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PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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Pope Francis meets with bishops from Luzon at the Vatican May 20. The first of the three groups of Filipino bishops making their "ad limina" visits to Rome to report on the status of their dioceses, pray at the tombs of the apostles and meet with Vatican officials. VATICAN MEDIA

Bishop, green groups hit 'misleading' SMC coal ad

ENVIRONMENT advocates including a Catholic bishop criticized a power company for supposedly "greenwashing" coal plants.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos said the attempt was made through a recent newspaper advertisement which he described as "misleading".

"It was a deliberate attempt at misleading the public regarding the well-established negative effects of coal," Alminaza said.

He was referring to San Miguel Corporation's ad that its Circulating Fluidized Bed (CFB) coal-fired plant in Limay, Bataan had pollution emissions "way below" those set by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The prelate said the ad attempts "to make it seem like pollutants emitted by the plant are virtually insignificant."

Bishop Alminaza has been helping lead opposition to a 300-megawatt CFB plant that SMC plans to build in San Carlos City.

Dr. Romana de los Reyes, a veteran anti-coal campaigner, said it was not surprising that the Limay plant met DENR standards for Sulfur and Nitrogen Oxide "as CFBs are precisely designed to control SOx by combining limestone with coal during combustion, while the plant's low combustion temperature mitigates NOx emissions".

"However, there is no report nor monitoring of the amount of CO2 released by the plant," she noted. "The amount of CO2 emitted must be considered as it is the most notorious force causing the climate breakdown we are experiencing now."

Energy think tank Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development (CEED) pointed out important information SMC has suspiciously left out in their advertisement.

"A more holistic way of presenting the data would include a diagram showing the scope of the power plant's affected areas, and where the CFB plant stands compared to other power plants across the country," said CEED Legal, Policy, and Research head Atty. Avril De Torres.

"This will surely reveal just

Coal / A6

Take courage, Pope tells 'killing field' bishop



Pope Francis embraces Bishop Pablo Virgilio David during an ad limina visit at the Vatican May 20. VATICAN MEDIA

By Roy Lagarde

POPE Francis encouraged Bishop Pablo David of Kalookan to face the challenges in his diocese with "courage".

The pope met with the first of the three groups of bishops from the Philippines May 20 during the "ad limina" that prelates are required to make to the Vatican.

Seated around the pope, David and other bishops were allowed to address the pontiff freely without the aid of a microphone.

When David had his turn, he told the pope that he had no question and just wanted to ask for his prayers.

"I was surprised when he interrupted me in the middle of my sentence and said, 'I want you to know that I know your situation; I know what you are going through. I am praying for you,'" David recalled.

"My eyes blurred with tears when he said that. I had to clear my throat to be able to go on speaking," he said.

The Kalookan diocese is composed of the southern part of Caloocan, Malabon and Navotas covering some of the poorest communities in Metro Manila.

The bishop earlier said the cities in his diocese have been "turned into killing fields" in the government's bloody campaign against illegal drugs trade that claimed thousands of lives.

A vocal critic of the drug war, David had earned the ire of President Rodrigo Duterte and accused him instead of involvement in illegal drugs.

In February, the prelate bared he has been receiving death threats.

On his way out after the audience with the pope, he said the pontiff held his arm and prayed over him.

"I want you to know I am with you as you face trials in your ministry in your diocese," David quoted the pope as saying.

"Then he pulled me to himself to give me a warm paternal embrace, pressing his head against mine, and brushing his hand gently on my back as he whispered into my ears, 'courage!'" he added.

Caritas Manila welcomes passage of anti-poverty law

THE social action arm of the Archdiocese of Manila welcomed the passage into law a measure that seeks to uplift the lives of the poor and marginalized.

Fr. Anton Pascual, executive director of Caritas Manila, said the "Magna Carta of the Poor" is needed to help address the poverty and hunger in the country.

President Rodrigo Duterte on April 12 has signed RA 11291, which requires agencies to provide full access to government services to

the poor.

"That's what good government is all about, taking care of the poor and marginalized," Pascual said.

Under the new law, the government is mandated to prioritize programs for the poor that are concerned with the provision of food, shelter, livelihood, education and healthcare.

The beneficiaries include individuals whose income falls below the poverty threshold

Caritas / A6

Cardinal Tagle reelected Caritas chief



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, president of Caritas Internationalis, arrives for a news conference May 23, 2019, about the general assembly of Caritas Internationalis. ROBERT DUNCAN/CNS

CARDINAL Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila has been reelected as president of Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of Catholic charities around world.

The cardinal was confirmed for a second four year-term at the Caritas general assembly in Rome on May 24.

There was no contender for the position of president, for which Tagle was requested to seek another term. He was deemed re-elected with nihil obstat or approval given by the Vatican.

The meeting, which is held every four years, brought together some 450 representatives of the

confederation formed by 165 organizations.

Caritas Philippines National Director Archbishop Rolando Tria Tirona and Executive Secretary Fr. Edwin Gariguez were also present in the gathering.

The assembly was opened on May 23 with a Mass presided by Pope Francis at the St. Peter's Basilica and was concelebrated by Cardinal Tagle and other bishops.

During the gathering, which ended on May 28, the members also elected Aloysius as the new secretary general with a mandate for four years.

Chief / A6

No closure without probe on election glitches, Church officials say

AT least three Catholic bishops have joined the growing demand for an independent investigation of the alleged irregularities in the recent midterm elections.

Bishops Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos, Antonio Tobias of Novaliches, and Broderick Pabillo of Manila said that until an impartial probe is made, "there will be no closure on the questions of integrity and credibility" of the elections.

"No amount of name-calling

and threats from the part of those silencing protests can repress the call for transparency," the bishops said in a joint statement.

According to them, the Commission on Elections has yet to respond satisfactorily to the transmission delays and technical glitches that marred the polls.

They particularly want the Comelec to explain the high number of vote counting

Closure / A7



Vatican Briefing

Pope: Sport strengthens friendships, brings out best of body, mind

For young men and women, competitive sports like soccer not only help strengthen their bodies, but also help strengthen their souls in creating last bonds of friendship through teamwork, Pope Francis said. Speaking to 6,000 young people at a gathering co-sponsored by the Italian Gaming Federation of Soccer May 24, the pope encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunity to play a sport that allows them to engage with others rather than give in to the temptation “to isolate ourselves,” especially through technological advances, like social media. “Soccer is a team sport; you can’t have fun alone,” he said. “If it is played in this way, it can be good for the mind and the heart in a society that exasperates subjectivism—that is, the centrality of self—as an absolute principle.” (Junno Arocho Esteves/CNS)

Church must promote pastoral approach to human life, cardinal says

To fight a throwaway culture that pressures women to view abortion as the only alternative to a difficult pregnancy, the Catholic Church must be ready to assist, accompany and care for expectant mothers and their families, said U.S. Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell. The cardinal, prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, opened a Vatican conference on protecting life May 23. Catholics, Cardinal Farrell said, must have a more “pastoral orientation” to fulfill the Christian obligation to “take care of another in a loving and caring manner in accordance with our view of human life: that every man and every woman is created in the image and likeness of God.” (Junno Arocho Esteves/CNS)

Foster brotherhood, solidarity, pope tells new ambassadors

Nations, like individuals, have a “solemn duty” to care for the poor and to work together to promote development, Pope Francis told a group of ambassadors beginning their service at the Vatican. International cooperation for development and for peacemaking tap into a common, universal desire to experience real fraternity, the pope told the new ambassadors from Thailand, Norway, New Zealand, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Luxembourg, Mozambique and Ethiopia, who presented their letters of credentials to the pope May 23. “As we face increasingly complex global challenges,” the pope told them, “it is right to underline the importance of fraternity, for striving together to ensure just and peaceful coexistence is not merely a sociopolitical strategy but is an example of that solidarity which runs deeper than a mutual desire to achieve a shared goal.” (CNS)

Pope asks Italian bishops finally to implement tribunal reforms

Pope Francis told the bishops of Italy that he was disappointed that so many of their dioceses had yet to implement the reforms he ordered to make the marriage annulment process quicker, more pastoral and less expensive. “I am saddened to note that the reform, after more than four years, remains far from being applied in most Italian dioceses,” Pope Francis, the bishop of Rome, told other members of the Italian bishops’ conference. The bishops were holding their annual spring meeting May 20-23 at the Vatican, and Pope Francis opened the gathering. He gave a short speech focused on “synodality” and collegiality, marriage tribunals and the relationship of bishops to their priests. (Cindy Wooden/CNS)

Throwing away food is like throwing away people, pope says

Pope Francis condemned food waste, saying throwing away food is like throwing away people. “Waste reveals an indifference toward things and toward those who go without,” he said May 18. “To throw food away means to throw people away,” he told members and volunteers of the European Federation of Food Banks, including the Food Bank of Italy, which was marking its 30th anniversary. He thanked the organizations for all they do in providing food to those who are hungry while fighting against food waste. “You take what is thrown into the vicious cycle of waste and insert it into the ‘virtuous circle’ of good use,” he said, saying their work is like what trees do—taking in pollution to give back oxygen to those in need. (Carol Glatz/CNS)

Fight fake news with humble search for truth, pope tells journalists

The task of journalism is to seek the truth, which requires humility and freedom of the press, Pope Francis told foreign correspondents working in Italy. “At a time when many spread fake news, humility keeps you from peddling food spoiled by disinformation and invites you to offer the good bread of truth. The humble journalist is a free journalist: free from pressures, free from biases,” he said, adding that such freedom also required courage. The pope made his remarks during an audience at the Vatican May 18 with members of the Foreign Press Association in Italy. He said the church has always held the work of journalists in high esteem and regard, even when their job entails touching sore “wounds,” including wounds within the church. (Carol Glatz/CNS)

Vatican court clears official accused of solicitation in confessional

The Vatican’s highest court cleared a Vatican official accused of the crime of solicitation in the confessional. The court, the Apostolic Signature, the Vatican’s highest court, said May 17 that it finished an “administrative penal process” of Fr. Hermann Geissler, an official at the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who had been accused of “a grave delict.” Five court members convened May 15, it said in a communicate, and “acquitted the defendant” because the “configuration” or appearance of the alleged crime was not “proven with the moral certitude necessary after a careful examination of the affair.” Fr. Geissler, who has publicly maintained his innocence, had resigned from his job in an effort “to limit the damage already done to the congregation and to his community” and asked that a “canonical process already initiated continue,” the doctrinal office said Jan. 29. (Carol Glatz/CNS)

Catholic bishops lament setbacks for Holy Land peace, but call for a better path



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. LAUREN CATER/CNA

JERUSALEM— Peace, mutual equality, and respect must be the foundation of progress in Israeli-Palestinian relations, despite continued setbacks, the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land said this week.

Continuing difficulties in Palestine and Israel have caused many people to question “whether international diplomacy and the peace process were ever actually based on justice and good will,” the ordinaries said in a May 20 message.

“Many in Palestine and in Israel feel that since the launch of the peace process, their lives have become more and more unbearable,” the ordinaries said. “Many have left, many more consider leaving and some are resorting to violence. Some die quietly and others are losing faith and hope.”

The ordinaries represent a diverse group of Middle East Christians in communion with Rome.

Their message was signed by current and past patriarchs, archbishops and bishops, exarchs, men and women religious, and other leaders, from the Maronite Catholic Church, the Melkite Catholic Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

While Israel’s population is predominantly Jewish, about 20 percent of the country’s 8.5 million people are Arab. About two percent are Christians, though their numbers have sharply declined after decades of emigration.

The Palestinian population is largely split geographically and politically between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Palestinian militants, largely based in Gaza, have engaged in military attacks on Israelis, and the Israeli military has also conducted military action.

Security borders have impaired Palestinians’ ability to work and travel, including travel to Muslim and Christian holy places, while Jewish settlements in the West Bank are a continuing source of tension.

For the ordinaries of the Holy Land, it is time for Churches and spiritual leaders “to point to another way, to insist that all, Israelis and Palestinians, are brothers and sisters in humanity.”

“The Churches insist that we can love one another and live together in mutual respect and equality, equal in rights and duties, in this same land,” they said. “This is not simply a dream but the powerful basis of a vision that inspired our ancestors, the prophets.”

More moderate Palestinian groups, based in the West Bank, have hoped to secure East Jerusalem as the recognized capital of a Palestinian state under a negotiated two-state solution. Gaza has been ruled by the Islamist

political party Hamas since 2007. Israel and Egypt have conducted an economic blockade of the Gaza Strip, restricting the flow of persons and goods in an effort to limit rocket attacks on Israel launched from the territory. The blockade has driven up unemployment and harmed supplies of electric power and drinking water.

Under the Trump administration, the United States has moved its embassy to Jerusalem and ended vital humanitarian aid to the West Bank and to Gaza, including aid to hospitals in East Jerusalem. It has recognized the Golan Heights, long contested with Syria, as Israeli territory.

Recent Israeli elections returned to power a right-wing coalition headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which tends to take a hardline attitude on Palestinian issues.

The Catholic ordinaries lamented the failure to make progress. (CNA)

China’s technological controls keep Christians under constant surveillance

BEIJING, China— As the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests approaches, the Chinese Communist Party is utilizing authoritarian tactics old and new to crack down on Christians.

High tech means of controlling religious observance include facial recognition surveillance and a smartphone app that ranks citizens’ party loyalty.

On the local level, however, government officials are still manipulated with similar methods used 30 years ago to implement the one child policy, in which local officials were heavily pressured to force women into abortions, according to China expert Steven Mosher.

Local government officials are punished if their superiors find evidence of unauthorized religious expression in the areas under their control via a “job responsibility contract” system, Mosher told CNA.

“What that contract says is that you must enforce the new restrictions on religious behavior. You can’t allow children under the age of 18 to attend religious services. You can’t allow any unauthorized religious gathering to take place. If it does, you find the people present and you can arrest the leaders,” Mosher, president of the Population Research Institute, said.

Changes in 2018 within Chinese governance shifted direct control of all religious affairs in China to the Chinese Communist Party’s United Front Work Department, an agency

tasked with ensuring that groups outside of the CCP, ethnic minorities like Tibetan Buddhists, Xinjiang Muslims, Hong Kong democracy activists, and the Catholic Patriotic Association, are following the party line.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called the United Front Work Department one of his “magic weapons,” used to co-opt and control.

“Local officials have been given the green light to intensely persecute the local church and the Patriotic church is not going to be exempt,” Mosher said. “We now know that Patriotic churches are being destroyed, not just underground churches.”

In Hebei province, there are 24 village churches currently slated for destruction, according to Mosher.

In September 2018, the Vatican signed a provisional agreement with the Chinese government on the appointment of bishops, intended to unite China’s estimated 12 million Catholics who worship in both underground and registered churches.

The terms of this Sino-Vatican agreement have not been made public, something that Mosher says has been used against Catholics living in China.

“The problem with any secret agreement is that either side can misrepresent it at no cost because there is nothing to compare their statements with,” he said.

“Clearly the Chinese Communist

Party’s United Front Department is misrepresenting the Sino-Vatican agreement ... telling bishops and priests that they must join the Catholic Patriotic Association. Now, I don’t think that is what the Vatican intended,” Mosher continued.

“It would be helpful if the Secretary of State would speak out and say that the agreement does not call for priests and bishops in China to join the Patriotic Association,” he said. “The only kind of pressure that the People’s Republic of China responds to is external pressure. They deal with internal pressure by setting up reeducation camps and filling them with dissidents.”

In China’s Xinjiang region, between 800,000 to 2 million Uyghur Muslims have been detained and sent to “re-education camps,” where they have been subjected to abuse and political indoctrination.

Chinese authorities in the region use high-tech surveillance with facial recognition and an app tracking its user’s location to intensely monitor the Uyghur ethnoreligious minority, a technological model that the Chinese could apply to expand to other parts of the country in the future.

Christian churches throughout China have been equipped with 24-hour CCTV surveillance. Beijing’s largest Protestant church was forced to close last September after its pastor refused a government order to allow face-recognition cameras to be installed on his pulpit. (CNA)

Construction of huge dam threatens Quezon tribe

TRIBAL people were all ears as a Catholic priest talked about the love of God and the challenge to defend his creation during last month's Holy Week observance in the Philippines.

The celebration was held in the hinterlands of Quezon province, home to the Dumagat tribe whose community has been threatened by the proposed building of a huge dam.

"God loves us, and we hope that all of our needs will be provided according to his plan," preached Franciscan priest Pete Montallana, who heads the Save Sierra Madre Network Alliance.

The priest, who has been living with the tribal people for 30 years, said caring for the environment is an ongoing challenge for everyone. He said the building of a dam is not only a threat to the tribe but also to God's creation.

The tribal leaders agreed with the priest. They fear a dam will result in the plunder of their land, their river and their forests.

Solution to Manila's water crisis

The government has been insisting that the construction of the US\$226.4-million New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam Project, which has been in the pipeline for three decades, will address a lot of problems, including a water crisis being experienced by the 12 million residents of Philippine capital Manila.

Up to 85 percent of the project will be funded by China through official development assistance. The remainder is to be shouldered by the Philippine government through the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

The China Energy Engineering Corporation will construct the dam



A 'No to Kaliwa Dam' tarp posted outside the Infant Jesus and St. Mark Cathedral in Infanta, Quezon. CBCP NEWS

in the towns of General Nakar and Infanta in Quezon province. It is expected to supply some 600 million liters of water per day to Manila.

The contract with China was inked during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Manila in 2018. Should construction go ahead this year, the dam is expected to be ready by 2023.

The tribal people, however, said they were not informed about the project. "It was not fully discussed with us, but we know that it will be harmful to the community," said Krisanto, the tribal head of Yokyok, a village that sits on the bank of the Agos River, which will be harnessed by the dam project.

Affected communities

The Dumagat people, who live in the mountains of Aurora, Rizal and Quezon provinces in the northern region of Luzon, depend on their forests and rivers to survive. They rely on the river to transport their produce, mostly bananas, honey and tree resin, to market.

When in season, they can catch fish, eels and shrimps in their rivers that they barter for rice in the lowlands. They regard their rivers as sacred and having healing powers.

"If nature gets destroyed, we won't be able to eat, to live and to breathe," said Rodrigo, another local tribal leader. "We will only survive as long as we have our lands."

Aileen, who belongs to the Dumagat-Remontado tribe in the village of Cablao, said the dam will not only destroy their ancestral lands. "We also stand to lose our identity, our livelihood, and our homes," she said.

People have been advised to keep their distance from the river when the dam project starts. Although they were promised resettlement in other areas, they fear these areas might not be suitable for their needs.

"We already know how to live here. We know that our land will last us a lifetime," said Lucila, another Cablao resident.

Authorities have also promised jobs, but Aileen said: "Why should

we be hired if we don't even know how to build a dam? Would they even consider hiring uneducated people like us?"

Resistance

Tribal leaders vowed to continue opposing the project, but they are also afraid that their people will succumb to government pressure.

Poleng, one of the elders, said many villagers do not understand the threat the dam poses. "Letters inviting us to dialogues are written in English," he said. "We cannot read them."

"We oppose the project for our young people," said Amy, another tribal elder. "It will be the end of our clan if we do not take steps to oppose it."

"As long as there is a reason to fight, and as long as there are people and institutions that support us, we will continue to fight for our river," added another elder.

Last year, 51 Catholic bishops and four priests backed a pastoral letter signed by Bishop Bernardino Cortez of Infanta opposing the construction of the dam.

The pastoral letter acknowledged that while the dam project could mean an adequate water supply for people in Manila, it was a cause for concern for the tribal people.

The issues raised by church leaders include the inundation of tribal communities and possible disasters that could be caused by an earthquake because the proposed dam will sit on a fault line.

The bishops quoted Pope Francis, who warned: "Caring for the ecosystems demands farsightedness, since no one looking for quick and easy profit is truly interested in their preservation." (*Pau Villanueva/UCAN*)

Pope Francis: Bishops who do not know their priests weaken the Church

VATICAN— Pope Francis said May 20 that each bishop has a duty to have a strong, close relationship with his priests with a firm warning that episcopal aloofness and favoritism weakens the mission of the Church.

"The relationship between us bishops and our priests is, unquestionably, one of the most vital issues in the life of the Church, it is the backbone on which the diocesan community is based," Pope Francis told Italian bishops gathered at the Vatican for their annual meeting May 20-23.

"Unfortunately, some bishops are struggling to establish acceptable relationships with their priests, thus risking the ruin of their mission and even weakening the mission of the Church itself," he said.

Pope Francis said that bishops need to understand that at this time many priests feel continually under attack because of the crimes of others in the priesthood, and they need encouragement during this difficult time.

"This requires, first of all, closeness to our priests, who need to find the bishop's door and his heart always open," he said.

The pope warned the Italian bishops that hierarchical communion "collapses when it is infected by any form of personal power or self-gratification," but in turn is strengthened by "a spirit of total abandonment and service to the people of God."

Francis also stressed that bishops must not "fall into the temptation to approach only the sympathetic priests or

flatterers" or to "hand over all responsibilities to available priests or 'climbers.'"

In addition to the importance of the relationship between bishops and priests, Pope Francis outlined two other priorities for the Italian bishops' conference (CEI) assembly taking place in the Vatican's synod hall this week: synodality and the implementation of a more streamlined annulment process announced in 2015.

"The success of the reform necessarily passes through a conversion of structures and people; and therefore we do not allow the economic interests of some lawyers or the fear of losing the power of some judicial vicars to hold back or delay the reform," he said.

The pope concluded his speech by calling on the

bishops to be a spiritual father to each of their priests by taking an interest and finding time to listen to everyone, so that each priest feels valued and encouraged by his bishop.

"If a bishop receives the call of a priest, answer within the day, at most the next day, so that that priest will know that he has a father," Pope Francis recommended.

"The solid relationship between the Bishop and his priests is based on the unconditional love witnessed by Jesus on the cross, which represents the only real rule of behavior for bishops and priests," Pope Francis said. "It is also based on mutual respect that manifests fidelity to Christ, love for the Church, adherence to the Good News." (*Courtney Grogan/CNA*)

Church groups honor Filipino nun who championed poor

CHURCH and activist groups in the Philippines have paid tribute to a Franciscan nun who spent her life working for the defense of human rights, especially for the poor.

A series of ecumenical gatherings in honor of Franciscan Sister Crescencia "Cres" Lucero, 77, who died in Indonesia on May 15, have been held in Manila before she was laid to rest at Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina on May 24.

"The history of human rights in the Philippines can never be written without the name of Sister Cres," said Father Christian Buenafe of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines.

Father Buenafe and Sister Lucero led the rights organization, which is under the auspices of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines, from 2009 until the time of her death.

She was head of the association's Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation at the time of her death.

"There were things that you could not negotiate with her, things like peace, social justice, right to life and the environment," Father Buenafe told ucanews.com.

He said that against the advice of her doctors "to slow down" the nun continued "to commit to the building of the church of the poor."

Following the launch of the Philippine government's bloody campaign against illegal drugs in 2016, Sister Lucero would stay awake all night to monitor and visit places where suspected drug users were killed.

Father Dexter Toledo, a Franciscan, said the nun had also "effectively integrated the call for peace and the protection of human rights to the fight for the protection of the environment."

"She knew that peace is integral to our relationship with the environment, and peace cannot be achieved

without protecting the rights of nature and rights of the people," said Father Toledo.

He said Sister Lucero "faithfully performed the duties of a true Franciscan and a true Christian."

Yolanda Esguerra of the Philippine-Misereor Partnership Inc. described the nun as "an icon of peace and a tireless human rights defender since the 1970s."

Redemptorist priest Oliver Castor, spokesman of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, said the nun was a "trailblazer" in human rights work and peace building.

"She kept the torch burning and sacrificed herself not simply to a higher cause but to God," he said, adding that the nun "opened the gates of the Church" to people who needed sanctuary.

Father Castor said that during the martial law years in the 1980s, Sister Lucero was "one of the sisters who kept us safe from state fascism and gave us safe haven."

"[She] used her veil to serve the poor and defend the victims of human rights violations during those dark years up to her last days," said the priest.

Karen Tanada of the non-government Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute said Sister Lucero was "always visible" in promoting peace and human rights.

"She belonged to many organizations because she wanted to exhaust every possible avenue to further peace-building and make the country a better place for us," she said.

Benedictine Sister Mary John Mananzan described Sister Lucero as "an indefatigable advocate for human rights, for justice and peace issues."

She said the late nun was a "silent-type woman who had a soft heart for the oppressed, but was fervent in her stand against tyranny." (*Mark Saludes/UCAN*)

South Sudan president: I was 'almost trembling' as Pope Francis begged me to make peace

JUBA, South Sudan— In an unprecedented gesture last month, Pope Francis kissed the feet of several South Sudanese leaders, who were visiting the Vatican for a retreat, in a plea for peace in the country.

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir told EWTN News that the exchange, which garnered attention around the world, left him "almost trembling."

"I felt humbled at the humility of the Holy Father, to bend down on the ground and kiss my feet," Kiir told EWTN News in an interview May 7.

"I was almost trembling because that thing has not happened before, except at the time when Jesus knelt down to wash the feet of his disciples. And it should have been the opposite; his disciples should have been the ones to wash his feet...this is what came into my mind when the Pope knelt down."

Kiir and former vice-president Riek Machar met with the pope April 10-11 during a retreat at the Vatican. The pope hosted the retreat specifically for the leaders, who have been at war with each other for years.

Pope Francis encouraged the South Sudanese leaders to "seek what unites you, beginning with the fact that you belong to one and the same people, and to overcome all that divides you," and told them he was praying for them to become peacemakers, who "build peace through dialogue, negotiation and forgiveness."

"We have clearly heard the cry of the poor and the needy; it rises up to heaven, to the very heart of God our

Father, who desires to grant them justice and peace," he said.

In 2011, the predominantly Christian South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, which has a Muslim majority and been governed mostly by Islamic law since the 1980s.

A five-year civil war began shortly after the country gained its independence. The war has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions more.

The fighting has primarily taken place between those forces loyal to Kiir and rebel groups led by Machar. The war has left 2.1 million people internally displaced, with another 2.5 million refugees, according to the United Nations.

"The purpose of this retreat is for us to stand together before God and to discern his will...It is to reflect on our own lives and the common mission the Lord has entrusted to us, to recognize our enormous shared responsibility for the present and future of the people of South Sudan, and to commit ourselves, reinvigorated and reconciled, to the building up of your nation," the pope told Kiir and Machar.

Kiir and Machar signed a tenuous peace agreement in September 2018, which the country's Catholic bishops have called "fatally flawed" because it does not address the complex root causes of the conflict.

"Taking the decades and years of mistrust that had existed between these different forces, it's not an easy thing" to have peace established overnight, Bishop Eduardo Kussala of Tombura-

Yambio in South Sudan told EWTN News.

Still, Kussala said the bishops' conference is grateful for and encouraged by the pope's meeting with the leaders of opposing groups in South Sudan.

"We have tried to keep the momentum, to continue to work harder and make sure peace is actually in this country... It has again energized us" to serve the leaders and the people, he said.

Kiir said his meeting with Pope Francis was especially meaningful for him, as he grew up in an area of South Sudan that was evangelized primarily by Catholic missionaries, from whom he has learned much.

"Jesus came to the world to teach people to forgive and to live in peace with whoever is near you. And we as Catholics, especially in South Sudan, we have learned a lot from God's teaching," he reflected.

"This is why [although] we have been under oppression all this time...we're able to reconcile with those oppressors and then we see them as brothers and sisters." Kiir said the moment when the Pope displayed such humility was inspiring to him as the leader of the country.

"The feelings that I had at the moment, at that hour, was that I should try my best when I come back to South Sudan. I should try my best to bring peace to my people, so that people reconcile among themselves, and people do not think of fighting again," Kiir said. (*Alejandro Bermudez and Jonah McKeown/CNA*)

EDITORIAL

The metaphors of the net

SOME fifty-three or so years ago, not one would have thought—not even Pope Paul VI who initiated the celebrations of World Communications Day in 1966—that social communications would have morphed into becoming a social network that according to Pope Francis' message for the 2019 World Communications day "is so pervasive as to be indistinguishable from the sphere of everyday life."

The paradigm shift in communications came with the onset of the internet—and social media soon after. Gone are the days when the one-way media was the monopoly of publishers, editors, broadcasters and gatekeepers. Today, with the barest tool of a smart phone and an internet connectivity anybody is equipped to livestream and manipulate all other platforms of social communications. Whereas before content production and distribution used to be a massive work of corporate media outfits, presently a troll can singlehandedly simulcast and make viral his content from the comfort of his device—and admittedly get more audience share than the legacy media.

Pope Francis calls the internet as the "resource of our time". A one-stop-shop resource of fast knowledge and information. But "it has also proven to be one of the areas most exposed to disinformation and to the conscious and targeted distortion of facts and interpersonal relationships, which are often used to discredit...lend themselves to the manipulation of personal data, aimed at obtaining political or economic advantages, without due respect for the person and his or her rights." Despite the tremendous potential of the internet for good, it can also become "showcase for exhibiting personal narcissism" and a snake-pit for young people to becoming "social hermits who risk alienating themselves completely from society."

In his message for the 53rd World Communications Day 2019 that will be celebrated on the Solemnity of the Ascension, Pope Francis exhorts, "We can, in this way, move from diagnosis to treatment: opening the way for dialogue, for encounter, for 'smiles' and expressions of tenderness... This is the network we want, a network created not to entrap, but to liberate, to protect a communion of people who are free. The Church herself is a network woven together by Eucharistic communion, where unity is based not on 'likes', but on the truth, on the 'Amen', by which each one clings to the Body of Christ, and welcomes others."

Christ in the making

THAT'S what we all are in this life. We are still a work in progress. We as a creature of God are still under construction. And the completion of that divine project is when we become another Christ, "alter Christus." Yes, we are still Christ in the making. That's because Christ being the Son of God is the perfect image God has of himself. Since we have been created in God's image and likeness, we are supposed to be children of God in the Son. He is therefore the pattern of our humanity.

In other words, the mould of our humanity is Christ. This mould is already in us, and we need to flesh it out. It would not be presumptuous on our part then to presume that we already have the mould of Christ in us. We just have to fill out that mould, making ourselves more and more like Christ. But first, let's be conscious that we have that mould. This may cause us some awkwardness at first, but it's an awkwardness that we just have to overcome. It's part of our human weakness, let alone, the consequence of our sinfulness, that we feel that way. But Christ reassures us that we are meant to be one with him.

For this, Christ has reassured us by always showing how in the gospel he reached out to the sinners and those in all kinds of human weakness and misery. "Be not afraid," he would often say. "Come to me," he would invite us. He wants all of us, and not just some of us, to be with him, no matter how we are.

The fact that we are still light years away from being like him should not deter us from going to him. Rather, it should be the very reason to go to him. To be sure, Christ is not scandalized and disturbed by whatever unworthiness we feel with respect to Christ. We need to get over it as soon as we can.

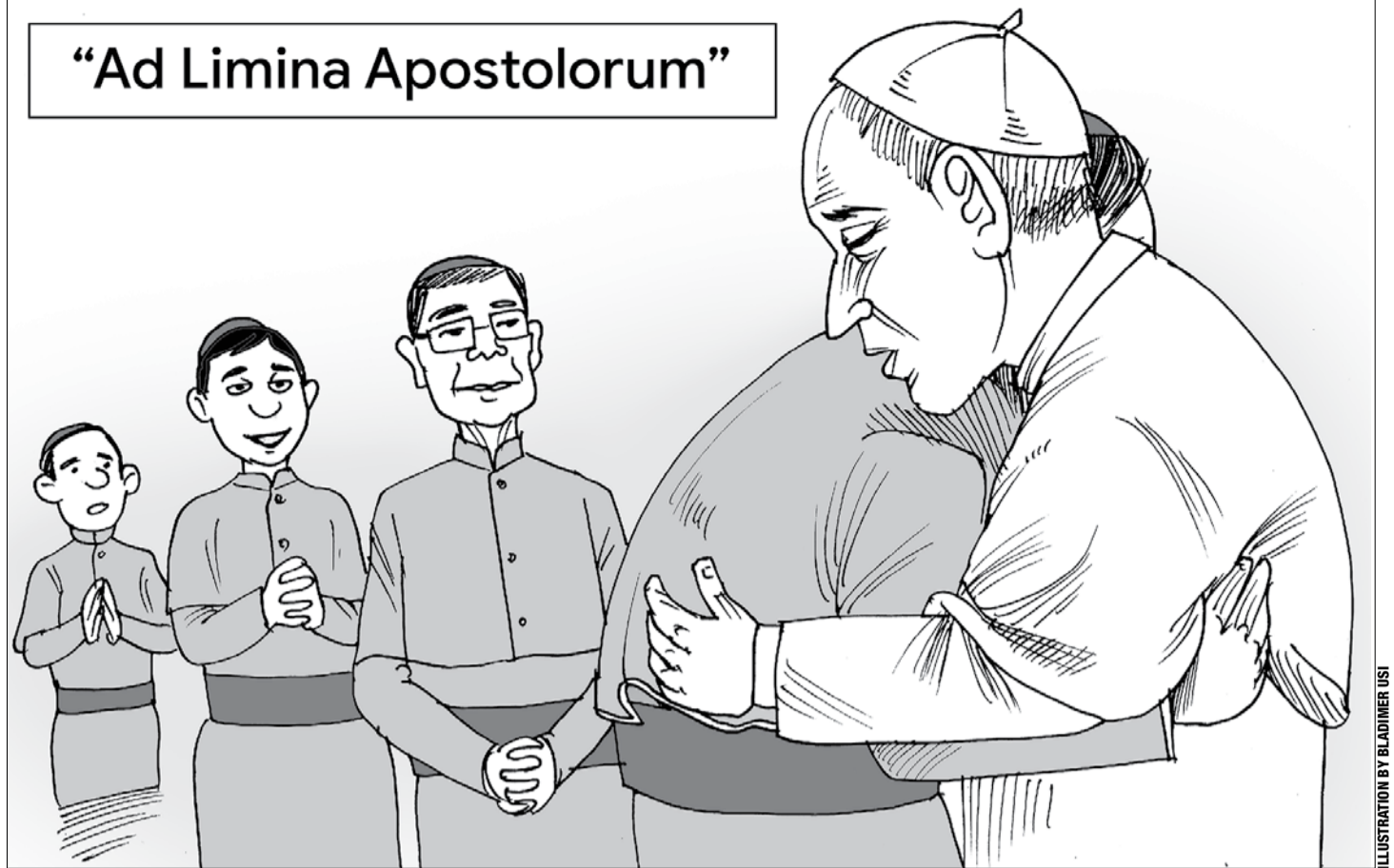
No matter how awkward and clumsy we may be in this respect, let's be determined to acquire or assume Christ's mind, heart, spirit, will, ways, etc. We just have to aim at becoming another Christ. To be sure, it will be Christ who will accomplish everything for us. On our own, we simply cannot, and we should not be bothered by that fact. What we need to do is simply to be as docile and as malleable as we can be for Christ to make us like him.

This means that we, of course, have to know him as best we could, using all the means that Christ himself has made available—his life, word and example as found in the gospels, etc. And let's hope that from that knowledge we can develop love and affection for him. He has left us with the Church, the sacraments, etc., that would perpetuate his redemptive presence and action in us. We have to find a way of being aware of this reality and to correspond to it properly.

It would serve us well in this regard if at every moment of our life, at every step of the way, whenever we have to think, speak and act, we first ask Christ, "Lord, what is it that you want from me now? What would you like me to think, speak, act or react at this particular instance, etc.?"

And whatever happens in our life, whether good or bad, let us be quick to refer ourselves to Christ. There has to be a conscious effort to do everything with and for Christ!

"Ad Limina Apostolorum"



Ad Limina Visit

VISITA Ad Limina Apostolorum. This is the visit of the Catholic Bishops to the See of St. Peter in Rome. It is supposed to be done every five years but the last ad limina visit of the Philippine bishops was in 2010 at the pontificate of Benedict XVI. This scheduled visit to Rome is meant to strengthen the bond of unity of the bishops with the Holy Father. During this visit the bishops have a dialogue with the Pope. They also get to visit the different departments of service (called dicasteries) of the Vatican Curia. There they are consulted about what is happening in their dioceses and their countries;

they can put their questions concerning their situations, and they get to know the initiatives being done in Rome to serve the worldwide Catholic community. The dicasteries are organized according to specific concerns, like the dicastery for integral human development which deals with social justice, peace, ecology, migrations, charitable works, health, etc.

There is the dicastery which deals with the concerns of the bishops, like the appointment and transfer of bishops. We have the dicastery of social communications, the dicastery of the clergy and seminary formation, the dicastery of the laity, the youth

and life, the dicastery for religious and consecrated life, the dicastery for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, the dicastery for Catholic education, and many others. The visits to the dicasteries are very enlightening. It gives the bishops a wide view of the issues, concerns and initiatives being done by the Church all over the world. The ad limina visit is also a kind of pilgrimage of the bishops to Rome. There are moments of visits and prayer to the four major basilicas where they are able to celebrate mass and pray together for their local churches.

The Philippine bishops are scheduled this year for

their ad limina visit. Since there are around 100 active bishops in the country, we are divided into three groups. The first group, mostly the Luzon bishops, just finished theirs, which took place from May 20 to 25. The next batch will be the bishops from the Visayas and the Bicol region, and the last batch from Mindanao and the Southern Tagalog region.

We started our ad limina visit last Monday with an early morning mass at the tomb of St. Peter in St. Peter's Basilica. It is so touching to celebrate mass together in front of the tomb of the head of the apostles. Then

Panaghoy / A7

Panaghoy

Bp. Broderick Pabillo



Living Mission

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM



IN preparing for the 2019 "Year of the Youth," a three-day conference was sponsored by the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Youth. One beautiful outcome of this reflecting and sharing was "An Open Letter of the Filipino Youth to the Catholic Church in the Philippines." The document set four goals for 2019 as the Year of the Youth.

Goal One: "Youth in Formation" envisions an evangelized youth that is conscious of being gifted. They seek to be "transformed by a personal encounter with Christ" and to mature in their faith. **Goal Two:** "Youth in the Community, Church and Society" desires a "family-oriented youth whose image of oneself is patterned after the life of Jesus and who is actively involved in the life of the Church."

Goal Three: "Youth in Mission" foresees "a youth inspired by the Church's missionary spirit, who, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, courageously shares Christ's message of joy and hope to people in difficult situations."

Goal Four: "Youth Ministry and Youth Ministers" seeks "a preferential ministry for the young ... with the spirit of the new evangelization."

Idealism of Youth. The young noted that "we liken ourselves to the two disciples of Emmaus and converse with Jesus about who we are, where we are, and what are our concerns and hopes as we journey in life and walk in faith."

"Filipino youth of the 21st century are life-given and want to be life-giving. We are dynamic individuals, overflowing with blessings, willing and open to learn and to grow.... 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 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."

Spirituality of the Youth. In forthright language, the youth note: "We choose to express this longing for a deeper relationship with our Lord and heighten our experience of faith through personal prayer and participation in various prayer gatherings. Our apparent

distrust and doubt on the credibility of the Church, on the other hand, is but an expression of our burning desire to see her truly living the joy of the Gospel."

"We long for a Church that embodies Christ's vision and for her—a Church that: • has confidence in us, and ensures that we are 'not marginalized but feel accepted,' • declares and actualizes her preferential apostolate for us; and • 'draws the attention of young people by being rooted in Jesus Christ.'"

Value of Family Affirmed. In their "self-description" the Filipino youth express how deeply they reverence their families. "Our family is where we first experience love, care and belongingness. It is also where we have our first role models who guide and shape us as we are prepared to be launched into the bigger environment.... We still see the family as a foundational aspect of our lives. In our dreams for a better life, our families will always be part of our hopes and aspirations."

It is an understatement to assert that our Catholic community has much to learn from the faith and idealism of today's Filipino youth!

Filipino youth portray their values

We are not God's puppets

WE are children of God, and not his puppets or robots. The freedom he gives us is real freedom because it can even enable us to go against the true nature, source, meaning and purpose of freedom itself. We can use it—or better said, misuse or abuse it—to go against God himself.

While it is true that God is always on top of things, he allows us to use our freedom the way we want it. Remember those famous lines in the Book of Ecclesiastes that articulate this truth: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity

under the heavens..." (3,1)

Even if he is on top of everything, he does not treat us as his puppets or robots whom he controls. He treats us as his children, for that is how he has created and designed us. We are supposed to be his image and likeness.

As such, his dominion over us is a dominion of love. It is a dominion that is akin to that of the parents over their children, but much, much better than that. In fact, it is infinitely better.

There is some forcefulness involved there, but one that is not coercive. There is obedience and docility involved also, but

one that does not compromise freedom. When we obey God and follow his will and ways, we do it because we want it and we know that it is good for us. Yes, there is some fear involved, but not of the servile kind, but rather of the filial type.

This dominion of love comes as a result of the abundant and gratuitous outpouring of God's goodness over us—his grace, his blessings, his inspirations, etc. He is full of compassion, slow to anger, quick to forgive.

He provides us with everything that we need, especially the things that we

most need in our quest for true happiness, our ultimate salvation, our fulfillment as image and likeness of God, children of his.

It is because God loves us first that we learn to love him and others in return. It is this love that enables us to live and use our freedom properly. And this love-inspired freedom leads us to our true joy where truth, beauty and everything that is good for us are integrated.

This love-inspired freedom makes us realistic with the realities of our earthly life where there will always be

Candidly Speaking / A5

Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimigala



CBCP Monitor

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By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

"Youthful rashness skips like a hare over the meshes of good counsel" (Shakespeare)

"So flee your youthful passions and pursue righteousness, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart" (1 Tim 2:22).

THE Year of the Youth has just run smack against the corrupt ways of their elders in the recent election realities in the Philippines. Not a few voters or politicians had sold and/or bought votes. It is to the undying shame of the older generations that the young once more witnessed, and many even took active part in, buying and selling votes for local and national candidates. Votes were sold and bought in cash or, if you prefer a more refined language, "in kind". The commercialization of the right of suffrage particularly in an impoverished island called Samar was matched only by an equally unabashed wallowing in dirty cash by

local traders and business establishments. No one turned away "dirty election money" in the same way that no one held long onto it with pride. In my hometown of Borongan there has always been frenzied commerce after elections in which voters seem more than eager to part with "dirty cash" by trooping to the local malls, stores and business establishments days after the elections.

The voting population seemed too eager to part with unearned "dirty cash", as if letting go of it through commerce somehow assuaged a conscience guilty of violating the sanctity of the ballot. How poverty violates a people's sense of conscience is beyond me. But it is a reality that Filipinos confront every election and for which the more conscientious among them hang their heads in shame.

Naturally it is always our people's poverty that we hold as the prime culprit. We also point to the centuries of colonialization behind us

The young vis-à-vis the culture of corruption

that has somehow corrupted our moral sense or which explains the lack of it among many of our otherwise gentle, smiling populace. Still, the commercialization of the right of suffrage cannot be morally justified. Unless the poverty of the masses of our people is effectively addressed the commercialization of the right of suffrage, could be in for the long haul.

But this fact exposes a deep wound in the Body of Christ in the Philippines. The local Church cannot simply point accusing fingers to, nor look down on, our teeming poor not a few of whom are compelled by economic misery to grasp at every straw to survive till the next meal. Or, if I may add, to the next opportunity to rise from abject poverty, if only for a short while. And the young are among those caught up in this maelstrom.

The young, like their adult counterparts, could also easily succumb to the lure of easy money from unscrupulous politicians or

their agents. If we do not stay callous, neither will they. But, as sure as daylight, the young need the right modelling by their elders. If their elders find the commercialization of the sacred right of suffrage normal or even justifiable under the circumstances of poverty, then what is to stop the young from selling their very souls to the highest bidders?

After all, the culture of corruption is truly a corruption of our culture. And the young are its most vulnerable victims. If we do not collectively, by word and example, act in concert to address its root-causes, we might find ourselves in a moral quagmire that nothing short of divine action can take us out of.

To our young, with our young, we hold dear the words of the Apostle Paul: "So flee your youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim 2:22).



Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

Ad Limina visit after midterm elections

THE mid-term elections was done. The votes had been canvassed. The official results had been released. In the local level, the result was immediately known. The unpredictable happened in the local election. Almost all the well-known family dynasties had fallen. The neophytes and the amateur in politics won over them. It only means that the Filipinos reject political dynasty. Thus, the Senate must think twice before it adopts the House of Representatives decision allowing the coming back of political dynasties which the 1987 Philippine Constitution prohibits. It is the end of the road for old families who had been lording over the local scenes. We hope and pray that these new blood will not disappoint their constituents and they would do their best to fulfill their election promises, to achieve the real change for the better.

On the other hand, most of the voters were disappointed with the result in the national level. They suspected that their votes were not counted despite the audit voter's receipt that was released by the vote counting machine (VCM). They fear that the VCMs were manipulated. Let us pray that the senators-elect would not be rubber-stamp senators, as many said. Let us pray that we will have an independent and thinking Senate.

Such fear by the voters might have been brought about by some perceived anomalies which the Comelec must explain and which Congress must investigate. As PPCRV volunteer in charge of legal assistance, I personally witnessed the following: (1) Dead persons are still in the registered voters list. (2) Many persons were disenfranchised, their name was not in the voters list despite the fact that they voted during the last two elections - 2016 Presidential and 2018 Barangay Elections. The voter's name will be deleted from the voters' list if they failed to vote in the last two elections. (3) There are new voters whose name are not in the voters' list. Does it mean the 2.5 million new voters were disenfranchised? (4) Voters had to queue or stay in line for more than one hour and suffer the heat of summer before they can vote. Most of them went home and did not care to come back and vote. (5) Many polling places/precincts were merged in one Cluster, what use to be 200 voters only in one precinct becomes more than 1,000 in a Cluster, thus, the very slow process of voting in a small and hot room. (6) The Election Board was very slow in verifying the identity of the voters. (7) Lack of marking pens to shade the ballots caused too much delay in the voting process. I voted in the Cluster where there were only 6 marking pens for 12 voters. We have to wait for a voter to finish shading his ballot before we can shade our ballot. (8) Some of the marking pens blot causing smudges on the ballot and once stained, the VCM would not accept the ballot and the vote not counted. (9) The VCM heat easily, despite the electric fan focused on it, thus causing the VCM to slow down in accepting ballots fed to it. (10) The most controversial is, the glitches hit 961 of 85,000 VCMs, with 1,665 secure digital or SD cards corrupted. (11) The worst, how can the Comelec

explain the 7 hours break in the transmission from the transparency servers that fed the unofficial election results to mass media and the public.

The Philstar reported that, "Information technology experts working with the Comelec have also alerted the public to the risks in the use of a so-called meet-me room during the vote, which the Comelec says was meant mainly to prevent the system from being overwhelmed. The IT experts warn that the meet-me room is not a passive temporary data storage mechanism, but one that allows the election results to be actively intercepted and digitally stored somewhere while being transmitted from the VCMs in the polling precincts to the vote canvassing centers. These glitches happened in the past elections. The Comelec should, by now, have available means to solve these problems. To avoid doubts, the Comelec must ensure a credible and honest election. Comelec must be beyond suspicions and partisanship. ***

The first group of 30 archbishops/bishops of Luzon went to Rome for their Ad Limina Apostolorum Visit/Meeting with Pope Francis. The Ad Limina visit is usually held every 5 years during which the archbishops/bishops report to the Pope about their respective archdiocese/diocese pastoral projects, needs, etc. The dicasteries discuss the local issues with them. Due to the big number of Luzon bishops, the Archdiocese of Lipa and Nueva Caceres, were separated and will join the Visayas and Mindanao Groups.

I have the gut feel that Pope Francis would personally talk to Bishop Pablo Virgilio "Ambo" David and would assure him of his prayers for the bishop for what he is going through in shepherding his flock. I felt happy to see that our bishop is seated next to Pope Francis. Bishop Ambo himself mentioned in his social media account that he was surprised that the Prefect of the Papal Household seated him "right next to the Holy Father, on his left." Bishop Ambo narrated that the last time he was in an Ad Limina visit, "we were positioned in rows facing the Pope (20 feet away) according to the ranks in the hierarchy." He said he was at the very rare end because he was a newly-ordained auxiliary bishop at that time. This time "we were seated around him in a circle and made to feel more like brother bishops, than as subjects before the king. He allowed us to address him freely without the aid of a microphone." Instead of asking question, Bishop Ambo told Pope Francis that he had no question and that he just wanted to ask for his prayers. Bishop Ambo continued "He looked into my eyes as I spoke. I was surprised when he interrupted me in the middle of my sentence and said 'I want you to know that I know your situation. I know what you are going through. I am praying for you. Please continue.'" Bishop Ambo added that on their way out, Pope Francis held his arm and said "Wait. Please let me give you a special blessing. I want you to know I am with you as you face trials in your ministry in your diocese." The

Duc in Altum / A7

Do not be afraid

WHEN I visited the Cairo Museum two years ago, I found myself looking at the huge statue of Pharaoh Rameses II sitting proudly at the main door. Pointing his finger to the Pharaoh's feet, the guide said, "Do you know these people and monsters under the feet of Rameses?" Without giving me time to reply, he said, "They are the enemies of Rameses. He wanted to tell everyone, I AM IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING. There's nothing to fear. We shall overcome our enemies."

In Chapter 14 of the Gospel of John, we see Jesus giving his farewell address before facing his death. He knew the difficult path that his disciples will walk through after his death. He saw the necessity to give them something to hold on to and to bring them out of their own darkness, pain, and frustrations. As a good shepherd, he assured his disciples of two things:

1. AN ASSURANCE IN THE NOW (HE KNOWS WHAT'S BEST). With his words, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you..." (John 14:27),

Jesus was simply telling them, I will never leave you alone. Peace is not the absence of conflict, struggles, darkness, and chaos. But a trustful disposition, coming from one's awareness of the Divine Presence who is ahead of us, behind us, beside us and above us. Don't doubt. When God's presence becomes the part of the air we breathe, we become more courageous to take a leap of faith.

2. AN ASSURANCE IN THE FUTURE (HE KNOWS WHAT'S BEST). With his words, "I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe" (John 14:29), Jesus has invited his disciples to hold on to his Words. Don't blink. We may not understand Him now, but when God asks us to do something, it will always be for our own good. Today, God is inviting us to place everything in His hands, for he said, "the ruler of this world has no power over me." (John 14:30).

In the resurrection narratives, when Jesus greeted his disciples with the word, "Peace," he was gently injecting to the disciples' hearts that he was over

Pitik-Bulag

Fr. Wilfredo Samson, SJ



and above everything, including death. Love conquers everything, and when someone is in love with Christ, he or she will transcend all darkness, including fear, "for perfect love drives away all fears." (1 John 4:18).

Rameses II may have claimed victory over the Egyptians' enemies, but still, he died and lost his kingdom. But Jesus, our Eternal King is not only assuring us of victory after working and laboring with Him. For beyond his assurance of victory and vindication, He assures us of His loving presence in our life's journey. And that's what matters most.

Let's pause for a while and hear God's words, "Peace be with you." All was well. All is well. All will be well. He is gently inviting us to let go of our desire to control things and let God do the rest.

Every day, every moment in our prayers, God would gently whisper into our ears, "Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." (John 14:27)

Peace! The lifegiving word of assurance is given. All we need to do now is allow God to work through us.

Bridging the gap: Faith into action



Active Faith

Joe Tale

I RECALL a question articulated by our former Vice President Emmanuel Pelaez many years ago.

"What is happening to our country, General?" Pelaez asked as he was being wheeled into the emergency room of St. Luke's Hospital, after an assassination attempt on his life. The question was directed to Gen Prospero Olivas who was then head of the Metropolitan Command (Metrocom) at that time. Pelaez survived the assassination attempt and went on to continue serving the country as head of the government panel that negotiated the peace process with our Muslim brothers in Mindanao. He later served as Philippine Ambassador to the US during the term of President Corazon Aquino.

His would be assassin was never caught.

The question of VP Pelaez was more than a question, but an anguished cry about the conditions prevailing in the country then. It can very well our very own cry today.

Why is there so much crime and violence in our country today? And those in government encouraging the kidnapping and killing even of our priests and bishops? Why is the response of Congress (lower house) to allow criminal liability and possible imprisonment even on 9 year olds of our children?

Why is there still widespread grinding poverty on our people even when there is supposed to be record economic growth in our country?

One can go on and on. There are of course some good also happening, but the foregoing questions stick out like a sore thumb, especially because we are supposed to be a predominantly Christian and Catholic country.

Our faith tells us not to kill. Our faith tells us to love and care for our neighbor. Our faith tells us that what God has joined together no man should put asunder.

What is happening to our country? There can be many reasons put forward to explain and justify.

I believe the root of all these problems is that there is a yawning gap between our faith and our actual action.

In the letter of James, it is written, "My friends, what good is it for one of you to say that you have faith if your

actions do not prove it? . . . faith without actions is dead." (James 2:14, 26)

Jean Daujat, writes in his book *The Applied Faith*, "The moulding of Christians who live out Christianity is the urgent business of today."

A well-known contemporary author, Mitch Albom, writes in his book *Have a little Faith*, "Faith is about doing. You are how you act, not just how you believe."

The urgent call is indeed for us Christians to live out our faith in our day to day situation.

I hope to continue to write about Christians who try to do this, who express their Faith by the many good things they do. I wish to honor them by this simple gesture and hope many more will be inspired to do the same.

mixture of good and evil, successes and failures, joy and sorrows, health and sickness. It's not afraid of suffering. In fact, it welcomes suffering. Neither does it spoil us when we happen to have good things in life.

We understand that freedom as the freedom of the children of God, where we are willing to unite our will with the will of God. We would never feel that we are enslaved or tied down by God.

The unavoidable conditionings that

our earthly life entails will never be regarded as limitations. They would be assumed willingly and lovingly. They would be regarded as means and occasions to further our development as a person and a child of God, despite the cost, inconveniences and sacrifices that they may involve. In short, they are seen as what would enhance our freedom, not what would deter it.

To be sure, God does not want us to be mere puppets and robots of his. He

wants us to be like him, full of love and goodness. We just have to understand that for our freedom to be true freedom, we have to live and exercise it always with God's will and ways in mind.

That is why we need to develop a close relationship with him who actually initiated an intimate relationship with us. It was he who started that relationship. We just have to try our best to correspond to that relationship, in spite of our weaknesses and mistakes.

Negros prelate gifts pope with painting of 'sacada' Jesus



Pope Francis receives the icon of 'Hesus sa Katubhan' as a gift from Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos during the Ad Limina visit of the Visayas bishops in Rome May 27. VATICAN MEDIA

A NEGROS island-based Catholic bishop has brought the plight of the island's sugarcane workers or the "sacadas" to Pope Francis through an artwork.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos presented to the pope the painting of Jesus portrayed as a sugarcane worker during an audience at the Vatican on Monday.

He said the icon, made by Augustinian Bro Jaazeal Jakosalem, challenges the faithful to see Jesus in the struggles of sacadas.

The prelate lamented that until today, the workers "are being paid unjustly" and without social and health

benefits despite their contribution to the economic growth.

"They fought for land and justice—ending up dead from the very hands of our state forces," Alminaza said.

Alminaza is currently in Rome for a week-long ad limina visit, along with 28 other bishops from the Visayas and the Bicol regions.

Among the accompanying symbols of the artwork include a cane knife to symbolize the hard-work of the workers and bloodied-bullets to depict the violence committed against farmers.

In October 2018, still unidentified gunmen killed nine sugar farmers, including four women and two minors,

at a hacienda in Sagay City's Bulanon village.

Five months later, a string of police operations against loose firearms killed 14 farmers in Negros Oriental for allegedly resisting arrest.

A human rights worker for exploited sugarcane workers of Negros island was also shot dead last April 22.

Bishop Alminaza said that the rate of death count in the province continued to alarm the diocese.

At the end the audience, he asked Pope Francis for prayers for the victims and their families left behind and for an end to violence in Negros. (Roy Lagarde)

Bishop stresses need for active formation of young people

TODAY'S church needs to continue and actively engage young people in formation of their faith, a Catholic bishop said.

Bishop Valentin Dimoc of Bontoc-Lagawe said through vibrant formation, they are raising young people for the spiritual and moral renewal of society.

"We have to be humble in listening to them, we have to find ways how to respond to their needs through dialogues and through courage in being open to them," Dimoc said after a visit to the Vatican's Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life on May 22.

Dimoc was among the 32 bishops from Metro Manila

and northern Luzon who were making their ad limina visits to Rome.

On Monday, the bishops met with Pope Francis who is devoting a lot of time to ad limina visits during this time of year.

Bishop Dimoc said that Pope Francis and the dicasteries have been supporting them to go with the formation of young Filipinos.

"Indeed, formation is important in the life of families, in the life of the young people," he added.

"This is what we have to do and we will discuss more about this in our local churches in the Philippines," Dimoc also said. (CBCPNews)

Church leaders pan same-sex union survey

Church leaders have voiced disapproval of an online poll launched by Congress asking people whether they are in favor of or against same-sex unions.

The survey, posted on the official House of Representatives website, asks respondents whether it is time to legalize same-sex unions.

A disclaimer noted that the poll "does not reflect the opinions, inclinations, or views of the House of Representatives" including its members and employees.

It also said that that the poll aims "to [foment] public discussion in aid of potential legislation."

As of 3 p.m. local time on May 27, a total of 289,958 had voted in favor, while 218,679 said they believed same sex marriage was wrong.

Fr. Jerome Secillano, executive secretary of the public affairs office of the Catholic bishops' conference, said that although surveys reflect the sentiment of the people, it "does not reflect the truth."

"Even if a majority of Filipinos favor same sex union and call it by any other name such as civil partnership, the truth is that such a union is still called marriage," said the priest.

He said Catholic bishops maintain that marriage must be between a man and a woman as enshrined in the Philippine Constitution, the Family Code and as ordained by God.

"Marriage as willed by God is between a man and a woman," said Bishop Honesto Ongtioco of Cubao in an earlier interview.

Archbishop Ramon Arguelles, the retired Lipa prelate, said same-sex marriage is not only against Divine Law, but is also against human and natural law.

"The purpose of marriage is to have a family, kids ... but if the couple is of the same sex the one who will suffer the most in this situation is their child because it's not normal," said the archbishop.

The survey comes ahead of the Philippine observance of "Pride Month" in June and several days after same-sex marriage was legalized in Taiwan.

In June last year, only two in 10 people favored same-sex unions in the predominantly Catholic country. A survey by pollster Social Weathers Stations showed that 61 percent of Filipinos disagree with the proposal to legalize same-sex marriage, 22 percent agree, and 16 percent are undecided. (UCAN)

Reject death penalty revival, new senators urged

THE Catholic Church's prison ministry urged new senators to shelve proposals to reinstate the death penalty in the country's legal system.

Mr. Rodolfo Diamante of the church's Commission on Prison Pastoral Care, said the legislators should not pass legislations just to please Malacañang.

He said that senators have been elected by the people to work for their welfare and not for President Rodrigo Duterte.

"We urge them to study the bills thoroughly and determine if they will really address the problems of our country," he said.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the revival of capital punishment for high level drug trade crime is possible with the incoming set of senators.

He made the claim as more allies of Duterte, who has been pushing for the measure, are poised to enter the next senate.



Thousands of Catholics carry placards in a "Walk for Life" around the Quirino Grandstand in Manila to oppose the revival of the death penalty, Feb. 18, 2017. FILE PHOTO

Mr. Diamante reiterated that death penalty was never been and will never be a solution to criminality.

"Moreover, it is anti-life,

anti-poor and will enhance only the culture of violence that is now prevailing in our country," he warned.

"Don't give our people

a quick fix solution to our people's problem... They deserve something better," Mr. Diamante added. (CBCPNews)

Caritas / A1

as defined by the National Economic and Development Authority, and those who cannot afford in a sustained manner to provide their minimum basic needs of food, health, education, housing or other essential amenities of life.

Fr. Pascual said they are hoping that government agencies have the time and resources to implement the Magna Carta.

"That is always the problem... efficiency and effect of government execution," he said. (CBCPNews)

Coal / A1

how vast and far-reaching the effects of coal are, with its impacts which go beyond just air emissions," she said.

De Torres added that other aspects of coal plants such as ground clearing, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity should be incorporated in the graphics to give a clearer picture of the effects of coal.

"Perhaps they should also show pictures of children and adults plagued by respiratory, skin, and cardiovascular diseases caused by particulate matter and other chemicals released into the air and water by San Miguel's plant in Limay, Bataan," she said.

In 2017, residents called for the suspension of the Limay plant after videos showed coal ash being disposed near their communities.

De los Reyes said "a 2019 study of ash ponds of 265 US coal plants revealed that the nearby groundwater had unsafe levels of nerve-damaging lithium, and neurotoxin arsenic, which impair a child's brain development and cause cancer."

"This is on top of the lead, cadmium, and chromium generally found in coal ash and mercury released by coal plants, often in the form of acid aerosols." (CBCPNews)

Chief / A1

John is currently the head of institutional development and capacity building at Caritas Internationalis.

Cardinal Tagle was first elected to head Caritas in 2015, making him the first president from Asia.

This year's assembly has the theme: "A single human family, a common home".

In this line, Cardinal Tagle stressed that "the large number of displaced, the proliferation of conflicts and environmental disaster, increasingly evident, threaten to overwhelm us, unless together we act urgently

against these problems as a single human family with a common house."

The cardinal's reelection comes as the Vatican is making significant efforts to take a lead in environmental protection.

It also comes as Pope Francis continue to put the plight of immigrants and refugees at the forefront of his papacy.

As Caritas chief, the post has allowed him to travel the world to deliver speeches, including visits to disaster areas and conflict zones. (CBCPNews)

Meet the New Eve
Veils
www.meettheneweve.com
MTNE Veils are also available via LAZADA just search for Meet the New Eve.

Palawan church plants 10K trees in protected area



Scenes like this one, where Bishop Socrates Mesiona helped plant trees at the Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape, have taken place repeatedly over past nine months in Palawan. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY— The Church in Palawan hits its target of planting 10,000 trees at the Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape, in Southern Palawan.

According to the Bishop Socrates Mesiona of the Vicariate of Puerto Princesa, based on initial assessment as of May this year, they have already planted more than 10,000 trees in different project sites in Brookes Point, Palawan.

“It is a continual planting program among the Pala’wans, our partner indigenous peoples, since August last year,” explained the prelate.

A response to Pope Francis’ Laudato Si, the project of the vicariate to plant 10,000 trees in a year is being implemented

through the help of the Augustinian Missionaries of the Philippines-Indigenous Peoples Mission (AMP-IM).

Sr. Mae Juanitas of AMP-IM explained some trees that did not survive because of the weather and other factors are always replaced to ensure that the target is really achieved.

Beto Calman, one of the IP leaders, said the project of the Church is a “big help.”

“It helps us to make sure that our culture is preserved because taking care of the environment is part of our Pala’wans’ culture,” he explained in Filipino.

The Church is still set to validate the actual number of surviving trees, said Mesiona. **(Katya A. Santos/CBCP News)**

Duc in Altum / A5

Pope prayed over and blessed him, “Then he pulled me to himself to give me a warm paternal embrace, pressing his head against mine, and brushing his hand gently on my back as he whispered into my ears, ‘Courage!’ My heart melted after that. I just said ‘Thank you, Holy Father.’”

Thank you very much Pope Francis for praying over Bishop Ambo and for your assurance and fatherly gesture. We are strengthened that we have you in our midst in in praying for the safety of our bishop. May our Lord

Jesus Christ continue to be in our hearts and in the hearts of every Filipino, so that unity and peace will reign within us.

Bishop Ambo gifted Pope Francis with the Spanish translation of his book “The Gospel of Love According to Juan/a” while Fr. James Del Rosario, Parish Priest of Sto. Niño de Pasion, Navotas City, gave the Pope the image of the patron saint of his parish and the scrap book containing pictures of pastoral works in the parish and messages of children to Pope Francis.

Closure / A1

machines with glitches and secure digital cards which malfunctioned during polls.

The prelates also questioned the seven-hour glitch in the poll body’s transparency server and the alleged existence of pre-shaded ballots and “erroneous” ballots receipts.

“These irregularities and possible logistical tamperings already cast doubt to the reliability of the election results,” they said.

“We question the suspicious behavior and sidesteps employed by the Comelec to avoid addressing the aforementioned issues and the data blackout in a comprehensive manner and in sufficient detail.”

The Comelec proclaimed the newly elected senators and party list groups on Wednesday despite calls to suspend the proclamation until the allegations of fraud are resolved. **(CBCPNews)**

Panaghyo / A4

in the same morning we had our audience with the Holy Father. It was an informal meeting for two full hours with him. He encouraged us to shot any question, to give comments, and even to criticize him during the session. It was very familial and lively, and Pope Francis was so cordial and open to us. To my surprise he knows full well our situation in the Philippines, especially with the present president! We also were able to greet him individually. That meeting set the tone for the whole ad limina visit—cordial and open exchange. We had visits to the different dicasteries. We were divided to the various dicasteries which we were interested to visit. Everyday we visited 3 or 4 dicasteries. The Cardinals and Archbishops who head the dicasteries were our dialogue partners.

During the week too we were able to schedule masses in the other major basilicas. On Wednesday afternoon we had mass in the Basilica

of St Paul Outside of the Walls. That was the burial place of St. Paul, who was also martyred in Rome. On Friday we had the mass in St. John Lateran, which is the Cathedral Church of the Pope, and this morning in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the main church dedicated to Mother Mary.

Another bonus of the ad limina visit is the rare bonding opportunity that we bishops have together during our meals, our trips, and our free moments. Since we are all housed only in one place, at the Collegio Filipino where Filipino students who study in Rome stay, we bishops have a lot of time to share with each other, to joke together, and also to share our experiences and problems with one another. Not only is our bond with the universal church strengthened but also our bond with one another. We go back to our dioceses renewed and energized. We are indeed in a common mission of service in the Roman Catholic Church!

Bishop seeks justice for death of OFW in Kuwait

BALANGA, Bataan— A church official has joined calls for justice for the death of another overseas Filipino worker in Kuwait.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga urged the government to exert all efforts to help bring justice to Constancia Dayag, who was killed by her employer in Kuwait.

He said the employer of Dayag, a 47-year-old household service worker from Isabela province, must be prosecuted and justice rendered.

“Our government officials should not stop until the guilty is punished by law, and justice for Constancia is done,” said Santos, who heads the church’s migrants ministry.

The prelate also blamed the Kuwaiti government for the “gruesome” death of Dayag.

“She has not been protected, and so it was a failure on their part and clear violation of signed agreement,” he said.

Bishop Santos then challenged incoming

lawmakers to craft a new measure that would protect the rights of OFWs more.

He made the appeal as he also asked legislators to craft laws that would create more jobs in the country so that Filipinos will never be forced to seek jobs abroad.

“For our newly elected government officials, you can do a great service to our OFW if you can craft laws that will protect and promote their rights,” he said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said it is coordinating

with Kuwaiti authorities in probing the death of Dayag, who died from contusions and hematoma on May 14.

Last year, the Philippine government ordered a total ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Kuwait amid reported abuses and deaths, including Joana Demafelis, whose body was found in a freezer.

The ban was lifted after the two countries agreed on a measure to protect Filipino workers in the Gulf state. **(CBCP News)**

Bishops remind faithful about grace in prayer at Obando fiesta



Devotees dance in front of a statue of Sta. Clara during a religious festival inside San Pascual Baylon Parish Church in Obando, Bulacan on Sunday, May 19. PAROKYA NI SAN PASCUAL BAYLON – OBANDO CHURCH FACEBOOK PAGE

OBANDO, Bulacan— Thousands of people flocked to Obando Church in Bulacan province to celebrate the country’s only fertility festival on May 17 to 19.

Many couples danced and pray for fertility in the annual festivity at the San Pascual Baylon Parish Church and Diocesan Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepcion de Salambao.

In the Masses for the three-day, bishops have preached on the value of grace and intercession that surrounds the outpour of pilgrims going to Obando for the celebration.

Grace in prayer and intercession

Presiding on the Mass of the first day, Iba Bishop Bartolome Santos Jr. reminded the faithful of the power of the Eucharist.

He said, “Whatever we ask from the Lord, whatever we ask through [the intercession of] San Pascual Baylon, let us put the Eucharist first, because this is what is given to us.”

Dedicated to St. Paschal Bailon, the Patron Saint of Eucharistic adorers, Santos mentioned the value of his

intercession.

He added, “It is in the Eucharist that God’s grace is given and flows through from the Lord so that whatever [good] we wish from God would be fulfilled.”

On the same day, Military Ordinary Oscar Jaime Florencio also led a Mass where he valued the pilgrims coming from all over the country going to Obando.

He said, “While we live, we will still have our problems with you now: if you see your family abandoning you, if you do not have work, whatever it is, always remember that God loves you.”

Focusing on the need for prayer and supplication, he added, “Even if you have big problems with you now: if you see your family abandoning you, if you do not have work, whatever it is, always remember that God loves you.”

3 Patrons

Each of the three days was attributed to the three patrons of Obando town: San Pascual Baylon is the titular of the parish and patron of the first day; St. Claire is the original patron of Obando and now secondary patroness of the parish venerated on the second day, and the Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada

Concepcion de Salambao found in the coast of the town in 1763 and is a diocesan shrine.

Known as the “Tatlong Patron”, the devotees venerated the patrons through dance, which is primarily for childbirth among couples who come every year to the church.

Kalookan Bishop Emeritus Deogracias Iñiguez, Jr., in his homily for the second day invited the faithful to “recognize the grace of God through the intercession of St. Claire.”

“My brothers and sisters, I hope you recognize that this child/children given to us by God through St. Claire’s prayers allow us to deepen our faith and to follow him more ardently,” he said.

The “Sayawan sa Obando” has been present in the town as the Spanish Franciscan missionaries Christianized the former pagan practice of “Kasilonawan” or the dancing of sterile women for fertility.

The dance is recognized by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts as the only Philippine ‘fertility fiesta’. **(Kendrick Ivan Panganiban and Carlo Padilla/CBCP News)**

Seminar for seminarians tackles youth issues

SOME 34 seminarians from eight dioceses attended this year’s National Seminar for Seminarians organized by the Theological Centrum in Masbate City on May 19 to 23.

Hosted by the Diocese of Masbate, the seminar with the theme “Seminarians in the Year of the Youth” discussed issues on seminary formation, particularly for the millennials.

Among the topics discussed include the message of Pope Francis to the youth, and integration of the Ratio Fundamentalibus Institutio Sacerdotalis (RFIS), a Vatican document on priestly formation.

Quoting Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “Christus vivit”, Theological Centrum executive director Fr. Victor Santos said that the youth are now of the world and sanctity is prepared by having friendship with Christ.

In addition, Fr. Rolan Panesa of the Diocese of Legazpi shared about the message of Pope Francis to



Participants of this year’s National Seminar for Seminarians organized by Theological Centrum and the Diocese of Masbate on May 19 to 23, 2019. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

the young people.

Fr. Philippe Gallanosa of the Diocese of Sorsogon also mentioned some crises of the youth regarding pornography and the preservation of chastity.

Fr. Raymun Sotto, Spiritual Director of St. John the Evangelist Major Seminary in Palo, Leyte, challenged the seminarians to discern

and integrate the instruction of RFIS.

Fr. Ian dela Cruz, Director of Sedes Sapientiae Formation House of the Diocese of Masbate in Naga City, tackled the understanding of the millennials and generation Z.

Participants were later asked to take their intellectual formation seriously and at the same time harmonize it

with their spiritual life.

Speakers also stressed to put Christ in the pinnacle of their activities.

The five-day seminar was also spent in the atmosphere of meditations, talks, conferences, pilgrimage and excursions. **(Sem. Jemuel B. Gepiga and Rev. Philippe A. B. Gallanosa/CBCP News)**

New Basilan bishop urged: 'Have courage, be strong'



Bishop Leo Dalmao (center) is flanked by other prelates and priests after his ordination and installation as head of the Prelature of Isabela at the Sta. Isabel Cathedral May 24. CBCP NEWS

BISHOP Leo Dalmao, who was ordained the fourth bishop of the Prelature of Isabela in Basilan on May 24, received strong words of encouragement from Archbishop of Ozamiz Martin Jumoad, his predecessor.

"People depend on you. Have courage and be strong," Jumoad told the first Filipino Claretian to be ordained bishop, in a ceremony held at the Sta. Isabel de Portugal Cathedral in this city.

"Bp. Leo, trust your priests," added the prelate, saying that the new bishop should love the priests of Basilan even if they commit mistakes.

Archbishop of Zamboanga Romulo Dela Cruz served as principal consecrator along with Jumoad and Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, president of the Philippine bishops' conference.

'Love your bishop'

Jumoad also had a message to the faithful of Basilan.

"Love your bishop and he will love you," he said.

Jumoad added: "Allow him to serve you in the breaking of the bread, the sacrament of confession, in the washing of the feet."

The former shepherd of the prelature also stressed the need to champion unity among all peoples of faith, saying Dalmao "should be friendly to all sectors and promote interreligious dialogue," especially with the Muslim brethren.

Born on December 1, 1969, Dalmao entered the Claretian Congregation in 1986 and studied AB Philosophy at Claret Formation Center, now called St. Anthony Mary Claret College.

Rome assignment

He had his first profession of vows on May 3, 1992 in Bungiao, Zamboanga City.

From 1992 to 1997, Dalmao also studied theology at Loyola School of Theology.

He had his perpetual profession of vows on July 16, 1996 and priestly ordination on May 31, 1997.

His first assignment was as project coordinator for Sama-Bajau which then became the Claret Sama Bajau Foundation, Inc. which caters to the Sama Bajaus in Basilan.

Dalmao was the General Consultor and General Prefect of Formation of the Claretians in Rome prior to his appointment as Bishop of Basilan on March 25, 2019. **(John Frances Fuentes/CBCP News)**

Pope's humility astounds Pinoy priests

ROME— Pope Francis is known for his humility, but a group of Filipino priests still could not believe what he would do to them: "a gesture of a real father".

The priests were about to leave a room inside the Apostolic Palace to give way for the pope's meeting with the Philippine bishops on Monday until he waved and called them back.

Fr. Kali Pietre Llamado of the Manila archdiocese said it was a very formal setting and for the pope to call them casually was something they did not expect.

"Pope Francis suddenly gathered us and said, 'Thank you for accompanying the bishops here. I will talk to them now. I know you are always praying for me,'" Llamado quoted the pope as saying.

"Then he waved his hand to us and sweetly said 'Bye bye!' What a loving gesture from a real father to us," he said.

The priests, about 30 of them, accompanied the bishops from Metro Manila and northern Luzon, who were on their ad limina visits to Rome.

Among them were Fr.



Filipino priests surround Pope Francis inside the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican, May 20. VATICAN MEDIA

Marvin Mejia, secretary general of the Philippine bishops' conference, the others are bishops' secretaries, and priests studying in Rome.

Fr. Llamado, who is also the Vice-Rector of the Manila Cathedral, said their experience was astounding and inspirational.

"It's just amazing that

instead of just dismissing us, he (pope) talked to us personally," he said. "It's like saying that he valued our presence there."

The ad limina visits of Filipino bishops are scheduled for three different groups and each group has at least a week in Rome.

After the Luzon group, next to go will be bishops from the

Bicol region and the Visayas and then prelates from Mindanao and those from the ecclesiastical province of Lipa.

This is the first ad limina visit for the Filipino bishops under Francis' papacy. The last one was made in 2011 during the time of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. **(CBCP News)**

'La Virgen Milagrosa de Badoc' enshrined in Germany

OBEREISESHEIM, Germany— Badoc's miraculous Madonna has found a home in Europe.

The small village of Obereisesheim in Germany has become the first officially declared place of devotion to "La Virgen Milagrosa de Badoc" outside the Philippines.

In a Mass presided over by Bishop Renato Mayugba of Laoag on May 25, a three-foot replica of the Patroness of Ilocos Norte was enshrined in the Christuskirche of Obereisesheim, under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart.

Hundreds of Filipinos and German devotees from various parts of Germany attended the solemn event, including some Filipino priests coming from Germany, Italy and the Philippines.

During the Mass, the Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart was represented by the Very Rev. Siegbert Denk, the Dean for the Deanery of Heilbronn and Neckarsulm.

Bishop Mayugba brought with him the Rector of the Basilica of Badoc, the Very Rev. Freddie Astudillo and Laoag's Diocesan Chancellor, the Very Rev. Rey Magus Respicio.

The Embassy of the Philippines in Berlin was represented by Consul Bong Villanueva.

The solemn enthronement was organized by Filipino Migrants who compose the Catholic Group named Divine Mercy Prayer Group headed by Elsa Quintero-Agatep.

Agatep hopes the church will be flocked by pilgrims as they seek the help of Our Lady.

Bishop Mayugba was in Europe for their six-day "Visita Ad Limina" of the first set of Philippine Bishops to Pope Francis.

During an audience on May 20, the bishop gave an image of Apo Badoc to the pope as a sign of gratitude for granting the Pontifical Coronation of the Lady of Badoc and the elevation of her church into a Minor Basilica.

Earlier, "La Virgen Milagrosa de Badoc" was presented to hundreds of Filipino Migrants at the Basilica di Santa Pudenziana and the Church of St. Gabriel Archangel at Cortina d'Ampezzo in Rome.

Last March, Bishop Mayugba also gifted Archbishop Joseph Mitsuki Takami of Nagasaki, Japan with a replica of the revered La Virgen Milagrosa de Badoc. **(CBCP News)**

2nd Filipino bishop ordained in US to serve Los Angeles



Catholic community welcomes Most Rev. Alejandro Aclan as second Filipino bishop in the United States. PHOTO FROM THE LA ARCHDIOCESE FACEBOOK PAGE

FILIPINO priest Alejandro Aclan was ordained auxiliary bishop to help shepherd the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the largest ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the United States.

Archbishop Jose Gomez, together with Archbishop Emeritus Cardinal Roger Mahony and Bishop Oscar Solis ordained Aclan to the episcopacy May 16 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

Aclan's ordination makes him the second Filipino American prelate after Bishop Solis of Salt Lake City.

In an indication of the diversity of the Catholic flock, the readings during Mass were read in Tagalog, Spanish and English.

With nearly five million Catholics, the archdiocese is also one of the most diverse, with people from about 70 different countries.

The Los Angeles area is home to the largest Filipino immigrants in the US and the biggest Asian American community in California.

In his homily, Gomez told Aclan that God has called him "in a time of renewal and reform in the Church".

"It is a time, as we know, with shadows and uncertainty. But it is also a time of bright hope and new possibilities," he said.

The archbishop also reminded Aclan that as a bishop, he needs to let Jesus

be his only teacher.

"This time in the Church — this time of renewal — is a call for every one of us to return to Jesus. It is a call to continue the conversion of our hearts," he added.

In his message, Bishop Aclan, 68, thanked Pope Francis for the trust and confidence in him.

"I would like to thank in a special way our Blessed Mother who has never left me unaided in all of my years since childhood," a tearful Aclan said.

"And of course, I would like to thank in the most special way of all our God," he added.

"I would like to thank him for bringing me to this moment that is causing me so much joy to everyone I've come in contact with in my life and many others whom I have yet to meet.

Pope Francis on March 5 appointed Aclan as auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles.

Born in Pasay City, Aclan moved to the US at the age of 31 where he soon after decided to enter the seminary.

In 1993, he was ordained to the priesthood, and served as parochial vicar, pastor, and Vicar for the Clergy in the LA archdiocese in the years after.

As he was ordained, the archdiocese announced that Aclan would serve as episcopal vicar for the San Fernando Pastoral Region. **(CBCP News)**

Catholic Women's League celebrates 100 years

FOR 100 years, charity work and loyalty have been the cornerstone of the Catholic Women's League (CWL).

"This centennial celebration is a pledge and an assurance that we will serve the church and the country for many years," said CWL National President Dr. Rosa Rita Mariano.

The CWL was formed in 1919 by Archbishop Michael O'Doherty with a group of prominent Catholic women.

The charitable spirit spread like a wildfire, and before long the CWL was the country's largest Catholic women organization.

To date, CWL has around 250,000 members from 84 dioceses across the country with a mission to entrench spiritual and moral values of Filipino women.

"Throughout its 100-year history, the CWL in the Philippines has been the glue that continues to bind the church," Mariano said.

She said that the CWL advocacies on family, women, children and environment remain their key priorities.

The milestone was highlighted with a Mass presided over by Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, the Archbishop Emeritus of Cotabato, at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City on March 25.

Also present were Archbishop Antonio Ledesma of Cagayan de Oro, Bishop Mel Rey Uy of Lucena and Philippine Ambassador to the Vatican Grace Relucio Princessa, who was the keynote speaker.

Dubbed as "100 Years



Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, the Archbishop Emeritus of Cotabato, delivers the homily during Mass to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Catholic Women's League at the PICC Reception Hall in Pasay City on May 25. COURTESY OF FR. PROSPERO TENORIO

of Grace," the event showcased the organization's contributions to the Church and society.

The gathering also paid tribute to its members who have performed well through the years and those who have nurtured their sons and daughters to the consecrated life— the CWL mothers of nuns, priests and bishops.

Mariano said their inspiring servant leadership "made CWL what it is today".

Among the group's pioneering apostolate were catechetical works for public school children and easing welfare cases such as unemployment and family problems.

During World War II, the CWL assisted wounded Filipinos in an emergency hospital setup in Ermita, Manila. **(CBCP News)**

“We are members one of another” (Eph 4,25)

From social network communities to the human community

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 53rd World Communications Day



Pope Francis greets the crowd as he leads the Angelus from the window of his apartment overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Jan. 20, 2019. CNS/VATICAN MEDIA

DEAR Brothers and Sisters,

Ever since the internet first became available, the Church has always sought to promote its use in the service of the encounter between persons, and of solidarity among all. With this Message I would like to invite you once again to reflect on the foundation and importance of our being-in-relation and to rediscover, in the vast array of challenges of the current communications context, the desire of the human person who does not want to be left isolated and alone.

The metaphors of the net and community

Today's media environment is so pervasive as to be indistinguishable from the sphere of everyday life. The Net is a resource of our time. It is a source of knowledge and relationships that were once unthinkable. However, in terms of the profound transformations technology has brought to bear on the process of production, distribution and use of content, many experts also highlight the risks that threaten the search for, and sharing of, authentic information on a global scale. If the Internet represents an extraordinary possibility of access to knowledge, it is also true that it has proven to be one of the areas most exposed to disinformation and to the conscious and targeted distortion of facts and interpersonal relationships, which are often used to discredit.

We need to recognize how social networks, on the one hand, help us to better connect, rediscover, and assist one another, but on the other, lend themselves to the manipulation of personal data, aimed at obtaining political or economic advantages, without due respect for the person and his or her rights. Statistics show that among young people one in four is involved in episodes of cyberbullying.^[1]

In this complex scenario, it may be useful to reflect again on the metaphor of the net, which was the basis of the Internet to begin with, to rediscover its positive potential. The image of the net invites us to

reflect on the multiplicity of lines and intersections that ensure its stability in the absence of a centre, a hierarchical structure, a form of vertical organization. The net works because all its elements share responsibility.

From an anthropological point of view, the metaphor of the net recalls another meaningful image: the community. A community is that much stronger if it is cohesive and supportive, if it is animated by feelings of trust, and pursues common objectives. The community as a network of solidarity requires mutual listening and dialogue, based on the responsible use of language.

Everyone can see how, in the present scenario, social network communities are not automatically synonymous with community. In the best cases, these virtual communities are able to demonstrate cohesion and solidarity, but often they remain simply groups of individuals who recognize one another through common interests or concerns characterized by weak bonds. Moreover, in the social web identity is too often based on opposition to the other, the person outside the group: we define ourselves starting with what divides us rather than with what unites us, giving rise to suspicion and to the venting of every kind of prejudice (ethnic, sexual, religious and other). This tendency encourages groups that exclude diversity, that even in the digital environment nourish unbridled individualism which sometimes ends up fomenting spirals of hatred. In this way, what ought to be a showcase for the world becomes a window for exhibiting personal narcissism.

The Net is an opportunity to promote encounter with others, but it can also increase our self-isolation, like a web that can entrap us. Young people are the ones most exposed to the illusion that the social web can completely satisfy them on a relational level. There is the dangerous phenomenon of young people becoming “social hermits” who risk alienating themselves completely from society. This

dramatic situation reveals a serious rupture in the relational fabric of society, one we cannot ignore.

This multiform and dangerous reality raises various questions of an ethical, social, juridical, political and economic nature, and challenges the Church as well. While governments seek legal ways to regulate the web and to protect the original vision of a free, open and secure network, we all have the possibility and the responsibility to promote its positive use.

Clearly, it is not enough to multiply connections in order to increase mutual understanding. How, then, can we find our true communitarian identity, aware of the responsibility we have towards one another in the online network as well?

We are members one of another

A possible answer can be drawn from a third metaphor: that of the body and the members, which Saint Paul uses to describe the reciprocal relationship among people, based on the organism that unites them. “Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each to his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Eph 4:25). Being members one of another is the profound motivation with which the Apostle invites us to put away falsehood and speak the truth: the duty to guard the truth springs from the need not to belie the mutual relationship of communion. Truth is revealed in communion. Lies, on the other hand, are a selfish refusal to recognize that we are members of one body; they are a refusal to give ourselves to others, thus losing the only way to find ourselves.

The metaphor of the body and the members leads us to reflect on our identity, which is based on communion and on “otherness”. As Christians, we all recognize ourselves as members of the one body whose head is Christ. This helps us not to see people as potential competitors, but to consider even our enemies as persons. We no longer need an adversary in order to define ourselves, because the all-encompassing gaze we learn from

Christ leads us to discover otherness in a new way, as an integral part and condition of relationship and closeness.

Such a capacity for understanding and communication among human persons is based on the communion of love among the divine Persons. God is not Solitude, but Communion; he is Love, and therefore communication, because love always communicates; indeed, it communicates itself in order to encounter the other. In order to communicate with us and to communicate himself to us, God adapts himself to our language, establishing a real dialogue with humanity throughout history (cf. *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 2*).

By virtue of our being created in the image and likeness of God who is communion and communication-of-Self, we carry forever in our hearts the longing for living in communion, for belonging to a community. “Nothing, in fact, is as specific to our nature as entering into a relationship one with another, having need of one another,” says Saint Basil.^[2]

The present context calls on all of us to invest in relationships, and to affirm the interpersonal nature of our humanity, including in and through the network. All the more so, we Christians are called to manifest that communion which marks our identity as believers. Faith itself, in fact, is a relationship, an encounter; and under the impetus of God's love, we can communicate, welcome and understand the gift of the other and respond to it.

Communion in the image of the Trinity is precisely what distinguishes the person from the individual. From faith in God who is Trinity, it follows that in order to be myself I need others. I am truly human, truly personal, only if I relate to others. In fact, the word “person” signifies the human being as a “face”, whose face is turned towards the other, who is engaged with others. Our life becomes more human insofar as its nature becomes less individual and more personal;

we see this authentic path of becoming more human in one who moves from being an individual who perceives the other as a rival, to a person who recognizes others as travelling companions.

From a “like” to an “amen”

The image of the body and the members reminds us that the use of the social web is complementary to an encounter in the flesh that comes alive through the body, heart, eyes, gaze, breath of the other. If the Net is used as an extension or expectation of such an encounter, then the network concept is not betrayed and remains a resource for communion. If a family uses the Net to be more connected, to then meet at table and look into each other's eyes, then it is a resource. If a Church community coordinates its activity through the network, and then celebrates the Eucharist together, then it is a resource. If the Net becomes an opportunity to share stories and experiences of beauty or suffering that are physically distant from us, in order to pray together and together seek out the good to rediscover what unites us, then it is a resource.

We can, in this way, move from diagnosis to treatment: opening the way for dialogue, for encounter, for “smiles” and expressions of tenderness... This is the network we want, a network created not to entrap, but to liberate, to protect a communion of people who are free. The Church herself is a network woven together by Eucharistic communion, where unity is based not on “likes”, but on the truth, on the “Amen”, by which each one clings to the Body of Christ, and welcomes others.

From the Vatican, 24 January 2019, the Memorial of Saint Francis de Sales.

FRANCISCUS

[1] To stem this phenomenon, an International Observatory for Cyberbullying Prevention will be established with its headquarters in the Vatican.

[2] Detailed Rule for Monks, III, 1: PG 31, 917; cf. Benedict XVI, Message for the 43rd World Communications Day (2009).

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

Deacons and baptisms in extraordinary form

Q: Can deacons do baptisms in the extraordinary form? — G.P., Ann Arbor, Michigan

A: The short answer is yes, although with some limitations.

The Roman Ritual which constituted the law in force in 1962 allowed for deacons to administer solemn baptism in some cases:

“15. A deacon is the extraordinary minister of solemn baptism. He may not, however, use his power without the consent of the Ordinary or the pastor—such permission being granted for a just cause, and lawfully presumed when necessity urges.

In danger of death, non-solemn baptism can be administered by anyone as long as he uses the proper form and matter and has the right intention. If possible two witnesses or at least one should be present so that the baptism can be proved. A priest if available should be preferred to a deacon, a deacon to a subdeacon, a cleric to a laic, a man to a woman, unless for the sake of modesty it is more fitting that the woman baptize rather than the man, or because the woman might know the form and method better than the man. Father or mother are not permitted to baptize their child, except when in danger of death no one else can be had who could baptize.”

The rites also add that “When a deacon administers baptism he uses salt already blessed by a priest.” The water is usually already blessed in the extraordinary form.

In 1962 deacons at Mass were uncommon as there were only transitional deacons awaiting priestly ordination, and the period of diaconate was relatively brief. At solemn Masses, the liturgical function pertaining to deacon and subdeacon were usually carried out by priests.



A 2013 file photo shows a deacon baptizes 4-month-old baby girl at St. Jude Church in Mastic Beach, N.Y. GREGORY A. SHEMITZ/CNS

Although I believe that there are no permanent deacons in the communities dedicated exclusively to the extraordinary form, there is nothing that would impede a permanent deacon from carrying out the liturgical functions permitted in this ritual. Thus, in an answer to a question in 2008 the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* announced: “The *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum*, just as the *Motu Proprio Ecclesia Dei*, presupposes that any deacons, transitional or permanent, may function as deacons in the Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal, provided, of course, that they are familiar with the rites and can function with sufficient

ease. The local Ordinary cannot impede a deacon in good standing from functioning as a deacon in the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite provided that the deacon is qualified.”

We could, however, ask the question whether the 1983 Code of Canon Law (861, §1), which makes a deacon an ordinary minister of baptism, might remove some of the restrictions mentioned above.

I would say that it would only make a relatively small difference. The 2011 instruction *Universae Ecclesiae*, No. 28, clarified that *Summorum Pontificum* derogated from post-1962 liturgical laws which are incompatible with the previous rubrics.

In the light of this, even though, as an ordinary minister of baptism, the deacon might no longer technically require an express authorization to baptize, he is restricted, and depends on the priest, insofar as he is still unable to bless the salt and water required for the rite.

This would leave him, for all practical purposes, in the same situation as a 1962 deacon with respect to baptism.

With respect to distributing holy Communion, Father Daniel C. Gill points out that there is a change wrought by canon law (CIC 910, §1) making the deacon an ordinary rather than an extraordinary minister of Communion. The 1917

code (845, §2) said that the deacon:

“Was an extraordinary minister of communion, who needed the permission of the pastor or local ordinary and a legitimate reason in order to distribute communion. With the change from extraordinary to ordinary minister, the deacon now would no longer need permission and a legitimate reason in order to distribute communion. Ceremonially there is no change. The 1952 Roman Ritual allowed the deacon to distribute communion using the same ritual as a priest (cf. 1952 RR, *Order of Administering Holy Comm. outside Mass*, n. 10) and could also give the blessing found at the end of the rite (see Cod. Comm., Resp. 13 July 1930). Similarly, the ritual allowed the deacon to administer Viaticum (cf. 1952 RR, *Order of Communion to the Sick*, n. 29). That this included the blessing within the rite was made clear, first, by an 1858 response by the Sacred Congregation of Rites (see S.R.C. 5270, *Tonkini Occidentalis* [14 Aug 1858]), and then, by 1917 CIC 1274, §2. <https://dcgb7f.wordpress.com/2014/05/01/deacons-and-summorum-pontificum/>”

The situation of an Eastern-rite deacon with respect to baptism is analogous to that of an extraordinary form deacon albeit more restrictive. Canon 677 §2 of the Code of Canon Law of the Eastern Churches states that the deacon can baptize only in cases of necessity. The norm here is more restrictive insofar as most Eastern Churches habitually administer confirmation and Eucharist to infants in a continuous celebration. While it is possible for the Church to widen the number of blessings that a deacon can bestow, it is beyond its power to grant a deacon the faculty to be a minister of confirmation.

Transferring obligatory memorials

Q: In our parish, I notice that our priest transfers the celebration of the obligatory memorial of a saint to another day (usually the nearest ferial day) because it always coincided with the celebration of the dedication of our cathedral. In the same way, he transfers the optional memorial of a saint to another ferial day because its celebration coincides with the patron saint of our parish who does not figure anymore in the general Roman calendar since the liturgical reform of Vatican II. Does liturgical law require this? Is it really necessary? — T.C., Manila, Philippines

A: Regarding this general topic the Holy See issued a Notification in 1997 regarding some aspects of how to address the increasing number of coincidences in the liturgical year. It says in part:

“1. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the principle that the celebration of the Saints, in which the marvels of Christ are continually proclaimed in his servants, although important, should nevertheless not take precedence over the celebration of the mysteries of salvation which recur weekly on Sunday, and in the course of the liturgical year. This awareness, therefore, entailed that the celebration of many Saints should be left to the dioceses, to countries and to religious families (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 111). This principle, along with others established by the Council, served in the restoration of the liturgical year and of the General Calendar of the Roman Rite.

“2. The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar, along with the Table of Liturgical Days, have the purpose of applying concretely this criterion, both to the General Calendar and to proper calendars. Further, the instruction *Calendaria particularia* of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, of June 24, 1970, explicates some complementary considerations regarding proper calendars.

“3. Since these norms were promulgated two new factors have entered upon the scene. On the one hand, the large number of beatifications and canonizations celebrated in these last years by the Holy Father has resulted at times in a notable increase in the

celebrations introduced into the proper calendars. On the other hand, the addition of a certain number of celebrations to the General Calendar or the raising of the grade of the already existing Feasts, have diminished to a corresponding extent the number of unoccupied days.

“4. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments does not judge it opportune, for the moment, to change the norms presently in force; at the same time, however, it considers it necessary to underline some provisions of those norms, provisions whose observance might contribute to avoiding a notable deterioration in the liturgical calendars ...

“5. The appropriate day for adding celebrations to a proper calendar is the same day that the celebration takes place in the General Calendar (*General Norms*, n. 56a; *Calendaria particularia*, n. 23), even if the grade of the celebration has to be changed.

“6. A good practice, in regard to the liturgical celebration of traditional devotional titles of the Lord Jesus Christ or of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is to tie them to one of the Feasts or Solemnities of either one that is found in the General Calendar. In the case of the Blessed Mother, it is also customary to associate the Feast with September 12th, which was the date of the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary in the Roman Calendar. At the same time, in the same spirit of integration and clarification, it would be advisable to avoid the creation of new titles or devotional Feasts for the Lord or the Blessed Mother, limiting these to the ones already in use in the liturgical books, unless they respond to a devotional feeling widely diffused among the Christian faithful and have received a prior and careful examination from a doctrinal point of view.

“7. In the case of a Saint, in the absence of a celebration in the General Calendar, the most appropriate day for the proper calendar will be the *dies natalis* (heavenly birthday) of the Saint. Whenever, however, that date is unknown, or is impeded by a Solemnity or Feast or obligatory

Memorial, already present in the General Calendar or in the proper calendar, the new celebration would normally be set on another suitable day: perhaps the day of the Saint's baptism, his ordination, of the discovery or translation of his or her body, or simply the nearest unoccupied day (*General Norms*, nn. 56b, 56c). It is preferable, however, that the day of the canonization not be chosen (see below, n. 39).

“8. In the case that an optional Memorial of the proper calendar is impeded on the most appropriate day by another obligatory Memorial, found in the General Calendar or, for example, in the national calendar, one of the two following solutions is advisable (cf. *Calendaria particularia*, n. 23); in certain circumstances it would be possible to obtain a reduction of the grade of the obligatory Memorial; this would permit an appropriate pastoral freedom to choose between the two celebrations; otherwise it would also be possible to unite, though this would be done rarely, two celebrations of a similar kind.

“9. The Beatified do not occur, obviously, in the General Calendar; but their addition to a proper calendar follows, in general, the same principles enunciated above for a Saint.

“10. In the last few years the Dicastries of the Holy See concerned with liturgy, following requests presented with sound reasons by the diocesan bishops, and on pastoral grounds, have conceded a certain number of transfers, even of celebrations which are found in the General Calendar. Now, however, it seems opportune to offer some brief reflections on this subject.

“11. The integrity of the General Calendar must be maintained, as the expression, among other things, of the substantial unity of the Roman Rite (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 38). The risk, in fact, is that too broad a practice will result in the weakening of the unity and the internal coherence of the General Calendar and, at their different levels, of each of the national calendars or those covering regions that transcend a single diocese.

“12. In the future, therefore, the Congregation intends to insist more strictly on maintaining the celebrations of the General Calendar on the days assigned to them, and not to allow the transferral of the impeding celebrations to a different day, except for altogether exceptional pastoral reasons involving a considerable number of the faithful. The same will hold true for the national and the regional calendars when they come into conflict with diocesan calendars.

“13. Whenever, in fact, it is a question of a celebration to take place at a more local level being impeded, the principle should normally be followed that the impeded celebration rather than the one which is impeding it be transferred.

“14. A case is sometimes made for the transfer of impeding celebrations by the existence of processions or other festive observances of a popular tradition among the Catholic faithful. These cases require special consideration. Nevertheless, when such manifestations are of a nature more popular or folkloric than liturgical, they may take place independently of liturgical functions, and therefore create no need for the transference of the celebration. Still, there remain local Solemnities and Feasts where a deeply rooted and immemorial popular tradition will constitute sufficient grounds for the transferral of the impeding celebration (cf. *Calendaria particularia*, n. 23b).

“15. More rarely the motive advanced for the transferral of a celebration is the idea of ensuring coordination with a similar celebration present in the liturgical or popular calendar of a non-Catholic Christian community. Except for truly exceptional reasons, such a motive should not be deemed sufficient. That holds true, in a special way, in respect of the General Calendar, which is an expression of the communion existing between the local Churches of the same rite. However laudable these may be in themselves, considerations prompted by ecclesial communities with which there does not exist full communion should not be given precedence ...

“17. In obedience to the desire

of the Council, the norms insist that the period that usually falls within Lent, and the days of the Octave of Easter, as well as the days running from the 17th to the 24th of December, should be left free of celebrations of the Saints. These norms, however, may admit of exceptions to the general rule. Above all, on this point, a certain liberty obtains regarding proper Feasts and proper optional Memorials.

“18. It is important to note that the celebrations to be included in proper calendars are regulated in precise terms by the norms currently in force.

“19. In the diocesan calendar should be included: the Feast of the (principal) patron of the diocese, the Feast of the dedication of the cathedral church, as well as the obligatory Memorial of any secondary patron. There should also be included the celebrations of those Saints and Beatified who have a special connection with that diocese: for example, if they were born there, engaged in a long service to the Church there, or if they died there, especially if their bodies or the major relics are kept there; or again if they are the subject of an immemorial and still living cult in that place (cf. *General Norms*, n. 52a; *Table of Liturgical Days*, nn. 8a, 8b, 11a; *Calendaria particularia*, n. 9). The request that is not rarely made for the (principal) Patron of the diocese to be celebrated with the grade of Solemnity is not in full harmony with the norms (cf. *Table of Liturgical Days*, n. 8a), and is not advisable ...

“22. From all this, it follows that, in the absence of a truly exceptional pastoral motive, it is not appropriate to introduce other celebrations into the proper calendars. Such exceptional cases require an indult from the Holy See.

“23. The legal norms are much less developed regarding other calendars. This would include, on the one hand, interdiocesan (regional, national) calendars, or intradiocesan ones (of a city or of other places, of specific churches) and, on the other hand, those of the congregations or provinces that make up religious families, or the calendars common to the various

Family is a gift

By Archbishop Gilbert Garcera



IN all my years of service to Christ, I realized that all the gifts that God has given us are only as good as our capability to maximize them.

I experienced this realization through one of the first gifts God has given me, my family. It was through the influence of my father and mother—their love, their prayerfulness, and selflessness—that I came to understand what God was calling me to do for others. Every time I am hit with this profound thought, I thank God profusely for they led me to follow God's will. Because of how they raised me, I know that I am exactly where God has chosen me to be—to uphold, defend, and protect the reason that gave meaning to my life—the family.

Brothers and sisters, if we can visualize what the family would look like, the family would look like a bruised child, constantly trying to defend itself from the taunting of bullies in society who constantly tell him that the family is of no value and use anymore.

It sometimes saddens me that the world has come to this—that many would forsake the Sacrament of Marriage out of being “practical”. It wounds me to see couples having difficulty fulfilling their vows and resort to “giving up”. It bothers me how children are choosing gadgets over parents, while parents choose careers over the home.

I agree with Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*: “A crisis in a couple's relationship destabilizes the family and may lead, through separation and divorce, to serious consequences for adults, children and society as a whole, weakening its individual and social bonds.” (no. 41)

Have we forgotten why this family was given to us, wrapped in an infinite amount of grace and love?

Family is a gift because ...

My dearest friends in Christ, or rather, I should say, my dearest

family in Christ, let us not forget that our families are a gift.

It was created with a great purpose. The family is the first place where we learn to become human—a ‘cradle of life and love’. (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, p.209) It is designed to be the concrete manifestation of overflowing love as seen in the perfect love within the Holy Trinity.

“The family is the setting in which a new life is not only born but also welcomed as a gift of God.” (*Amoris Laetitia* no. 166)

Because it is a gift, we, the lay faithful, are called to uphold its giftedness by:

Acknowledging the sending. “Love between husband and wife and with the children is always a gift of God. Wherever it is poured out, it makes its transforming presence felt, often in mysterious ways.” (*Amoris Laetitia* no. 228)

Let us express our gratitude to God for the gift of family. Despite the trials, challenges, and issues we encounter within it, let us never forget that God has given us to them, or rather placed us in them for a reason. Let us wake up every day thanking God for the graces, knowing we cannot preserve its value alone. Let us offer each family member in prayer—knowing that each person is a gift from God to us.

Opening and using the gift. The recent papal document on the young people as expressed by Pope Francis presents significantly the value and dignity of being a gift. “For Jesus, you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands. That is why he is concerned about you and looks to you with affection.” (*Christus Vivit* # 115)

The family is also the work of God's hands. Let us discover the beauty of our family. What is its uniqueness? Giftedness? Be reflective and discover how our families can be a gift to other families as well. Let us encourage

our own families to be active in faith. Let us bring our family members closer to Jesus.

Sharing the gift. Let us allow our family members to experience the gift of mission, providing for them an opportunity to share who they are to the world. Encourage them to open their eyes to other families who are in need of their support, company, and guidance.

A message to the next generation

To the Filipino youth, a lot rests on you. Young as you are, the Lord is calling you to preserve the family as a gift, by being gifts to others. How do we become gifts to others? By practicing these 3Ps!

Personal reflection and realization

Have you thought of the inspiring words of Pope Francis at his meeting with the young people during the synod? He said: “Young people, beloved of the Lord, how valuable must you be, if you were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, you are priceless! You are not up for sale! Please, do not let yourself be bought. You must repeat this always: I am not up for sale; I do not have a price. I am free! Fall in love with this freedom, which is what Jesus offers”. (rf. October 6, 2018; CV #122)

Self-knowledge and self-awareness are vital in being a gift to others. Every day, we need to have a time for silence and meditation in order for us to be conscious of our giftedness. Most of us spend our lives existing but not really living. We wake up, move, and do our usual routines, without really being mindful of why we do things or for whom we are doing them. Let us make every waking moment a chance to be a gift to others, especially your own family.

Personal discernment

As you become more aware of how you were created by God, accompany this with the habit of

critical thinking and constantly asking for the Lord's will in your life. These days, it seems the young generation is trained to be “lazy”. Why? Because there are systems and technology (like Google, Facebook, and social media) to think and do the work for them. My dear young ones, let us use the gift of knowledge and wisdom to analyze the life we're living. Our minds are a special gift from God, differentiating us from all creation. Use that mind to ponder, analyze, and decide, in order to deliberately act on something.

Have you asked yourselves these questions?

What do should I do with my life?

What is the Lord doing to my life?

How can I be a gift to my family?

How can our family be a gift to others?

For us to respond to the challenge of discerning our family and personal situation, I want us to look at the importance of the formation of conscience. For us priests who hear confession, we could say that the quality of sins we listen to in the sacrament of reconciliation would gauge the depth of moral consciousness of our parishioners. How about decision-making during the recent elections? During the recent elections, one can conclude on the level of moral decisions of our people, from the prism of the moral development theories of Piaget and Kohlberg. For our young people, the proliferation of fake news through different media platforms is as ordinary as daily news. If we want to remain in Jesus with the spiritual aid of discernment, formation of conscience is a must. “Forming our conscience is the work of a lifetime, in which we learn to cultivate the very sentiments of Jesus Christ, adopting the criteria behind his choices and the intentions behind his actions.” (*Christus Vivit* # 281)

Is our conscience formed with the values of family?

Prayer

Lastly, because being a gift to others and our family can sometimes be a daunting feat, I urge you to pray—consistently, constantly, and unceasingly. We ought to pray, not just in the quiet parts of our home, but also as we go out and interact with others. Let us pray as we train ourselves to see the Jesus in another.

We all belong to families but we can never be families in the fullest sense without the presence of Christ. My dear couples, put Christ in your marriage in order to enrich the giftedness of your family. I hope that both of you pray when you wake up in the morning. Seek to have a devotion to the Holy Family.

I am one with Pope Francis in *Gaudete et Exultate* in saying that, “I do not believe in holiness without prayer, even though that prayer need not be lengthy or involve intense emotions.” (no. 147)

My fellow brothers and sisters in mission, to all family and life organizations, the task to protect the family and uphold its giftedness is not easy. The clergy alone cannot do it. Lay faithful alone cannot do it. We all need to work together—and become a church, a family, in order to slowly touch the lives of families around us. We need your creativity to think of more ideas and new ways to help make Jesus' message of love attractive to them. We need solidarity so that the mission can further exponentially.

We need your prayers. It is in prayer that we begin to see that we need Christ. Prayer is our way of listening to Him so that we can become a gift. Let us become a gift from God for others.

(This was delivered by Archbishop Gilbert Garcera at the launch of “Family is a Gift” program in the Archdiocese of Lipa, held on May 18, 2019. Garcera is the Archbishop of Lipa and Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.)

From climate change to climate emergency

(Part 1)

By Jaazeal Jakosalem



Pope Francis addresses participants of a Vatican climate change conference for finance ministers from around the world May 27, 2019. The conference, "Climate Change and New Evidence from Science, Engineering and Policy," was sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Science. Among the issues discussed during the event was the fulfillment of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. CNS/VATICAN MEDIA

CLIMATE Change already made its impact on our planet, of our making—disastrous impact on humanity and all of creation. We have paid the cost of climate divergence: damaging to humanity, irreparable to nature and a bleak future for the generations to come; and *yet global warming is not being treated as an emergency*.

'Climate Emergency' offers a new approach to our climate action, more than just a campaign slogan or any sort of parliamentary declaration; it is however, a call to engage governments, institutions, organizations and even individuals to prioritize drastic response to any environmental damages. No more sweet talks, or capitalistic sloganeering on the environmental campaigns. We have to immediately change from normal mode to emergency mode, "An 'emergency declaration' demonstrates that the government rates the problem as very serious, that priority will be given to resolving the crisis, that we are all in the crisis together and that, officially, 'business as usual' and 'reform-as-usual' no longer applies..."² No hesitation, not allowing space for inaction in the existing climate crisis, "People expect an emergency announcement when there is a life-threatening situation, and will hesitate to take any action themselves if nobody else appears to be taking the threat seriously."³ Here and now, there is climate emergency. We have to step-up our ecological mechanisms in addressing the impacts of climate disruption, Pope Francis underlined this in his encyclical, *the immensity and urgency of the challenge we face*⁴, encouraging everyone to respond to the challenge of the ecological problems with greater urgency. The UK Parliament declared an environment and climate emergency⁵ last May 1, 2019; the first in the world, approving the proposal of Jeremy Corbyn for the body to declare 'climate emergency,' in his speech, he said: "We are living in a climate crisis that will spiral dangerously out of control unless we take rapid and dramatic action now... This isn't just climate change. It is a climate emergency."⁶ This declaration was followed by the Republic of Ireland last May 9, 2019, declaring a *climate and biodiversity emergency*. Cities and towns in Europe are already declaring climate emergency on their own.

There is a need to understand issues and

current themes of learning and actions on environmental or climate emergency. First, we need to *connect-the-dots existing between environmental and social problems*, the interconnectivity of all social issues is rooted in social disturbance brought about by ineffective social programs by society or governments. Second, we need to *re-frame contemporary global strategies*; international bodies, organized conferences and formed groups for many years failed to address the roots of the problem, and instead failed to address the climate emergency in an integral manner. Third, we need to learn from the *emerging faces and stories of struggles* of activists and collective groups doing the right thing for the environment, and offering the needed action to immediately address the emergency. Fourth, we need to situate *the global stage of the climate emergency*, it is not the ideal space where to find action, it is where you are; your contribution in addressing local ecological problem/s will support the collective efforts to address the global stage of climate emergency happening all across the globe. And lastly, our conclusion offers an organic basic responses on climate emergency.

Connecting the dots between Environmental and Social Problems

The alarming call of climate emergency is disturbing the established political 'order,' it can even isolate governments and even pave a way for a new regime change for other countries. The environmental problems affected the lives of the people, the realization that communities has become the victim of every damage done to the environment; governments cannot just dismiss the cry of the victims. *The poorest people will continue to experience climate change through the loss of income and livelihood opportunities, hunger, adverse health effects and displacement.*⁸ Sadly, this epoch is seeing both the reverberation of ecological voices and the reality of more environmental damages being done across continents.

"Historically, people have been forced to flee their homes due to civil wars, political instability, poverty and hunger, but the growing number of extreme weather events linked to climate change are now increasingly contributing to migration."⁹ Pope Francis identified the interconnectivity of all these, he calls it "integral ecology"¹⁰; "integral ecology"; that the problem is not just ecological, with potentially catastrophic impacts cascading through financial, ecological and social

systems¹¹. "As climate change intensifies, we will find it harder to feed ourselves. Extinction rates will spike as vital habitats decline. More and more people will be forced to migrate from their homes as the land they depend on becomes less able to support them. This is already leading to many local conflicts over dwindling resources."¹² Failure to address these, leads to a profound destruction of people and planet.

Yes, there is a connection between 'climate emergency' with other social struggles. The destruction of communities paving the way for pipeline projects; the continuing destruction of forests in the Amazon region and in countries like Indonesia are affecting the lives of indigenous peoples and the whole of the ecosystem; the enormous deaths caused by stronger typhoons in the island communities—all these impacts create economic disturbances on the affected families and communities, and we have seen that all these lead to displacement (social and economic in nature). "Climate change affects people inside their own countries, and typically creates internal displacement before it reaches a level where it displaces people across borders."¹³ Pope Francis recently issued a call for young economists and entrepreneurs worldwide to gather, reflect and be able to re-animate our economic system affecting our *common home* and our people on March 26-28, 2020, in a conference called the "Economy of Francesco;" he said in his message: "everything is deeply connected and that the safeguarding of the environment cannot be divorced from ensuring justice for the poor and finding answers to the structural problems of the global economy. We need to correct models of growth incapable of guaranteeing respect for the environment, openness to life, concern for the family, social equality, the dignity of workers and the rights of future generations. Sadly, few have heard the appeal to acknowledge the gravity of the problems and, even more, to set in place a new economic model, the fruit of a culture of communion based on fraternity and equality."¹⁴

Most of our current environmental problems are the results of the actions and inactions of our government leaders, often justifying the many destruction with economic and development-driven reasons, truly a wrong reading of sustainable development. As underlined by the 2018 IPCC report that in addressing the climate change impacts, we need to "allow people to live a life in dignity while avoiding actions that undermine capabilities; transform economies; overcome uneven consumption and production patterns

and conceptualize development as well-being rather than mere economic growth..."¹⁵

Re-framing contemporary global strategies

In 2015, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was able to craft the Paris Agreement, a non-binding and yet definitive 'guideline' for countries to address and step-up climate action. And yet, we are seeing the commitments of countries only on the level of a more weaker commitments, of speaking only from the economic perspective of climate change. Even at the start of the climate negotiations and thereafter we have seen how the negotiators sidelined the equity and climate justice approaches; leaving the accountability of big nations that contributed so much the CO₂ in our atmosphere; and letting the developing countries pay the price¹⁶. Naomi Klein, foremost Canadian activist, sounded the alarm of the need of a 'post-Paris plan'; she was right, year after year of the Paris Agreement, we are seeing more people suffering from the climate impacts without due attention, she said "Today, I feel the same way about the urgency of climate action as I did yesterday: The threat is so grave that it is immoral to waste even a moment pondering our chances of success. So long as there is any chance of keeping temperatures below truly catastrophic levels, we have an unbreakable responsibility to do everything in our power to increase those chance."¹⁷

The UNFCCC should re-frame the whole nature of any 'future' agreements: making it legally binding (making signatories legally accountable); clearly specifying climate financing, improving the liability provision of the loss and damage; overhauling the systemic capitalist attitude related to economic, political and development models; and infusing consistent declaration of climate emergency. Most importantly, we must avoid in future *conference of parties* (COP), the element of resignation that any agreement was better than no agreement at all, this is the defeating attitude of developing countries, and the succeeding COP after the Paris Agreement repeated the same mistake.

Many people expected that the Paris Agreement would bring productive development of a fossil-free future, and yet *the Paris Agreement does not address fundamental problems with the global capitalist economic system and how it continues to foster reliance on fossil fuel to drive economic growth in the short to medium term*¹⁸.

The deadlines, the rule book, and the targets need to be translated into the realities of climate-related experiences. The attempt to incorporate the *Talanoa Dialogue*¹⁹

15 IPCC, p. 469.

16 Raymond Cléménçon, *The Two Sides of the Paris Climate Agreement: Dismal Failure or Historic Breakthrough?*, The Journal of Environment & Development, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1070496516631362>.

17 Naomi Klein, *Economic Pressure Could Jolt Trump into Action on Climate Change*, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, May 31, 2017, <http://www.naomiklein.org/articles/2017/06/economic-pressure-could-jolt-trump-action-climate-change>.

18 Cléménçon, *The Two Sides of the Paris Climate Agreement: Dismal Failure or Historic Breakthrough?* <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1070496516631362>.

19 UNFCCC, *What is Talanoa?*, Talanoa Dialogue, 2018,

1 Ian Dunlop, David Spratt, What does "climate emergency" mean?, THE CLUB OF ROME CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN (November 21, 2018) p. 5, [hereinafter climate emergency].

2 Id, p. 3.

3 Why Declare A Climate Emergency?, <https://climateemergency.uk/blog/what-emergency>.

4 Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, LIBRERIA EDITRICE VATICANA ¶15 (May 24, 2015) [hereinafter *Laudato si'*].

5 Ashley Cowburn, MPs make history by passing Commons motion to declare 'environment and climate change emergency', INDEPENDENT, May 1, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/climate-change-environment-emergency-commons-motion-mps-vote-latest-a8895456.html>.

6 Jeremy Corbyn, Jeremy Corbyn declares environment and climate emergency, LABOUR, May 1, 2019, <https://labour.org.uk/press/jeremy-corbyn-declares-environment-climate-emergency>.

7 Irish parliament declares climate emergency, THE GUARDIAN, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/10/irish-parliament-declares-climate-emergency>, "An amendment to a parliamentary report declaring a climate emergency and calling on the parliament "to examine how [the Irish government] can improve its response to the issue of biodiversity loss" was accepted without a vote late on Thursday."

8 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Roy, J., P. Tschakert, H. Waisman, S. Abdul Halim, P. Antwi-Agyei, P. Dasgupta, B. Hayward, M. Kanninen, D. Liverman, C. Okereke, P.F. Pinho, K. Riahi, and A.G. Suarez Rodriguez, 2018: Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication and Reducing Inequalities. In: *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty* [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. In Press, p. 479. [hereinafter IPCC].

9 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Climate Change Is A Key Driver of Migration and Food Insecurity, Oct. 16, 2017, <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-a-key-driver-of-migration-and-food-insecurity>. [hereinafter UNFCCC].

10 *Laudato si'*, The Chapter Four (¶¶ 137-162) of the Encyclical is all about *integral ecology*.

Ecumenical dimension of the encyclical “Laudato Si”

By Fr. Emmanuel Mijares

Children perform at the start of an international conference marking the third anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, “Laudato Si’,” at the Vatican July 5. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

“WHAT kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (160). This question is at the heart of *Laudato si’* (May You be praised), the famous Encyclical on the care of the common home by Pope Francis. “This question does not have to do with the environment alone and in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal” but require a dialogical solution and cooperation from many sectors and angles.

If we try to revisit it, we could discover a perhaps forgotten element which is its ecumenical dimension, a dimension which perhaps without it this encyclical would be incomplete. Already in presenting this rather urgent encyclical to the media with the presence of scientists, among others, His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Pergamo, John Zizioulas, was around representing the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church. He spoke of the theology and spirituality with which the Encyclical opens and closes.

There were also other perspectives, important as well, like climate change and its impact, economic and financial, and of course the environmental and human issues. In a sense the spirit of dialogue, a necessary element in Ecumenism, is the spirit of the Encyclical. These different perspectives are really intertwined and complementary: the ecumenical riches of faith and of spiritual tradition, the seriousness of scientific research, the concrete efforts at various levels, all for an equitable and sustainable development.

This type of dialogue with and among many sectors and institutions was also employed as the method of preparation that the Holy Father embraced in the writing of the Encyclical. He relied on a wide range of contributions.

In fact this is what the Pope himself said on the plane flying to Manila. He said, “[It] is already known: Cardinal Turkson and his team prepared the first draft. then, with some help, I took it and worked on it, then with a few theologians I made a third draft and sent a copy to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to the second section of the Secretariat of State, and to the Theologian of the Papal Household...”

“Some, in particular those from many Episcopal Conferences from all the continents, are mentioned in the footnotes. Needless to say that others who participated in the various phases of this work[1] all the way to the complex final phases of translation and publication, remain unnamed.”

As noted, the framing question asked by Pope Francis in his encyclical is a simple one: “what kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up”? This question surely resonates with everyone in the world.

The Holy Father continues, “This question does not have to do with the environment alone and in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal.” This leads us to ask ourselves about the meaning of existence and its values that are the basis of social life: “What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?” “If we do not ask these basic questions” – says the Pope – “it is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations” (n. 160).

These questions arise from an observation: today the earth, our sister, mistreated and abused, is lamenting; and its groans join those of all the world's forsaken and “discarded”. Pope Francis invites us to listen to them, urging each and every one—individuals, families, local communities, nations and the international community—to an “ecological conversion” according to the expression of St John Paul II, that is, to “change direction” by taking on the beauty and responsibility of the task of “caring for our common home”. He does this using the words of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, who was represented by His Eminence, the Metropolitan John Zizioulas: “Human beings ... destroy the biological diversity [...] by causing changes in its climate, [...], contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins (n.8).

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople Patriarch Dimitrios, the successor of Athenagoras, has been the first one in the Christian world to draw the attention of the world community to the seriousness of the ecological problem and the duty of the Church to voice its concern and try to contribute with all the spiritual means at its disposal towards the protection of our natural environment. Thus, back already in the year 1989, he issued an Encyclical to the faithful Christians and to all people of good will, in which he underlined the seriousness of the ecological problem and its theological and spiritual dimensions. This was followed by a series of activities, such as international conferences of religious leaders and scientific

experts, as well as seminars for young people, Church ministers etc., under the auspices of the present Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, aiming at the promotion of an ecological consciousness among the Christians in particular and more widely in the community of men and women.

In number 8, in fact, the Encyclical acknowledges what “Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet,” for “inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage”, we are called to acknowledge “our contribution, smaller or



Children perform at the start of an international conference marking the third anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, “Laudato Si’,” at the Vatican, July 5, 2018. PAUL HARING/CNS

greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation”.[14]

Pope Francis was in unison with him when he said: “[Patriarch Bartholomew] has repeatedly stated this firmly and persuasively, challenging us to acknowledge our sins against creation: “For human beings... to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins”.[15] For “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God”.[16]

“At the same time, Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. He asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which “entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion”.[17] As Christians, we are also called “to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet”.[18] (n. 9)

The encyclical therefore offers the shared Ecumenical Points: Ecology and Theology.

What does ecology have to do with theology? In the traditional manuals of theology, there is hardly any place for ecology and the same is true for the academic curricula of the theological schools, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. The Encyclical devotes a whole chapter (ch. 2) to show the profound ecological implications of the Christian doctrine of creation. It points out that according to the Bible “human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself” (par. 66). This third relationship, i.e. with the earth, has been very often ignored by Christian theology. (to such an extent that the American historian Lynn White, in a now famous article in the periodical *Scientist* (1967), would accuse Christian theology for being responsible for the modern ecological crisis. For it is true that in Christian theology the human being has been so exalted above material creation as to allow humans to treat it as material for the satisfaction of their needs and desires. The human being has been de-naturalized and in its abuse and misuse of the biblical command to the first human couple—“increase and

multiply and subdue the earth” (Gen. 1.28)—humanity was encouraged to exploit the material creation unrestrictedly with no respect for its integrity and even sacredness.)

This attitude to creation did not only lead to a misuse of the biblical doctrine but at the same time contradicted fundamental principles of Christian faith, namely:

a. Incarnation of Christ. In assuming human nature, the Son of God took over material creation in its entirety. Christ came to save the whole creation through the Incarnation, not only humanity; for according to St. Paul (Rom. 8.23) “the whole creation groans in

future generations. By destroying our planet in order to satisfy our greed for happiness, we bequeath to the future generations a world damaged beyond repair with all the negative consequences that this will have for their lives. We must act, therefore, responsibly towards our children and those who will succeed us in this life.

All this calls for what we may describe as an ecological asceticism. It is noteworthy that the great figures of the Christian ascetical tradition were all sensitive towards the suffering of all creatures. The equivalent of a St. Francis of Assisi is abundantly present in

travail and is suffering” awaiting its salvation through humanity.

b. Eucharist. The other fundamental principle of Christian faith that has important ecological implications relates to the very heart of the Church, which is the Holy Eucharist. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church offers to God the material world in the form of the bread and the wine. In this Sacrament space, time and matter are sanctified; they are lifted up to the Creator with thankfulness as His gifts to us; creation is solemnly declared as God's gift, and human beings instead of proprietors of creation act as its priests, who lift it up to the holiness of the divine life. This brings to mind the moving words of St. Francis of Assisi with which the Encyclical opens: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth.” As St. Gregory Palamas and other Greek Fathers would put it, the whole of creation is permeated by God's presence through His divine energies; everything declares God's glory, as the Psalmist says, and the human being leads this cosmic chorus of glorification to the Creator as the priest of creation. This way of understanding the place and mission of humanity in creation is common to both Eastern and Western Christian tradition, and is of particular importance for the cultivation of an ecological ethos.

The spiritual dimension

As it emerges clearly from the Encyclical, the ecological crisis is essentially a spiritual problem. The proper relationship between humanity and the earth or its natural environment has been broken with the Fall both outwardly and within us, and this rupture is sin. The Church must now introduce in its teaching about sin the sin against the environment, the ecological sin. Repentance must be extended to cover also the damage we do to nature both as individuals and as societies. This must be brought to the conscience of every Christian who cares for his or her salvation.

The rupture of the proper relationship between humanity and nature is due to the rise of individualism in our culture. The pursuit of individual happiness has been made into an ideal in our time. Ecological sin is due to human greed which blinds men and women to the point of ignoring and disregarding the basic truth that the happiness of the individual depends on its relationship with the rest of human beings. There is a social dimension in ecology which the Encyclical brings out with clarity. The ecological crisis goes hand in hand with the spread of social injustice. We cannot face successfully the one without dealing with the other.

Ecological sin is a sin not only against God but also against our neighbor. And it is a sin not only against the other of our own time but also – and this is serious – against the

the monastic tradition of the East. There are accounts of the lives of the desert saints which present the ascetic as weeping for the suffering or death of every creature and as leading a peaceful and friendly co-existence even with the beasts. This is not romanticism. It springs from a loving heart and the conviction that between the natural world and ourselves there is an organic unity and interdependence that makes us share a common fate just as we have the same Creator.

Asceticism is an unpleasant idea in our present culture, which measures happiness and progress with the increase of capital and consumption. It would be unrealistic to expect our societies to adopt asceticism in the way St. Francis and the Desert Fathers of the East experienced it. But the spirit and the ethos of asceticism can and must be adopted if our planet is to survive. Restraint in the consumption of natural resources is a realistic attitude and ways must be found to put a limit to the immense waste of natural materials. Technology and science must devote their efforts to such a task. There is a great deal of inspiration and help that can be drawn from the Encyclical itself in this respect.

The ecumenical significance and ecumenical “loci” of the encyclical

We could say that there are three dimensions to ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue.

a. The Dialogue of Doctrine. Also referred to ecumenism in time, an expression frequently used by one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the last century, the late Fr. Georges Florovsky. By this we mean the effort of the divided Christians to unite on the basis of their common Tradition, the teaching of the Bible and the Church Fathers. This is the object of the theological dialogues which are taking place in the Ecumenical Movement of our time and it seems to be the predominant form of ecumenism.

b. Dialogue of common concern. Could also be called an ecumenism in space. It is also practiced through various international institutions, such as the World Council of Churches and similar ecumenical bodies which bring together the divided Christians so that the different cultural contexts in which they live may be taken into consideration in the search for unity. This has brought together Christians from Asia, America, Europe, Latin America etc – an expression of the universality of the Christian Church.

c. To these two dimensions which have dominated the ecumenical scene for the last hundred years we must add, a third one which is usually neglected, namely what I would call an existential ecumenism, also called a “dialogue of life and action”. By that I mean the effort to face together the most profound existential problems that preoccupy humanity in its entirety – not simply in particular

The power that heals, strengthens and unifies

Pentecost Sunday, Year C, John 14:15-16, 23b-26
June 9, 2019

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

AFTER the sin of Adam and Eve, and the universal perversion that enveloped mankind which led God to purify it through the Flood, the episode of **the Tower of Babel was the third major disaster in human history.** The construction of that tower intended to “reach the sky” and “to make a name” for its builders was no innocent architectural blunder. Rather, **it was a proud revolt against God’s sovereignty and an attempt to supplant Him by organizing a godless society** in which earthly values were supposed to be everything, to the exclusion of transcendent ones.

The catastrophic result of that plan was of such a magnitude that the whole of mankind has ever since staggered under its crushing weight. The proliferation of languages mentioned in the Book of Genesis is just a partial symptom of a much deeper and more serious malaise: the pride and selfishness which sets man against man, group against group, nation against nation. **Those who reject the authority of God soon become the oppressors of their kind.** It is personal and social sin in its endless ramification of tentacles that continually threaten to choke individuals and societies. **A shattered and scattered mankind endlessly renews the causes of its own undoing.**

Nor is **sin** a cause only of division among individuals and nations. **It is also a cause of struggle and division, even within each individual sinner** as it unleashes in him/her the quest for physical pleasure and the satisfaction of one’s arrogance. These militate against all forms of moral and spiritual values, and sow discord in the basic orientation of every person, as St. Paul pointed out (*see Rom 7:15-24*), and as each of us knows very well.

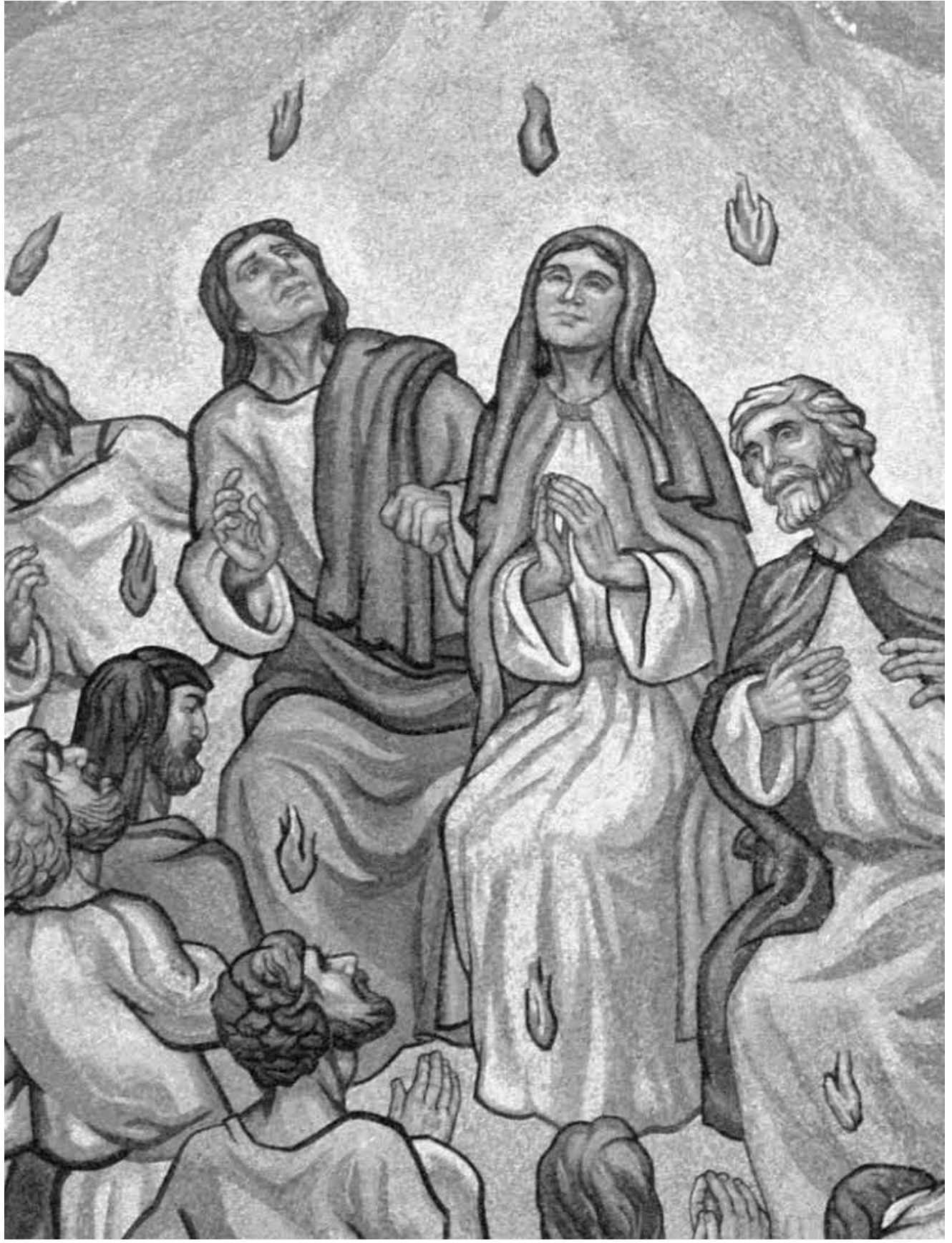
Only God can rid mankind of the plague of sin in all its forms and effects. His “rescue plan” includes two interrelated stages:

redemption through Jesus Christ; healing process and sanctification through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ reconciled mankind with God and broke down the barriers separating Jews from Gentiles, man from man, and soul from body. (*See Rom 5:10 and Eph 2:13-18.*) **The Spirit makes the power of Christ’s Redemption present and operative in all corners of the world and for all generations,** and thereby undoes all forms of devastation produced by sin. The Spirit is the one who heals the wounds caused by conflicting interests and binds into a harmonious whole the variety of human resources and efforts.

It is for such a purpose that **the Risen Christ breathed his Spirit on his Apostles and sent it as a mighty wind to the whole community of believers on Pentecost Day.** (*See Jn 20:22-23 and Acts 2:1-4.*) Thus he gave the whole Church, represented by its initial members, the unifying bond that alone can reconcile people with God, among themselves and within themselves.

From that moment on, **Pentecost** was revealed to the world as **the anti-sin and anti-Babel event.** Since the root of all mankind’s disasters is sin, **the Spirit is given to the Church as the anti-sin power.** The Spirit of love and unity counteracts the negative effects of hatred, division, rejection, exploitation, and disorderly passions . . . through the balm of forgiveness, trust, and harmony. **He builds up the “new man” by instilling in every human being the virtues of faith, hope, and love . . .** Thus is the history of humankind transformed into a constant effort to undo the disaster of Babel, and to build up the Kingdom of harmony and love which Christ came to establish and which will find its completion in the “New Jerusalem” of the world to come.



The God of love from whom we come, in whom we live, to whom we go

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year C, John 16:12-15
June 16, 2019

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB



OUR belief in the Trinity—One God in three “Persons”—is no vain fantasizing about a remote mathematical riddle. Rather, **it is the humble and grateful acceptance in faith of the great mystery of Divine Love which was revealed by Our Lord, Jesus Christ. This sublime mystery does not concern only the three Divine Persons in their mutual relationship, but all creatures, and especially all human beings. It concerns and encompasses us all.** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bound together into one Godhead by their eternal and mutual love, are also related to each one of us and all mankind. **The Blessed Trinity is the source of all that we are, the indispensable support in all that we do, and the fulfillment of all that we aspire to be.**

The fundamental relationship between the three Divine Persons and

can be expressed through one common denominator: **loving concern and care.** But such a shared concern and care, filled with love for us, takes on a different and complementary role in the divine “Persons,” according to the characteristics of each of them.

Thus, **the Father’s concern and care for us started with creation**—especially our own—and **reached its peak in the gift of His Son and the Holy Spirit.** The love of the Father accompanies us each moment, till we reach the end for which He created us: eternal life in Him.

The loving concern and care of the Divine Word is particularly evident in the work of our Redemption, which started with the Incarnation, reached its peak in his death and resurrection, and is continually made available to all men through the ministry of the Church.

We experience **the loving concern and**

care of the Holy Spirit when he **makes us members of the Body of Christ, adopted sons and daughters of the Father, and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.** He is the one who consoles and protects us; who leads us to the knowledge of all truth. He is the one who fills our hearts with faith, hope, and love. He fills our lives with meaning and holiness, and empowers us to live according to the Gospel.

All this the three Divine Persons do for us not in isolation or competition among themselves, but in beautiful cooperation and harmony, for they are but one God, who has only one aim: our eternal happiness.

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity, then, concerns us very personally and very deeply. We are fortunate to have come to know it already in this life. Its very revelation through Jesus is a further sign of the Trinity’s

loving care for mankind.

Such a wonderful tri-personal love of God demands an adequate response on our part. The first form of response is **acceptance** of this mystery with humble faith and gratitude, even when it hurts our intellectual pride. The second is **the desire to honor each of the three Divine Persons** in our thoughts, attitudes, words, and deeds. The third form of response is **our commitment to love the Blessed Trinity with all our heart, and above all creatures, as God alone deserves to be loved.**

Such a free, faith-driven response will be rewarded a thousandfold not only in the life to come, but also during our days on earth. **Nothing can fill more our hearts with peace and contentment, than the certitude that the Blessed Trinity loves us and lives in us.**

The curse of sex tourism

(Part 1)

By Fr. Shay Cullen

THE depravity of human nature reveals itself in the most shocking way as sex tourism. This phenomenon has become a government-supported and encouraged form of personal and national income generation in many countries that exploits and abuses millions of people around the world.

Currently, almost half a million people in the Philippines specifically, and many more in other nations, work in the huge sex tourist industry that annually generates several billion US dollars. Yet, the human suffering experienced is incalculable. Millions of lives are broken, damaged, and destroyed.

The sex tourist industry is a highly organized money-making business. Behind its growth is the demand of middle-aged and older men who cannot find sexual satisfaction in their own countries and travel abroad seeking gratification with young, vulnerable and impoverished girls. These men tend to be divorced, widowed or unmarried, or isolated from their wives or partners. Many of them have no regard for the dignity of women and young girls, seeing them as objects to be bought and used for their personal pleasure. There is no apparent concern for the victims of sex tourism.

Thousands of the exploited young women are uneducated and unwanted by their penniless families. Unless they can earn by being commercially sexually exploited, they have no value. Indeed, their sexual commoditization is their only value. Their human dignity, importance, and rights are totally disregarded.

The worth of these women is lessened by the vast sums of money generated by sex tourism for politicians and tycoons. The police are in on the game, too. The sole motive is the satisfaction of their greed, selfishness and depravity. Many also have their own young, underage mistresses and sex slaves.

The human cost is enormous. The dignity of the victims is violated, their rights to a decent life, to education and a career, are all denied them. A nation that sells its young people to tourists, domestic and international, is despicable. It is a tarnished, corrupt society that allows the domination of the lives of



Bar girls talking to customers in the thriving red light district of Angeles City in Pampanga. FILE PHOTO

millions of vulnerable young people worldwide.

Sex tourism is not really tourism. It is really a form of modern sex slavery as the perpetrators and wrong-doers exploit the young. The abusive encounters between sex tourists and young women are truthfully more about power, control, and domination, manifesting a sadistic desire to own and abuse the lives of another. Such ascendancy by a sex tourist over a weaker person may be compensation for his or her own inner character weakness. Perhaps, it makes up for feelings of being rejected in their own families or communities. Whatever its source, the abuse is criminal behavior and everyone who abuses a woman or a minor ought to be brought to justice.

The extreme poverty of the families out of which these young women come is undoubtedly the reason for their involvement in the sex tourism industry. Without resources, access to education is slim and so, these rural or slum-dwelling women are compelled to do anything to earn money for food. It is about survival, it is about staying

alive. Like hunter-gatherers, from dawn to dusk, they scavenge for money, or anything else they can lay their hands on, to get enough to buy a cup of rice and some vegetables or eat pagpag, the re-cooked scrapings from the plates of restaurants.

Minors in the sex tourist industry are oftentimes victims of sexual abuse in their own home: abused by relatives, neighbors or even their own biological fathers. These young girls have no alternative but to run away for their own survival. Their available choices are to be on the streets or to go with a "recruiter." Once under the power of the sex tourism recruiter—who provides money, food and accommodation—they are sold to brothels, sex bars or clubs in the neon-lit sex strips of cities from Johannesburg to London to Manila. There is no end to their exploitation.

Not only are the Philippines, South Africa or the mega-brothels of Europe notorious for sex tourism and the human destruction it brings with it, these governments and societies must be held responsible for the pain and hardship that afflict

the lives of the youth, many of them underage children. Sex tourism has created a wonderland of child sex, aided and abetted by the societies that are supposed to protect and nurture these children.

Sex tourism destroys the purpose and fabric of society. The dignity of women, youth and children is downgraded by the people who operate and allow the sex tourist industry to thrive and grow. They see the young as bodies for sale. They do not treat them as individual persons with hearts and souls, feelings, ambitions and hopes for a brighter, happier future.

The traffickers are human traders who broker lives and sell them to whoever is willing to pay a large sum to rape and abuse a child in a hotel room, without fear of retribution or responsibility to the law or human dignity.

Impunity is the attraction. Prostitution is illegal in the Philippines and in other countries, yet it thrives. The sex bars and clubs are protected by police and politicians, many of whom are club owners themselves.

Once, I went to rescue some children trapped in debt bondage in a tourist hotel frequented by foreign sex tourists. Posing as a customer, I asked the manager in a quiet undertone, nodding towards a small stage where six teenagers each clad in a tiny bikini were gyrating in a languid manner on a pole: "Is it safe here to have one of those young girls?" "Oh sir," the manager answered, "you don't have to worry, here you are completely safe and protected". "Oh really? "Why is that so?" I answered. "But this place is owned by a police officer," he said. The system is corrupt in its exploitation of young women.

People tend to blame the young girls for being lured into the dirty business of exploitation and abuse but it is the apathy and indifference of the public that is part of the exploitation. There is no church or public outcry against it. It is tolerated and thousands of young people suffer, lives destroyed and a once proud nation is prostituted.

(To be continued)

Obligatory / B2

branches of a single religious family. Basic indications can be found in the Table of Liturgical Days, and also in *Calendarium particularia* (nn. 8, 10, 11).

"24. One of the things most commonly overlooked is the existence of calendars proper to individual churches, which comprise the celebrations recognized by the Table of Liturgical Days. Besides the Solemnity of the anniversary of the dedication of that church, and of the titular Solemnity, there can also be proper celebrations with the grade of Feast."

Coming now to the precise question at hand, we see above that the preference is to move the local rather than the general celebration. However, this would also depend on the particular feast. The titular saint of a parish is a solemnity in that church and therefore has precedence over memorials, feasts, Sundays of Ordinary Time and even some solemnities.

If this were to occur every year, then it would be permissible, but not required, to move a general obligatory memorial to the closest free day. This would be especially advisable if the impeded saint is an object of great devotion in the parish.

The dedication of a diocesan cathedral is a solemnity in the cathedral. In the rest of the diocese, it would depend on whatever its liturgical status happens to be. If, for example, the title of the cathedral is also the patron saint of the diocese, then it could be a feast throughout the dioceses and, following the pastoral criteria given above, an obligatory memorial could also be transferred.

If the diocesan celebration is an obligatory memorial in the diocese, then, in accordance with the norms given above, the local celebration would be preferably transferred.

If the dedication of the cathedral is celebrated liturgically only in the cathedral itself, then there is no need for any transfers.

Climate / B4

framework is in itself beneficial to the COP, but it shall never remain in the appendix, the challenged communities have a lot to contribute in the negotiations, more than just the ingredients and exhibits being done in every COP meeting. The outcomes of the conferences should be something that move countries to targeted actions, not just programs. The implementing mechanisms must cascade into the affected communities, most often only being accessed by government institutions, academic entities and non-government organizations (NGOs); only to discover that the responsible agencies have become funding-driven.

Emerging faces and stories

The emerging faces and stories of struggles must sustainably unite a better and broader forces of action on addressing this climate emergency.

In 26 May of 2015, Pope Francis officially published an encyclical entitled: *Laudato Si': On care of our common home*, a definitive document by a world leader officially affirming the reality of climate disruption. A widely-circulated document; read and admired by intellectuals, scientists, activists, change-makers, world leaders and ordinary people willing to make a difference on the environment. Until today, Pope Francis is enriching "Talanoa is a traditional word used in Fiji and across the Pacific to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The purpose of Talanoa is to share stories, build empathy and to make wise decisions for the collective good. The process of Talanoa involves the sharing of ideas, skills and experience through storytelling... During the process, participants build trust and advance knowledge through empathy and understanding. Blaming others and making critical observations are inconsistent with building mutual trust and respect, and therefore inconsistent with the Talanoa concept. Talanoa fosters stability and inclusiveness in dialogue by creating a safe space that embraces mutual respect for a platform for decision making for a greater good." <https://talanoadialogue.com/background>.

more and more the message of *Laudato Si'* with continuing programs, conferences and with an upcoming reality-driven *Synod of the Amazonia* on October 2019. Onwards, Pope Francis inspired people from within and outside the church, to unite in responding with greater hope the greatest problem humanity is facing—environmental degradation.

Since 2015, a group of young activists from all across the globe started the 'Climate Pilgrimage', led by Yeb Sano the former Philippine climate negotiator. This group walked from Rome to Paris bringing Pope Francis' message of ecological conversion globally and at the doorsteps of the signers of the Paris Agreement, amplifying the voices of the climate victims from the island nations the need to target the 1.5 degrees Celsius. And in 2018, The Climate Pilgrimage embarked on a climate journey again, from Rome to Katowice; along the route they were bringing the message to address the climate crisis with urgency, starting from the personal impacts to institutional; from breaking free from coal to breaking free from plastic. "We continue walking, and sharing the message of protecting the planet; until the climate crisis stops..." said Albert Lozada, a veteran climate walker of the team.

Today, we are seeing a new voice supporting and uniting the many climate voices, in the person of Greta Thunberg. Starting from her own simple 'school strike' and rippling across the globe, encouraging young people to do their own version of 'school strike' (#climastrike, #klimastrejk and #FridaysForFuture) to bring the message of climate emergency. Greta, brings a consistent call for climate justice, bringing her own placard from her school to parliaments, and to world leaders; she said: "We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis. We need to keep the fossil fuels in the ground

and we need to focus on equity. And if solutions within this system are so impossible to find then maybe we should change the system itself. We have not come here to beg world leaders to care. You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time. We have come here to let you know that change is coming whether you like it or not. The real power belongs to the people!" (UN Climate Change COP24 Conference, December 12, 2018, Katowice, Poland) Her speech is a strong voice calling for change, a warning for world leaders that the people are ready to defend the planet on their own.

More forceful now, is the Extinction Rebellion in the United Kingdom, and amplified across the globe too, integrating the needed non-violent direct action to force governments and local and national leaders that really, "climate change is system change." That the greed of powerful countries and corporations resulting to environmental and climate emergency must be drastically stop, at all costs. "We are unprepared for the danger our future holds. We face floods, wildfires, extreme weather, crop failure, mass displacement and the breakdown of society. The time for denial is over. It is time to act... Conventional approaches of voting, lobbying, petitions and protest have failed because powerful political and economic interests prevent change. Our strategy is therefore one of non-violent, disruptive civil disobedience—a rebellion."²⁰ They have graphically protested in many areas in the United Kingdom; showing too the diversity of its members from across sectors. The sustained commitment of *Extinction Rebellion*, is showing the readiness of people to demand from governments and institutions accountability from the impacts of the climate crisis. (To be continued)

²⁰ Extinction Rebellion, Act Now, <https://rebellion.earth/act-now>.

Ecumenical / B5

places or classes of people. Ecology is without doubt the most obvious candidate in this case.

The significance of the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is not limited to the subject of ecology as such. It is an important ecumenical dimension for it brings the divided Christians before a common task which they must face together. (We live at a time when fundamental existential problems overwhelm our traditional divisions and relativize them almost to the point of extinction. Look, for example, at what is happening today in the Middle East: do those who persecute the Christians ask them to which Church or Confession they belong? Christian unity in such cases is de facto realized by persecution and blood—an ecumenism of martyrdom).

The threat posed to us by the ecological crisis similarly bypasses or transcends our traditional divisions. The danger facing our common home, the planet in which we live, is described in the Encyclical in a way leaving no doubt about the existential risk we are confronted with. This risk is common to all of us regardless of our ecclesiastical or confessional identities. Equally common must be our effort to prevent the catastrophic consequences of the present situation. Pope Francis' Encyclical is a call to unity—unity in prayer for the environment, in the same Gospel of creation, in the conversion of our hearts and our lifestyles to respect and love everyone and everything given to us by God.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is our hope that new consciousness and awareness could arise from this significant and urgent encyclical. From a right consciousness one could attain a right conscience, from right conscience to "ecological" conversion, from conversion to commitment, from commitment to upright, solid ecological and ecumenical practice and conduct.

CINEMA
Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

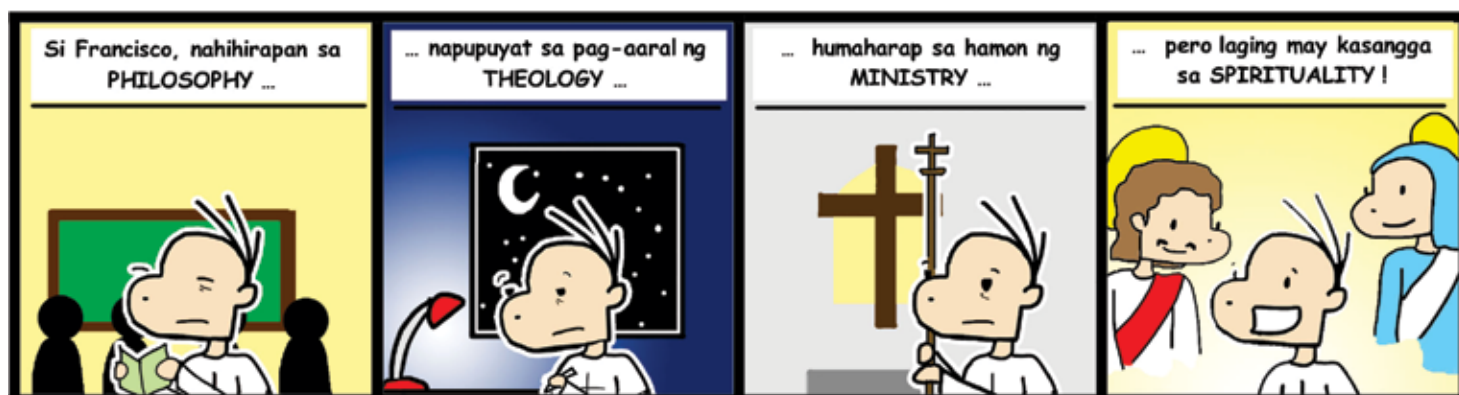
TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT	MORAL ASSESSMENT
5: Excellent	
4: Above Average	
3: Average	
2: Below Average	
1: Poor	

CINEMA RATING

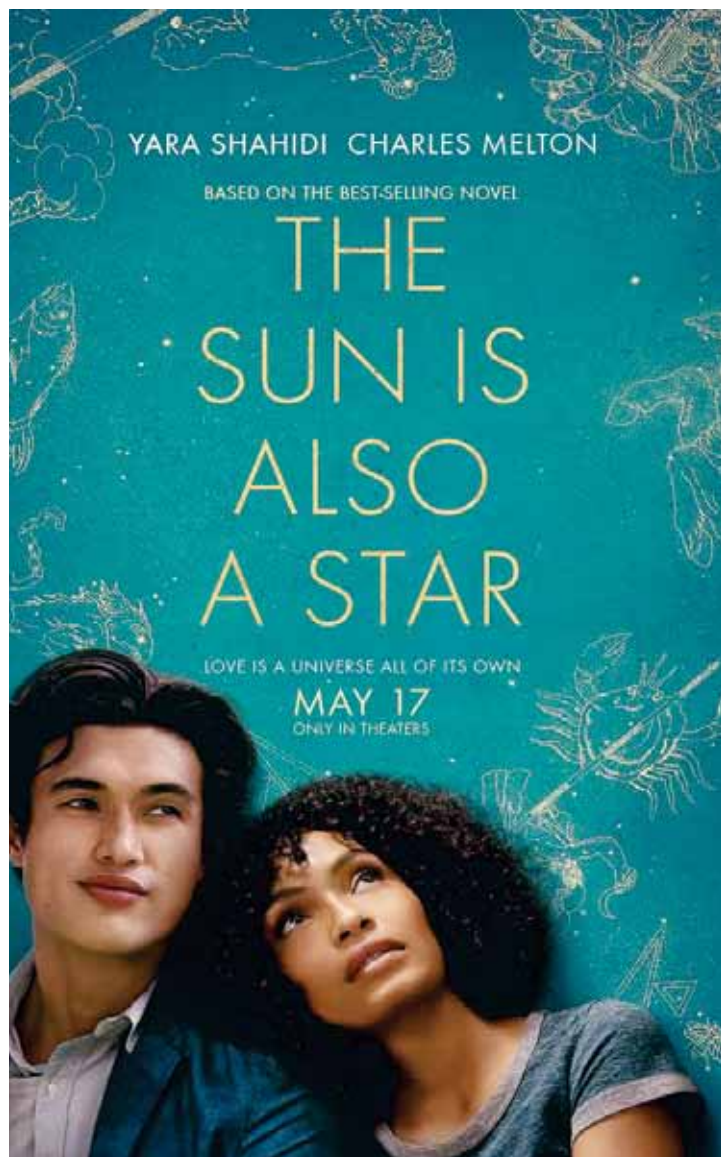
VA: For all ages	V14: Ages 14+
V13: Ages 13 below, Parental Guidance	V18: Ages 18+ NPV: Not for Public Viewing

Buhay San Miguel

Brothers Matias



The sun is also a star



It is very easy for this generation to stereotype success with Western culture and with what is measurable.

CINEMA rating: V13
Technical assessment: 2.5
Moral assessment: 3

Natasha (Shahidi) a no-nonsense Jamaican teenager aspiring to be a scientist is making a last ditch attempt to prevent her family from being deported the following day. Meanwhile Daniel Bae (Melton), an American-Korean who dreams to be a poet but needs to be a doctor to please his parents, is scheduled for an interview in Dartmouth. The two cross paths when Daniel saves Natasha from being run over by a car. The initially awkward meeting turns into an opportunity for Daniel to prove to Natasha that he can make her fall in love with him in an hour. The hour turns into a day and the experiment becomes real as the two fall for each other while learning and dealing with their family issues.

The premise of accidental meeting between opposite strangers who find their stark differences cause the inevitable pull into that "meant to be" situation is generally overused and specifically uninspired in this version. The success of "accidental love" relies on the naturally undeniable chemistry of the lovers achieved through a down to earth relatable characterization. You feel them. You root for them. Their presence makes you smile. This saccharine overdosed interpretation does the opposite. You don't believe them. Their presence

makes you cringe. The use of coincidence as a plot device is just too much even for those willing to suspend disbelief for the sake of the remarkable performances of Shahidi and Melton. The weak screenplay and weaker directorial choices are further obscured by interjections of songs in the attempt to elevate the gooeiness of the love story. While the original book offers debate about human existence from philosophical and scientific explanation, the movie simply makes these ornamental conversations.

There seems to be two strong agendas in the film: the unjust predicaments of immigrants forcefully deprived of their chance to be better on the one hand, and the racial discrimination on the other. While Natasha believes that her future depends on holding on to a foreign country she considers home, Daniel wears his Korean ancestry with pride. It is very easy for this generation to stereotype success with Western culture and with what is measurable. As if these hold the exclusive franchise to all great things. But the movie proves it wrong. Natasha accomplished something in Jamaica while Daniel proved that he can be successful when he follows his passion. While the movie is decent and charming, audiences predisposed to young romance will find it enjoyable.

Five Feet Apart



Imagine not being allowed to touch the person you love for the rest of your life.

CINEMA rating: PG13
Technical assessment: 3
Moral assessment: 3.5

Stella Grant (Haley Lu Richardson), a teenage patient with cystic fibrosis (CF) is restricted by routine regimen that includes staying away at least 6-feet from fellow CF patients to lessen the risk of cross infection. Stella adheres to this restriction

TERIBOL OG

Bladimer Usi



Buhay Parokya

FIND 3 MISSING THINGS:
1. POPE FRANCIS
2. MOTHER TERESA
3. SAINT JOHN PAUL II



and engages herself instead in social media where she shares awareness about CF. At the hospital she meets Will Newman (Cole Sprouse), a fellow CF patient who is on medication trial, but unlike Stella, Will is not diligent about the restrictions of their sickness. Stella reminds him to observe the rules which Will agrees on the condition that they draw close to each other closer from six to five feet apart. The two of them start falling for each other and secretly go on dates. When Stella's best friend Poe (Moises Ramirez) dies, she is saddened that she never gets to hug him; she decides not to let her condition waste her life and prevent her from touching the people

she loves. Wearing gloves so she can hold hands with Will, their next date brings them to the pool edge where she falls...

Five Feet Apart is an informative and touching story about cystic fibrosis disease and the struggle of people suffering from this illness. There is creativity in the title and in Stella's vlogging activity in social media for raising awareness about cystic fibrosis as a genetic disorder. The director did a good job in his melancholy yet hopeful treatment of the film. Richardson stands out in her acting as she effectively engages the viewers in sympathizing with the character of Stella. The final scene with her thought of Will

is a very touching moment. The production establishes well the hospital setting. The rest of technical aspects such as sound, lights and music are all appropriate. The editing is likewise commendable for the smooth transition of scenes from hospital to dating venues. While similar themes have been dealt on in many other films, Five Feet Apart differs in the characters' light treatment of their life-threatening illness.

No matter how dark and depressing the situation—choose life. This is the message of the film Five Feet Apart. Despite the reality of the life-threatening illness, Stella remains hopeful and enthusiastic about living.

Illness, marital problem of parents, and sudden death in the family may lead some people to depression but the film presents an optimistic character. Stella may serve as an inspiration especially for viewers in similar situation. The film uses the presence of social media as a companion in Stella's journey, and as information tool to raise public awareness about cystic fibrosis as a genetic disorder. The film is also a good reminder for sick people to be cooperative with their treatment and not to give their caregivers a hard time. Along with the main message of choosing life, the film is also about compassion, diligence, love, and sacrifice.



Family is A Gift Launched in Archdiocese of Lipa

By Gerlie Alcoriza

"PERSONAL reflection, personal discernment and prayer, these are the three things to help you recognize that you are a gift... (that) we are a gift from God for others," said Most Rev. Gilbert Garcera, Chairman of Episcopal Commission on Family and Life (ECFL) and Archbishop of Lipa, during the launching of Family is a Gift (FiG) program held May 18, 2019 at the National Shrine of St. Padre Pio, Sto. Tomas, Batangas.

Prior to the launching of FIG in the archdiocese, the program was presented at the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life National conference in Cebu in February 2019. Archbishop Garcera, chairman of ECFL, acknowledged that the program needed to be adopted and implemented in the archdiocese to further help family and life workers and family-oriented organizations in their work of protecting and upholding Batangueño families.

"We are grateful to our good Archbishop and to the FIG team because we really need a program like this to help and equip us in guiding families in our Archdiocese especially these days in the face of many attacks against marriage and families. The beauty of the program is it has specific topics that cater to the needs of parents, grandparents, children and all the members of the family in creating a true Christian family," shared CFC leader Vic Alvarez, chairman of Ministry for Family and Life, Archdiocese of Lipa.

FIG is a movement that advocates the giftedness of family. It equips families in nurturing and upholding the gift of family and provides family-focused environments where members of the family can be nurtured. FIG serves as a convergent point for organizations, institutions, families

and individuals in pushing for one goal—to create harmonious familial relationship anchored in Christ.

"*Kapag buo ang pamilya, buo ang mundo...* Family is a Gift is about reminding us of the giftedness of family and focusing on the basic unit of the society, the family," Rommel Ancheta, one of the speakers, emphasized in his talk.

Ancheta expounded on the challenges faced by families today and the rapid decline of church-goers which may be rooted in the failure of the family to inject values in the lives of children.

CFC International Council member Arnel Santos, in his session, mentioned the various studies on Filipino families. He also quoted a survey conducted by SWS which reported that Church attendance in the Philippines is rapidly declining, and that Catholicism, among all the religions in the country, registered the highest decline.

He shared one study which says that the solidarity of Filipino families, even from the past decades, had been seriously threatened. The study further noted the breakdown, disintegration and crisis in the family due to multiple challenges, including violence in the environment, separation of family members and technology. "These findings and glaring reality give us more reasons to continue working for family and pushing programs like FIG," Santos said.

"Parenting the Digital Generation" was discussed by Bboy and Rachel Arguelles. The couple spoke of the different generations and encouraged everyone to eradicate the discrimination between generations, especially among family members. Rachel stressed that the goal is to understand each generation and to create bridges among these generations because those who intentionally aim for intergeneration unification are the healthiest.



The Archdiocese of Lipa, under the leadership of Archbishop Gilbert Garcera (top left) welcomes Family is a Gift as a program and partner for couples, single young adults, youth, and young children.

She added, "Technology is here to stay. We cannot totally take it out of our children's system but we can limit or control it... And why do we need to? Because over exposure to social media can really cause depression, anxiety and a lot more negative effects on children and family."

The event concluded with a message from Rev. Fr. Eugene Peñalosa, Director of the Ministry for Family and Life, Archdiocese of Lipa. He expressed his gratitude to the FIG team and to all the delegates, and challenged everyone to take part in upholding the gift of

family and protecting the youth, the next generation.

A total of 770 individuals from 52 parishes, and various family- and youth-oriented organizations from the Archdiocese of Lipa attended the event.

FamCon 2019 goes around the Philippines!



FOR this year's Family Conference (FamCon), the CFC Kids for Christ hopped to four locations in North Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

A total of 6,112 individuals from 1,378 families came to the Island FamCons in Quezon (South Luzon) on May 17 to 19; Zambales (North Luzon) on May 24 to 26; Leyte (Visayas) on April 26 to 28; and Cagayan de Oro (Mindanao) on April 26 to 28.

Families in the modern world are constantly being challenged, resulting in the development of the culture of indifference, busyness, prolonged screen time, and lack of trust in the Church as an institution. The FamCon conveyed three main key messages conveyed to all families that aim to counter these negative cultures.

The family strengthens the Church

The family as the domestic Church plays an active and important role in strengthening the Catholic Church. It

must consciously strive to be the fertile bed where the seed of faith is planted, nurtured, and allowed to grow. Developing a culture of togetherness and passing on the faith to the next generation should be the goal of all parents. Families must stand as a rock, fulfilling what scripture says in Matthew 16:18: "And I tell you...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The family must draw strength from the Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist is the most important and highest form of prayer. It is the source and summit of one's Catholic faith. Members of the families comprise the Church, who draw strength from the Word, Body and Blood of Christ, the center of the life of the Church. Families are called to encounter Jesus Christ in His very presence in the Holy Eucharist. It is from the Holy Eucharist that families draw strength to continue the call of togetherness.

Families must light up the world

Everyone in the family is called to become saints, and striving for sainthood is about trying to live a life always ready to say "Yes!" to the mission that God sends families to. It is important to note that a member's personal journey to sainthood leads other members of the family to the same journey. And like a spark of light in the darkness, families bearing the light of Christ can illumine the world and overcome the darkness.

Aside from the fun family activities during the FamCon, each session brought families to do "serious" stuff as well such as the Family Covenant Board in Session 1, visiting the Adoration Chapel as a family for Session 2, and picking a family patron saint in Session 3. These family activities not only bonded fathers, mothers and children together, but gave the families a venue where the parents can creatively pass on the faith to the next generation. (CFC Global Communications)

AGW 2019 launched in The Philippines, US, Canada



THE ANCOP Global Walk was officially launched in the Philippines last May 5 during the Metro Manila Mission Core Assembly held at the Ynares Stadium in Pasig.

This year's AGW in Metro Manila, which bears the theme "Light Up My Life" will be headed by Barry Tad-y, Sector Head for Metro Manila South B. Metro Manila, as well as all the Philippine provinces will hold the AGW on November 17, 2019. It has been timed with the celebration of the World Day of the Poor.

Metro Manila Music Ministry member Gabby Ocampo was commissioned to com-

pose a special AGW jingle titled *Light Up Lives* for the event. The MTV of the jingle may be seen at the ANCOP Global Walk official Facebook page.

Meanwhile, ANCOP USA and ANCOP Canada have likewise opened the registration for their respective ANCOP Global Walk events. To register for AGW USA, visit <https://ancopusa.org>. For AGW Canada, go to <https://ancopcanada.org/ancop-walk/>.

Registration is now open for AGW 2019. For updates and details on registration, please visit facebook.com/ancopglobalwalk or call (+63 2) 709 4852. (ANCOP Communications)

Family is a Gift partners with schools, parishes

FAMILY is a Gift, an advocacy initiated by Couples for Christ, upholds the family. Launched last year, Family is a Gift aims to share the value and the giftedness of families with different parishes and schools by sharing expertise in different issues that concern the family, such as divorce, depression and sexuality.

Since its launch, the Family is a Gift team has been going to various cities and provinces to introduce the advocacy and to provide parents an avenue to air pressing issues.

On January 11, 2019, Robert Labayan, Head of Creative Communications Management at ABS-CBN and sector head of South A in CFC Metro Manila, gave a session on Family Dinner Conversations at the Parish of St. Francis of Assisi and Sta. Quiteria in Caloocan. The session was about the importance of communication in the family. During the session, Labayan gave tips on how to make the children open up to their parents.

According to Psychology Today, lack of communication in the family is one of the causes of



depression, especially for teens.

Because of the increasing number of cases of depression in the country, Montessori Integrated School Antipolo had its 4th FIG workshop on February 9. The workshop, titled Understanding Mental Health in the Family, was given by Ms. Mary Margaret Pangilinan, a guidance counselor. The first three sessions were on Building a Healthy Family Culture, Chastity and Sexuality for Teens and Parenting the Digital Generations.

The goal of the workshop is to teach parents of elementary students the basics of how to be a healthy family, both in terms of wellbeing and men-

tally. Parents are taught what to do as a family to prevent any member from suffering depression. At the same time they are taught to watch out for the signs of depression in their family members. Parents are also reminded that their mental wellbeing will reflect on their kids, so they must take care of themselves too.

On March 2, Academia de Belarmino in Quezon City requested for a session on Spending Quality Time with the Family. It was given by Gitte Pagdagagan and Cora Simbulan.

This session talks about the importance of spending quality time with the family in order to preserve **FIG ACTIVATION, p4**



FROM A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Rouquel Ponte

THE GIFT OF LIFE FROM GOD

"I CAME so that they may have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10). Here the Lord comes as our Good Shepherd who takes care of His sheep. This begins with the gaze of Jesus and of how He looked upon the women and men whom He met with love and tenderness, accompanying their steps in truth, patience and mercy as He proclaimed the demands of the Kingdom of God. (cf. AL 60)

These words coming from our Lord became real in a recent experience when I attended the Vatican conference sponsored by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life whose theme was: YES TO LIFE! Taking care of the precious gift of life in its frailness.

The theme, talks and testimonies of the conference gave practical application to the words of Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* 47 "The Fathers also called particular attention to "families of persons with special needs, where the unexpected challenge of dealing with a disability can upset a family's equilibrium, desires and expectations... Families who lovingly accept the difficult trial of a child with special needs are greatly to be admired. They render the Church and society an invaluable witness of faithfulness to the gift of life. In these situations, the family can discover, together with the Christian community, new approaches, new ways of acting, a different way of understanding and identifying with

others, by welcoming and caring for the mystery of the frailty of human life. People with disabilities are a gift for the family and an opportunity to grow in love, mutual aid and unity... If the family, in the light of faith, accepts the presence of persons with special needs, they will be able to recognize and ensure the quality and value of every human life, with its proper needs, rights and opportunities."

Further, in AL 48 "Most families have great respect for the elderly, surrounding them with affection and considering them a blessing. A special word of appreciation is due to those association and family movements committed to serving the elderly, both spiritually and socially... In highly industrialized societies, where the number of elderly persons is growing even as the birth rate declines, they can be regarded as a burden ... the care that they require often puts a strain on their love ones."

With the above, AL 53 gives us an encouragement to go on despite the challenges the family is facing today: "The strength of the family lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love. For all its problems, a family can always grow, beginning with love."

But how can we journey together and make this love grow and deepen that it may help us weather any storm or trial that may come our way? The whole chapter 4 of *Amoris Laetitia* entitled Love in Marriage should lead

us to reflect once more on the words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. We will not dwell on the details of these but let me highlight a few important points as emphasized by Pope Francis:

1. Dialogue (or communication) is essential for experiencing, expressing and fostering love in marriage and family life. Yet it can only be the fruit of a long and demanding apprenticeship ... We need to develop certain attitudes that express love and encourage authentic dialogue. (AL136)
2. Take time, quality time. This means being ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say. It requires the self-discipline of not speaking until the time is right. Instead of offering an opinion or advice, we need to be sure that we have heard everything the other person has to say. This means cultivating an interior silence that makes it possible to listen to the other person without mental or emotional distraction ... Often, the other spouse does not need a solution to his or her problems, but simply to be heard, to feel someone has acknowledged their pain, their disappointment, their fear, their anger, their hopes and their dreams. (AL 137)
3. Develop the habit of giving real importance to the other person.

This means appreciating them and recognizing their right to exist, to think as they do and to be happy. (AL 138)

4. Keep an open mind. Don't get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions, but be prepared to change or expand them. The combination of two different ways of thinking can lead to a synthesis that enriches both. The unity that we seek is not uniformity, but a unity in diversity or reconciled diversity. (AL 139)
5. Show affection and concern for the other person. Love surmounts even the worst barriers. When we love someone or when we feel loved by them, we can better understand what they are trying to communicate. (AL 140)
6. Finally (and most important), let us acknowledge that for a worthwhile dialogue, we have something to say. This can only be the fruit of an interior richness nourished by reading (the Word of God), personal reflection, prayer and openness to the world around us. (AL 141)

The highlight of the three-day conference was a papal audience. It was indeed, a sacred encounter with the Vicar of Christ. The Holy Father exuded a "sacred aroma of holiness and love" that comes from Christ which inspired all of us to hope and dream for a better and more loving society. On

a personal note, as Pope Francis held my hand, the only words I was able to say were, "Holy Father, please pray for the Philippines, Couples for Christ and my family." And in turn, looking at me with smiling eyes, he answered, "Pray for me also." And I answered, "Yes Holy Father and we love you!"

I end with a few words from Pope Francis' closing remarks:

1. No human being can ever be incompatible with life, either because of their age, their state of health or quality of existence. Every child that presents itself in a woman's womb is a gift that is about to change a family's story, that of a father and a mother, of grandparents and of siblings. This child needs to be welcomed, loved and nurtured.
2. It is necessary to create spaces, places and "networks of love" to which couples can turn, as well as devote time to assisting these families.
3. Your witness of love is a gift to the world.

Points for reflection:

1. Let us talk to the Lord and ask His grace to help us create spaces, places and networks of love in our family and those around us.
2. Let us commit to two ways that may more concretely express this network of love.

CFC CRO trains new Mass servers

CFC Church Relations Office (CRO), in partnership with the Archdiocese of Manila, organized training for Mass servers of CFC—lay ministers, greeters and collectors, readers and commentators and altar servers. The training was held on April 27 and May 4 at the CFC Global Mission Chapel in Cubao, Quezon City.

The first talk was given by Fr. Genaro "Geny" Diwa, head of the liturgical ministry of the Archdiocese of Manila, who spoke on the history of the

Eucharist. The second talk was given in the morning of May 4, Saturday by Fr. Carmelo "Jek" Arada, who explained the different parts of the Mass.

Fr. Bong Bayares gave the final talk, on explained the General Instructions of the Roman Missal.

Mass and the commissioning of the new Mass servers followed. The training was done in order to create and strengthen the pool of Mass servers for events of Couples for Christ. (*Nanding Cecilio*)

Bishop challenges CFC Negros Oriental: evangelize despite the dark times



COUPLES for Christ, driven by its passion to spread the Good News, reached the shores of the Diocese of Dumaguete through Joe and BabyLou Tale, who introduced the community to the Diocese. With the support of Bishop Angel Lagdameo, 27 couples finished the Christian Life Program, albeit reluctantly, on May 14, 1989 and became the first batch of Couples for Christ in the province and diocese.

The first 27 couples (Ernesto and Nene Abringe, Vir and Ceding Bacay, Simplicio and Beling Bangcal, Felix and Cerce Banot, Art and Tita Calumpang, Cilo and Norma Catan, Edmund and Dottie Dy, Tuting and Milan Elnar, Saletto and Silvia Eramas, Dodong and Juliet Flores, Edgar and Ellen Flores, Boy and Cecille Gonzales, Freddie and Angie Gonzales, Oscar and Lyn Gubantes, Paul and Myrna Honculada, Jofra and Lovelene Jorico, Jess and An-an Kadusale, Roy and Lily Grace Labid, Tannie and Liling Llena, Bobby and Malou Mercado, Emil and Gaya Onon, Eddie and Flor Rosales, James and Delia Rosales, Oding and Erlyn Sun, Franklin and Norma Tale, Marcus and Inday Vailoces, and Britt and Vicky Villahermosa) provided the impetus to grow the numbers of CFC a hundredfold. CFC Negros Oriental now comprise thousands of individuals faithfully serving the Lord, from CFC to its Family Ministries and Social Development Programs.

On the 30th anniversary of CFC Negros Oriental held on May 19 in Dumaguete City, Bishop Julito B. Cortes, D.D., challenged the Couples for Christ community in the province to continue its zeal of evangelization despite the dark times. In his homily at the Congressman Lamberto L. Macias Sports and Cultural Complex, Bishop Cortes said, "Despite the darkness that the community has gone through, CFC has continued its mission to bring light to the families in this part of the country."

The prelate likewise acknowledged CFC's important role in the new evangelization as enunciated by the Catholic Church.

"We express our faith in the Lord through love," the Bishop said as he praised God for His faithfulness in guiding the community through the years.

"CFC will not go this far without God's level of confidence that He will be with us while we fulfill our mission and advocacy," he added.

Meanwhile, CFC Negros Oriental Spiritual Director Msgr. Mariño P. Ybo called on the CFC community to be witnesses to the world and to the adjacent communities, not to confine its mission within the community alone but to reach out to all.

"Your life must be a witness to others... CFC must be witnesses to even the peripheries," as he enjoined the CFC

NEGROS ORIENTAL, p3

MC TEACHING NIGHT

A Woman's Inherent Feminine Genius as Described by God

WOMEN are diamonds in the light...

This was how Nini Villaroman, wife of CFC Chairman Melo Villaroman Jr., and the speaker at the Metro Manila Teaching Night on May 21, described women, the subject of the teaching for the month. Appropriately so, as May is the month of Mama Mary, the Mother of all, and the month when the world celebrates Mother's Day in honor of the most important woman in every person's life.

Nini picked as the anchor verse 1 John 3:1, which says, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! Yet that is what we are!" The verse emphasizes the worth of women as precious children of God, and how through "Feminine Genius", women have played a significant role in the life of the Church.

Nini began by saying that "St. Helena was a significant figure in history. She was the mother of Emperor Constantine, a convert, who legalized Christianity across the Roman empire, ending the maltreatment of Christians, which also dramatically changed the course of world history," She went on to enumerate women who have, in one way or another, become influencers in their own right, such as St. Monica, whose incessant prayers paved the way for the conversion of her son, St. Augustine of Hippo.

"At the time of Jesus' passion and death, more women than men stood at the foot of the cross of Christ. Women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. The Catholic Church has produced many notable women scientists and scholars. Four women are considered Doctors of the Church—St. Hildegard of Bingen, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Therese of Lisieux. Mother Teresa was one of the most famous women missionaries and is highly regarded for her work in bringing help to the suffering," Villaroman continued.

She added, "Fast forward to present time, in this venue tonight and in the many mission areas, we also pay respect and honor the women of CFC for their dedication, hard work, sacrifice, selflessness, submission, and for being the untiring intercessors of the community."

Women in CFC must be joyful and appreciative of the role they play as helpmates and support to the husbands, which purposely flows out from women's desire to follow Christ. Their conscious choice to lead their families to the Lord has created a beautiful impact in the lives of their children, relatives and friends, and co-servants in community.

In his Letter to Women, St. John Paul II began by thanking God for the gift of women. He likewise thanked women for being mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters; as women who work, women who are consecrated, and every woman who exists merely for being a woman.

The authentic Christian woman

Who then is an authentic Christian woman? She is a woman who fears the Lord. (Proverbs 31:30)

"The footnote in the Bible says, "The true charm of this woman is her religious spirit, for she fears the Lord." Nini shared.

Pope Francis, in his book *Ave Maria*, mentioned two types of fear—one is closed fear, or becoming slaves to fear, the kind that prevents growth; and open fear, or the holy awe of God, when one says, "I am afraid, but I go forward feeling fear and assurance at the same time."

Nini exhorted, "Our best example of this open fear is the Blessed Mother. She said yes at the annunciation, even when she felt anxious about what will happen next."

Before she is anything, a woman is first a daughter of the Father. A woman's identity as a daughter of God is hinged on the firm foundation of God's love through His fatherhood. A woman, like man, is created with dignity. It is here where a woman draws her natural value and worth.

A woman's first presence in the world is a gift. In her marriage, woman is an irreplaceable support to her spouse. She was destined to be a life-giver, her entire being oriented towards receiving and nurturing new life.

Villaroman elaborated, "The feminine genius is the distinctive way a woman expresses her gift of self in all her feminine fullness and originality, as God intended her to be from the beginning. It is the "active" and "external" expression of her being. The feminine genius is the unique ability to bring into being something that never existed before - a new human life."

One way to become a gift with total self-giving love is by becoming a mother. Motherhood is everyday heroism. It is the silent but effective and eloquent witness of all brave mothers who devote themselves to their own families without reserve. Mothers suffer in giving birth to their children, and are ready to make an effort to face any sacrifice.

"While not all are called to biological motherhood, every woman is called to spiritual motherhood, because motherhood is knit into the very structure of a woman's being," Nini exhorted.

Biological motherhood must be completed by spiritual motherhood. Spiritual motherhood is a sincere gift of self which is designed to be fruitful. A sincere gift of self which is designed to be fruitful must involve the whole person. It means giving of oneself fully, without reservations.

Mother Mary is the most significant woman in creation, and in the Sacred Scriptures.

There is no human being closer to God than Mary, who carried Jesus Christ in her womb with priceless love of a mother.

The one full TEACHING NIGHT, p4

ABLAZE holds creative workshop in Isabela



TO ENGAGE community members in creative evangelization, ABLAZE Communications conducted a two-day creative workshop on May 11 and 12 at the Parish Pastoral Formation Center, San Mateo, Isabela.

Members of CFC Youth for Christ (YFC) who are ANCOP scholars, along with CFC Singles for Christ (SFC) and Couples for Christ (CFC) members from all over Isabela province participated in the various workshops. The workshop topics included Creative Thinking

ABLAZE publications specialist who discussed guidelines on how to come up with creative ideas valuable for planning community-related events like youth camps, the Christian Life Program (CLP) and conferences; Basic Powerpoint by Chariz Santos, ABLAZE inbound marketing specialist; and Basic Photoshop to hone their designing skills facilitated by Benedict Zambo, ABLAZE graphic artist.

Participants received a certificate of completion upon finishing the workshops. Prior

to this, a brief talk delivered by Philip Nico Cruz, ABLAZE channel marketing supervisor, explained ABLAZE's mission and corporate works.

Gladys Mae Europa, fulltime pastoral worker for Isabela, shared, "The creatives workshops are not only useful in our service in the community, but will be useful in designing excellent materials for our school projects and in our workplaces as well."

The workshop has long been anticipated by Isabela CFC leaders, particularly Dr. Consuelo Ricafort, who found out about the training program through a brochure she read a few years back.

Aside from the creatives workshops, ABLAZE also conducted an ambassadors' training program to help members raise funds in their province and provide evangelistic materials for community activities. (*Gerone Baladhay*)

ANCOP Presents to AmCham North Luzon

CFC ANCOP Global Foundation, Inc. (CAGFI) was invited to present to the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (AMCCHAM) North Luzon on Tuesday, May 21, at the Clark Marriott Hotel, Clark Freeport, Pampanga City.

The AmCham - North Luzon hosted its very first Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility Summit entitled "Empowering Businesses by Gearing-Up Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustain-

ability through Collaboration." The main objective of the summit was to raise awareness on sustainability as a business priority and the importance of collaboration among businesses and organizations.

Different businesses and non-profit organizations attended the event, giving them a chance for collaboration and networking. The summit discussed different topics such as emerging trends in sustainability, collaboration, and advocacy best practices.

CFC ANCOP President Rudy Gaspiillo presented under the Advocacy Best Practices. He discussed the various ANCOP programs and the streamlined processes and practices that make the organization effective in the delivery of its services.

CFC ANCOP continues to extend its effort in collaborating with different businesses and organizations, to improve its programs and harness more resources to help the poor. **(Patria Balila)**



30 HOUSES BUILT IN ROMBLON ANCOP SITE

AN INITIAL 30 houses were built for RDSAC CFC ANCOP Canada Community at Brgy. Lunas, Romblon, Romblon, and blessed last May 1 by Bishop Narciso Abellana of the Diocese of Romblon.

Representatives of partner donors, including Atty. Budoy Madrona and CFC ANCOP Global Foundation, Inc. (CAGFI) Community Development Head, Ric dela Rosa were present during the ceremonies.

Also present during the occasion were Romblon Mayor Anoy Mateo, Vice Mayor Macmac Silverio, former Mayor Gard Montojo, Brgy. Lunas Captain Neil Andrew Mojado, Rev. Fr. Ric Magro, Rev. Fr. Gilbert Saminado, barangay and municipal council members as well as home partners with their families.

As the major donor of the project, Atty. Budoy Madrona committed to make concrete all the

main roads of the community to assure safety and accessibility for the home partners. Mayor Mateo pledged to finance the community's water system, while the Department of Public Works and Highways approved a Php 50 million budget for the construction of riprap along the mountainside to protect the ANCOP community from possible landslides.

The construction of the houses started in January 2019. The candidate home partners, who fulfilled a commitment to undergo values formation, finished their Christian Life Program in April.

Everyone involved in this endeavor is excited to see the completion of these projects, which will undoubtedly make a big difference in the lives of the beneficiaries who are now considered brothers and sisters in the CFC family. **(ANCOP Communications)**



NEGROS ORIENTAL, p2

leaders to reach out to others. "Let your light shine to all," he stressed. "Believe in God's Word, most of all in what He does, because they are the concrete foundations of what Jesus has given the community."

Marlon Tanilon, Negros Oriental's Family Ministries Head, thanked God for the wonderful 30 years of family, love and service. "We have remained the strong and victorious for 30 years because God is with us," Tanilon emphasized.

Joel Dayao, CFC Negros Oriental Provincial Area Head, urged the community to walk like Jesus and follow his path no matter how hard and challenging it may get, emphasizing to all their responsibility to be a great light to others.

Dayao led the honoring of the

27 pioneers of CFC in the province, saying, "We are meant for greater things beyond ourselves. When we recognize the purpose of the Lord for us, we show brightness and reflect the true light of Jesus."

Dong Avila, Regional Head of CFC Central Visayas, exhorted, "We are all servant leaders here. Everything that we do in this community or outside, we do it out of love for our Lord."

In the meantime, Negros Oriental Provincial Area Director Yoyong Gonzalez, Jr. encouraged the CFC to be alert. "We continue to be awake because God has entrusted us with so much," Gonzalez said.

ANCOP President Rudy Gaspiillo was also present to rally the province behind ANCOP for societal change, especially

ANCOP Education. He encouraged the brothers and sisters to be strong always in the service. "I am retired from work, but not from the service. There is no limit in serving the Lord!"

The ANCOP scholars also shared testimonies of how the CFC community has brought "light" into their future.

Kenny De la Peña, Pastoral Formation and Spirituality Head, exhorted, "Once we were in darkness, now we are sons and daughters of God. We should spread that light like wildfire to give light to those who are in darkness."

Gene Ryan Briones, SFC Coordinator of the Redemptorist Chapter, led the praisefest that served as fitting culmination of the celebration. **(Oliver M. Lemence)**

CFC – OSM Conducts the First CEM Aboard BRP Tarlac (LD-601)



COUPLES for Christ - Order of St. Michael (CFC-OSM) racked up another first in its mission to evangelize the nation's uniformed personnel - they conducted a Character Enhancement Module (CEM) aboard BRP Tarlac (LD-601), a Philippine Navy ship.

The CEM, conducted on May 24, 2019 while the vessel was moored on Pier 13, was given by 15 members of the CFC-OSM, led by the Head for Navy and Maritime Division, VADM Jess Millan AFP (RET) and his wife, Sonia, in close coordination with the Philippine Navy Chief Chaplain, Capt. Melchor Fernando, PN (CHS) (GSC).

BRP Tarlac is the country's first landing dock (LD) ship, and was acquired for naval operations such as combat troop transport, amphibious operations, command and control, and other non-traditional missions. For non-military operations, it serves as a support platform for humanitarian assistance and disaster response, as well as other rescue and mercy missions. It has been operated by the Philippine Navy (PN) since 2016.

The LD, with a crew of 150 officers and enlisted personnel, can transport 500 combat troops and their equipment. It has two rigid hull inflatable boats, two landing craft units and can accommodate three naval helicopters, four amphibious assault vehicles, five trucks, two jeeps, one ambulance vehicle, and one mobile hospital unit. The acquisition of BRP Tarlac was part of the multi-year Modernization Program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Ninety-four participants of the various Philippine Fleet floating units attended the CEM training, consisting of 19 officers and 75 enlisted personnel. Of the officers, five are females and 14 males, while 13 are Catholics and six non-Catholics. Ten of the enlisted personnel are females while 65 are males. Of the enlisted personnel, 64 are Catholics while 11 are non-Catholics.

The 94 participants are currently assigned in four vessels docked at Pier 13: BRP Tarlac (LD601) with 59 participants; BRP Gregorio Velasquez (AGR 702) with 24 participants; BRP Lake Caliraya (AO 81) with 10 participants; and BRP Andres Bonifacio (PS 17) with one participant.

The opening prayer was led by, Maj. Rafael M. Olisea, CHS, the Philippine Fleet Protestant Chaplain. VADM Millan (RET) gave the CEM Overview and proceeded with Talk 1: Heroes for God and Country. Junn Enriquez was the speaker of Talk 2: Roadblocks to Greatness with Radi Roldan as sharer. Talk 3: Defending Our Families, Building our Homes was delivered by Zaldy Quinto with Junn Enriquez as sharer. Ron Navarro gave Talk 4: Forgiveness - A Key to Success and Diony Mateo served as the sharer. The final talk: All Out Victory was delivered by VADM Millan (RET). Radi Roldan served as the Moderator. The team members are spearheads from CFC Central A, Central B and West B.

BRP Tarlac was led by its Commanding Officer, CDR Norman A. Mutia, PN (GSC), together with his executive officer, LCDR Junie A. Rubio PN;

operations officer CDR Marco DJ Sandalo PN; and, incoming executive officer, CDR Paul Anthony SJ Yamamoto. They set a good example to their subordinates by attending all the CEP sessions.

During the plenary sharing, volunteer-participants expressed their impressions/ feedback. LCDR Rommel Marcelino R. Panol shared, "Spirituality and family provide real meaning and serve as sources of inspiration in life. Spirituality has something to do with having a sense of peace and oneness with God who can guide us in choosing what is right from wrong and how we can keep our family intact and loving."

NS Joleen A. Villagantol said, "If I want a better life and country, the change should start from within me. It is my character that will speak well about me. Our talent and skills can elevate us to top positions, but if we have negative character traits, these will always put us down."

LTJG Victorino M. Montallana related his thoughts on forgiveness, while EM3 Jundy M. Obeñita shared that she would always remember the teachings of the day, specifically about having a strong faith in God that will enable one to resist temptations and survive the storms of life.

LT Mary Grace A. dela Cruz shared, "Even if one is so talented and has gained a lot of accomplishments, any boss would also always appreciate a person who is kind and treats his / her colleagues and subordinates well."

CDR Mutia, PN (GSC) shared his message at the close of the program. He said, "Character started to develop during our early childhood, pre-school years, and continues through our entire education, employment and retirement life. Our character is a part of us. Life's events and environment continue to influence our character and how it relates to our behavior." He added, "As humans, there is no such thing as "perfect character." A good character is earned by individual effort. If we want to develop a character acceptable to God, we need to connect to Him through daily prayer. A short period of transgression can lead to a great loss. There should be a conscious and persevering effort to stay connected to God to withstand or break away from worldly temptations and protect our reputation."

For the months of April and May, aside from this CEM on board the BRP Tarlac, the OSM Naval and Maritime Division had conducted a Lenten Recollection for 99 participants on April 8, 2019 at the Bonifacio Naval Station (BNS), Taguig City; CEM 1 on April 30 for 148 participants of the Philippine Marine Corps at the Acero Hall, BNS; CEM 1 on May 2 for 107 participants of Naval Forces Northern Luzon (NFNL) at the Naval Station Ernesto Ogbinar, Poro Point, La Union; CEM 1 on May 10 for 38 participants of the Naval Reserve Command (NAVRESCOM), Intramuros, Manila; and, CEM 1 on May 25 for 29 maritime students from Visayas, Mindanao and National Capital Region (NCR) undergoing summer shipboard training with the Naval Reserve Command - Navy Reserve School (NRC-NRS) at Naval Station Pascual Ledesma, Cavite City. **(Malu Enriquez)**

CFC Global Mission Center conducts Mission Support Conference



THE CFC Global Mission Center (GMC) has been going around the various regions in the Philippines to conduct the Mission Support Conference, a program born from GMC's efforts to continually improve services rendered to CFC members all over the country.

Mission Support, or MS, in the context of CFC, is the backbone of the community's evangelization work. MS provides support services that may cover, but are not limited to Administration (Back/ Home Office Management), including Human Resource, Finance, Information Technology, General Administration, Government Compliance; Events Management and the Music Ministry.

Eric Ylagan, who heads the conference, shared, "CFC, in its 38th year, is present in 124

foreign countries (IMs) and in 82 Philippine provinces (PMs). All have unique/distinct ways of conducting operations. For consistency, the International Council saw the need to establish operating standards. With this end in view, the MS conference is going around to the various regions for a more direct consultation with the provinces."

So far, the GMC team has gone to the five regions in Mindanao, the Bicol region, MIMAROPA, Central Luzon and CALABARZON. Before the end of June, the team aims to cover Cebu and Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Western Visayas, North Western Luzon and North Eastern Luzon.

Ylagan emphasized that the primary aim of the MS conference is to promote good governance in all CFC Metro

Manila and Philippine Missions through an effective mission support system. The group specifically wants to identify areas of operation that need to be improved or strengthened, and to recommend measures or steps to improve areas of operation where needed. That is why prior to visiting a region, the team sends a set of questionnaires to the Area Governance Teams for them to answer and submit to the Global Mission Center.

It is the hope of the CFC leadership that all Mission Centers all over the Philippines and later on, the world, will share in GMC's mission and vision to be "the Heart, the Home, and the Hands of our CFC Vision and Mission, so that those we serve and those who visit us will feel like they are at the center of God's fullness." **(Alma Alvarez)**



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CFC CANADA MARCHES FOR LIFE



THE 2019 March for Life, held in Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Canada united people from various races, ages and religions as they urged the Canadian Parliament to put an end to the 50-year long status of abortion on demand in Canada, and to ask for a law that will protect the right to life of every human being from the time of conception until natural death.

The Gift of Life (GOL) Ministry of the Couples for Christ organized and facilitated the participation of CFC members in this national endeavor.

CFC members came together as early as 6:00 in the morning to board the bus going to Ottawa.

The trip provided the participants a time for reflection and prayer. The group activities in the bus also allowed them to enjoy the company of brothers and sisters from different chapters, play competitive Bible trivia games and sing uplifting songs together. At the Parliament grounds, the fellowship continued as CFC bus riders met the other brothers and sisters that drove to Parliament Hill to support the March

and stand up for life.

The rally began at around 12:30 pm. Among the rally speakers were Archbishop Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa, Cardinal Thomas Collins of Toronto, and the conservative MP David Anderson, sponsor of the conscience rights bill. Other radical speakers that received the applause and support of the pro-lifers were Ann McElhinney and Phelim McAleer, producers of the movie Gosnell.

The former manager of the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in America,

and now Founder of the Pro-life Outreach to Abortion workers, Abby Johnson, author of the book "Unplanned", was also there to rally the pro-lifers. "Unplanned" is the story of Johnson's rejection of abortion after witnessing the abortion of a 13-week-old unborn baby. The movie of the same title is now showing in the USA big screens but is still banned in Canada.

In her speech at the rally, Johnson promised that the movie "Unplanned" will come to Canada. She also asked everyone to continue to pray for the end of abortion but also to "do something with that prayer," stressing that it is essential that pro-lifers also act on their belief.

She said, "It is going to end because each of you raised your voices and said enough. No more death, no more evil. Not on our watch."

After the march, the courageous women from the "Silent No More" campaign group shared their stories of how much they regret having undergone abortion. Coping with life after the wrong that was done resulted in post-abortion trauma, depression, anxiety, loss of self-esteem and isolated pain. Besides the fear that their secret abortion might become known, they also felt empty, helpless and betrayed by the people and the doctors who supported and encouraged their shameful decision.

BY God's grace however, the sharers experienced healing and the mercy of God. They now share their stories to protect the life of the unborn, to give the message that abortion is not the only solution to an unwanted pregnancy, that it is a painful decision that brings long time suffering, and that women trapped in such a condition can find help.

Despite the stormy and rainy weather forecast, the marchers enjoyed comfortable climate the whole day with only a light drizzle to bless them as they boarded the bus home.

First time marches among the CFC group were grateful for the opportunity to experience the March for Life 2019. They expressed excitement at joining the 2020 event and are planning to bring their friends with them.

The Gift of Life Ministry, under the leadership of Rick and Roni Van Tassel, thanked everyone who supported the mission, for being the hands, feet and voice of Jesus, and the channels of hope and love for the unborn.

AGT Director Alex (Toti) Quijano said of CFC's participation, "Yesterday's March for Life was a true example that there is fun in service if we put joy in it. Everything went well... As always the March for Life was great... another victory for the Lord!" (*Tet Gonzaga, GOL coordinator*)

Catholic Missions Australia Holds Immersion Program in ANCOP

AS IN the past years, Catholic Missions-Australia once again brought students and teachers from several schools in Australia for a week-long immersion experience at a CFC ANCOP site. This year, they visited Malbago Community at Madridejos, Bantayan Island, Cebu City. The immersion program ran from April 14 to 19.

A total of 15 high school students, and three teachers, from FCJ College Benalla and Sacred Heart College Yarrowonga, both in Victoria, Australia, participated in the immersion program. The visit became more meaningful because it was timed with Holy Week, giving them all the opportunity to bond with the home partners in the community not only through the usual fellowship activities, but more importantly, by participating in the Holy Week activities of the province, such as visiting churches and observing religious traditions.

It was a time for fun too, as their hosts made sure they set foot on the island's beautiful beaches.

The missionaries brought home amazing experiences, especially the warm welcome they received from the residents. Nicole Murphy, a teacher from FCJ College Benalla, shared, "There is so much love and happiness in this village. These people have so little but they give so much." She was also astonished by the faith and resilience of the Filipinos amidst the struggles they are facing.

Some students could not help but observe the difference between the ANCOP residents and the people from their home country. Student Josh Bernett compared the people they met who, despite simple living conditions, were happy and

constantly smiling, with the people in Australia who have so much more and yet do not seem content. He expressed a deeper appreciation for what he has now, recognizing that very little is actually needed for one to live a happy life.

"In a short span of time, the experience changed my outlook in life and has greatly transformed me. There is no way I can explain what it is like. One has to experience it," said student Lily Godson.

To make their experience even more memorable, both schools planned to connect with ANCOP Australia so they can sponsor a few more children from the village.

Catholic Missions-Australia will visit the country in December 2019 for another immersion in ANCOP. (*Patria M. Balila*)



FIG ACTIVATION, p1

and reintegrate families affected by migration or other forms of separation.

On the same day, Mary the Queen Parish, Greenhills had their second Family Is a Gift session. The session, titled Building Great Communication, was given by Manny and Grace Panagsagan and is about how people can communicate better with others, whether it is their spouse, children or friends. The session made use of the Imago dialogue which, according to imagoworks.com, is a communications tool that aims to teach the art of seeing things from the other's point of view.

The first session given to Mary the Queen Parish was A Love Like This, in partnership with CFC Youth for Christ. A Love Like This is an acoustic journey to what love really is. During the jamming night, the teens got to hear testimonies about being single, about how to prepare for a relationship, about being in a relationship and what married life can and should be. The main point of the session is to teach the teens that true love is worth the wait.

The following month, on March 19, St. Therese of Lisieux School, Cainta, Rizal held session on Building a Healthy Family Culture given by Aimee Serrano.

The session is about the importance of couples planning the culture they want to build in their families. During the session, the speaker mentioned that even if families don't plan, culture will be built in their family anyway so it would be better to plan the kind of culture they desire. At the same time Serrano mentioned that the family of origin has an effect on the culture that a family will have, so couples should be aware of the culture of their respective families before they get married.

On April 23, Barangay Mabini Mandaluyong City, partnered with Family Is a Gift for their "Katipunan ng Kabataan." Amiel Magnaye, a Catholic youth leader, gave a session on being Better than the Best to the youth of the community who were also about to open their basketball league. The session was about teaching the kids to give their best in everything they do.

On May 18, the Archdiocese of Lipa, with the support of Archbishop Gilbert A. Garcera, D.D., Archbishop of Lipa and National Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life, launched Family Is a Gift at the Divine Mercy Sanctuary for Pilgrims at the National Shrine of Saint Padre Pio.

During the event, the delegates were told of the current state of the families in the Philippines and in the world, hence, the call for each family to strengthen their values and foundation and to share their giftedness to other families as well. The first session was given by IC member Arnel Santos.

The participants also had a session on Parenting the Digital Generation given by Bboy and Rachel Arguelles. The session was about understanding the differences among the generations, and how parents can adapt to the changing needs of their children.

On May 24, Our Lady of the Abandoned Parish launched their Family and Life Teaching Night with a session on Building a Healthy Family Culture given by Manny and Grace Panagsagan.

Aside from these partnerships, Family Is a Gift is currently in talks with other schools and parishes for activation of FIG in the coming months.

For more information on how to be an advocate of the family, contact Family Is a Gift at contactus@familyisagift.com, or call 709-4868 loc. 24. Like, follow and share Family Is a Gift posts at Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. (*Maria Laarni Mallari*)

CFC ANCOP Qatar, PISQ Fortifies Partnership



THE CFC ANCOP team in Qatar has strengthened their partnership efforts by initiating successful ventures with the Philippine International School of Qatar (PISQ). The school, through its principal, Jason Iyas, has signed up to support four ANCOP scholars for school year 2019 - 2020. They have also expressed willingness to provide overseas job opportunities to the gradu-

ates of ANCOP Educational Sponsorship Program (ESP) from the Philippines.

The partnership started in 2014, with then YFC Qatar's National Coordinators, Nino and Sheila Villamor tapping Philippine schools in Doha, Qatar that have active YFC members heading the student assemblies. Mary Chiles Balana was one of the YFCs who ac-

tively supported ANCOP ESP through ANCOP Global Walk (AGW) and gained merit from the former school principal.

PISQ has been supportive of the ANCOP mission by participating in the AGW for three consecutive years now, continuously supporting ANCOP scholars, and donating books to CFC ANCOP's office in Manila. (*Patria M. Balila*)

TEACHING NIGHT, p2

of grace lived a beautiful life. Her secret: The Word of God. Her heart directed toward God made her life beautiful.

Nini, in concluding her talk, said, "All women are called to be Christ-bearers to receive divine life in the womb of their souls. When we conceive, we are blessed to give life to a child. All women are called to see in Mary's spiritual motherhood a reflection of their own lives. Without tenderness, one cannot understand a mother, one cannot understand Mary."

She added, "Pope Francis exhorts us: 'Today, I would also like to say a few words about the irreplaceable contribution of women in building a world that can be a home for all. Women

make the world beautiful; they protect and keep it alive. They bring the grace of renewal, the embrace of inclusion, and the courage to give of oneself. Peace, then, is born of women it arises and is rekindled by the tenderness of mothers."

The acronym MOTHER says it all:

- M - agnify the Lord by
- O - ffering our all and when we
- T - each our children, we
- H - ear and listen, too, and we should always
- E - xcite our children to
- R - adiate Christ's love always

(*CFC Global Comm Team*)