, not taken advantaged of for profit," he added.

During the liturgy, the cardinal also washed the feet of 12 young adults including

a person with cerebral palsy, two foreign missionaries, and a married couple.

The twelve were chosen in line with the Year of the Youth celebrated by the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

In view of the coming midterm elections, the cardinal washed the feet of a first-time voter and a parish-based poll-watch volunteer.

The washing of the feet commemorates Jesus Christ's "mandatum" to love one another as he has loved. (CBCPNews)

Cardinal Tagle: Value dignity over money

CARDINAL Luis Antonio Tagle visited a shanty community in Manila on April 17 and urged its dwellers not to fall prey to the allure of money at the expense of one's dignity.

Speaking during a Mass at the Parola Compound in the city's Tondo district, he urged them to resist the idolatry of wealth because it is a betrayal similar to what Judas Iscariot did to Jesus.

He said that behind these sowers of discord and divisions are 30 pieces of silver, which often times are hiding behind good intentions.

"I hope that our generation will stop this kind of betrayal wherein people are sold for materials and money," Tagle said in his homily.

The cardinal also said that money does not make a person rich, "character does".

According to him, there are lots of wealthy people but are impoverished in character.

"In the end, your character is your true wealth and it's priceless," said Tagle.

Dozens of people attended the Mass held in a makeshift tent built beside the Pasig River.



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle visits a shanty community in Manila's Tondo district on Wednesday, April 17. CBCP NEWS

The church official arrived at the area riding an e-trike coming from the nearby Nuestra Señora de la Soledad Parish Church.

After the liturgical celebration,

Cardinal Tagle joined the people and a group of parish volunteers for lunch.

Cardinal Tagle last visited the area in 2015 after a large fire that swept through the community. (CBCPNews)

Witnesses / A1

"To be killed is not a defeat of our mission. Martyrdom is the crowning glory of our mission," he said.

As part of the liturgy, Villegas blessed the oils of the sick, catechumens and chrism, which priests will use in the administration of sacraments throughout the archdiocese for the year.

The priests also reaffirmed their promises that they are committed to being faithful stewards of the Gospel and servants of their people.

Archbishop Villegas was among the prelates and priests who received death threats for being critical of the government's brutal war on drugs.

However, Villegas said that they must be priests "for all season, priests for sunny middays and dark midnights".

"We must confront with holy anger the more than thirty thousand senseless murders of the poor in the name of a false drug-free society," he added.

"We must exorcise the creeping culture of vulgarity, obscenity, lewd jokes and lack of good breeding, with the humble power of the Crucified Lord."

"We must not fear suffering rebukes, being calumniated, forgotten, ridiculed, wronged or suspected," he also said.

Condemn / A6

of Sri Lanka," he said.

The death toll has soared to 290 and more than 500 people have been injured in the worst attack since its bloody civil war ended 10 years ago.

The first six explosions struck in quick succession in three luxury hotels in the country's capital of Colombo.

Two Catholic churches in Colombo and Negombo and an Evangelical church in Batticaloa were also targeted

as worshippers gathered for Easter services.

As the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks, Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga said that "violence will never achieve anything".

"It just sows destruction and death, must be denounced and condemned," Santos said.

Archbishop Martin Jumoad of Ozamiz said it's sad that churchgoer

and innocent civilians died "due to cruel acts of violence".

"I hope those who participated in planning and in the execution of the terroristic acts will not be given peace of mind unless they will repent and face the court of law," he said.

Sri Lanka is a predominantly Buddhist country of 21 million people, with Hindus representing approximately 13 percent and Christians 10 percent. (CBCPNews)

Marking first Mass in Philippines 'reaffirms' faith

LIMASAWA, Southern Leyte—A group of young Filipino Catholics in the central Philippines wanted to “reaffirm” their faith, so they decided to take a boat to an island called Limawasa.

The island, about 10 kilometers long from north to south, is believed to be where the first Mass on Philippine soil took place on March 31, 1521, celebrated by Father Pedro de Valderrama.

The priest came with Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan who was looking for the land of spices.

This year marks the 498th anniversary of the first celebration of the Eucharist in this part of the world, so Cherline Carbonilla, 22, thought it would be good to go there for the anniversary celebration.

“Coming here is like reinforcing my belief,” she said after spending a night camping on the cold ground where the first Mass was supposed to have been celebrated.

Abbie Jean Tampos, a 26-year-old youth leader, was shepherding the flock of 14 young people wanting “to strengthen their Catholic faith.”

“[Attending the celebration] has helped them understand and appreciate the history of the birth of Christianity in this country,” said Tampos.

About 3,000 mostly young people took the 45-minute boat trip to Limawasa from the nearest large island to attend the anniversary celebration.

“I understand the joy of this event,” said Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, apostolic nuncio to the Philippines.

Archbishop Caccia, who celebrated the Mass, said, “the presence of the Church, the presence of Christianity has shaped this country.”

He said the first Mass, which was most likely attended by only a few people, “was like a seed put in the soil.” “Now that seed has become a big tree,” said the prelate.

According to history books and official records, Magellan and his men



Residents of Limasawa in the central Philippines re-enact the arrival of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan on the island 498 years ago on March 31. RHOEL AMAZONA/UCAN

came ashore on Limasawa on March 31, 1521, and celebrated Easter with an early morning Mass.

“Who knew at that time that on a remote island in the Pacific somebody was saying Mass? Back there, they didn’t even know that there were lands and islands here,” said Archbishop Caccia.

“We are grateful to those who came,” he said.

“But as they came, they went. But faith stays,” said the prelate, adding that the legacy of the first Mass “is not only language and culture but the gift of knowledge of the true God.”

The papal nuncio said the birth of Christianity in the Philippines inspired Filipinos “to share, to announce to people this Good News.”

Losing the faith

Amid the celebrations, however, a resident of the island warned that the Catholic Church is fast losing adherents.

Rommel Labastida said church leaders have to speed up efforts to reach out to people, especially the youth.

“Most have gone astray,” he said.

Limasawa, which has a population of about 6,000 in six villages, is now

home to at least 12 religious sects whose chapels stand a few meters from each other.

Danny Sindo, a 45-year-old resident, said the sects started arriving on the island in the 1970s when no Catholic priests came to visit, unlike these days.

“I am just happy that this time there are already plenty of church workers and religious activities in our island,” said Sindo.

Archbishop Caccia thanked the people of the island for welcoming him while trying to compare how the natives welcomed Magellan 498 years ago.

“I see the same spirit of warm welcome is still present in you like your ancestors,” said the archbishop who joined the people in a religious procession of the image of the Child Jesus.

“You received the image of the [Child Jesus] and you received also the faith, the Christian faith,” said the papal nuncio.

The prelate told the faithful that the faith that started in Limasawa “is like a light” amid the darkness.

“This candle reminds us that the true light is Jesus. Those who follow Jesus will not walk in darkness,” he said. **(Ronald Reyes/UCAN)**

Cebu expects around 12,000 pilgrims for Nat’l Youth Day



Archbishop Jose Palma (center) receives the pilgrim bag for this year’s National Youth Day during a press briefing in Cebu City April 11. NYD 2019 FACEBOOK PAGE

CEBU City— Around 12,000 pilgrims are expected to gather in Cebu this month for the country’s biggest gathering of Catholic youth.

Hosting the National Youth Day for the first time, the Archdiocese of Cebu wants to show that it is ready to host the huge event to be held from April 23 to 28.

“We are anticipating a wonderful event here in our archdiocese,” Archbishop Jose Palma said in a press conference in Cebu City on Friday.

“Let us pray that this would be peaceful, joyful and fruitful and full of promise for our young people,” he said.

Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Caccia will be present starting April 27 where he will a dialogue with young people.

More than 30 members of the Philippine bishops’ conference led by its president, Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, also pledged attendance.

While 11,692 pilgrims formally registered, the figure could reach to as many as 18,000 with the participation of priests, nuns, volunteers, and unregistered locals especially at the concluding Mass to be presided over by

Archbishop Caccia.

The youth pilgrims will be staying in more than 3,000 host families and common spaces like seminaries and convent dormitories.

Frankel Gerard Margallo, Cebu archdiocesan youth coordinator, said around 90 percent of the pilgrims are coming from different dioceses outside Cebu.

One of the highlights of the five-day gathering is the youth festival which will be held across Metro Cebu.

Hosted in nine locations, the youth festival will engage the pilgrims in various expressions of art, music and culture.

Various activities will center on the theme “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to Your word.”

“This will be a festive, formative and prayerful gathering,” said Fr. Mark Rommel Barneso, NYD Steering Team Leader.

Cebu’s hosting of the event also coincides with the Church’s observance of the Year of the Youth, which is part of the CBCP’s preparation for the fifth centenary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines. **(CBCP News)**

Bishop warns Catholics of ‘The Book of Truth’

SAN CARLOS City— A Catholic bishop has warned the faithful against a group whose prayer life, beliefs and teachings are based on “The Book of Truth.”

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos said that he

never endorsed such group and the book by a woman who calls herself “Maria Divine Mercy” is not something to believe in.

“The message of Maria Divine Mercy is not to be taken

seriously, discussed or distributed within the Diocese of San Carlos,” said Alminaza in a circular issued on April 15.

He said the book contains some teachings which are “very contrary” to the

Catholic faith.

The author asserts to have predicted Pope Benedict’s resignation ahead.

She also claims he will be the last pope on earth, that the next pontiff is a false prophet, and that the

Second Coming is about to occur.

“And adherence to such teachings would lead on to confusion and eventually being led astray to what our Magisterium upholds,” Alminaza said. **(CBCP News)**

Collection Box / A5

anybody. “Man is free, man is freedom.” He himself is the standard for his own actions.

The odd thing about this is that man doesn’t have any basis outside of himself that will determine the rightness or wrongness of his acts? Sartre explains: “You are free, therefore choose—that is to say, invent. No rule of general morality can show you what you ought to do.” For Sartre, values do not exist a priori to human actions.

In effect, Sartre’s philosophy can free man from the burden of any predetermined or

predefined meanings imposed on him and in the case of young people, by their elders or by any institution of authority, including the church. But then man is left in a world without any signs or roadmaps. What are we to do then? Sartre said, “Create your own roadmaps.” But how?

There arises the difficulty when man lives a life all to his own. Man cannot be his own absolute standard in much the same way that young people cannot simply live in a world they themselves created and one that is

completely detached from others.

For Viktor Frankl, the “meaning of life” and “being human” is “to serve a cause or to love a person.” This “love a person” is connected with a human being’s ability to self-transcend which means “to point to something or someone other than oneself.” The way to self-transcendence is through others and the Gospel can certainly provide young people with a roadmap pointing to it.

Young people, you are now

called to a life of service. You are God’s servants now. You are no longer just bystanders and mere recipients of grace, you are now sharers of Christ. Serve with all your heart and with your absolute commitment.

Ultimately, it is service that will define who you are. As you said in your letter, “we are gifts, life-given to the Church and to the Philippines, and we want to be truly life-giving.”

You have now found your purpose. Go, and be gifts, indeed, to others!

Whatever / A4

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,

Candidly Speaking / A4

his initial refusal, while the second was just good in words and intentions but not in action, and therefore did not truly love his father.

The parable concluded with Christ saying: “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you (referring to the self-righteous leading Jews at that time). For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.” (Mt 21,31-32)

Again, this point is underscored in that correction Christ made on his apostles who were arguing about who

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.

Duc in Altum / A5

Parish Priest Fr. Elpidio Erlano, Jr. and NHCP Deputy Executive Director for Administration Ms. Carminda Arevalo. The String Quartet from the University of the Philippines provided entertainment with classical music.

Consultants for the Diocese of Kalookan are Atty. Ramon Lucas and Architect Richard Bautista. In Charge of the Diocesan Archives and Museum is Rev. Paul Woo. The children of Jesus and Monina Lucas (Jerry, Pilar, Ramon and Jackie) donated the artefact, the ancient baptismal font.

The academic and non-academic staff of San Jose Academy went on Personnel Development Tour in Seoul, South Korea. The 3 degrees to 7 degrees centigrade cool and windy weather with the cherry blossoms in full bloom was a bonus to the staff. Led by the School Director Fr. Jerome Cruz and School Principal Rafael Patrick Pecjo, the staff had a share of the history of Korea, location shooting places of Korean drama, Korean foods especially kimchi making. The kimchi prepared and cooked by the staff will be given to

old people and children who could not prepare the same. The staff visited the famous DMZ or Demilitarized Zone. The Korean Tour Guide, Ms. Ashley Ahn, a former History High School Teacher in Seoul, provided the staff with the history and description of the tourist spots visited.

The most important part of the tour that I appreciated is about the Korean War, a war between North Korea and South Korea. It began on June 25, 1950 when North Korea (with the support of China and Soviet Union) invaded South Korea (with the support of the United Nations and the United States). The Philippines sent civilian action group. Finally, the fighting ended on July 27, 1953, when an armistice was signed. It created the Korean Demilitarized Zone or DMZ to separate North and South Korea. In April 2018, the leaders of North and South Korea established the DMZ and agreed to work towards a treaty to formally end the Korean War.

Despite the presence of DMZ, the North Koreans had numerous acts of aggression. Since 1974, four incursion tunnels leading to Seoul have been

uncovered in October 1978 following the detection of an underground explosion in October 1978. “It is 1,635 meters long, 1.95 meters high and 2.1 meters wide. It runs through a bedrock at a depth of 73 meters below ground. Upon discovery of the 3rd tunnel, the UN Command accused North Korea of threatening the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement signed at the end of Korean War.”

I had the opportunity to go down and up this 3rd tunnel, a really stiff and difficult way to go, especially going up. At the end of the tunnel is the blockade which leads to North Korea. We also went up the Dora Observatory where we can see at a short distance part of North Korea. We also went to Dorasan Train Station which links the Gyeongui railway from South Korea to Pyeongyang of North Korea. It is 56km from Gaesong and 205km from Pyeongyang Station. It is the 1st station towards the North but not the last station from the South. It was really an enlightening tour especially with the history of our neighbor South Korea where the Philippines had a share in its fight for freedom.

RVA at 60: Pope urges church radio to be 'voice of the poor'



Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, presides over the Mass to mark the 60th anniversary of Radio Veritas Asia at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila April 10. **ROY LAGARDE**

POPE Francis felicitated the Radio Veritas Asia on its 50th anniversary on April 10, encouraging the radio station to be a channel of love by being the voice of the poor.

The pope said he hopes the milestone will "revitalize" the station's commitment to echo Christ's teachings and contribute to "a more just and united society".

Sending his apostolic blessing to people behind RVA and Radio Veritas 846, the pontiff prayed that they continue "to raise the hearts of the listeners to the God of love and truth".

He also urged them to knit "the bonds of evangelical love" for their listeners to be conscious not just of the joys and hopes, but also the griefs and anxieties of other people, especially the poor.

The pontiff's message was read by Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Caccia during a Mass at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

Present were several bishops led by Myanmar's Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon, president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and Bishop Roberto Mallari of San Jose, head of the FABC Office on Social Communications.

Also in attendance were Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila and Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu and Vice Chairman of the Philippine Radio Educational and Information Center (PREIC).

Archbishop Stephan Burger of Freiburg also graced the occasion for the German Bishops' Conference who have been supporting RVA since its birth.

In his homily, Cardinal Tagle recounted the history of RVA, which according to him, had existed before FABC was established.

New 'One Praise' album coming out on Easter Sunday

DEDICATED for the Year of the Youth, the Jesuit Communications Foundation through the Jesuit Music Ministry (JMM) has released a new album entitled "One Praise 3" on Easter Sunday.

The album is composed of original songs from different International Catholic Renewal Communities namely, Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon, Christ's Youth in Action, The Feast, Elim Communities, Simply4Him and The Lord's Flock Catholic Charismatic Community.

The tracks in the album are a combination of mellow and upbeat worship and praise songs plus a bonus track of a new version of "One in Mission" theme song for the Year of the Youth.

"This is our contribution in observance of the Year of the Youth in preparation for the Philippine Church's 500th Year Anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines," the JMM said.

The album was on Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer, iTunes

The dream for a radio facility in Manila for Asian Catholics was brought before an assembly of 100 bishops from Asia and Australia at the UST in 1958, five years before the Second Vatican Council.

The idea was eventually approved by the Vatican amidst the challenges of communism to the Church in Asia.

In 1961, the PREIC was created and provided the legal status for RVA. In the same year, the UST franchise to operate a radio station was transferred to PREIC.

The PREIC in 1963 agreed that the radio station will have medium wave transmission for the Philippines, which is the Radio Veritas 846, and short wave transmission for the overseas.

On April 11, 1969, the RVA facility was inaugurated in Quezon City by Cardinal Antonio Samore, a Vatican official, and Cardinal Rufino Santos, the then Manila archbishop.

In 1970, the meeting of Asian bishops in Manila gave birth to the FABC.

"So FABC somehow was midwifed into birth by Radio Veritas. What a wonderful history," said Cardinal Tagle.

Archbishop Caccia said the idea for Radio Veritas Asia was successful because it was "well grounded".

"The goal was to spread the Good News, the truth. The Church is missionary... this initiative was under the sign of the mission, to spread the Gospel," he said.

The nuncio also attributed RVA's success to "unity and communion".

"There will be no good results if we are not going to work together and we cannot celebrate the Eucharist if we are not united," Caccia said. **(Roy Lagarde/CBCP News)**

and YouTube.

One Praise is a movement of Catholic Charismatic Communities initiated by the JesCom, the media arm of the Society of Jesus.

"JesCom has been involved in the work of evangelization through music and one of the ways we found effective is to tap our youth through praise and worship music that appeals to them. Hence, One Praise is born," it said.

"For four years now, One Praise gathers different Charismatic communities to come up with all-original praise and worship songs which JesCom produce as an album in CD and digital platforms," it added.

The next big event of One Praise to celebrate the Year of the Youth will take place in October 2019.

For more information, please contact Mr. Lester Mendiola, Director of the Jesuit Music Ministry at 09184211823, 4265971 loc 114 or email: lestermendiola@gmail.com. **(CBCP News)**

Laguna's San Antonio de Padua Church now a 'national shrine'



The San Antonio de Padua Church becomes the San Pablo diocese's first national shrine and the 25th in the country. **ROY LAGARDE**

A CENTURIES-OLD and Asia's first Antonine church has been elevated to a "national shrine" status on April 23.

Located in Pila, Laguna, the San Antonio de Padua Church— longtime a tourist attraction and pilgrimage site, becomes the San Pablo diocese's first national shrine and the 25th in the Philippines.

The solemn declaration was held during a Mass presided over by Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, president of the Philippine bishops' conference, with Bishop Buenaventura Famadico of San Pablo as the homilist.

More than 2,000 priests, nuns, government officials

and laypeople attended the event.

Also in attendance were Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabrielle Caccia, Archbishop Jose Advincula of Capiz and Bishops Mylo Hubert Vergara of Pasig and Mel Rey Uy of Lucena.

The bishops during their plenary assembly last January "unanimously" approved the petition to elevate the church to the rank of a national shrine.

In a decree, the bishops expressed hope that the people who visit the shrine "may grow steadily in Christian piety, reach maturity in the Catholic faith and constantly live the mandate of Christian charity."

Aside from making always

available the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, they said that "the poor and the needy must always receive the best pastoral care from the Catholic community who come to this national shrine".

Originally made of hardwood and bamboo, the church was inaugurated in 1581 in its first site in Pagalangan.

In 1599, the construction of the stone church started. It took 18 years to finish until its completion in 1617.

Due to consistent flooding in Pagalangan, the governor general in November 1794 ordered the transfer of the church to the Hacienda Santa Clara, now known as Pila town.

As locals wanted to rebuild the church to its original design and structure, they decided to come together and unite to carry and transfer every brick and stone from the church in Pagalangan to Pila in 1804.

The transfer of the church was completed on 1816. Although the design is the same, the old church was said to be three times bigger than the present structure in Pila.

In May 2000, the National Historical Institute proclaimed the San Antonio de Padua Church and the town of Pila as a "national historical landmark".

The church was elevated as the Diocesan Shrine of San Antonio de Padua in 2002. **(CBCP News)**

New bishop installed in Antique

A CHOIR burst into a Karaya liturgical song as Bishop Marvyn Maceda emerged from San Joseph Cathedral on April 9.

In a solemn ceremony, the Diocese of San Jose de Antique celebrated the installation of Maceda as its new bishop.

"I come to you here not as an important person, as the world sees it, but the least of all," he said.

"I come as your servant, and not even as a servant, but as your slave," said Maceda, whose episcopal motto is "Servant of Jesus Christ".

The installation comes a week after he was ordained to the episcopate at the Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Cathedral in Naval, Biliran on April 2.

At 50, Maceda will guide the 53-year-old diocese with around 63 priests, 83 men and women religious in 25 parishes.

The diocese also runs a radio station, some schools, a hospital, and a college

seminary.

In Kenya's Lodwar diocese, San Jose de Antique has a missionary parish administered by its two priests.

Antique has been without a bishop since early 2018 after its former local ordinary, Jose Romeo Lazo, was appointed archbishop of Jaro.

The ceremony was attended by around 20 bishops including Kenyan Bishop Dominic Kimengich of Lodwar.

In his message, Bishop Maceda also asked the faithful for prayers in his new mission.



Bishop Marvyn Maceda (center) enters the Saint Joseph Cathedral during his installation as the new head of the Diocese of San Jose de Antique April 9. **SCREENSHOT/DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE DE ANTIQUE FACEBOOK PAGE**

"If one day you see and you realize that I am not anymore your servant, your slave, please see me, please correct me, please pray for me," he said. **(CBCP News)**

Franciscans mark 800th anniversary of St. Francis' meeting with Muslim sultan

THE Custody of St. Anthony of Padua – Philippines is one with the Church and the Franciscan Order in this year's celebration of the 8th centenary of the meeting of St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Al-Malik Al-Kamil.

The anniversary has special significance in the United Arab Emirates, which is served by the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia, a church jurisdiction entrusted to the Capuchin Franciscans.

One of the highlights of the year-long event is the interfaith forum held on April 2 at Tairan, Lantawan, Basilan. The Franciscans run the San Roque Parish in this vibrant multi-ethnic and multi-religious community.

Fruits of dialogue

The forum was strategically

held in Tairan due to the symbolic relationship between Muslims and Christians in the local community.

Parish priest Fr. Elton Viagedor, OFM said: "Tairan is a community that tolerates differences and diversity in culture and religiosity; hence a perfect place for dialogue to flourish and bear fruits."

The event's highlights were the talks of two respected scholars in the field of dialogue: Fr. Antonio Ma. Rosales, OFM and Ustad Garson Hamja. Rosales reflectively recounted the fateful encounter between Sultan Al-Malik Al-Kamil and St. Francis from the perspective of the Christians and how the event influenced the understanding of the

paradigm of mission as dialogue.

'Dulah' and 'agape'

Meanwhile, Ustad Hamha retold a brief biography of Sultan Al-Malik Al-Kamil, describing the traits that made him beloved not only by his subjects but by Christians as well. Both speakers reinforced the relevance of that momentous event to the contemporary challenges of peace, harmony, and diversity in the world.

Muslim and Christian reactors shared their insights and experiences.

The event also featured interpretative dances from Muslim and Christian youth and kids, a photo exhibit about the history of Franciscan presence in Mindanao, and the symbolic ribbon-cutting of the

commemorative mural of the encounter by Fr. Arturo Daquilanea, OFM and Ustad Garson Hamja.

Br. Christopher Villanueva, a Franciscan brother and artist, created the artwork at the entrance of the parish church. The Muslim ritual "dulah" and the Christian meal "agape" culminated the day's activities.

Local Christians, the friars of the Custody, members of the Order of Secular Franciscans, the local clergy of the Prelature of Isabela (Basilan), and some students from the schools in the community participated in the said forum. Members of the Muslim community as well as invited Muslim leaders, and local politicians were also present. **(Mark Joy Basallajes and Errol Ortiz/CBCP News)**

Urbi et Orbi message of His Holiness Pope Francis



Pope Francis greets the crowd during his Easter message and blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 21, 2019. VATICAN MEDIA

Easter 2019 Central loggia of the Vatican Basilica 21 April 2019

DEAR Brothers and Sisters, Happy Easter!

Today the Church renews the proclamation made by the first disciples: "Jesus is risen!" And from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, there resounds a call to praise: "Alleluia, Alleluia!" On this morning of Easter, the perennial youth of the Church and of humanity as a whole, I would like to address each of you in the opening words of my recent Apostolic Exhortation devoted especially to young people:

"Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world. Everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive! He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you. However far you may wander, he is always there, the Risen One. He calls you and he waits for you to return to him and start over again. When you feel you are growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure, he will always be there to restore your strength and your hope" (Christus Vivit, 1-2).

Dear brothers and sisters, this message is also addressed to every person in the world. The resurrection of Christ is the principle of new life for every man and every woman, for true renewal always begins from the heart, from the conscience. Yet Easter is also the beginning of the new world, set free from the

slavery of sin and death: the world open at last to the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of love, peace and fraternity.

Christ is alive and he remains with us. Risen, he shows us the light of his face, and he does not abandon all those experiencing hardship, pain and sorrow. May he, the Living One, be hope for the beloved Syrian people, victims of an ongoing conflict to which we risk becoming ever more resigned and even indifferent. Now is instead the time for a renewed commitment for a political solution able to respond to people's legitimate hopes for freedom, peace and justice, confront the humanitarian crisis and favour the secure re-entry of the homeless, along with all those who have taken refuge in neighboring countries, especially Lebanon and Jordan.

Easter makes us keep our eyes fixed on the Middle East, torn by continuing divisions and tensions. May the Christians of the region patiently persevere in their witness to the Risen Lord and to the victory of life over death. I think in particular of the people of Yemen, especially the children, exhausted by hunger and war. May the light of Easter illumine all government leaders and peoples in the Middle East, beginning with Israelis and Palestinians, and spur them to alleviate such great suffering and to pursue a future of peace and stability.

May conflict and bloodshed cease in Libya, where defenceless people are once more dying in recent weeks and many families have

been forced to abandon their homes. I urge the parties involved to choose dialogue over force and to avoid reopening wounds left by a decade of conflicts and political instability.

May the Living Christ grant his peace to the entire beloved African continent, still rife with social tensions, conflicts and at times violent forms of extremism that leave in their wake insecurity, destruction and death, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. I think too of Sudan, presently experiencing a moment of political uncertainty; it is my hope that all voices will be heard, and that everyone will work to enable the country to find the freedom, development and well-being to which it has long aspired.

May the Risen Lord accompany the efforts of the civil and religious authorities of South Sudan, sustained by the fruits of the spiritual retreat held several days ago here in the Vatican. May a new page open in the history of that country, in which all political, social and religious components actively commit themselves to the pursuit of the common good and the reconciliation of the nation.

May this Easter bring comfort to the people of the eastern regions of Ukraine, who suffer from the continuing conflict. May the Lord encourage initiatives of humanitarian aid and those aimed at pursuing a lasting peace.

May the joy of the resurrection fill the hearts of those who on the American continent are experiencing the effects of difficult political

and economic situations. I think in particular of the Venezuelan people, of all those who lack the minimal conditions for leading a dignified and secure life due to a crisis that endures and worsens. May the Lord grant that all those with political responsibilities may work to end social injustices, abuses and acts of violence, and take the concrete steps needed to heal divisions and offer the population the help they need.

May the Risen Lord shed his light on the efforts made in Nicaragua to find as rapidly as possible a peaceful negotiated solution for the benefit of the entire Nicaraguan people.

Before the many sufferings of our time, may the Lord of life not find us cold and indifferent. May he make us builders of bridges, not walls. May the One who gives us his peace end the roar of arms, both in areas of conflict and in our cities, and inspire the leaders of nations to work for an end to the arms race and the troubling spread of weaponry, especially in the economically more advanced countries. May the Risen Christ, who flung open the doors of the tomb, open our hearts to the needs of the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, the poor, the unemployed, the marginalized, and all those who knock at our door in search of bread, refuge, and the recognition of their dignity.

Dear brothers and sisters, Christ is alive! He is hope and youth for each of us and for the entire world. May we let ourselves be renewed by him! Happy Easter!

Canonical validation of civil marriages

A case of *sanatio in radice* of invalid marriage for lack of form

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

A RECENT discussion in the **Canon Law Society of the Philippines** resulted in one of its eminent members sending a consultation to the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, the reply to which (**Rescript of 20.III.2019**) could open the doors for the regularization of many civil marriages in the Philippines. The discussion dealt with the competence of the Local Ordinary to grant in individual cases the validation of a marriage of two Catholics, not in danger of death, suffering invalidity for lack of canonical form. The reply, which was in the affirmative, opens the door for the veritable canonization of quite a number of civil marriages, provided the essential requirements for the validity of consent are present. This could pave the way for the regularization of many matrimonial situations in the Philippines.

Retroactive validation or the so-called *sanatio in radice*

Can. 1161 states:

§1. The retroactive validation of an invalid marriage is its validation without the renewal of consent, granted by the competent authority. It involves a dispensation from an impediment if there is one and from the canonical form if it had not been observed, as well as a referral back to the past of the canonical effects.

§2. The validation takes place from the moment the favor is granted; the referral back, however, is understood to have been made to the moment the marriage was celebrated, unless it is otherwise expressly provided.

§3. A retroactive validation is not to be granted unless it is probable that the parties intend to persevere in conjugal life.

Retroactive validation can be understood as the recognition of the canonical validity of a hitherto simply civil marriage, when a true matrimonial consent exists, and the legal obstacles that impeded its efficacy have ceased. Thus, retroactive validation does not really create the marriage bond, but rather makes that bond effective on the basis of an existing consent at the root of an apparent marriage.

Applying these general norms to the case in point, a civil marriage between two Catholics—which happens quite commonly among Filipinos, especially in the lower classes, usually for lack of formation or lack of the financial means to go through a Church wedding—is invalid from the canonical standpoint for lack of canonical form. Simply put: it is just a civil marriage, not a *Church wedding*. However, if there is a valid consent that persists, c.1161 states that such a marriage can be retroactively validated—i.e., converted to a canonical one—by the competent authority (in this

case either the Holy See or the Local Ordinary). In effect, what the competent ecclesiastical authority does is to retroactively grant a dispensation from the canonical form—i.e., the exchange of marriage vows of the contracting parties in the presence of a the Local Ordinary or Parish priest (or another cleric delegated by either of them) and two other witnesses, following the liturgical rites prescribed by the Church—such that the civil marriage is retroactively validated as a canonical and therefore a sacramental one.

What actually happens is that since the ministers of the sacrament of marriage are the spouses themselves, and the presence of the qualified and common witnesses, together with the observance of the Catholic liturgical rite, are just matters of ecclesiastical law (albeit for instituted for very good reasons of the common good), the competent ecclesiastical authority can—in individual cases and for just cause—dispense from such formal requirements. In such cases, provided that the other requirements for a canonical marriage are present—i.e., capacity of the contractants and a valid matrimonial consent—an erstwhile simply civil marriage (canonically invalid for lack of canonical form) is validated retroactively to be a canonical and sacramental one. Another way of looking at it is that the ecclesiastical authority grants the civil registrar or judge the right to solemnize the canonical marriage in question: this can be done for an upcoming marriage (dispensation from canonical form) or retroactively, which is the case under consideration.

What are the requirements?

Can. 1165, §2 states: *In individual cases radical sanation can be granted by the diocesan bishop, even if several reasons for nullity exist in the same marriage, provide the conditions mentioned in c.1125 concerning the sanation of a mixed marriage are fulfilled. The diocesan bishop cannot grant radical sanation, however, if there is present an impediment whose dispensation is reserved to the Apostolic See in accord with c.1078, §2, or if it is a question of an impediment of the natural law or of the divine positive law which has ceased to exist.*

Here we reprint excerpts of the above-mentioned *rescript* from the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, dated 20.III.2019:

“From the study concerning the sources and the process of codification of can.1165, §2 CIC, it is agreed that, for pastoral reasons, the diocesan Bishop has the faculty to grant in individual cases the *sanatio in radice* of invalid marriages



Pope Francis meets Jan. 29, 2019, with members of the Roman Rota, a Vatican tribunal handling mostly marriage cases. VATICAN MEDIA

because of a defect of canonical form.

In the current norm of the CIC, the diocesan Bishop has the faculty in individual cases to grant the *sanatio in radice* of invalid marriages, and even for cases with several causes of nullity (see can.1165, §2). This means that the Diocesan Bishop can sanate the marriage of two Catholics contracted without observing canonical form and without dispensation from the required impediment(s) (see can.1161, §1).

“Therefore, the right to remedy marriages is limited to individual cases and to the impediments that the Bishop can dispense. This means that the Diocesan Bishop cannot sanate a marriage between two Catholics if there is an impediment reserved to the Apostolic See (see can. 1078) or an impediment of natural or divine positive law which has now ceased (see can. 1165, §2). However, he can sanate an invalid marriage because of the lack of form, since he also has the faculty to dispense from canonical form in individual cases (see can.1127, §2).

“Finally, in granting the *sanatio* the Bishop must also observe these additional requirements: the existence and perseverance of the consent of both parties (see cann. 1162 and 1163, §1) and the presence of a grave cause to grant it without the knowledge of one or both of the parties (see can.1164).”

1. Existence and perseverance of a valid consent. As we have repeatedly affirmed in this column, *consensus facit matrimonium*: consent brings about marriage. What has to be determined in these cases is the presence of a valid matrimonial consent (at the moment of contracting the civil marriage) and its perseverance (i.e., that such consent remains and has not been retracted).

At this point it is necessary to recall that a valid marriage consent must enjoy all the juridic requirements

of canon law for such a consent—not the least of which are the due discretion of judgment regarding the essential rights and obligations of marriage (as regards the essential properties of marriage: monogamy, indissolubility, openness to life and sacramentality), the capacity to assume such essential obligations, and the freedom of will in such giving of consent.

2. Presence of a grave cause in the case of the grant of such validation without the knowledge of one or both of the parties. If the validation is sought with the knowledge of both parties, such grave cause is not needed—i.e., it is enough that both parties request such retroactive validation. This position finds resonance in the magisterium and pastoral orientation of Pope Francis, as regards reaching out to irregular marital unions, with a view of restoring full sacramental life of such faithful.

The aforementioned *rescript* even goes further: such retroactive validation can be granted even without the knowledge of either or both spouses, if serious reasons exist. A serious reason, for example, can easily be the desire of concerned relatives—e.g., children of an elderly couple who may not be willing to go through the trouble of seeking a validation of their civil marriage, but who are frequenting the Eucharist out of ignorance of their irregular state.

Criterion of selection for the canonization of a civil marriage in individual cases

A possible question could be when to grant such *radical sanation* of a hitherto simply civil marriage of two Catholic parties. Of special importance is the aspect of sacramentality: for a valid matrimonial consent to exist, the contracting baptized parties must at least not reject the sacramentality of marriage, since such sacramentality

belongs to the essence of a true marriage between the baptized. To my mind, this constitutes a criterion of selection for determining the granting of such a validation of a hitherto simply civil marriage.

In effect, if two Catholics got married civilly, not because of the rejection of the sacramentality of marriage, but simply out of ignorance of the need for the canonical form (including the Catholic liturgical rite) or—as commonly happens in the Philippines—for lack of the financial means to go through what they perceived would be an expensive Church wedding, then it can safely be assumed that such Catholic contractants really wanted to get married properly in the sight of God. In such cases, the retroactive dispensation from canonical form and the radical sanction of such a civil marriage would be called for.

On the other hand, if the Catholic parties—largely due to the slippage in faith in an increasingly secularized environment—have no appreciation at all of the sacramentality of marriage, effectively reducing it to a simple contract; or even worse, have a defective idea of the essential qualities of marriage (regarding monogamy, indissolubility and openness to live), then a convalidation would not be called for, since aside from the lack of canonical form, the marriage would be suffering of a defective consent.

As to who should initiate such processes, in addition to concerned children of elderly couples, the pastoral concern of the Parish priest should bring him to actively advocate for such sanations. Of course, it is incumbent on the parish priest—as pastor—to know his flock and determine the advisability of a radical convalidation in each case. *Salus animarum est suprema lex.*

Finally, the radical convalidation will have to be recorded in the Baptismal Registry of the parish of origin of each of the spouses.

Alternate cantors during the Exsultet

An Option Not Foreseen in Rubrics

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



Q: Our parish has had a deacon chanting the Exsultet for the past decade or so, but it is time to come up with a different option. None of the other deacons are capable of such a chant, nor are the priests trained in voice enough to accomplish the entire work. We have a perfectly capable cantor, and

I know that a cantor can chant the proclamation without the parts specific to a cleric. Is it acceptable to split the proclamation so that the cantor chants the bulk of the proclamation, and one of the priests chants the parts specific to the clergy?—G.K., Holmdel, New Jersey

A: I am presupposing that our reader desires to change the deacon proclaiming the Exsultet out of necessity and not from some desire for novelty.

Singing the Exsultet is a proper function of a deacon, and if there is a deacon available, the rubrics clearly indicate a preference for him over any other minister. A priest or lay cantor should only be called upon if no deacon is available or capable of singing the Easter Proclamation. When a lay cantor is used, the rubrics only provide for the omission of texts reserved to the ordained minister. To wit:

“If, however, because of necessity, a lay cantor sings the Proclamation, the words ‘Therefore dearest friends’ up to the end of the invitation are omitted, along with the greeting ‘The Lord be with you.’

The full text to be omitted is: “Therefore, dearest friends, standing in the awesome glory of this holy light, invoke with me, I ask you, the mercy of God almighty, that he, who has pleased to number me, though unworthy, among the Levites, may pour into me his light unshadowed,

that I may sing this candle’s perfect praise.”

The above paragraph introduces and explains the liturgical greeting “The Lord be with you” which is reserved to the ordained minister. It would make little sense for the priest to sing just this part and not sing the rest of the Exsultet. After all, why ask the faithful to invoke God’s mercy to sing the praises of the candle if he does not do so?

Even if the shorter version of the Exsultet is used, thus omitting the above paragraph, it would also seem appropriate that the priest avoids making an interjection at this point just to sing, “The Lord be with you.”

Since the Exsultet is musically challenging and as far as possible is sung without the support of any musical instrument, such an interruption could lead an insecure cantor to lose the tone. Therefore a lay cantor would omit the “Lord be with you” but would sing: “Lift up your hearts” with the people responding in “We lift them to the Lord” as with the preface at Mass, although with a

slight variation as to the traditional Gregorian melody.

It is true that there are many choral settings available, even some with instrumental accompaniment. However, while the rubrics do allow for the organ to support singing, from a liturgical standpoint, the best option during this part of the Easter Vigil remains the single unaccompanied deacon, priest or cantor. In this way, the organ is reserved to accompany the ringing of bells at the intonation of the Gloria.

As to the history of the Exsultet, there is clear evidence that this solemn rite began no later than the second half of the fourth century. For example, the use of singing a hymn in praise of the candle and the Easter mystery is mentioned as an established custom in a letter of St. Jerome, written in 384 to Presidio, a deacon from Piacenza, Italy. Saints Ambrose and Augustine are also known to have composed such Easter proclamations. The poetic and solemn text of the Exsultet now in use originated in the fifth century, but its author is unknown.

Radio Veritas: Asia's dynamic missionary

By James H. Kroeger, MM

VARIOUS titles can capture the identity and mission of Radio Veritas Asia (RVA), now celebrating its golden anniversary of service to Asia's peoples (1969-2019). It is appropriately described as "the missionary of Asia," "the Asian voice of Christianity" or "the Catholic voice of Asia." RVA's own vision statement describes this apostolic initiative as the "voice of the Church that is realizing the mission of crossing borders and sharing Christ through Gospel values to the people of Asia."

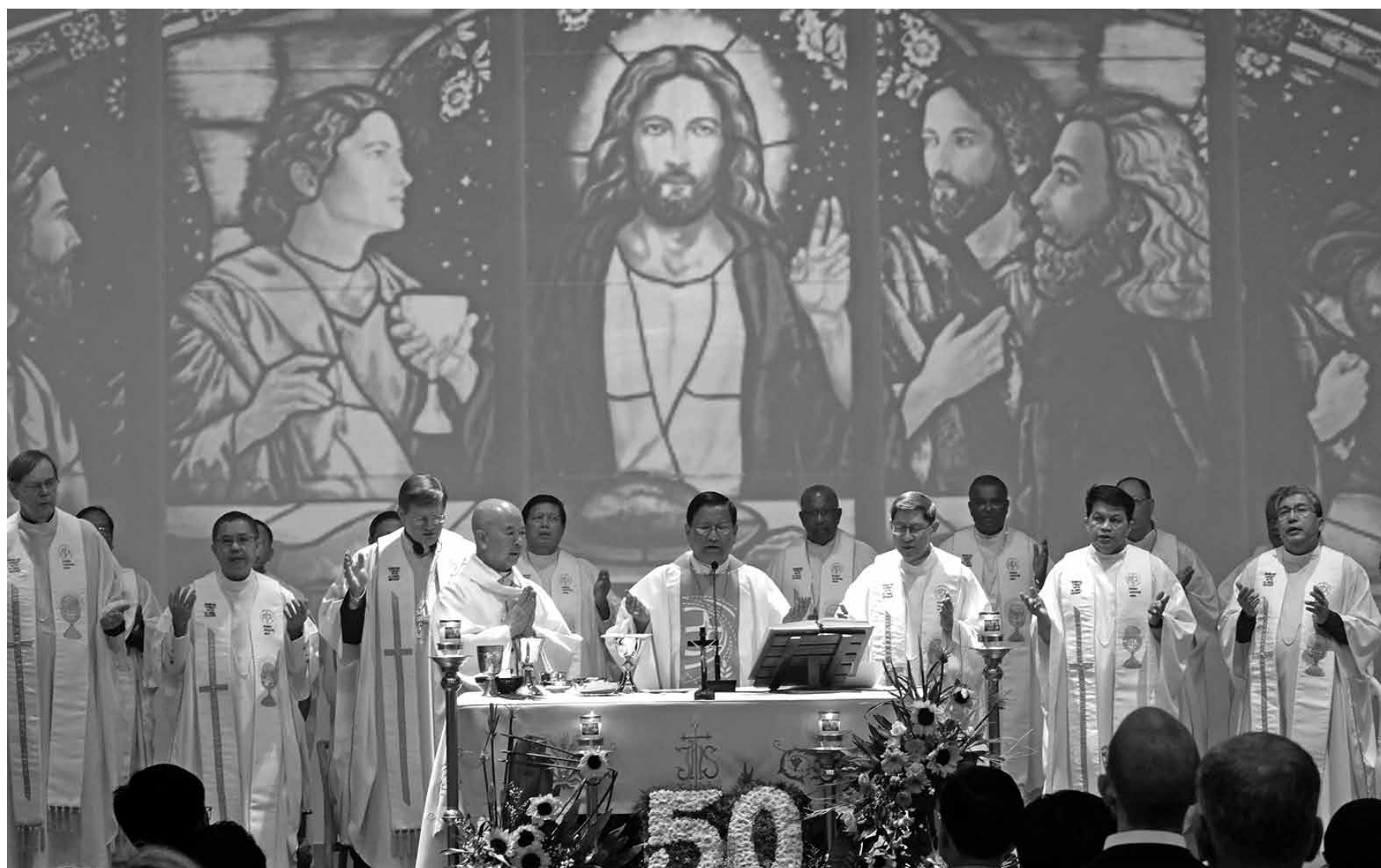
Voice of Popes. Two "saint-popes" (Paul VI and John Paul II) have spoken of the pivotal mission of RVA and also have personally visited its center in Manila. Paul VI sent the following message on April 11, 1969 when RVA was inaugurated; he spoke of Radio Veritas as "giving to the truth a new and powerful voice in a continental area of increasing significance in world affairs."

On November 29, 1970, during his Manila stop on his ten-day Asian journey, Pope Paul VI visited the RVA premises. He personally offered his "encouragement for an ever more enlightened, generous and fruitful activity.... It is our fervent wish that through it [RVA] there may reach you the echo of the teachings of Christ, to raise your hearts to the God of love and truth. We hope that it will knit among you, its listeners, bonds of evangelical love ... [so that] you may together undertake the construction of a more just and more united society."

Twenty-five years later, on January 14, 1995, during special ceremonies marking its silver jubilee, Pope John Paul II praised RVA for its quarter-century service and challenged it to find an "ever more effective way of sustaining and informing the faith of those who already believe in Christ, and of proclaiming him and his Kingdom to those who do not yet know him." For RVA, "the future can only mean greater commitment to evangelization as the Third Millennium of the Redemption approaches."

Furthermore, John Paul II said that this "voice of Asian Christianity" is a "powerful expression of the co-responsibility of the bishops of Asia" in fulfilling the "Church's missionary mandate." Through its diversity of programs, RVA "contributes to the human development of countless individuals and families." It also provides consolation and strength "to the Church of Silence and to all those Christians who have suffered and continue to suffer for their fidelity" to their faith and to the Church.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), John Paul II said: "I echo the Synod Fathers' commendation of *Radio Veritas Asia*, the only continent-wide radio station for the Church in Asia, for its almost thirty years of evangelization through broadcasting. Efforts must be made to strengthen this excellent instrument of mission ... [as] an



Cardinal Chales Maung Bo of Yangon, president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, presides over a Mass to mark the 50th anniversary of Radio Veritas Asia in Quezon City April 11. CBCP NEWS

important means of sustaining and nurturing a sense of Catholic identity and of spreading knowledge of Catholic moral principles" (EA 48).

Milestones of RVA History. Pope Pius XII first had the idea of a Church radio station for Asians to address the needs of Catholics in the region. On December 10, 1958 (still in the pre-Vatican II era) at a meeting in Manila, the Conference of Southeast Asian Bishops decided to establish, operate, and maintain a Catholic radio station to serve as an instrument of evangelization and information. Radio Veritas studios were formally inaugurated on April 11, 1969. RVA relied on shortwave radio technology to reach audiences in the Asia-Pacific, the Indian subcontinent, and mainland China; it also reached many Filipino overseas workers in the Middle East. Financial support from the German Church aid agencies *Missio* and *Misereor* as well as the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples has been substantial; this is complemented with assistance from various local Churches throughout Asia.

In addition to the encouragement given by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II (already noted), other significant milestones in the history of RVA include its brave coverage of the assassination of former senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino on August 21, 1983; RVA was the only radio station to broadcast the slain senator's funeral procession in Manila. Then, on February 22, 1986, through Radio Veritas Cardinal Sin called the Filipino populace to show support and converge on EDSA; this resulted in

the four-day bloodless revolution now known as the "People Power Revolution." In the same year, RVA received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award (popularly called "Asia's Nobel Peace Prize") for "its role in using truth to depose an oppressive and corrupt regime and restore Filipino faith in the electoral process." In 1991, Radio Veritas separated into two entities: the "Asia-wide" branch and the "domestic" segment that serves the Philippine public; both continue their effective operations today.

Vision of Missionary Evangelization. An official statement of RVA for its silver anniversary captures well its vision of evangelization: "Radio Veritas Asia seeks to reaffirm and strengthen its commitment in proclaiming to peoples and cultures the message of the Gospel." It strives to be "a stimulus of authentic human values and an instrument of salvation in Jesus Christ." One may validly assert that RVA fulfills Pope Paul VI's succinct description of evangelization: "evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 18). Another expression of this same vision is to see mission as "integral evangelization," addressing all dimensions of the human person and society, including the political, economic, cultural, educational, social, and religious aspects of a truly human life.

Thus, as RVA broadcasts in about twenty languages, it provides a wide diversity of programs, fostering the growth of Asia's local Churches

and their role in dialogue with religions and cultures. It also airs news and programs on health, community development, science and technology, women and youth empowerment, family issues, and historical perspectives. Readings from the sacred texts of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam are broadcast. In addition, there are programs on Christian liturgy and catechesis, as well as features about significant Asian personalities who have contributed to integral human development and liberation in the Asian context. Truly, RVA seeks to bring Gospel values into all dimensions of life of Asia's diverse peoples.

RVA also seeks to integrate the paradigm of evangelization promoted by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). The FABC vision of the Asian Church's mission is captured in its "triple dialogue" formula, initially enunciated in the First FABC Plenary Assembly in 1974. It envisions genuinely Asian local Churches "in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions—in brief, with all the realities of the people." In FABC V (1990) the vision was reaffirmed: "Mission will mean a dialogue with Asia's poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions." FABC X (2012) noted: "We thank the Lord for a challenging vision of Church in Asia." In a word, this *operative paradigm* of holistic evangelization [the "triple dialogue" approach] is the *interpretive key* to understanding and appreciating the dynamic local Churches in Asia today. And, RVA has consistently

fostered this "Asian" vision of being Church in today's contemporary societies.

Conclusion. As RVA observes its golden jubilee of service to the vast Asian continent, our hearts overflow with gratitude for what has been accomplished. Yet, all realize that missionary evangelization is never a static reality. Change, renewal, transformation, and discernment are constants in the Church's evangelizing mission; one never finishes reading the "signs of the times" and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel (cf. GS 4). Certainly, with the Lord's abundant graciousness, RVA's mission in the coming fifty years will prove most fruitful—as has the past half century. Following Pope Francis' insights, one can add one new title to describe RVA: "Asia's Dynamic, Joyful Missionary-Disciple"!

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History of Radio Veritas Asia

continental Catholic radio station in Asia. After his death, the idea was carried out by His Holiness Pope John XXIII, who sent Papal delegate Gregory Peter XV and Cardinal Agagianian to discuss the challenges of Communism to the Church in Asia.

The Philippines, the only Catholic country in Asia nearest to China, was to be the host of this radio facility. Cardinal Rufino Santos, who was then the Archbishop of Manila, agreed to the task. In 1961, a legal body for Radio Veritas was created in Manila. This was the Philippine Radio Educational and Information Center (PREIC) which provided the legal status for RVA.

In 1970 Pope Paul VI inaugurated RVA in Manila with these words: "This great enterprise and such an important work should echo the teachings of Christ and lift hearts to God's truth and love." Pope John Paul II's visit to the station in 1981 yet again sealed the relevance of the shortwave station for the Church's task of evangelization by his description of RVA as the "voice of Asian Christianity." And in "Ecclesia in Asia," the Pope in 1999 referred to Radio Veritas as an

"excellent instrument of mission."

Divine Providence

God's generosity was experienced in realizing this project because the German Church came forward to help the Asian Bishops to great dream. On October 11, 1960, Conference, the Chancellor of Germany, Konrad Adenauer committed in realizing this dream project of Radio Veritas Asia. On the part of the Church, the following promised financial support: the Propagation of the Faith; the Bishops' Conference of Germany; the Archdiocese of Cologne; the mission aid societies *Missio*, *Misereor*, *Aid to the Church in Need*, and the Holy Childhood Association.

Some of Asian Bishops' Conferences also expressed their solidarity for this great missionary venture. Thus Bishops Conferences of Japan, Korea and Thailand land forward to support this venture. To house the production studios, the Archdiocese of Manila allocated a property in Fairview, Quezon City. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) was established on the historic visit of Pope Paul VI in Manila in 1970. From then on,

the responsibility for the station was entrusted to this collegial body of Bishops in Asia. This would be realized through the FABC Office of Social Communication. Its Board of five Bishops and Executive Secretary had been at the helm of planning and helping secure finances for running the station.

RVA and Technological Revolution

In today's technology-driven world, the Radio apostolate cannot afford to lag behind. Streaming programs was introduced at the turn of the millennium, making programs accessible to the migrants in Diaspora countries anytime and anywhere, through the marvel of internet and other digital modalities. In 2007, RVA digitalized its production facilities paving the way to shift some of the languages, where it is politically stable, to their language areas. Furthermore, this development ushered the possibility for most programs to be produced in the native areas and sent to RVA studios through Internet. (Sourced from: <http://www.rveritas-asia.org/index.php/about-us/history>)



RADIO
VERITAS
ASIA

RADIO Veritas Asia (RVA), commenced as a dream, a response to Scripture mandate to share Christ to all peoples in all corners of the world. The focus was in the Asian continent: to proclaim His truth from the housetops through the airwaves. The dream was doused with urgency in the horror that engulfed the continent after the Second World War. Throughout the vastness of China and its southern neighbors Vietnam, Korea and Burma, the evil of Communism shook the foundations of human dignity. This colossal threat, was known in history to have been methodically, but brutally destroyed millions of lives,

curtailed all practices of freedom and crushed all attempts to live the Christian faith. With governments opposed to basic human dignity, Christ was the people's only hope and His voice was to reach them through the marvel and power of radio.

Response of the Church in Asia

In 1958, the dream was brought before an assembly of 100 bishops from Asia and Australia at the central seminary of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. This idea was eventually approved and accepted with the concurrence of The Holy See. Pope Pius XII has a

Is death a threat?

By Archbishop Socrates Villegas



Archbishop Socrates Villegas breathes over chrism oil as he celebrates the Chrism Mass at the St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Dagupan City on Holy Thursday, April 18. SCREENSHOT/SABINS STUDIO

HAVE you ever received a death threat as priests? Were you ever a recipient of an anonymous letter or a text message threatening you with a bullet shot for doing the work of God? Were you ever threatened with a false media expose against your good name because you stood for the truth and you stood for the Lord? Did you ever receive a threat that a religious procession will be bombed or a prayer rally will be disrupted to scare the people whom you invited from attending? Were you ever cursed for simply ringing church bells to pray for the killed?

Were you surprised? Were you scared? Did you consider hiding and stopping your work as priests? Did you cry alone? Did you pray? Did you ask the Lord "What have I done to deserve this?"

Wait...

Have you forgotten Queen Jezebel threatening Elijah "Now I am going to kill you! I pray that the gods will punish me even more severely if I don't do it by this time tomorrow." (1 Kings 19:2)

Did they not threaten the prophet Jeremiah "This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!" (Jer 26:11)

There is nothing surprising with priests being threatened with death. We should not have accepted ordination if we were afraid to die or be killed for the Lord. It is destiny. It is fate. Guhit ng palad ng kaparian.

To be threatened with violence is an opportunity of grace as the Lord admonished us "You will stand trial

before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me." (Mt 10:18)

The Lord's words to Peter are addressed to us also "Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." (Jn 21:18-19)

Death is not a threat. It is our destiny. To be killed is not a defeat of our mission. Martyrdom is the crowning glory of our mission. Daily we celebrate the memory of the death and rising of the Lord. Daily we must share in that mystery so that when we die, our death will

only be a fitting crown of our daily dying for the Lord. We are seeds and when we are buried we give life (cfr Jn 12:24)

We must be priests for all seasons, priests for sunny middays and dark midnights. "Into each life some rain must fall, some days must be dark and dreary" said Henry Longfellow. We may have to go through these dreary times of darkness but behind the clouds the sun is still shining. Death is our mission and in our death the world receives life. We have been through better times when priests were revered, trusted and esteemed. Those days seem to be behind us but we are still here serving as priests in season and out of season. Sometimes it is not death. Sometimes the threat is spreading calumny. If they cannot kill us by the bullet, they kill our reputation instead. We are called many names—sex addicts, child predators, priest playboys, priest gamblers, priest husbands—the litany is endless. It is tiring and annoying. It is wearisome and fatiguing.

We face the next two years, leading to the half millennium of the first Mass and first baptism within our shores, and who confronts us? We are sent to an angry disbelieving society. We are priests sent to a nation whose leader mocks God and calls Him stupid. The bishop's mother is derided as a prostitute and there is a marching order to kill any bishop you see. All priests are sex maniacs and piety is ridiculed. Honesty is optional and delicadeza is outdated. To top it all, our Catholic faithful are clapping and campaigning for his enablers to win the elections. "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless" said Bonhoeffer.

We must face this angry and disbelieving society with the witness of our faith and say with Peter "We must obey God rather than men". (Acts 29:5) "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel". (1Cor 9:16) We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus (2Cor 4:8-10).

We must confront with holy anger the more than thirty thousand senseless murders of the poor in the name of a false drug-free society, with our courage to face death eyeball to eyeball and declare "Death where is your sting? Grave

where is your victory? No weapon formed against us will prosper. The gates of hell won't stand."

We must exorcise the creeping culture of vulgarity, obscenity, lewd jokes and lack of good breeding, with the humble power of the Crucified Lord. We must not fear suffering rebukes, being calumniated, forgotten, ridiculed, wronged or suspected. "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Mt 10:28).

We must reject the father of lies and prince of darkness by the courage to stand up for the truth, the bravery to shield it from deception and fake news. Bring the fight not just in the pulpit but on social media and in the plaza. Flood social media with the power of love. Make good manners fragrant and attractive. Make them see the mercy of God on Facebook. "They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them". (Mk 16:18).

"A church that does not provoke any crises, a gospel that does not unsettle, a word of God that does not get under anyone's skin, a word of God that does not touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed—What gospel is that? You can tell the people that if they succeed in killing me, that I forgive and bless those who do it. Hopefully, they will realize they are wasting their time. A bishop will die, but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish," said Saint Oscar Romero.

Brother priests, make friends with death. Let death not threaten you. The call to the priesthood is a call to die. It is clear. There is no priesthood without victimhood. We would be fake priests if we separated the Upper Room from Calvary.

Priests of God, make friends with death, do not fear it. These times demand courage, much courage. When future generations write this episode of our history, may they see us on the right side of the story, that when we were given a chance to die, we stepped forward and embraced our martyrdom!

(Note: This is the full text of the Homily delivered by Archbishop Socrates Villegas during the Holy Mass of the Chrism at the St. John the Evangelist Cathedral, Dagupan City, April 18, 2019)

An open letter of Fr. D'Ambra to the "Balik Islam"

EVERY Good Friday Christians around the world remember the death on the cross of Jesus Christ and after few days the resurrection. Many times I have reflected on this mystery of the love of God up to death "and the death on the cross." Last April 19, during the Good Friday, I prayed also for you, the Christians who in the Philippines, are called "Balik Islam", those who were Christians and have decided to embrace Islam. Yes, I remember you because often I hear Christian and Muslim friends who are alarmed by the fact that a good number of so called "Balik Islam" are becoming very radical and are inclined to violence. There are so many alarming news about you that today I ask in my prayer in front of the cross: "Why?" The first answer that comes to my mind is that we in the Philippines, a country with a Catholic background and many expressions of "popular religiosity," need to teach more to our Christians the central part of the message of Jesus' death and resurrection as a great message of love for all following the teaching of the Gospel and to be closer to Jesus message of love and not to be tempted to follow a model of society that tends to forget the centrality of God in history and in our life. Jesus reminds us to "be in the world but not of the world" referring to the many temptations that we may encounter in the world.

In my experience in Mindanao since 1977, most of the time in contact with Muslim communities, I learned many things. I have also been in two years of my life in Mindanao closer to the Moro National Liberation front (MNLF) as negotiator in my desire to share the message of peace. Because of this mission I was threatened by those who did not appreciate my closeness to the Muslims and to the MNLF and I was forced to leave the Philippines for a few years. That was the time when I decided to study Islam and Arabic undergoing formal studies that helped me to understand Islam more and to appreciate especially the spiritual dimension that we can find in Islam and in the Sufi movements



Filipino Muslims pray at the Golden Mosque in Quiapo, Manila. CBCPNews

of Islam.

This back ground of my life brought me to start, in 1984, the Silsilah Dialogue Movement in Zamboanga City, a Movement that today, after thirty-five (35) years, is alive and continues to inspire many from different faiths to promote the culture of dialogue, path to peace. Unfortunately, there are also those who promote violence justified by a wrong understanding of their religion.

My dear friends who are called "Balik Islam", you are in my prayer asking the Lord: "Why does this reality of the Balik Islam alarms also many good Muslims?" The Christian community suffers from this situation and I too suffer, but I do not write this letter to judge you but to remind you that we are brothers and sisters in the same humanity and we are called to promote dialogue and peace. All of us are people of different faiths and beliefs. In choosing the key word "Silsilah" (that means CHAIN or LINK) for the movement of dialogue that I started long ago I was dreaming, and I still dream, to remind all that we are "LINKED" to the same human family and "genealogic tree" to the same Creator that we identify in many ways and names in our own faith.

Yes, I believe that we are brothers and sisters. In a recent document of Pope Francis in Abu Dhabi (February 4, 2019) signed together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb it is clearly stated the importance of living together. This document is entitled "HUMAN FRATERNTY

for world peace and living together" It starts saying: "In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the value of goodness, love and peace ..."

My dear brothers and sisters, at the foot of the cross in prayer I recognize also the many mistakes committed by Christians in history up to now, at the same time I am inspired by the message of love of Jesus that gives me the courage and determination to live my mission as Christian and Catholic priest living in this beautiful country of the Philippines, in spite of the many contradictions and sufferings of our people. I hear the voice of the poor, the innocent, those who suffer and those who work for dialogue and peace together. I invite you to "dream" with me a better society in the spirit of love for all.

My dear brothers and sisters who are today identified as "Balik Islam" please reflect and pray about your life and faith and be consistent in living the faith your conscience dictates to you, but do it in the spirit of love and compassion. This is the real spirit that we, as Christians and Muslims have to promote to build together a real "Human Fraternity," walking together in dialogue as brothers and sisters.

Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, PIME
Founder of the Silsilah Dialogue Movement

Aria, for the second time

By Bishop Pablo Virgilio David

IT was interesting to see at the special screening of ARIA some of the direct descendants of the landed elite of Pampanga. When the late Cesar Maria Guerrero of Malate was installed as the first bishop of a new Diocese of San Fernando, carved out of Manila in the 1950's, Pampanga was torn apart by an agrarian unrest. The hacenderos were putting up their own private armies against the Huks, who fought for social justice and defended the rights of tenant farmers. The killings became daily occurrences, perpetrated by both sides of the deep economic and political divide. The victims from either side were blessed in the same parish Churches and buried in the same Catholic cemeteries.

It was in such circumstances that Bishop Guerrero preached his most famous homily at the newly restored Cathedral of San Fernando, calling for an end to violence, but obviously siding with the poor peasants' clamor for agrarian reform. He said, addressing the hacenderos, "Aqui en Pampanga hay mucha piedad pero muy poca caridad." (Here in Pampanga there is so much piety but so little charity.)

Guerrero, being a devotee of the Virgen de los Remedios of Malate, introduced the devotion in Pampanga, with the Virgin accompanying the image of the Crucified Christ called Santo Cristo del Perdon. He organized pilgrim processions to remote barrios where most of the ambushes were taking place. He himself accompanied the images, which he asked the landed Doñas and Dons, duly appointed to act as Damas y Caballeros, to visit

the remotest Visitas of the province, in order to get the landlords and the tenants to face each other and to facilitate a dialogue among them. These dialogues eventually reached the halls of Congress and Senate and led to the drafting of a series of land reform laws.

The new diocese itself set a good example by surrendering to the comprehensive agrarian reform program its own agricultural landholdings. Most of these lands were donated to the Church by landlords for the support of the parishes. But since the parishes had no legal personality to own property, all of these lands which were in the name of the corporation sole of the Church were covered by land reform.

This agrarian conflict in the country is obviously not quite resolved yet. Proof of this is what is happening in the island of Negros. In fact, the bishop of Bacolod, Bishop Gerry Alminaza, expressed to me his intention of sponsoring a special screening of ARIA in his diocese, when he learned that this Kapampangan film had English subtitles. Apparently, he had read my review of the film and said, "That film should be viewed by the faithful of Bacolod."

Bishop Alminaza, like the late Bishop Guerrero, has boldly called for an end to violence in his diocese, especially in the aftermath of the recent killings that resulted in the death of 14 farmers. Bishop Alminaza has called for an impartial investigation of this recent tragedy, which is alleged by the families and witnesses to have been a massacre.

Where is love?

Easter Message 2019

"WHERE is Love?" This was the question asked by the orphan boy Oliver Twist in the 1960's *Oliver* when he felt alone and abandoned. This song touched me deeply when I was a boy. It is a question many of us ask ourselves when life is hard or when we see injustices destroying lives.

Christ must have asked the same question on the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Where was love when Jesus was betrayed, abandoned by his friends and crucified like a criminal?

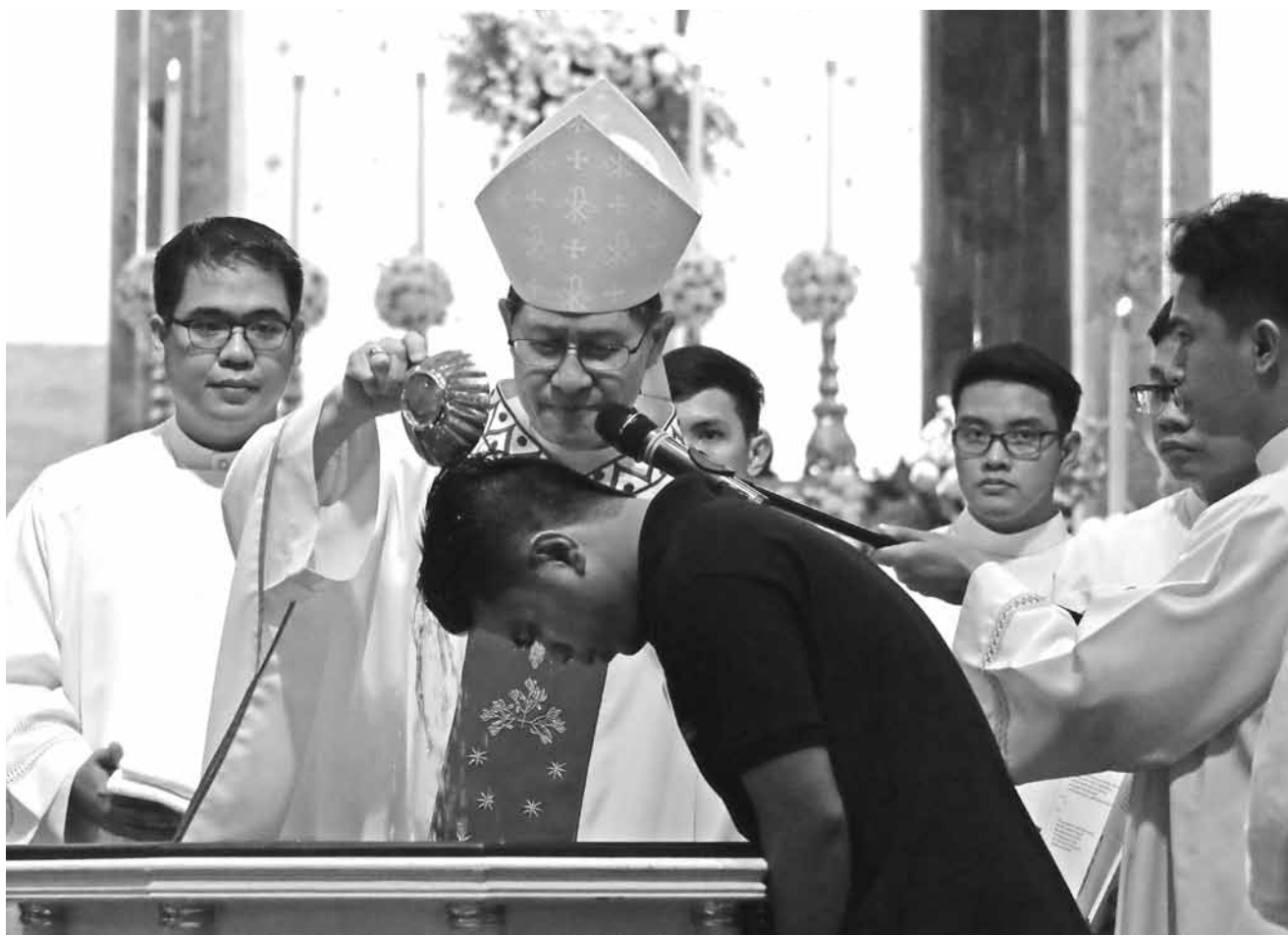
Sometimes we find ourselves in a dark place, like Jesus on the cross, and our lives can seem loveless. When hunger, unemployment, addictions, indignities, abuse, hate speech, false accusations, killing, corruption, human trafficking run wild and seem to reign, our world appears dark. But if we look more carefully, more intently at people and situations, it is then that we see love revealing itself.

On Jesus' way to the cross and beyond, in the sea of hate surrounding him, there were also intense moments of love: the women, the Blessed Virgin Mary and John, who brave the sorrow if standing at the foot of the cross when everyone else had abandoned him; the good thief, who broke the

stereotype of the delinquent and asked to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingdom; Joseph of Arimathea, who overcame his fear of being an open follower of Christ to ask Pilate for his body; Nicodemus who generously gave vast quantities of myrrh and aloes to anoint Christ's body; the women who went to the tomb on the third day to tend to the body, even though they had no idea how to move the boulder blocking its entrance; and even Pilate, who saw the injustice of the situation and wanted to release Jesus.

What these actions have in common is that they seem insignificant, especially if you compare them to the violence of the crucifixion and all that had gone before it. What difference can one act of kindness make in the face of unrelenting evil? It can make all the difference in ways we can't even imagine how because these small acts of care and love are crowned by the total self-giving of Christ crucified on the cross.

Since the time of Christ, who tended to the poor and healed the sick and welcomed the outcasts, our faith has been built on personal encounters and on people who empty themselves, enabling them to see people and their situations with deep understanding, compassion and solidarity. We are called as Christians to encounter others and



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle baptizes one of two new members of the church during the Easter Vigil at the Manila Cathedral, April 20, 2019. ROY LAGARDE

walk with them humbly, without judgment or pretensions of having the answer to all their problems. It is through these encounters that our hearts are opened and presented with new a horizon and a renewed energy to move forward. It is through these encounters of love and caring that persons, families and communities are transformed from prisoners of

despair into bearers of hope.

We invite you to seize the power if love unleashed by the risen Christ this Easter, and with the love you have received, spread seeds of hope across our country. Love is not just a word, it's a lifestyle of seeing, encountering, and understanding other people. It is the lifestyle of Jesus, crucified and risen. It is the style of being with

and living for others in the belief that light will always overcome darkness. In the name of the Archdiocese of Manila, I wish you a blessed and safe Easter!

+LUIS ANTONIO G. CARDINAL TAGLE
Archbishop of Manila
April 21, 2019

Population and development

(Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, on the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development Agenda, April 3, 2019, New York City.)



Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Vatican nuncio to the United Nations. GREGORY A. SHEMITZ/CNS

AS we call to mind the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and consider the follow-up to its Program of Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, my Delegation is aware of the many challenges that the international community still faces to achieve the goal of greater, integral human development.

The ICPD was an important milestone in the world's understanding of the interrelationship between population and development, indeed

considering the linkage between these two for the first time. All forms of coercion in the implementation of population policies were rejected. The family, based on marriage, was recognized as the fundamental unit of society, and as entitled to comprehensive support and protection. Strong impetus was given to the improvement of the status of women throughout the world, particularly with regard to their health, and their full and equal participation in development. The expanding phenomenon of migration was considered along with its impact on development.

Since then, development has been and remains the proper context for the international community's consideration of population issues. Within such discussions there naturally arise questions relating to the transmission and nurturing of human life. To formulate and position population issues, however, in terms of individual "sexual and reproductive rights" is to change the focus from that which should be the proper concern of governments and international agencies. Suggesting that reproductive health includes a right to abortion explicitly violates the language of the ICPD, defies moral and legal standards within domestic legislations and divides efforts to address the real needs of mothers and children, especially those yet unborn.

Moreover, questions involving the transmission of life and its subsequent nurturing cannot be adequately dealt with except in relation to the good of the family, which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society."^[1]

Governments and society ought to promote social policies that have the family as their principal object, assisting it by providing adequate resources and efficient means of support, both for bringing up children and looking after the

elderly, to strengthen relations between generations and avoid distancing the elderly from the family unit.

Another landmark of the ICPD was the link between migration and development. Ever since, there has been increased sensitivity, research, cooperation and effective policies in this field, leading to the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Migration is a global phenomenon; one which is linked to development and poverty, as well as to financial and health security. In particular, migrants are now seen as proactive agents of development. Nonetheless, negative stereotypes of migrants are, at times, exploited to promote policies detrimental to their rights and dignity, and migrants, especially children and women, are often victims of trafficking. These are issues that demand our attention when tackling problems concerning population and development.

This topic also has strong environmental implications. While population growth is often blamed for environmental problems, we know that the matter is much more complex. Wasteful patterns of consumption, growing inequalities, the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, the absence of restrictions or safeguards in industries, all endanger the

natural environment. Research across several decades shows, with insignificant variations, that inequalities in consumption are stark. Globally, the 20% of the world's highest-income people account for 86% of total consumption, while the poorest 20% a mere 1.3%. Confronted with these and other data that demonstrate drastic inequalities, Pope Francis exhorts us to an "ecological conversion,"^[2] which calls for a change to a more modest lifestyle and responsible consumption, and for a greater awareness of the universal destination of the world's resources.

The Holy See is fully aware of the complexity of the issues involved in the review and appraisal of the ICPD Programme of Action. This very complexity requires that we carefully weigh the consequences for present and future generations of the strategies and recommendations to be proposed. Fundamental questions like the transmission of life, the family, and the material and moral development of society, need very serious consideration. The Holy See stands ready to make its contribution toward finding ways to building a world of genuine equality, fraternity and peace.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 16.3.
2. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 216.

AMRSP Solidarity Statement for the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines

PEACE BE TO THIS COUNTRY!
We, the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines, an association of 327 religious congregations in the Philippines, strongly condemn the continued barrage of malicious allegations made on the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines and other human rights and sectoral organizations, by some leaders of the government and the military as communist fronts of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, a mission partner of the AMRSP, was established in 1969 as a Church response to the plight and unjust conditions of the rural poor.

Fifty years of missionary work speaks for the integrity of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines. Moreover, fifty years of continued presence in the most forgotten places in the Philippines, to accompany the marginalized and poorest farmers and indigenous

peoples, is by itself a testimony of the fervent commitment of the religious and the Catholic Church to be living witnesses to the good news of just peace and equity to all Filipinos.

Red tagging, accusing individuals and organizations as communist terrorists, is inimical to democracy and respect for human rights. In its most extreme, red tagging, can lead to warrantless arrest, detention without charges, torture, enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings.

We are already disturbed to the core of our souls by the growing mistrust, division and animosity among our peoples, unending violence in our midst, the more than 20,000 nameless victims of summary executions and extra judicial killings. We are also disturbed to the core of our beings by the surrender of our patrimony and our natural resources to the Peoples' Republic of China, who are in fact communists.

We long, thirst, hunger and

pray for social equity and just peace in our country. Let the members of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines do their jobs where we in the government and church agencies have failed to go to address issues of peace, education, respect for life, freedom, dignity of persons, good governance and good politics in the far-flung rural areas. Lord, spare our mission partners from deadly malice and give them peace.

"Often, too, the fair speech of friends entrusted with the administration of affairs has induced many placed in authority to become accomplices in the shedding of innocent blood, and has involved them in irreparable calamities by deceiving with malicious slander the sincere good will of rulers" (Esther 45:5-6).

REV. FR. CIELITO ALMAZAN, OFM
SR. REGINA KUIZON, RGS
AMRSP Co-Chairpersons
April 8, 2019



What really matters in the Church is life in the Spirit of Jesus

2nd Sunday of Easter, Year C, John 20:19-31
Divine Mercy Sunday, April 28, 2019

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD



SOME MIGHT WONDER if we have to talk about a “Johannine Pentecost.” Is this something different from what we used to know—namely, the 50th day after Easter, which we celebrate in the liturgy after the feast of the Ascension? If by Pentecost we mean the bestowal of the Spirit upon all believers, then we have much ground for saying that the Gospel today is John’s version of Pentecost. We have to understand that for theological reasons, Luke, who wrote the Pentecost account in Acts 2:1-13, separated the Christological moments of redemption. In his account, there is a day for the resurrection of Jesus, another for his ascension, and still another for Pentecost. John, however, has a different way of looking at these moments. For him, Jesus’ resurrection is bound up with his exaltation and the giving of the Holy Spirit. When he rose from the dead, Jesus at the same time was exalted and bestowed the Spirit

on the gathered believers. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Jesus appeared to his disciples, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

But how does John describe the Pentecost? In depicting the event, John does not use words and images that evoke the giving of the Law at Sinai, as Luke does in Acts. It is instructive that in describing the giving of the Holy Spirit, John uses the words “breathed on them” (John 20:22). Since the term “to breathe on” or “to blow in” popularly lined with Gen 2:7, there is no doubt that he harked back to the creation narrative when God breathed into the nostril of Adam who became a living being. That is to say, just as God gave life to Adam by blowing into his nostrils, so Jesus was giving a new life to the community of believers by giving them life. A similar view is held in wisdom literature; “the one who fashioned him, and breathed into him a quickening soul, and infused

a vital spirit” (Wisd 15:11).

At the same time, he alludes to Ezek 39:9-10 where, in the vision of the prophet, the dry bones came to life after the wind “breathed into them.” Since this text has reference to the gathering of Israel from the land of exile, it is clear therefore that John has in mind the reconstitution of God’s people as a new creation. John seems to be saying that with the death and resurrection of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit, God recreates his people by letting them share in the life of the Risen One. Jesus possesses this new life, but at Pentecost he shared it with the community of believers. In other words, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, those who are given this new life become members of a newly created people.

When the Holy Spirit descends on a people to re-create them, what happens to them? As the attribute “holy” indicates, the people are cleansed from their sins.

Spirit / B7

How will Church leaders accomplish the mission to preserve unity?

3rd Sunday of Easter, Year C, John 21:1-19
May 5, 2019

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

THE RESURRECTION OF Jesus is yearly celebrated at Easter, which is the oldest and most solemn Christian feast and considered the center of the Liturgical Year. But what is the meaning of the raising of Jesus from the dead? Admittedly, every New Testament writer has his own distinctive understanding of what the Resurrection of Jesus is all about, but in John, one of its meanings is mission. In John’s story of the Lord’s appearance on the shore of Tiberias (John 21:1-19), that significance derives, as in Luke 5:10, from the symbolism of the fishing scene. It may be recalled that before he was raised, Jesus promised that he would draw all women and men to himself (John 12:32). Since he has been lifted up, he could now fulfill his promise. If the Matthean Christ commanded the Eleven to make disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:19), that account has an equivalent in John in the instruction to throw the net. And the meaning of the symbolism of throwing the net is made clearer in another metaphor: the commissioning of Peter to feed the lambs/sheep (John 21:15-17).

Of course, the mission remains the risen Lord’s. The disciples are simply his instruments. Christ takes the initiative and sustains it. For this reason, the success of the mission does not depend on the quality and effort of the disciples. A doctorate degree, a high IQ, one’s

being honed at Harvard Divinity School, the ability to attract huge crowd—all this does not guarantee automatic success. Rather, it rests entirely on their obedience to the word of the listen Lord. By their own effort the disciples could not catch fish (21:6). Which reminds us of Jesus’ saying that “without me you can do nothing” (15:5). One may work in the mission with much effort, but without the presence of the Lord, that mission would be fruitless. No wonder then that the disciples were able to experience a miraculous catch—the Lord called them to throw their nets and they obediently did so: “they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish” (21:6).

But what is the purpose of throwing the nets? If Jesus promised to draw all to himself, if he asked his disciples to cast the nets, the object was the form one community, one people coming from all nations. In this narrative, the net images the Church, and the fishermen stand for its leaders. The 350 kinds of fish represent all the races of men and therefore universalism. (In his commentary on Ezek 47:9-12, St Jerome says that according to the ancient naturalists there were 153 species of fish.) Thus, the mission of the Church is universal salvation. Which reminds us of Jesus’ words: “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also must I lead, and they will hear my

voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd” (10:16). His plan to gather all into one is reflected in the prophecy of Caiaphas, the high priest, “that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God” (11:32). (It goes without saying that to say that salvation is only for those who know the Bible, or who are born again or who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior is to misread John.) It is interesting to note that although the fish were numerous, the net was not broken (21:11). For John, this symbolizes the unity of diverse believers that is to be preserved by the leaders of the Church.

And how will the Church leaders accomplish the mission? If a shift in image may be permitted, it may be said that they will fulfill their mission by shepherding (Ps 80:2; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10) in love of Jesus. This is precisely the reason why Jesus asked Peter thrice: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” For without such love, the pastoral efforts of the shepherds or ministers of the Church (1 Pet 5:2-4; Act 20:28) will be in vain. As Paul puts it, “If I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away

Unity / B7

‘Signs’ of the reality of the resurrection

2nd Sunday of Easter, Year C, John 20:19-31
Divine Mercy Sunday, April 28, 2019

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

WHO could blame Thomas for his refusal to believe what his co-disciples were saying about the apparition of the risen Jesus? He was a concrete, “positive” man. To believe what his friends were saying about Jesus was like believing that the sun had risen at midnight!

He was ready to grant that, during the three years he had been with Jesus, he had witnessed quite a number of happenings which seemed as incredible as a midnight sunrise: lepers cured instantly; paralytics who walked home carrying the mats on which they had been lying for years; thousands fed with just a few loaves and fish; and even dead people coming back to life! . . . He believed in the reality of their occurrence because he had seen them happen with his own eyes.

But Jesus, the reportedly “risen Jesus,” where was he? If he could just see and touch his body, then Thomas also would say, “Amen!” Since he was not around when Jesus had appeared to the whole group, what Thomas was asking was no less than a “personal apparition” of the Risen Christ to him.

And **Thomas got it all, thanks to Jesus’ loving condescension.** He saw Jesus and was able to put his fingers into the holes bored by the nails and the spear. And he exploded in that confession of faith for which he will be remembered till the end of time. (*See Jn 20:28.*)

Thomas is a contemporary of every generation. Even today, many refuse to believe in the reality of the Resurrection until they see some “proof” of it.

Especially in our days, **the only valid “proof” of the Resurrection people are prepared to consider is our life—our Christian witness.**

It is through our lives, more than our words, that we can show that Jesus is really risen from death and is now alive.

An existence characterized by charity and service to the needy is undoubtedly a strong “sign” that, after the death of Christ, a new powerful stream of life has entered the marshes of human history and human nature. Such life-giving reality has quickened to a superior level of existence the whole of mankind, thanks to the resurrection of Christ. No human being could constantly overcome the temptation and natural inclination to be self-centered if Christ did not rise from death. **A life totally spent in the service of others is a “sign” of the Life that has conquered death in Christ’s resurrection.**

Another decisive “sign” of the reality of the Resurrection is the **forgiveness that we grant to those who have wronged us.** Every offense that we suffer opens painful wounds in our sensitivity. They are the marks of the emotional agony, and even of our death, which human cruelty, unfairness, dishonesty, treachery, . . . have inflicted on us. **But if and when we are able to be good to the persons who have hurt us so deeply,** to speak well of them, to smile at them – in other words, **to forgive them from the heart,--then even the hardest unbeliever is faced with a very strong proof** (the strongest one, perhaps) **of the reality and life-giving effects of the Resurrection. Perfect forgiveness which overcomes all inclination to hate back is a first-class miracle indeed.** And the Holy Spirit, whom the Risen Christ gave to his disciples on Easter Sunday, has a lot to do with it.

Peter, the head steward of Christ’s flock

3rd Sunday of Easter, Year C, John 21:1-19
May 5, 2019

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

AFTER the Resurrection, Jesus’ external appearance must have been quite altered if no one could recognize him at first sight . . . But what had not undergone any change in him was his love for his disciples, in spite of their many shortcomings.

He made it a point to prove this even in his apparition in Galilee. His interest in their fruitless toil, his suggesting what to do in order to make a big catch, the fish freshly broiled, the bread just baked . . . (*see Jn 21:4-14*) were all signs of his loving care for them.

But that early spring morning, Jesus had more than fish and bread to offer them. **“Feed my lambs . . . Tend my sheep,” he said to Simon Peter in the presence of the other apostles,** his gaze piercing gently the misty eyes of the fisherman from Bethsaida. (*See Jn 21:15-17.*) The meaning of Jesus’ words was clear, in spite of the figurative language used: **the Risen Christ had made Peter the head-shepherd of the Church!** The first “*Habemus Papam*” in history—a proclamation done by Jesus himself on the quiet lakeshore near Capernaum, close to the place where everything had begun three years earlier. Quite a gift for Peter and for all believers, too! . . .

That appointment was the fulfillment of the promise which Jesus himself had made to Peter at Caesarea Philippi many months earlier in response to the disciple’s profession of faith in Jesus as “the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (*See Mt 16:18-19.*) The disciple had done nothing to deserve such a promise. Jesus said that Peter’s answer had been the Father’s

doing! (*See Mt 16:17.*) He had actually done quite a bit to lose any claim to its fulfillment, for **he had deserted and disowned his Master, in spite of all his boastful assurances.** (*See Mk 14:29-31.*)

In that painful process, Peter had lost almost all his dignity, but not his faith in Jesus and his love for him. He had also learned to be humble. And that, for Jesus, was enough. **The question, “Do you love me?” asked three times was not meant to embarrass the repentant disciple, but to bring him to realize that love and humility are indispensable virtues for one who is called to represent the humble and loving Master.**

Once again, as he had already done at Caesarea Philippi, **Peter gave the right answer, “Lord, you know that I love you!”** The whole Church rejoices in it, for a strong and humble love for Jesus is the basic condition for Peter to be the visible leader of the new People of God—a leader according to the heart of Christ.

The role of Peter in the Church, intended to be handed on to his successors, is one of the most precious gifts of the Risen Christ to the other apostles and to all his followers throughout the centuries. In Peter and his successors, in fact, we find the indispensable visible point of reference and unity, and the leadership that “presides in charity” and guides all the believers in being faithful to the common Lord. In this frail head-shepherd, we see a proof of Christ’s love for the Church and a sign of his unflinching presence in it.

The evil web of human trafficking

By Fr. Shay Cullen



Rome's Colosseum is illuminated during the Way of the Cross March 30, 2018. Pope Francis has asked Missionary Sister Eugenia Bonetti, a long-time activist in the fight against human trafficking, to write the meditations for his celebration of the Good Friday Way of the Cross prayer service at Rome's Colosseum April 19, 2019. PAUL HARING/CNS

THE most recent case of human trafficking that I have been involved in, and they are many, is that of Angelica- a 15-year-old girl sold by her mother to her employer. He is a rough, crude man, the owner of several mini-buses and from which he earns a lot of money and could afford to buy children for sexual abuse.

Angelica was brought to this middle aged Filipino man in a distant town to be sexually exploited and abused and that is the crime of human trafficking, child rape and sexual abuse. He brought her to a hotel and the hotel manager and staff either ignored it or were complicit in the trafficking and he raped her there. Her mother was guilty also of human trafficking of her own child.

He is a child rapist and he sexually abused Angelica several times and gave money to her and to her mother. The child could not resist, she being only 13 and she was under the power and influence of the adults in ascendancy over her and controlled by her own mother.

There are many hundreds of thousands of similar cases of human trafficking and abuse happening everyday around the world and not only in the Philippines. It is all too common especially in Southeast

Asia, Africa and the Middle East and the United States, anywhere where laws are lax and not enforced. In some countries, child abuse is tolerated under some guise of cultural practice like child marriage, which is rampant in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan.

An estimated 24.5 million adults, children and youth have been victims and are trafficked worldwide in the past decade by organized crime syndicates. Human traffickers are criminals who operate in many ways. Most of the 24.5 million victims are women and 33 percent are children under the age of 18.

The victims of human trafficking are almost always poor, unemployed, not well educated and vulnerable. Many minors come from broken families, are abandoned and left with a distant relative who neglects them and treats them as a servant or sells them to traffickers for a promised job in a hotel or as a domestic helper. They are frequently abused, underpaid and sexually exploited. The root of the problem is in the broken home. Without a secure, stable loving and caring family, children don't have a chance to succeed in life. When the parents have no love for each other, the

child is generally unloved too. They are easy prey for human traffickers.

Human trafficking and abuse of women and minors as under paid labor is so widespread that millions of people are trafficked everywhere. From Eastern Europe, many thousands are trafficked and brought to wealthy Europeans in the mega-brothels, which are legal. But the women are not free to leave and are trapped in a web of insidious debt.

In some countries like the Philippines, the age of sexual consent for a child under the Penal Code is very low, 12 years of age, and abusers take advantage of that to justify a relationship. The Penal Code must be changed. However, in the Philippines the child protection law otherwise known as Republic Act 7610 supersedes the old Penal Code. Anyone who abuses a child sexually below the age of 18 is criminally liable. If the child is below 12 years of age, it is statutory rape.

If you know of a child being abused physically, psychologically or sexually you are morally and legally obliged to report the abuse to the parents or relatives, to a trained social worker, a police officer or government official or to anyone who can help. Failure to do so makes a person liable to complaints

of complicity, aiding and abetting child abuse and human trafficking and even obstruction of justice if one person stopped another from reporting it and especially if the child asked for help and was refused.

In the case of Angelica, it was the child who suffered greatly. She hated what her mother and the man did to her and one day just after another session in the hotel where the abuse happened, she went to a local government official in the barangay hall and reported that she was being abused. She did not report that her mother sold her to the accused.

The suspect was arrested and jailed right away since the report was received within 24 hours of the crime being committed and he was charged with human trafficking and child rape. He paid the grandmother to file a case of habeas corpus case to get the child out of the Preda home but the child told the judge that she wanted to stay. The case of human trafficking and child rape is ongoing and Angelica, after a year in recovery, was able to testify clearly and coherently. He will surely be convicted.

It is very important that we all understand and are aware what is going on in the world. Human trafficking of children for sexual exploitation is an everyday crime.

Child sexual abuse is all around us, we just don't know it as they are ordered with threats to remain silent. They fear they will not be believed, that they will be severely punished if they reveal it. Most live with the pain and secret all their lives.

It's a fact that one-in-four girls are sexually abused at least once in their lifetime. The demand is persistent, abusive men even consider it an entitlement to do it and disregard and circumvent laws forbidding it with the help of human traffickers, corrupt police and sex tourist hotels and resort owners. Local government units give operating permits to these sex bars, hotels and resorts. They see them as a sexual Disneyland. Some officials are child abusers themselves. It is an urgent demand fueled by the internet and online cyber-sex business catering to the wealthy elite who want such evil sexual satisfaction, dominance and control of other human beings.

This terrible exploitation of human beings like what happened to Angelica is indeed slavery, banned but never conquered, condemned but never eliminated, opposed but still lives on. We must never give up the fight to overcome this pernicious evil and save the millions of exploited victims.

Spirit / B4

The idea of outpouring of the Holy Spirit is linked with the cleansing from sins: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees" (Ezek 36:25-27). No wonder that the early Church linked the sacrament of baptism, in which the Christian receives the Holy Spirit and becomes part of the new creation, with forgiveness of sins: "Now you have had yourselves washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11).

But if we strictly follow John's theology, we notice that into this re-created people, the unity of the Father and the Son is communicated,

and they become one people living in one divine life. As the Father is in Jesus, and Jesus in the Father, so the community is in Jesus and the Father (John 17:21). The members are bound into a corporate unity, but each one is known by their shepherd (10:3-4) who lays down his life for them (10:17). They imitate him by serving one another in humility (13:15). What holds the community is its spiritual relationship with Christ. As disciples to whom divine life is communicated, the members are sustained by Christ himself, who is united with them and remain in them (15:1-5).

What does this mean to us? It means many things, but we can point out one. To be a Church, the life its members live is of paramount importance. That life must be one that our Lord communicates to us at baptism and shared in the community of believers. It is just dismaying to know that when we talk about the Church, most of us look

at it in terms of secular standards. We tend to forget this inner life, and we regard the parish as good if, for example, the parish church is well constructed, the celebrations well attended, the church organizations are in place, the parish councils have plenty of projects, and the parish has much money in the bank. In the light of Johannine Pentecost, however, all these are secondary. Money, projects and infrastructures are never an indication that the community flourishes. The proper questions to ask are: do the members of the parish know each other? Do they love one another? Is their love expressed in helping those in need? Do they form one community? Does their love grow? Are they more forgiving than before? The parish may have the best infrastructures, but if it is lacking in love, forgiveness, unity, and mutual concern, it is no different from a secular body that has no soul. In the end, what really matters is life in the Spirit of Jesus.

Unity / B4

everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:2-3).

This implies that the exercise of power proper to secular society or to the military has no place in the Christian community. That Jesus repeatedly asked Peter the question about love—this was meant to show that he had a devoted love for Jesus (see Matt 26:33). Here, of course, Peter, far from declaring it, merely appealed to Jesus' intimate knowledge: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (John 21:17). With this, John would have understood that freeing love for the sheep is the essence of shepherding. A priest who does not freely love his parishioners is scarcely worthy of his pastoral office. Peter's love for the Lord was to be manifested in the taking care of the latter's flock. Moreover, he also would

shepherd them with love because he was a disciple who loved (John 13:37).

Out of his love for Jesus, Peter would have to deny his very self. In contrast to the shepherds who, following their wicked inclination, did not pasture the sheep with integrity (Ezek 34; Jer 3:15), he would not demand that they serve him. On the contrary, he would have to lay down his life for them: "A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). As Jesus was concerned with the good of the flock (John 10:3-4.14.27-30), so would Peter who must feed and shepherd Jesus' sheep. That is why Peter could go where the unexpected awaited him (John 21:18). In the end, he proved his love by dying a martyr's death under Nero. Such is the call of every ministers of the Lord: To testify to the mission of salvation by dying for it and for the sheep in love.

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

Buhay San Miguel

Brothers Matias



Dumbo

Director: Tim Burton
Lead Cast: Colin Farrell, Maichael Keaton, Danny Devito, Eva Green
Screenwriter: Helen Aberson, Ehren Kruger, Harold Pearl
Producer: Tim Burton, Katterli Frauenfelder, Derek Frey
Editor: Chris Lebenzon
Musical Director: Danny Elfman
Genre: Fantasy, Family, Adventure
Cinematographer: Ben Davis
Distributor: Walt Disney Studios
Location: United States



Running Time: 1hr 53min
Technical assessment: 3.5
Moral assessment: 4.0
CINEMA rating: PG 13
MTRCB rating: G

A recently purchased elephant at the Medici Bros. circus, Mrs. Jumbo, gives birth to a calf with unusually huge floppy ears. Returning to the circus from World War I, former equestrian star Holt Farrier (Colin Farrell), who has lost his wife to the flu epidemic and his arm to the war, is assigned to take charge of the baby elephant, a job enthusiastically shared by his two children Millie (Nico Parker) and Joe (Finley Hobbins) who name the calf "Dumbo". The children discover that when goaded with a feather, Dumbo can actually fly—using his ears as wings. Dumbo is made into the circus star, and his uniqueness reaches the ear of impresario VA Vandevere (Michael Keaton) who buys the whole Medici circus and incorporates it into his amusement park, the Dreamland. Dumbo's initial performance in Dreamland leads to the discovery of Mrs. Jumbo who happens to be caged at the far end of the park. From then on Dumbo is unstoppable, flying out of the circus tent in search of his estranged mother.

Drawing inspiration from the 1941 Walt Disney children's fable "Dumbo", director Tim Burton creates a delightful fantasy wedding real actors and CGI animals. Production sets effectively create a different world for the audience. With the flawlessly rendered elephants—Dumbo, particularly, with his sparkling, expressive eyes easily endears himself to viewers children and adults

alike. On the day CINEMA watched the movie, the audience cheered, obviously carried away (pardon the pun) by the flying baby elephant, and shrieked when a trick misfired and endangered its safety. The script, based on that of husband-and-wife team Harold Pearl and Helen Aberson, could stand improvement to add color and depth to the circus characters, but perhaps this is intentional, as the elephants are the stars and the circus performers are but supporting actors.

CINEMA ventures a guess that the appeal of Dumbo lies in its focus on the natural ties between mother and child—albeit of the genus loxodonta. Here cow and calf exhibit an overpowering longing to be with each other, a veritable reminder of the natural bonding instinct between human mother and child now threatened by today's relativism. The Farrier family members' closeness is also underscored, showing that while Millie and Joe sorely miss their deceased mother, in time that very emotion is what strengthens the children to empower Dumbo in his filial predicament. The movie's depiction of the dark side of business transactions in the entertainment world may be appreciated by adults and older teens, but children, while thrilled by the fantasy aspects of the story and the satisfying conclusion, need to be guided through the stressful footage showing accidents, the fire, and human cruelty to animals.

TERIBOL OG



Bladimer Usi

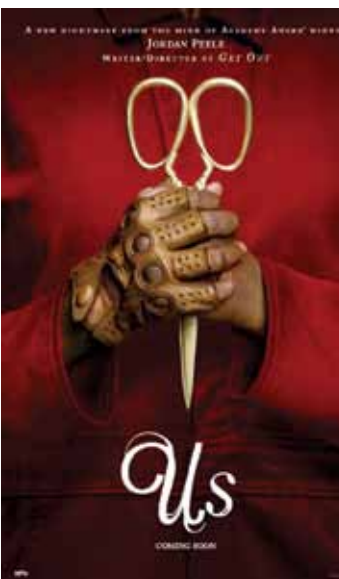
Buhay Parokya

- FIND 3 MISSING THINGS:
1. JESUS CHRIST
 2. ST. JOSEPH
 3. HOLY ROSARY



Us

Lead Cast: Lupita Nyong'o, Winston Duke, Shahadi Wright Joseph, Evan Alex
Director: Jordan Peele
Screenwriter: Jordan Peele
Producers: Jason Blum, Ian Cooper, Sean McKittrick, Jordan Peele
Editor: Nicholas Monsour
Musical Director: Michael Abels
Genre: Suspense, Psychological Thriller
Cinematographer: Mike Gioulakis
Distributor: Columbia Pictures
Location: California, USA



Running Time: 1 hr 56 min
Technical assessment: 3.0
Moral assessment: 3.0
CINEMA rating: V18
MTRCB rating: R16

The film starts off with a creepy prologue from 1986 at a carnival beside a beach. Then fast forward to present time, Adelaide Wilson (Lupita Nyong'o), accompanied by her husband (Winston Duke), son (Evan Alex) and daughter (Shahadi Wright Joseph), returns to her hometown for a family vacation—they will be staying in the house by the bay where she grew up. However, deeply haunted by a traumatic experience from the past, Adelaide's instincts are telling her that something bad is going to

happen in the said place so she insists on calling-off their vacation. But before they can even finalize the decision, her worst fears soon manifest when four strangers appear in front of their house in the dark as the power shuts down, forcing the Wilsons into a fight for survival. What's more terrifying is that when they come close to these strangers, they learn these attackers look exactly like them. Adelaide tries to figure out what's going on as these might be related to what happened in 1986 in

that carnival by the beach.

As expected of its director, Jordan Peele, Us is not your usual run-of-the-mill horror movie—but as in all horror movie, the film to a large extent remains to be preposterous. The creepiness factor from the beginning keeps the audience really involved in the scenes until the story moves into another plot development and direction where it becomes more of an opinionated psychological thriller than a horror flick. But Peele is really known for breaking rules of genre and that makes the film really controversial and interesting. However, there are certain points and

elements that just do not blend well. Perhaps the film in its entirety is devoid of any logic bordering on nonsense. If there is one decision in the film that must be recognized, it is putting Nyong'o as the lead. She carried the film from beginning to end with the showcase of her acting prowess that go beyond physicalization and dramatization—there is even dance and movement and a play of voice and eyes and double-meaning smiles. Nyong'o's thespian range is just mesmerizing and amazing that one could easily overlook whatever loophole there is in Us.

Us is rich in symbolism—the shadows that grew up in

the sewers are the have-nots and marginalized in the society. The title even suggests that Us also stands for the country US or United States of America. Aside from the great divide between the "haves and have-nots" or the rich and the poor, there is an ongoing divide between citizens of color or immigrants and white native Americans. The human barricade in the film, although a little bit off-tangent, symbolizes the racial divide and the literal borders being built by the US government to prevent other nationalities from crossing the borders. The film shows how lives are broken by inequality

and discrimination. Social classes are nothing but illusions that people regard as reality. In the end, as the film says, what matters still in life are the relationships one has—especially that of a family that sticks together no matter what happens. Goodness triumphs over evil or is that really so in the film when it ends up suggesting something more horrifying—who really is the shadow and who is the real person? But then, does it really matter? Given the film's theme and genre—and the horrifying scenes of gore and violence, CINEMA deems that film as appropriate only for viewers aged 18 and above.



THE CROSS



KofC Family... Our Concern

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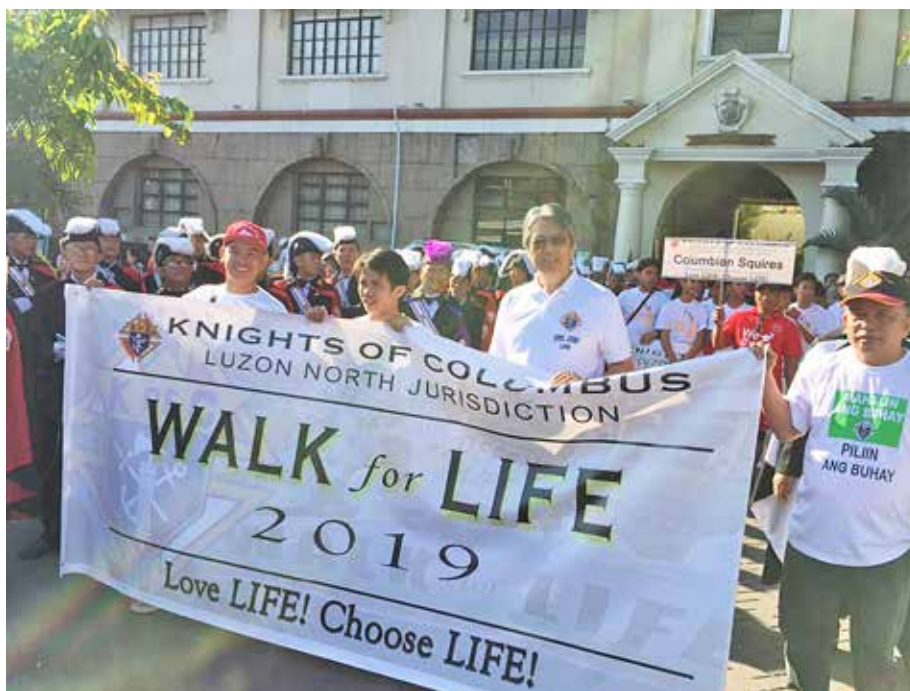
The Knights of Columbus in the Philippines gather for the Annual "Walk for Life"

The Knights of Columbus continue to publicly share a message of pro-life and pro-family values.

On March 23, thousands of its members from Luzon North and South Jurisdictions marched through the streets of the cities of Malolos and Marikina for its annual "Walk for Life". In Marikina, the walk winded up from River Park, where a liturgical service was held, passing through streets of the city to the Marikina Sports Complex. In his speech, Luzon South State Deputy Ramoncito Ocampo urged participants to continue promoting the dignity of human life. He also said that among the jurisdiction's many charitable activities is its "ultrasound initiatives" that it brings to different parishes in the region. The program aims to stop abortion because many women opt to keep their babies when they see the fetus in the ultrasound.

In Bulacan, activities also started with a Mass at the Malolos Cathedral and was followed with a march to the Bulacan State University. Led by Supreme Director and Luzon North State Deputy Jose C. Reyes, Jr., he encouraged the marchers to continue rebuilding a culture of life.

Brother Knights from the Visayas Jurisdiction led by Visayas State Deputy Anthony Nazario gathered last March 16 at the Archdiocese of Jaro joined by multi-sectoral groups and on March 23 at the Archdiocese of Tagbilaran with their battle cry to



The Knights of Columbus in Action during the Walk for Life activities in March 2019 across the Philippines headed by their respective State Deputies, Bro. Jose C. Reyes, Jr. – Luzon North, Bro. Ramoncito A. Ocampo – Luzon South, Bro. Anthony P. Nazario – Visayas and Bro. Gerry Eutemio T. Mission - Mindanao

promote and value life.

The Mindanao jurisdiction headed by Mindanao State

Deputy Gerry Mission led his brother knights from the Archdiocese of Davao to walk

the streets and to profess their commitment to protect and safeguard the sanctity of life

and family last March 23.

The Walk for Life is a yearly activity of the Knights of

Columbus nationwide to raise popular awareness of the value of life.

K of C Philippines Update:



In photo are 24 priests with Bishop Danilo B. Ulep, DD and KC Supreme Director Jose C. Reyes, Jr. with five other officers of KC Luzon North in Basco, Batanes.

ONCE again, we congratulate the Order of the Knights of Columbus for exemplifying First Degree Knights and this time it was done in the northernmost part of the archipelago specifically Basco, Batanes. Last March 28, 2019, 41 First Degree members were exemplified by Supreme Director and KC Luzon-North State Deputy Jose C. Reyes, Jr. with his team. The other members of the exemplifying team were: Pascual Carbero (State Secretary), Armand Gonzales (Reactivation Chairman), Jose Valdez (Culture of Life Director),

Diony Francia (Ceremonial Director) and Arthur Balmas (Family Director). The First Grand Knight of Batanes Council is Rev. Fr. Ronaldo "Zenki" B. Manabat, a 4th degree Knights of Columbus member, Rector and Parish Priest of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral/Sto. Domingo de Guzman Parish. Of the 41 newly exemplified members, there were 3 priests namely: Fr. John Capindo, Fr. Rolly Olango and Fr. Johnmar Marfe. Before the exemplification, there was a chris mass and renewal of priestly vows of 24 priests from Batanes and

some neighboring churches with Bishop Danilo B. Ulep, DD presiding. Bishop Ulep's older brother was a former District Deputy of Tuguegarao and Bishop Ulep was inspired by the work done by his older brother which led him to be very supportive of the activities of the Knights of Columbus. Truly, Knights of Columbus reaches out to all Roman Catholic men whether near or far. We enjoin the other Brother Knights to continue their apostolic duties to encourage more Roman Catholic men to join the Order of the Knights of Columbus.



Mindanao State Deputy Gerry Eutemio T. Mission together with the Mindanao Jurisdiction State Officers during their courtesy call to the newly installed Archbishop Angelito Rendon Lampon of Cotabato last March 26, 2019.

KC Foundations:

PAUL ALEXANDER ESTRADA, a scholar of KCPFI and a native of Samal, Bataan, has passed the February 2019 Mechanical Engineering Licensure Examination. He became a KC scholar and has obtained his bachelor's degree at Bataan Peninsula State University (BPSU), month of May 2018.

During his collegiate life, he actively participated in various university activities, became the auditor of the Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineers-Student Unit, and been the Vice President of the BPSU Graduating Batch of 2018. Currently, he is a third degree member of the Order of the Knights



of Columbus and the Inside Guard of the Father Agustin Consunji Council 4233.

Ramoncito A. Ocampo

President's Message



The Season of Lent

"It reminds us that during the season of spring, the sun takes a little longer each evening to settle beyond the horizon. With this, the weather grows warmer, and life emerges once more. Lent is our connecting point to the season of life." – Michael Hidalgo

Our country is known to be the only predominantly Christian country in the whole of Asia, most of the citizens living within are Catholics, that is why we widely observe the Lenten Season. It became a time for everyone to celebrate their faith and more often treat this as a day to look forward for spiritual growth and renewal. Some may be focusing on whatever thing they must give up during this time or some may think how long should they draw up those things they sacrifice from the very start of the liturgical week. We may be different in some ways but the essence of Lent still reflects the same for all Filipinos.

From Ash Wednesday to Easter, we abstain ourselves from certain foods or physical pleasures. We sacrifice even the bad habit that gives us enjoyment, we wanted to heal the environment by promoting good deeds without being recognized. Truly, we have a very rich culture and tradition, which is very distinct during this season.

Over the next few days, we, Brother Knights, should be the advocates of the real purpose of Lent, not only for ourselves but also for others, the power of the season should strengthen our deeper commitment towards our belief and our communion of love with God. Such a keen understanding can lead us to live these promises more faithfully.

To redeem and renew our salvation is the best way to describe how our day starts for this season. The right time to rediscover the power of our call with God, the beauty of life and holiness to all humanity and all creation. By this season, we must commit ourselves in restoring the good of human community, the road towards the real meaning of life, justice, peace and solidarity. May this season give us reason to bring our faith closer to the Creator as we are reminded of His passion and resurrection. Vivat Jesus!

Arsenio Isidro G. Yap

A Brother's Insight



2019 Philippine Election

MAY 13 is fast approaching and we Filipinos would once again "elect" our so called leaders. From senators down to councilors to include the so-called party list whose so-called main advocacy is to champion their so-called "causes". What a farce.

Election in the Philippines is like a play wherein the perpetual winners are the politicians and the perpetual losers are the electorate. Yet elections after elections, majority goes out and cast their useless ballots, hoping against hope that somehow a change would be in the offing. We always fall prey to those empty promises, repeated over and over every election by the same politicians or family of politicians. After getting themselves elected, they all suffer from the same disease – amnesia. They have forgotten all their promises and would blame the previous administration for their ineptness. All those who loss would claim they have been cheated on and would even file a case to "prove" their point and spend hundreds of millions again.

We Filipinos never learn, could never learn and are not willing to learn, the same old drama, the same old scenario. Politicians will emerge victorious and the people, the losers. But what ails our society? Why can we not get away from the doldrums of this recurring event? Why has our society allowed a few thousand to rule over all of us, a hundred million?

A politician's hearts belongs to the people, so they say. They're here to serve and not to be served, according to them. And yet in reality, they want to be served like kings and queens and their hearts belong to their desires, whatever it may be.

During the 2016 election, a presidential candidate spent more than five hundred million and still lost. A president's annual income is only 5.2 million pesos per annum. For the six year term, he/she would only earn a paltry 31 million pesos. To serve the country is a sacrifice on their part, so they say. To earn 31 million pesos in six years in a thankless job, one must "Sacrifice" I mean spend 500 million in about three months to get elected, hopefully not be cheated in the process.

I am not an accountant nor am I a mathematician, but it's easy to conclude that the foregoing figure doesn't add up. Are these politicians so rich or so insane that they cannot equate the two figures? There must be something else. You and I know there is something else. There is something else. Otherwise, why would anyone spend 500 million to gain a measly 31 million? Somehow, somewhere, by hook or by crook this must be recovered and much more, much, much more.

Politicians are like monarchs. They have their own fiefdom.

Brother's Insight / C3

Jose C. Reyes, Jr.

Chairman's Message

Accepting God's Love

WHAT better time of the year is there to reflect on God's love for us than the Lenten Season? Do you know of anybody who will love you unconditionally and die for you in order to save you from punishment? Maybe you will say these things happen only in the movies or heard of in fairy tales. Imagine yourself committing a crime as serious as killing somebody or as common as cheating in an examination. Then, here comes your best friend offering to take the penalty in your behalf without asking for anything in return. Have you experienced that kind of sacrifice and love? Or, can you imagine yourself doing that to any of your loved ones?

Jesus has given that kind of love to us long before we

were born. He died for us on the cross to save us from our sins. And not just for us but for the whole of mankind. Jesus descended to hell because of the heavy burden of all our sins. But He also rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven. This is the kind of love that God is giving us. Yet, we easily reject God's love and say "Yes" to the worldly allurements that are temporary, misleading, and oftentimes costly to our physical bodies and even more costly to our souls.

If we cannot see yet God's love as the better choice now and always, let us reflect now. Let us not delay because God is just too eager to give us His blessings of happiness, peace, prosperity, among many others.

Ma. Theresa G. Curia

Curia Settings

Reflections on and Lessons from the Visitation

AFTER reading the article of Ron Rohlheiser on the Visitation, I sort of entered into the world of these two great women and peeped into what must have gone on in their minds during the visit. As I enter into the heart of Mary as she visited Elizabeth, I wonder if she was ever confused or disturbed. Did she tell her about her pregnancy? Did she tell her of the angel's message? But Elizabeth must have been more surprised to see her. There were no fax machines nor facebook at that time to send messages. She must have wondered how Mary knew about her pregnancy. I wonder if Elizabeth felt a bit of embarrassment to face Mary because at her age she was pregnant. Did she worry about what the people would say? Did she even get scared of how she could bear the labor pains when her time comes? How will she nurse the child, bathe or run after the toddler? We really cannot know what sort of questions could have flooded her mind. However, these petty thoughts were overshadowed by her joy in seeing Mary by her side and pregnant too. We know that Mary learned from the angel that Elizabeth was pregnant. The latter was more than 80 years old. She must have wondered: How can an old woman get pregnant? But she did not doubt the angel. Nor did she harbour questions about her cousin's condition. So Mary

went to visit her and assisted her in the last months of her pregnancy. I guess she stayed on until Elizabeth gave birth. If Mary was confused about her cousin, she must have been equally confused about her own pregnancy. We are told that an angel talked to her at prayer and assured her that it was the Holy Spirit that overshadowed her. She was a virgin, and here she was, pregnant. How did she and Joseph talk about it? I suspect that she did not tell Elizabeth anymore about the heavenly intervention. After all there was Joseph to be responsible.

But we, who are watching the two of them from a distance, we see two women who are both in special situations. A young virgin and an elderly woman, both pregnant. I wonder, did they open up their doubts, anxieties, fears, and faith and hopes to each other? Or perhaps, they did not have those doubts at all? For all we know, they must have both come to contemplate together in silence and in peace, the mysteries unfolding before their eyes, despite the cloud of unknowing.

What we see here are two women, strong in faith, steeped in tradition, prayerful women, who knew how to listen to God's voice. Women of faith see the bigger picture. They do not get bogged down by petty human respect issues.

Karlo Serviento

Pondering the Words

The Journey to Easter

AFTER the glorious forty days of Lent, we have entered into the Holy Week or the week of weeks in which we commemorated the triumphant entry of Our Lord Jesus to Jerusalem, His passion, death and now, we are celebrating in jubilation His resurrection in which the fruits we reap and as Roman Catholics, we are proud to say that we are the Easter People! Happy Easter everyone!

In reflection, let us recall the days that have passed because there is no sense in just claiming our being men of Easter without having time to feel the real presence of Jesus in his passion, death and resurrection. Take note, this is not a vacation week. This is a vocation week. A response to the call of the Holy Mother Church to bring all souls back into the house of the Father, through our Holy Fasting and prayer.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people shouted with joy. They all long for a king. At these present days, we are like the Jews. We also long for a king. We too shout "Hossana!" for the King

of kings! But suddenly to notice and realize that we are the ones who crucify the Lord once more out of our sinfulness and worldliness. This brings us to the point that the Calvary is still present. We are the modern-day Calvary of Jesus. Every drop of blood from Him, is redemption for us.

Have you used the Holy Week to look upon ourselves and ask: Who is Jesus Christ? What is Jesus Christ in my life? What has happened to my Saviour? Is He still wounded? Is He still crucified? Will we just let our hearts be a tomb of a dead Saviour? Or are we ready to welcome His resurrection?

The resurrection of Jesus transforms our being that from His wounds we are healed and transformed to be instruments of healing and transformation to our brethren.

On the foot of the cross, the people shouted, "Long live the King of the Jews!"

As Easter people, we will together shout, "Long live the King of our lives!"

And as the centurion has spoken, we will also say, "Indeed, He is the Son of God!" (Mt. 27:54)

Accepting God's love is not for getting a reward. Many Catholics leave the Catholic Church because they cannot do what suits them like getting a divorce, not getting answers to what they pray for, and/or lacking in role models on how to be obedient to God. We used to have a housemaid who gave up being Catholic because a non-Catholic religious group offered her a job in exchange for her conversion to another religion. Later on, a Catholic school in our subdivision offered her daughter free schooling because she was poor. So, she declared she was Catholic. Faith is not about following who is the highest bidder. Let us not be short-sighted and be dazzled by what glitters.

In my case, my religiosity and deepening of faith as an adult were strengthened when I started joining religious organizations such as the Knights of Columbus and in serving the Church in various capacities such as Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion, as Liturgist and as a couple, my wife and I joined the Couples for Christ, and in our Chapel Community in Villa San Miguel, we served as Coordinators of Family and Life Ministry. Since then, life was never the same again in terms of prosperity in material and spiritual blessings. Temptations to sin still remain but we always try to reflect on our blessings so that we can remain humble and grateful to our awesome God.



They both knew they were chosen to play important parts in salvation history, as the prophets foretold and with faith and humility, accepted the mission. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your Word", appropriately captures the attitude of the two.

I guess I am not a very strong woman of faith. If I were present there, I could not have understood those things. So either I will be stressed, depressed, confused, if not angry at the complications and the shame that the pregnancies caused. Perhaps I could have said No to the angel's message. But the reverse is what we are presented here in the story of the Visitation. This is what we are invited to contemplate. When people are faithful to God, when people listen to him in silence and in prayer, these things are revealed to their hearts, first. And the mind gets silenced and at peace eventually. After all, they must have studied the prophecies in the synagogue and they must have been, together with the rest, been awaiting for their fulfilment. They, however, accepted with humility and faith that they were now invited to be part of that fulfilment. Wow, what a huge thing to happen to human beings!! But I guess again that the angel had a part in making their minds

Curia Settings / C3

Erwin John Mallari

EJ's Corner

Stations of the Cross

THE Lenten season brings about many practices of the Catholic faith, including the act of fasting and abstinence, performing Visita Iglesia, some even go to the extreme, and are yearly devotees who undergo "penitensya" even having themselves nailed to the cross! Included among this tradition of Catholic activities performed during the season of lent is the visitation of the "Stations of the Cross".

The Stations of the Cross is a series of 14 images depicting Jesus Christ on the day of His crucifixion. Devotees offer a series of prayers as they visit each station. The main objective of this activity is "to help the faithful make a spiritual pilgrimage by contemplating on the suffering endured by Jesus during the passion of Christ."

The 14 Stations of the Cross are commonly represented as small images, mostly carvings or paintings, spread around a church nave. These images are also marked with a number and are visited chronologically. The origin of the practice comes from the Holy Land of Jerusalem. St. Francis of Assisi venerated the Passion of Christ and founded the Custody of the Holy Land

to guard and promote the devotion to holy places. Those who would visit the Holy Land would traditionally follow the footsteps of Christ to the Cross. It was during the 15th and 16th centuries that Franciscans began building a series of outdoor shrines throughout Europe to replicate their counterparts at the Holy Land. The number of shrines vary from place to place, the most common were 7, while other places had up to 30 shrines

In 1686, a petition was granted by Pope Innocent XI to Franciscans to erect the 14 Stations of the Cross in their churches. By 1731, Pope Clement XII extended the right to have Stations of the Cross among all churches as long as it was a Franciscan priest that erected them with the consent of the local bishop. Eventually as time progressed, bishops were allowed to erect stations by themselves, without the intervention of Franciscan priests.

Today, visiting the Stations of the Cross has been embedded into our culture. It is such a beautiful practice of faith. Let us all follow the footsteps and the example of Christ not only during the Lenten season but throughout our lives.



THE CROSS

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Sustaining Hope in Iraq

Violence at the hands of Islamic state militants may have subsided, but our support of suffering Christians remains crucial



by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson

“WITHOUT THE KNIGHTS of Columbus, our Christian community would not have survived.” This is what I heard time and again as I visited Iraq in March, meeting with survivors of genocide, refugees, medical personnel, educators and bishops, as

well as U.S. and Kurdish government officials.

I came to Iraq at the invitation of the Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Erbil, Bashar Warda — a member of the Order and a good friend.

The day before leaving for Iraq, I had the privilege of a private audience with Pope Francis. He and I discussed the Knights’ efforts to help the persecuted Christians in that region — an issue that is close to his heart. He encouraged us to continue, saying, “A Middle East without Christians is not the Middle East.”

My trip to Iraq provided a concrete opportunity to express our solidarity with these Christians who have suffered so much, to assess the effectiveness of our past support and to understand future needs.

It was equally important to convey to Kurdish government officials that the Christians there are not alone; they have important allies.

I was encouraged to hear from the prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government of his administration’s commitment to protect Christians. Without that commitment and effective security, Christians face an uncertain future.

Since 2014, we have spent more than \$20 million to help persecuted Christians and others targeted for genocide in the Middle East. Our support has helped provide food, housing, education and medical care for tens of thousands of displaced people. It has also funded rebuilding the town of Karamles after its liberation from ISIS.

We were the driving force behind the 2016 declaration by then-Secretary of State John Kerry that ISIS had committed genocide against religious minorities. We then worked closely with Vice President Mike Pence to update policy so that persecuted minority

communities would no longer be overlooked by U.S. government aid.

As part of these efforts, I testified numerous times at congressional hearings, and my testimony became the basis for the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act. Congress unanimously passed the bill due in large part to the efforts of Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.). The act, which was signed into law by the president in December, provides for direct funding of groups targeted for genocide.

Having discussed this issue with Vice President Pence and Mark Green, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, I know their commitment. But much remains to be done that government cannot do. That is why we entered into a groundbreaking m e m o r a n d u m o f

understanding with USAID to build a new government-private sector partnership to help these suffering minorities.

The violent genocide of Christians by ISIS has been stopped, but we must not allow their despicable goal to be achieved by indifference.

I will remember many things about my trip to Iraq, such as praying with still suffering Christians displaced from Mosul, one of the oldest Christian cities in the world, and listening to senior churchmen speak about the deteriorating situation of Christians entrusted to their care.

There are hopeful images as well: the opening of McGivney House to provide apartments for young families and care for the elderly; the construction of a new Catholic hospital; and the activity of the newly established Catholic University of Erbil.

These initiatives in housing, education and medical care are building an infrastructure to sustain Christian life.

On a more personal level, I will cherish the painting I received from a young Yazidi boy helped at the medical clinic we support. It depicts a large sun shining down on a church, a mosque and a Yazidi temple, with a large Knights of Columbus emblem in the foreground. Another memory that will not soon fade is praying with young school children at Sts. Peter and Paul the Apostles Parish with the rosaries I presented to them as a gift from Pope Francis.

There are many reasons the Knights of Columbus is so committed to our persecuted brothers and sisters. Yet perhaps it is as simple as this: We want a world where children can paint their pictures with bright colors and can recite their prayers together in peace. Vivat Jesus!

The Gentle Warrior

By James B. Reuter, SJ

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WAR YEARS

Across the entrance to the Ateneo de Manila, on Padre Faura, were sandbags. Japanese guards were posted at the gates, with rifles, on the alert. Everyone inside the Ateneo was interned, subject to examination and identification. The Ateneo was American, and therefore the compound was enemy territory. Everyone inside it was presumed to be the enemy, or at least friendly to the enemy.

Sister Ruth Willmann, F.M.M., speaks of the “pass” given to her brother, George. She says:

“The invaders thought the Knights of Columbus represented their enemy, the United States. So when they found the American chaplain there, at Saint Rita’s Hall on Taft Avenue, they seized him as their first prisoner for the Santo Tomas concentration camp. “The next morning the prisoner, Father Willmann, faced the Camp Commander. He convinced the captor that he had nothing to do with war of any kind, and was dedicated to helping those in need of help. There was a long, soul-searching look on both sides before Father Willmann was released with a pass for travel within certain limits within the city, for religious and humanitarian work.”

George certainly had a “red arm band”. This allowed an enemy alien to move around the City of Manila. It identified the wearer as an enemy, to be watched, but granted permission to be outside of his place of concentration.

The “pass” probably put into Japanese script the limit of George’s mobility. It was a help, but it did not protect him from humiliation and insult.

Sister Ruth writes: “He was stopped for questioning, taken to a small military post and treated most rudely. He was carrying an attache case. His captors opened it and were infuriated to find only a comb and a banana. I asked if he was tortured. He admitted that they were most insulting, and that they usually concentrated on the soft parts of the body. But he hastened to add, in their favor, that he was near the perimeter allowed by his pass.”

The initial days of the Japanese occupation were dangerous, in many ways. In the Ateneo de Manila there were 460 refugees. One American wife and mother, Mrs. Lippe, whose husband had been killed by the bombing in the first days of the war, was interned in the Ateneo with her four little children and a maid. The maid had explicit instructions not to appear before the Japanese guards, who were stationed at the gate, but one afternoon in a hurry to get water, she passed by the Japanese guard house. A Japanese Lieutenant stopped her, and said: “You will come here tonight, at eight o’clock.”

The maid told this to Mrs. Lippe, in fear and trembling. She knew exactly what this meant. Mrs. Lippe told Father Hurley. At 7:30 that evening she piled all her furniture against the classroom door, of the classroom where they were living. She chose a chair that she could handle. She was

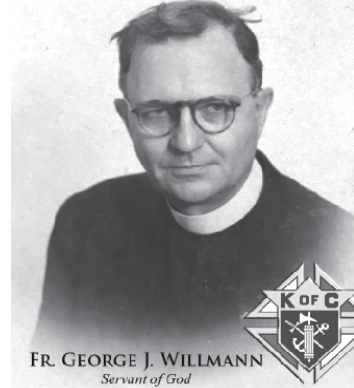
prepared to break this chair over the head of the Japanese Lieutenant, if he was able to come through the door.

But Father Hurley felt responsible for every one of his 460 refugees. He went down to the classroom, where Mrs. Lippe was living with her four children and the maid. He stood in front of the classroom door. At eight o’clock, when the maid did not appear at the guard house, the Japanese Lieutenant came to the classroom. Father Hurley said: “I am responsible for these people. You cannot go in.”

The Lieutenant slapped him in the face, hard. Father Hurley was bigger than the Japanese, and in a fair fight would have had no trouble with him. But this was not a fair fight. Father Hurley did not raise his hands. The Japanese slapped him again, and again, and again. Frontwards and backwards, hard. Then he drew his Samurai sword, and began to beat him with the sword. But Father Hurley would not move out of the doorway.

Upstairs in the Ateneo, Father Sullivan called the religious section of the Japanese. A Captain answered him. Father Sullivan begged the Captain to come, at once. And the Captain came. When the Captain saw the situation, he spoke to the Lieutenant, quietly, alone. The Lieutenant came back to Father Hurley and bowed, in apology. He said: “Sorry.... I am sorry! Sorry!”

It was this kind of thing that George remembered. He was always positive. He tried to see the best side of everybody, even



of the Japanese. He wrote: “I saw plenty of Japanese ruthlessness and atrocities, even personally experienced a little.... But perhaps enough has been written of that side of the picture, and too little of the Japanese Good Samaritans who, in one way or another, helped the suffering.

“For instance, one day the usually busy street in front of our Santa Rita K of C clubhouse, Taft Avenue, became ominously quiet. The Jap military had stopped all traffic, placed guards at strategic points. We knew something would happen, and it did. Along the other side of the broad avenue shuffled into view the long line of Corregidor’s survivors. Emaciated, limping, in rags, they passed directly in front of our building.

“Galvanized into action, our committee rushed out with cooling drinks. It was a courageous thing to do. Would the Jap guards, so cruel and ruthless in other places, allow them to help? Or would they be slapped down? Surprisingly, no objections were made, and they were allowed to allay the thirst of the half dying soldiers.



An INVITATION to become a **FR. GEORGE J. WILLMANN, SJ FELLOW**

THE “Fr. George J. Willmann Fellows” was launched by the Knights of Columbus Father George J. Willmann Charities, Inc. last June 29, 1997 during the Centennial Birth Anniversary celebration of Rev. Fr. George J. Willmann, S.J. This fundraising campaign finances the theological research expenses necessary to possibly raise Fr. Willmann to the honors of the altar. Last December 7, 2015, Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle has officially opened the Archdiocesan Process for the Causes of Beatification and Canonization of Fr. George J. Willmann.

Membership to the Fr. Willmann Fellows is open to all Knights of Columbus councils, members, their families, friends and even to business institutions. As of December 2018, more than 1,100 individuals and 36 institutions all over the country have already joined this fellowship. Father Willmann Fellows serve as co-sponsors in the work of spreading the good news about Fr. Willmann’s life, works and holiness. Their donation is a lifetime subscription to the initiative of the Knights of Columbus of promoting awareness on Father Willmann in order that authentic devotion to him may be encouraged among the faithful, especially those who need his intercession for God’s grace.

We therefore cordially invite you and your loved ones to join the Fr. Willmann Fellows. Aside from being an advocate in spreading the sanctity of Father Willmann and the graces that come with it, each Fellow is entitled to receive the following items as memorabilia: (1) a Certificate of Membership, (2) a lapel pin and (3) a pamphlet entitled “A Quest for a Cause of Fr. George J. Willmann, S.J.”. We further urge you to fervently seek Fr. Willmann’s intercession in all your petitions for God’s graces and to report to the Foundation all blessings you may have received with the intercession of Fr. Willmann.

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Brother’s Insight / C2

Curia Settings / C2

and hearts at peace. Mixed emotions and dispositions must have filled their hearts: amazement at the fulfilment of the prophecies, humility to understand their role, courage to accept it.

That visit must have been a power-visit, emotionally, physically and most of all spiritually. We do not have evidence of how they lived that time of the visit, in their luminal situations. What remains with us, is a wonderment of how the power of faith, and prayer must have helped them. How important it is for us to pray, be in awe at God, be available to what the Spirit will tell us, and very importantly, to learn the traditions of our faith, to study our teachings. We can safely imagine that Mary and Elizabeth were faithful listeners of the Word of God.

What do I get from this reflection? I am just like any other human person, who goes through events, or situations in my life. So I want to learn from Mary and Elizabeth how to face my situations. When I go over the opportunities which have opened up for me in the past and even now, sometimes I cannot believe they

happened and are still happening. I must be like Mary and Elizabeth, overwhelmed by the good news, and accepting it in peace. I cannot say ‘thank you’ enough to God for all the opportunities I had, all the professional fulfilment which I have been blessed with because of those opportunities. The travels, the meetings with international groups, interaction and even friendships with important people, the experiences of discussing complex elements and being able to contribute, give me feelings of amazement. The great trust I receive from the Board of Trustees and the great amount of work I am able to do for the good of the Association and its stakeholders sometimes overwhelm me. Could they be under the same line of amazement of Mary and Elizabeth who received the news of directly participating in the salvation of the world?

My children are now grown-ups. A mother has to say goodbye to the experiences that the childhood of their grown-ups brought. Children grow up, mature, and choose their own paths. It is a painful thing, many times a confusing

feeling why a mother feels like this towards grown up kids. Perhaps the sight of Mary and Elizabeth is inviting me to pause, reflect, and surrender to what God wants for me.

Mary did the right thing in visiting her cousin. For the things, they could not understand totally, they had each other to share, and support one another. She had to make sure, that the mission which she thought she said ‘Yes’ to, is verified by her cousin. After all her cousin is a woman of faith herself. It is good to have somebody whom you can trust, who is present to support you in what you are going through, and physically, to help in the chores. We need others not only to do the physical things, but to share thoughts, fears, joys, and to pray with. I realize that I must be sensitive to the people who come my way. Perhaps, like Elizabeth, they are the Marys who are being sent to visit me. And like Mary, perhaps God is whispering to me that I must visit, assist, accompany somebody in her or his hour of need.

Mary and Elizabeth, may your visit to each enrich our lives.*

They own everything (at least they believe they do) in their domain. Everything and everyone is at their beck and call. They are even above the law.

The politicians are even making a mockery of this process called the election. A presidential hopeful in the past who lost, ran and won as a barangay captain in a subsequent election. This is mockery to the hilt. Anyone who runs for a higher position, win or lose should no longer be allowed to run for any lower position. Two convicted presidents who were “pardoned” were also allowed to run in an election. One is a mayor and the other a congresswoman. Several pardoned mutineers are also in politics and are getting elected. Why? Are we so lame (mentally) that we cannot choose wisely or

are we so cheap that for five hundred pesos any politicians could have our votes? For five hundred pesos we lose our dignity and our future imperiled.

Our laws are weak and do not consider “propriety” in the process of making a law. No one would inhibit himself/herself if a Bill would affect their future in politics or their personal lives. No one would resign from their position if their names are dragged into a controversy, no matter how deeply involved they are in the mess. Their number one defense is, “Innocent until proven Guilty”. If proven guilty with finality, they could always apply for a full pardon. Clean slate again, tuloy ang ligaya.

Walang “Delikadeza”, Walang “Amor Propio”. Dead ma lang sa lahat ng akusasyon. Yan ang Pulitiko.

KCFAPI Keeps Lenten Tradition Alive



The Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. during their 2019 Lenten Season Activities (KAYngco).

AS a partner in the apostolic and evangelical mission of the Church and in observance of this year's Lenten season, the Knights of Columbus Association of the Philippines Inc., remained steadfast in practicing the old, yet timeless Filipino Catholic traditions of Visita Iglesia (Seven Churches), Via Dolorosa (Stations of the Cross) and the Pabasa. The Visita Iglesia is the practice of visiting seven (7) or fourteen (14) churches during Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. It has its roots way back in the 16th century, originally

attributed to St. Philip of Neri as a response to the frolicking tradition of carnival. As the practice is solemn and peaceful, many picked up this habit and was passed on to other Catholic devotees. Such tradition reached the shores of the Philippines together with the evangelization of the archipelago after Ferdinand Magellan rediscovered our islands in 1521. The origins of the Visita Iglesia in the Philippines is said to have been centered in Intramuros which was then considered as the religious and spiritual capital of

the country. During these glorious years, pilgrims would visit the original seven (7) baroque churches located in Intramuros. Although such informal title eclipsed after the Liberation of Manila in 1945, the tradition very well lives to this day. For the second year in a row, the Fr. George G. Willmann S.J. Chapel in the KCFAPI Center had been listed by the Intramuros Administration and the Department of Tourism as one of the pilgrim sites for this year's Holy Week, alongside other chapels in various institutions in the district

together with the Manila Cathedral and the San Agustin Church- the only two remaining churches of the original pilgrim sites of old Intramuros. The major artillery roads connecting these chapels and churches in the walled city were closed from Holy Wednesday until Black Saturday to pave way for pilgrims which in the estimate reached over 800,000. On the other hand, the Association conducted its Pabasa last 12 April 2019 and the Via Dolorosa last 16 April 2019. All officers, employees

and staff of the KCFAPI group, joined in by their brother Knights, participated in said activity. It was a solemn affair which was made more meaningful through the shared community spirit of the participants. Indeed, the said activities were a respite from fast paced life which besot most if not all Catholics in our changing times- a reference point to our upbringing as a predominantly Christian nation that values tradition and faith. **(LDFormilleza)**

KCFAPI Top 4 Mutual Benefit Association in 2018 ASEAN Corporate Governance Scorecard

ONCE again, KCFAPI proved its conformance to Good Corporate Governance. For the 3rd year in a row, it has consistently been one of the top Mutual Benefits Associations of the Philippines in terms of the ASEAN Corporate Governance Scorecard (ACGS). This is from a count of 126 companies who participated including 11 mutual benefit associations. It continues its efforts to create long-term value for all stakeholders by abiding with good corporate governance. KCFAPI's scores have been improving since it complied with the mandate of the Insurance Commission regarding the ACGS. It



scored high in the areas of Responsibilities of the Board, Disclosure and Transparency and Equitable Treatment of Shareholders. The ASEAN Corporate Governance Scorecard is used to

evaluate corporate governance practices. With the objective of increasing the competitiveness of the Philippine insurance industry and improving the perception of the public in the industry, the Insurance

Commission prescribed the adoption of the ACGS to the insurance industry. Indeed KCFAPI is challenged to continue leveling up to the global standards. Congratulations!

KCFAPI VP For MUA graduates from MBA



KCFAPI Vice President for MIS, Underwriting and Administrative Services Ronulfo Antero G. Infante together with his wife, Ma. Cristina Infante, during his MBA graduation ceremony last April 14, 2019 at the Sulu Riviera Hotel, Quezon City.

THE KCFAPI family would like to congratulate Ronulfo Antero G. Infante, Vice President for MIS, Underwriting and Administrative Service Department for graduating from his Master's degree in Business Administration last April 14, 2019 with Academic Excellence for achieving the highest possible grade for all subjects at the Philippine School in Business Administration, Quezon City.

Mr. Infante, Sir Ronnie to his colleagues, started his career at KCFAPI in 1998 as an IT Consultant and was promoted to a Senior Manager role after completing the Y2K project for the Association. He also played a very vital role in developing the Integrated Benefits Systems (IBS) which brought the Association to new heights by upgrading the business system from AS400 to PC-based platform. In the year 2007, he took the lead in the KCFAPI Wide Risk Management where he led the team in documenting the Association- Wide Risk Management (AWRM), a process designed to identify potential events that may affect the Association and manage risks in order to ensure achievement of the company's objectives. He was promoted to the Vice President role in 2010. Currently, Sir Ronnie is the Chairperson of the Working Committee for the Cause of Fr. George J. Willman, SJ.



1st Quarter Luzon North Area and Unit Managers Meeting and Evaluation held on April 11, 2019 at KCFAPI Center, Intramuros, Manila (JPDeGuzman)



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Fraternal Service Training 1 held at KCFAPI Home office last April 11 to 12, 2019 (JPDeGuzman)