

CBCP Monitor

APRIL 27 - MAY 10, 2020 VOL. 24, NO 9

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

CBCPMONITOR@AREOPAGUSCOMMUNICATIONS.COM

‘Religious services are essential’ Calls mount for resumption of public Masses

By Roy Lagarde

AFTER nearly two months in lockdown, calls are mounting for the government to allow the resumption of public Masses and other church services while keeping all the necessary precautions.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo, the apostolic administrator of Manila, said that “religious services” should be considered as “essential services” during the coronavirus pandemic.

“So when the decision makers consider the essential services to be allowed, they should also consider the opening of the churches and its services as important,” Pabillo said.

“Of course, necessary precautions should be taken, like the proper social distancing and the sanitation practices to be done in the churches,” he said.

According to him, religion is very important to many Filipinos for it gives them strength especially in difficulties.

He said that a proof to this is that one of the things that people save first in times of disasters are their religious images and Bibles.

After the disaster, the prelate said the first thing that the community would restore is their chapel and pray together.

“The signs of God in their lives are very important for the people,” Pabillo said,



Catholic priests Eduardo Vasquez Jr., and Rey Amancio wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to bless deceased people at a morgue in Malabon City on April 29, amid the prohibition of religious gatherings, including funerals, during the government-imposed lockdown to contain the coronavirus. **JUN SANTIAGO, CSSR**

adding that allowing public Masses “will uplift their spirits to a great extent”.

“Allowing people to go back to Church to thank the Lord, to ask for his protection and implore his help, are deemed very important by the people,” he said.

Fr. Elias Ayuban, superior of the Claretian congregation in the Philippines, also called for the reopening of churches,

particularly in dioceses where there are no Covid-19 cases.

He said that while going to the public market is allowed, where physical distancing is hard to implement, “I see no prevailing reason why an organized Sunday gathering in a cathedral or spacious parish church, where physical separation can easily be executed, not permitted”.

“It is about time to reopen

the doors of our churches for people to pray. While it is true that we can pray anywhere, there is no place like the church and no celebration like the Mass,” Ayuban said.

Government authorities earlier announced that worship gatherings will continue to be banned even after easing quarantine measures in some areas.

A lay Catholic organization

also urged the government to rethink its decision and give the faithful an opportunity to uplift their spiritual well-being, “which are both humane and essential”.

The Council of the Laity of the Philippines said it is willing to submit its plans, protocols and guidelines to assure authorities of their strict observance of the safety and health measures.

“With strict compliance to Government Guidelines on Social Distancing and Sanitation, the lay faithful requests for Religious Gatherings to be allowed in the GCQ areas,” said Rouquel Ponte, Laiko President.

“We demand that our right to religious worship be not curtailed when the necessary safeguards are followed,” he also said.

Church leaders alarmed over govt’s shutdown of broadcast network

IF freedom of expression and dissent is curtailed, human rights will follow suit, a Catholic archbishop has warned.

Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan said press freedom encourages debates and discussions to increase government’s accountability and protect the rights of the people.

“When freedom of speech or criticism is suppressed, tyranny abounds, liberty dissolves, our country is weakened and human rights are threatened,” Villegas said.

The former head of the Philippine bishops’ conference made the statement May 6 after the

Network / A3



Employees and supporters of ABS-CBN hold a rally outside the network’s compound in Quezon City on February 28, 2020. **FILE PHOTO**

Retrenchment of Catholic hospital workers ‘held in abeyance’

THE head of the Dominican Order in the Philippines has halted the retrenchment of non-frontliner employees of the hospital being run by its top educational institution, the University of Santo Tomas (UST).

UST, in a statement, said the termination of workers, contained in a memo dated April 29, was “held in abeyance” by Fr. Napoleon Sipalay, and would be reviewed by the UST Board of Trustees in a meeting on May 20, 2020.

Sipalay, the prior provincial of the Dominicans, is also chairman of the board of

trustees of UST, to which UST Hospital is attached.

“In the midst of the Covid-19, the University of Santo Tomas is one with the nation in its hope and prayer that we shall overcome this global pandemic,” the UST statement read.

In a report, the Varsitarian, UST’s student publication, said UST Hospital planned to lay off some “non-frontliner” personnel and adapt other cost-saving measures as financial losses brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic continued to balloon.

Hospital medical director Dr. Marcellus



UST Hospital in Manila. **THE VARSITARIAN**

Francis Ramirez also said the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. had yet to pay more than P180 million in reimbursements, which usually took five to six months to be settled.

Ramirez said the retrenchment plan complied

with all legal requirements such as a 30-day notice to affected employees and coordination with the Department of Labor and Employment. Laid-off workers will receive a 150-percent separation pay, he said. **(PressOne)**

Mindanao archbishop hits reopening of POGOs amid quarantine

A CHURCH official has criticized the government’s decision to allow the reopening of online gambling even amid the country’s coronavirus lockdown.

Archbishop Martin Jumoad of Ozamis could not hold his frustration that authorities allow gambling during the quarantine, while religious services remain banned.

“Our leaders may want to change our name from the only predominantly Christian nation in the Far East to gambling capital in the Far East,” Jumoad said.

Online gambling companies, also known in the country as POGOs for Philippine offshore gambling operators, will be allowed to open

POGO / A7



Archbishop Martin Jumoad of Ozamis. **BRENDAP. MILAN**

Bishops air stance to uplift plight of workers

ON Labor Day, Catholic bishops denounced the plight of ordinary Filipino workers who are suffering the brunt of the coronavirus crisis.

Bishop Jose Colin Bagafora of Kidapawan and Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos said the pandemic has exposed even more the “injustices” against workers.

“Indeed, this year’s Labor Day is yet another frustrating commemoration for our workers,” Bagafora, who heads Caritas Philippines, said.

“The Filipino workers are not only fighting Covid-19, they are racing against time to survive. We are their only lifelines. Let us help them by upholding their rights and dignity,” he said.

The prelate claimed that more than two million workers have been displaced in only over a month “with no assurance of getting back to work when the crisis is over.”

The Labor department has earlier stopped accepting applications for its Covid-19

Workers / A7

Italian churches prepare to resume funerals after eight-week ban

ROME Newsroom— After eight weeks without funerals, Italian families will be able finally to gather together to mourn and pray at funeral Masses for the victims of the coronavirus starting May 4.

In Milan, the largest city in Italy’s coronavirus epicenter, priests are preparing for an influx of funeral requests in the coming weeks in the Lombardy region, where 13,679 have died.

Fr. Mario Antonelli, who oversees liturgies on behalf of the Archdiocese of Milan, told CNA that archdiocesan leadership met April 30 to coordinate guidelines for Catholic funerals as more than 36,000 people remain positive for COVID-19 in their region.

“I am moved, thinking of so many dear people who have wanted [a funeral] and still desire one,” Fr. Antonelli said April 30.

He said that the church in Milan is ready like the Good Samaritan to “pour oil and wine on the wounds of many who have suffered the death of a loved one with the terrible agony of not being able to say goodbye and embrace.”

A Catholic funeral is “not just a solemn farewell from loved ones,” the priest explained, adding that it expresses a pain like childbirth. “It is the cry of pain and loneliness that becomes a song of hope and communion with the desire for an everlasting love.”

Funerals in Milan will occur on an individual basis with no more than 15 people in attendance, as required by “phase two” of the Italian government’s coronavirus measures.

Priests are asked to notify local authorities when a funeral is scheduled to take place and ensure that social distancing measures defined by the diocese are followed throughout the liturgy.

Milan is home to the Ambrosian rite, the Catholic liturgical rite named for St. Ambrose, who led the diocese in the 4th century.

“According to the Ambrosian rite, the



Undertakers wearing face masks carry a coffin in a cemetery in Bergamo, Italy, March 16, 2020. AFP

funeral liturgy includes three ‘stations’: the visit / blessing of the body with the family; community celebration (with or without Mass); and burial rites at the cemetery,” Antonelli explained.

“Trying to reconcile the sense of the liturgy ... and the sense of civic responsibility, we ask the priests to refrain from visiting the family of the deceased to bless the body,” he said.

While Milan archdiocese is limiting priests from the traditional blessing of the body in the home of the family, the funeral Mass and burial rites will be able to take place at a church or “preferably” at a cemetery, Antonelli added.

During the nearly two months without Masses and funerals, dioceses in northern Italy have been maintaining telephone lines for grieving families with spiritual counsel and psychological services. In Milan, the service is called “Hello, is this an angel?” and is operated by priests and religious who spend time on the phone with the sick, the mourning, and the lonely.

Aside from funerals, public Masses will still not be allowed throughout Italy under the government’s May 4 coronavirus restrictions. As Italy eases

its lockdown, it remains unclear when public Masses will be allowed by the Italian government.

Italian bishops have been critical of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte’s latest coronavirus measures, announced on April 26, saying that they “arbitrarily exclude the possibility of celebrating Mass with the people.”

According to the prime minister’s April 26 announcement, the easing of lockdown measures will allow retail stores, museums, and libraries to reopen beginning May 18 and restaurants, bars, and hair salons June 1.

Movement between Italian regions, within regions, and within cities and towns is still prohibited except under strict cases of necessity.

In a letter April 23, Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti of Perugia, the president of the Italian bishops’ conference, wrote that “the time has come to resume the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist, and church funerals, baptisms and all the other sacraments, naturally following those measures necessary to guarantee security in the presence of more people in public places.” (CNA)

White House consults bishops on church reopening guidelines

WASHINGTON, D.C. Newsroom— The White House has consulted four Catholic bishops who have reinstated public Masses, as the Trump administration considers issuing guidelines on the safe reopening of churches and religious services during the coronavirus pandemic.

Multiple sources confirmed to CNA that officials from the White House Domestic Policy Council and the Centers for Disease Control conducted a series of conference calls with bishops from three states on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The bishops of Las Cruces, New Mexico, Lubbock, Texas, and Billings-Great Falls and Helena, Montana, spoke to administration officials who asked for feedback on the dioceses’ resumption of public ministry in line with state public health orders.

The initiative for the

discussions came from the White House, sources familiar with the talks told CNA.

During the calls Tuesday and Wednesday, various policies put in place across the different dioceses were outlined, including extra measures for maintaining social distancing indoors and outside, and for the distribution of Communion. Administration officials also underscored to the bishops the administration’s ambition to see church buildings reopen whenever and wherever reopening can be done safely.

On April 15, the Las Cruces diocese issued guidelines providing that Masses could resume either outdoors or inside church buildings while conforming to state requirements on social distancing. The Diocese of Lubbock circulated its

own guidelines on April 22, including provisions for restoring access to Communion for Catholics.

In their own public statements last week, Montana’s two bishops, Bishop Austin Vetter of Helena and Bishop Michael Warfel of Billings-Great Falls also issued their own guidance on the phased reopening of churches in line with the governor’s announced plans.

Bishop Michael Warfel of Billings-Great Falls told CNA Wednesday that he took part in a call with several other bishops and White House officials earlier in the day.

“I was on a phone call just earlier this morning with the director and deputy director for domestic policy for the White House, and we were sharing our experiences [reinstating public

Masses],” he told CNA.

“They were very much interested in our experience and what we were doing.”

The calls were coordinated through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at the request of the White House, sources told CNA, but the bishops’ conference did not play an active role in the discussions.

When contacted by CNA about the calls, White House spokespeople declined to comment. Calls to the USCCB were not returned by the time of posting.

Bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces, who was the first U.S. bishop to announce the resumption of public Masses during the coronavirus pandemic, released a statement to CNA confirming that he had taken part in a call but declined to elaborate on the discussion. (CNA)

Chinese government resumes removal of crosses from church buildings

CNA Staff— As the Chinese government makes progress containing the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities have resumed action to remove crosses from buildings and crackdown on religious practice.

The latest round of enforcement actions have included the removal of crosses from buildings belonging to the state-run churches. According to a report from UCA News, priests say they are cooperating in the removal of exterior crosses in hopes that entire church buildings will not be demolished or converted into a building for secular use.

According to a parishioner in the Chinese province of Anhui named John, Chinese officials cut down the cross from the top of Our Lady of the Rosary Church on April 18. Our Lady of the Rosary belongs to the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA, the Catholic Church officially sanctioned by the Chinese Communist Party and operating both in communion with Rome and under state control.

The bishops of the CPCA, who were in many cases illicitly consecrated and under official excommunication, were received into full communion with Rome as part of the Vatican’s 2018 provisional agreement with China. The full terms of the China deal were not released to the public but have been reported to include the right of state authorities to propose and veto candidates for the episcopacy in China.

John, speaking to UCA News, explained that on April 13, the leaders of Our Lady of the Rosary—which does not have a member of the clergy assigned to it, and all religious activities are organized by the laity--asked the city authorities about making repairs to the church building. Three days later, the community director of the city requested keys and access to the church, in order to remove its cross.

Concerned parishioners went to Bishop Joseph Liux Xinhong of the Diocese of Anhui, who told them to request more information from the local CPCA office. The local CPCA office

said they did not know of any plan to remove the cross from the building.

Xinhong was one of the bishops who had his excommunication lifted and his position recognized by the Vatican following the 2018 provisional deal.

On April 17, the parish community leader said that he had been given “directions from superiors” regarding removing the cross. The following day, said John, the cross was removed by a “team of young people.”

Elsewhere in the province of Anhui, on April 19 a cross was removed from a church in Suzhou City during pre-dawn hours, presumably to avoid the chance of a crowd protesting its removal. A man from the diocese named Paul told UCA News that the removal had previously been scheduled for the afternoon.

Paul said that police officers blocked people from entering the church or taking pictures of the removal, and that a cell phone had been confiscated after it captured a picture of the cross coming down. (CNA)

Vatican Briefing

Pandemic could take heaviest toll on homeless, says pope

The homeless “risk paying the heaviest price” amid the coronavirus crisis, Pope Francis has said in a message to street newspapers. In a statement dated April 21 but released by the Holy See press office April 27, the pope noted that the pandemic posed a dire threat to the more than 100 publications sold by the homeless worldwide. Thousands of people depend for their livelihoods on the sale of street newspapers, he said. (CNA)

Pope Francis urges Catholics to unite through praying the rosary in May

Pope Francis sent a letter Saturday encouraging Catholics to pray the rosary throughout May. He also shared two new prayers to implore the help of the Virgin Mary during the coronavirus pandemic. “Contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial,” Pope Francis said in a letter April 25. He urged families and individuals to “rediscover the beauty of praying the rosary at home in the month of May,” which is traditionally a time of increased devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. With his letter, the pope included two prayers to Our Lady to recite at the end of the rosary, which he said he would also pray throughout May “in spiritual union with all of you.” (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

On Earth Day, Pope Francis urges solidarity with most vulnerable

Commenting on the celebration of Earth Day during his general audience Wednesday, Pope Francis urged people to show solidarity with the weak and vulnerable and to protect humanity’s common home. According to Pope Francis, Earth Day “is an occasion for renewing our commitment to love and care for our common home and for the weaker members of our human family.” “As the tragic coronavirus pandemic has taught us, we can overcome global challenges only by showing solidarity with one another and embracing the most vulnerable in our midst,” the pope said April 22. He called for a renewed sense “of sacred respect for the earth, for it is not just our home but also God’s home,” adding that “this should make us all the more aware that we stand on holy ground.” (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

La Civiltà Cattolica launches Chinese edition

The Catholic periodical La Civiltà Cattolica will now be published in simplified Chinese, in what its publishers say is an attempt at establishing a better relationship with the Chinese people. The Jesuit magazine announced the new language edition in a press release on April 21. “This initiative is also offered as a gesture of friendship, given the increasingly important role that China plays in our contemporary world within the global context,” said the statement. La Civiltà Cattolica is celebrating its 170th anniversary this year. The publication was founded by Italian members of the Society of Jesus and all pieces are written by Jesuits. With the addition of simplified Chinese, La Civiltà Cattolica is now published in six different languages. (CNA)

Pope Francis creates foundation to promote John Paul I’s teachings

Pope Francis has instituted a Vatican foundation to promote the thought and teachings of Venerable John Paul I, who was pope for 33 days in 1978. The John Paul I foundation was formally established with a papal rescript Feb. 17, according to the April 28 Vatican announcement. According to a note signed by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the foundation’s purpose “is to promote and disseminate awareness of the thought, works, and example of Pope John Paul I.” Often called “the smiling pope,” John Paul I died unexpectedly on Sept. 28, 1978 after just 33 days in office. A priority of his short pontificate was carrying forward the work of the Second Vatican Council. (CNA)

New director named for Vatican financial watchdog authority

The Vatican has named a new director for its internal financial watchdog. In a statement April 15, the Holy See press office said that the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin had appointed Giuseppe Schlitzer as director of the Financial Intelligence Authority (AIF). He succeeds Tommaso Di Ruzza, who completed his five-year term of office January 20, according to the Vatican. Cardinal Parolin also named a new vice-director, Federico Antellini Russo. The two men will run the watchdog, which combats money laundering, along with AIF President Carmelo Barbagallo, who was appointed after the departure of René Brühlhart in Nov. 2019. (CNA)

Vatican creates commission to address coronavirus aftermath

The Vatican is creating a commission to provide local aid and tackle issues related to the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, according to a statement released April 15. The group, created at the request of Pope Francis, will work in collaboration with the Roman Curia and specifically the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The commission has been formed “to express the concern and love of the Church for the whole human family in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, above all through the analysis and reflection on the socio-economic and cultural challenges of the future and the proposal of guidelines to face them,” according to the announcement. The commission will be headed by the leadership of the Integral Development dicastery: prefect Cardinal Peter Turkson, secretary Archbishop Bruno-Marie Duffé, and new deputy secretary Fr. Augusto Zampini. (CNA)

Vatican congregation to send ventilators to Syria and Holy Land

A Vatican Congregation has announced that it is sending medical supplies to Syria and the Holy Land as the coronavirus spreads across the Middle East. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches said April 18 it was donating 10 ventilators to Syria and three to St Joseph’s Hospital in Jerusalem, as well as diagnostic kits to Gaza and funds to the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem. The Congregation explained that the donations would be made in the name of Pope Francis through a new emergency fund called Fondo Emergenza CEC. (CNA)

Leyte priest offers ‘door-to-door’ confetssion, communion amid lockdown

LEYTE— The hunger for the sacraments has become more pressing among the Catholic faithful during the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The suspension of public religious celebrations, however, did not prevent a Catholic priest in the central Philippine province of Leyte from caring for his flock.

Father Amadeo Corpuz Alvero of the St. Isidore the Worker parish knocks on the doors of the faithful to offer the sacrament of reconciliation and communion.

The priest decided to go around his parish because people continue to go to church for confession and communion despite warnings from authorities.

“I told them not to come and to stay at home and join the online celebration of Mass,” said Father Alvero, adding that making the Act of Contrition would suffice for confession during the lockdown.

“Still they come and ask for confession,” said the priest. “At first I obliged,” he admitted. He heard confessions in secret inside the church’s sacristy before celebrating Mass.

“Then people learned about it and many came for confession,” said Father Alvero.

One time, a parishioner came to say that it is different to personally receive the Body of Christ and to confess through a priest compared to praying online.

It was the turning point for Father Alvero.

He decided to bring the Body of Christ to every home and to bring God’s forgiveness to those who asked for it.



Fr. Amadeo Corpuz Alvero of the St. Isidore the Worker Parish in McArthur, Leyte hears a confession inside a villager’s home on April 22. PHOTO COURTESY OF FR. ALVERO

On March 30, the priest started visiting the homes of his parishioners who sent a request online for confession.

After two weeks, the priest has been hearing confessions around the parish from 8:30 in the morning until 6 o’clock in the evening.

He would go around the parish and knock on doors offer the Body of Christ for communion.

“These extraordinary times strengthened the people’s need to receive the Body of Christ,” noted Father Alvero.

He said that the faithful also seemed to have established a strong faith in the forgiveness of sins through confession.

Parishioner Jenneth de la Cruz said it’s difficult to hear Mass online “and much more to not receive communion” on Sundays.

“I am very thankful and lucky that despite of our current situation, [Father Alvero] takes time to come

and visit us,” said the 41-year-old De la Cruz.

“I felt that God is always guiding us and that our faith in Him will always be there,” she said.

The parish priest also visits the sick and participates in the distribution of food aid to poor areas in his parish.

“The role of the Church is to pray for the people, to be with them in their suffering, and to extend help in whatever way we can,” said Father Alvero.

“Doing these, I feel that I am doing what Christ wants me to do,” he said, adding that people not only hunger for food during the pandemic but also hunger for “spiritual communal activities.”

He said that during trying times, the Church should take “extra effort to face the challenge to make extraordinary care, love, and service to the people.” **(Marielle Lucenio/LICAS.news)**

Archbishop Auza delivers Covid-19 med supplies donated by pope to Madrid hospital

SPAIN— Filipino Archbishop Bernardito Auza, apostolic nuncio to Spain, delivered three respirators and other medical supplies donated by Pope Francis to a hospital in Madrid.

According to Vatican News, the medical equipment were delivered to the San Rafael Hospital on April 26 in the presence of Madrid Mayor José Luis Martínez-Almeida.

Ventilators have become one of the top priorities in hospitals around the world amid the spread of coronavirus, a respiratory illness.

During the ceremony, Auza expressed the closeness and affection of the pope, his concerns for victims of the pandemic and its negative impact on the social and economic sectors.

Along with the nuncio were Cardinal Carlos Osoro Sierra, archbishop of Madrid, and his auxiliary bishop, José Cobo Cano.



Archbishop Bernardino Auza, Apostolic Nuncio to Spain, leads the turnover ceremony of respirators and other medical equipment to San Rafael Hospital in Madrid on April 26. PHOTO FROM HOSPITAL SAN RAFAEL MADRID

Auza, the former Holy See’s Permanent Observer to the United Nations in New York, said that they were “very happily surprised” by the donation, “which has been well received.”

San Rafael, a “very big and referenced hospital” in Madrid, he said, has been “almost exclusively dedicated, since the start of the crisis, to the coronavirus victims”.

The donations included protective equipment for the health care workers of the hospital run by the religious Brothers of St. John of God.

The delivery of the respirators ended with a of prayer in the hospital chapel for the victims of the pandemic and the sick.

Spain is the second country in the world most affected by the pandemic

and with the city of Madrid as its epicenter.

As of April 27, the country recorded around 209,465 Covid-19 cases, while 100,875 have recovered. There have been over 23,521 deaths.

Pope Francis has been donating funds and medical equipment to countries, organizations and healthcare centres dealing with the infection. **(CBCPNews)**

Filipino priest in New York recovers from coronavirus

NEW YORK— A Filipino priest who contracted coronavirus in New York has recovered after around a two-week battle with the disease.

Fr. Jun Villanueva of the Diocese of Balanga said that a doctor confirmed his complete recovery from the virus on April 13.

“I am feeling so much better now... everything feels normal again,” Fr. Villanueva said.

It began with fever, sneezing, sore throat, dry cough, no appetite and difficulty breathing so he decided to self-quarantine on March 25.

The priest thought he should get tested for Covid-19 so he visited a hospital on March 30. While waiting the result, he was advised to self-quarantine at their convent.



Fr. Jun Villanueva is pictured on a New York street March 18.

Four days later, he was informed that he had coronavirus.

Fr. Villanueva admitted that he got afraid but despite the initial fear, he knew what he had to do.

“I was literally and emotionally alone but I took all the moments to be with God,” he said.

After ten days, the priest said his fever disappeared and regained his appetite.

“Good thing I don’t have health issues so the recovery was a bit fast,” he said.

Fr. Villanueva, who previously served a parish in Bataan province’s Morong town, arrived in New York on March 6 for a five-year assignment at St. Peter – Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, located near the World Trade Center.

After studying 3D animation and digital compositing at the New York Film Academy in 2005, the priest has been in and out of the city, serving different parishes as a missionary.

New York City, the epicenter of the outbreak in the US, has also been tagged as the world’s coronavirus capital, recording more

cases than any country across the globe.

As of April 26, the virus claimed nearly 17,000 lives in New York, with over 282,143 confirmed cases across the state, which is home to some 19.5 million people.

The US, as a whole, has more than 980,000 cases, with around 55,000 fatalities.

New York also extended its lockdown measures, requiring residents to stay home, until at least May 15.

It was on March 13 when the archdiocese also announced the suspension public Masses to slow the spread of Covid-19.

For Fr. Villanueva, celebrating Masses in an empty church “is my loneliest of the loneliest experience as a priest”.

“I really cried when I first celebrated Mass without churchgoers. There’s no one in the Church except Jesus,” he recalled.

“Then I realized that the Mass is not a show but our union with Jesus, whether there are people or none,” he said. “I started to look at the situation from that perspective”. **(CBCPNews)**

Grand Master of the Order of Malta dies at 75

ROME, Italy— The Grand Master of the Order of Malta Fra’ Giacomo Dalla Torre died early Wednesday at the age of 75.

Dalla Torre had been in treatment for throat cancer in Rome in recent months. He is remembered by the Order of Malta for his kindness, appreciation of the arts, and charity towards the poor and disabled.

“I worked with Fra’ Giacomo for over 20 years,” Philippa Leslie, communications director of the Order of Malta in Great Britain, told CNA.

“He had a warm and sympathetic personality, a nice sense of humour, and was always completely natural and friendly with all whom he met, and took a great interest in people,” she said. “In relaxed moments, we discussed opera together, particularly Italian opera.”

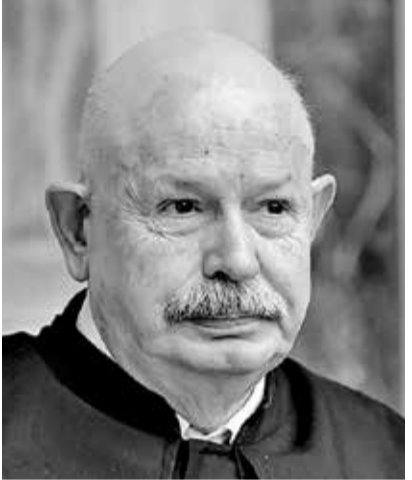
The Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta is a position usually held for life. Dalla Torre led the order for three years before his death. He was elected as the 80th grand master in May 2018 after serving one year as the interim grand master amid the order’s ongoing reform.

Portuguese Grand Commander Fra’ Ruy Gonçalo do Valle Peixoto de Villas Boas will serve as interim head of the order, according to article 17 of the order’s constitution, until the election of the new Grand Master.

The 80-year-old interim leader has been a member of the Order of Malta’s Portuguese Association for more than 30 years. He took his solemn vows as a Professed Knight in 2015, and was elected to the position of Grand Commander in May 2019.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta is a Catholic lay religious order originally founded as the Knights Hospitaller around 1099 in Jerusalem for the protection and medical care of Holy Land pilgrims. Now based in Rome, it is present in 120 countries with over 2,000 projects in the medical-social field and more than 120,000 volunteers and medical staff.

It maintains sovereignty, holding diplomatic relations with more than 100 states and United Nations



Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre. COURTESY OF THE ORDER OF MALTA

permanent observer status.

Recently, the Order of Malta has been active in its response to the coronavirus throughout the world. The order has delivered medicine and food to the elderly, donated iPads to nursing homes so residents can make video calls to family, and assisted with the construction of a new hospital in Lombardy, the epicenter of the coronavirus in Italy.

In April, the order launched a “Doctor to Doctor” initiative to share best practices with medical staff in the Middle East for the treatment and prevention of COVID-19. The program connected doctors on the front line in Italy with doctors in Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon.

The grand master is the sovereign and religious head of the Order of Malta vested with the authority to conduct diplomatic relations, ratify international agreements, and to issue legislative measures along with the Sovereign Council.

As grand master, Fra’ Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto made state visits to Cameroon, Benin, Germany, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and other countries. He visited medical staff and patients in the order’s healthcare facilities during each of these trips, according to a press statement by the order.

He cared for the poor by serving weekly at soup kitchens in Rome’s railway stations and participating in the order’s International Summer Camps for Young Disabled. For over

Network / A1

government ordered the country’s largest broadcasting network to halt operations.

Aside from being a legal issue, he said that the matter also involves “moral and spiritual” aspects that need attention.

According to him, press freedom is a key mechanism of a functioning and healthy democracy.

“The government should be willing to listen to feedback and criticisms and opposing views to improve governance,” Villegas said.

“Let us not shutdown anyone who has a different perspective than ours,” he added.

The archbishop also expressed concern to the thousands of workers who will be affected by the network’s shutdown amid the coronavirus pandemic.

ABS-CBN signed off after its evening news broadcast on April 5, leaving the jobs of 11,000 news and production personnel in jeopardy.

The move followed after the National Telecommunications

Commission issued a cease-and-desist order after ABS-CBN’s broadcast franchise expired on May 4.

It also comes after Congress sat on a decision to renew the station’s license.

“With the widespread poverty and job losses due to the pandemic, do we still need to increase poverty and unemployment?” said Villegas.

In several occasions, President Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly threatened to close down the network for its critical coverage of the government’s bloody drug war that claimed thousands of lives.

Before the closure order, government’s top lawyer, Solicitor-General Jose Calida, warned NTC against allowing the station to operate temporarily.

For Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, the NTC order was “treachery of the highest order”.

Bishops Ruperto Santos of Balanga and Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos also expressed alarm

over the shutdown of the network, which has been a major news source on the pandemic.

“It is untimely and disservice at this time of pandemic the cease and desist order given to ABS-CBN,” Santos said.

“Whatever legal issues there might be in this case, a remedy should be sought that will not further aggravate the plight of thousands of workers that will be added to the growing number of Filipino gravely affected by this pandemic,” said Alminaza.

Villegas also called on ABS-CBN to use this moment to critically examine itself and their mission to society, adding that “it does not help that the television is used to break morals and culture of the Filipinos”.

“There is something more important in the top rating. Promoting wisdom and goodwill is paramount. Don’t be afraid to criticize, but do it for the good of all and always based on the truth,” he said. **(CBCP News)**



By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio Belizar, Jr. SThD

“Go, my people, enter your chambers and shut the doors behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while till this indignation has passed by” (Is 26:20).

“I am living this as a time of great uncertainty”—Pope Francis

DEAR Fellow Quarantine Sojourners,

I hear your sometimes shrill voices. I see your worried faces. I feel your fears. I join your laughter when you try hard to find humor in the many tales of Covid-19 horror. I notice your anxious but determined struggle to grapple with an unseen enemy. I should know. In varying degrees I share these same realities with you. Your impatience is understandable, as is your panic when rules seem to be as changeable as our leaders’ understanding of the deadly disease and how to deal with it. Why do I sound like I’m talking to myself? Maybe I am.

Covid-19 has changed our country, as it has changed the world. We no longer live under the rules we once knew. Society that tries to bring it under control has surprisingly been so controlled by Covid-19 that it is effectively the reason behind new ways of looking at the world, at fellow human beings, at human activities, at the present and at the future.

The world is no longer a stream of endless faces but of face masks. Fellow human beings are no longer friends-or-colleagues-in-the-making but potential carriers of the dreaded virus to be kept as far away (at least one or more meters) as possible. Human activities are mostly around the most basic. The present is a battlefield. The future is a blur.

The reality it uncovers is uncertainty. While many governments—including ours—have imposed measures and protocols to keep the current virus at bay, almost all of them manifest little to no confidence in any predictable outcome of their efforts. So much is invested in keeping people quarantined, effectively punishing the poorest of

Journey of uncertainty

the poor in the hot and suffocating conditions of their crowded homes and neighborhoods. Work stoppage among the poor’s breadwinners with its effect of income-deprivation, is hardly offset by relief goods and insufficient social amelioration money. If Mother Earth’s cry characterized life before Covid-19, now it distinguishes itself as the cry of the poor. Even the so-called middle class joins in the groans of the nation’s poor under the weight of a seemingly ever-menacing crisis.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the lessons and even the blessings of quarantine. Social media abound in them, and much of the chatter they create either make sense or, at least, amuse and entertain. Many of us, in fact, think that quarantine has allowed the earth to rest and us—save for the ever-present fear of the virus—to take a long and even extended vacation with our families and loved ones. Those of us who previously had very little time at home, now find ourselves almost always there. Those of us who have young children and adolescent family members not only to feed but also to discipline and keep obedient to the ever-changing quarantine rules have our deep sympathy. I add, too, my prayers and best wishes. Children are a joy; they can also be a trial. Family life is a constant attempt to discover in our trials greater joys. Still, it is true, Covid-19 has further exposed life’s uncertainty, even in the family.

But I suggest that we take this uncertainty that we live with as an open invitation to take a leap of faith. This is what makes faith what it is. The uncertainty born of our human powerlessness and helplessness in the face of a deadly threat to our very survival and sanity is an arrow that points to our need to rely on a higher power without the powerlessness and helplessness of our best human efforts. The journey of uncertainty must follow where the arrow goes. Otherwise the alternative is the dead-end of life’s absurdity.

The Holy Father Pope Francis once observed that the current corona virus has exposed mankind’s undue bias to the economic and the material rather than to the human person. He cited the case of many empty hotels that cannot take in the many homeless persons, themselves under threat of viral infection, just because doing so obviously does not translate into business benefits. I might add that we are a part of this humanity. We must check our biases against humanity’s own. It appears to me that we are set to discover that the bias is simply due to the failure to follow where the arrow of the journey of uncertainty leads to. In effect, it falls into the absurdity of seeing what is material as primordial and what is human as inconsequential. This is a disease more deadly than covid-19.

On the other hand, when we take the leap of faith, we are bound to find ourselves face to face with the Risen One whose greeting, “Peace/Shalom be with you!” (Jn 20:19, 21, 26) is the fruit of being caught in the arms of the Lord. Thomas the Apostle’s bias to the physical and material had to make way to the spiritual. “You believe, Thomas, because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (Jn 20:29).

Let us take the leap of faith because it enables us followers of Jesus to see him in others. “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did or did not do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did or did not do to me” (Mt 25:40, 45). This is the kind of vision that matters the most because its light takes us to the Father’s house.

But it begins with the journey of uncertainty. At its backdrop remember the words of Benjamin Franklin: “The only certain things in life are death and taxes.” I beg to disagree. There are other certainties. But for now let me mention two: the uncertainty of things earthly (Covid-19 shows that) and God’s love for us. One is passing; the other is permanent.

Cling only to what is permanent. The uncertainty will lose its sting.



Spaces of Hope

Fr. Carmelo O. Diola

Tres Marias

WITH the wind howling outside the glass doors of the rectangular third-floor iron veranda of the parish and uneven rain clouds hovering over the city of Cebu, I scrounged for some consoling memories. My mind reached back to February 14 when about 60 street children and some parents had gathered in the parish for Valentine’s Day. They had given me a bouquet of multicolored paper flowers they themselves had made.

The parish outreach for street children, called AGAK (“Atong Gugma Alang sa Kabataan” or “Our Love for the Youth”) was a daily parish outreach started by my priest-predecessors. A stable group of volunteers and regular supporters had gravitated towards three single ladies who were in the parish daily: Lani, Farrah, and Leobe. Lani is a nurse who works with a lawyer. Farrah is in the corporate world. Leobe is a public elementary school teacher.

The outreach is now on its fourth year. Most street children actually have shelters that bear scant resemblance to a house. They would rather spend time in the streets. With the ECQ, the three ladies and other volunteers did weekly distribution of relief goods. Now, however, Sitio Tinabangay, where Farrah and Leobe live, is in lockdown due to a rising number of Covid positives.

Even before the lockdown, the trio also got involved in setting up the Adopt a Frontliner initiative of the parish. Parish volunteers, now numbering 50, commit to pray the Divine Mercy chaplet, the rosary with the Loretto Litany, the Gozos (“joys”) of San Roque, and two other prayers daily, including personal sacrifices, for five frontliners. They began their mission last April 8. Now 250 frontliners in both Manila and Cebu have their backs covered, in addition to wearing PPEs. A group of about eight prayer warriors come together daily, with appropriate social distancing, in a mini-plaza just outside the parish compound to sing the prayers. Their passion inspires.

ECQ is a time to reach out. It is also a time to reach into one’s self. Only God knows the personal struggles we all undergo during the ECQ, when Masses are without people and the sacramental life of the Church has been impeded, accompanied by copious tears of parishioners and clergy.

When the Apostolic Penitentiary published its decree on special indulgences last March 19, it touched upon something that the pandemic puts into relief: the question of death and how priests can minister to those afflicted by the virus. Suffering is compounded by the sense of physical, emotional, and spiritual isolation.

The value of such indulgences became apparent when a friend texted me about the need for extreme unction for his sibling who was dying from Covid-19. As I prepared myself mentally while inquiring about hospital protocols, I realized the letter had actually addressed those in such a situation when it says that “the Church pray for those who find themselves unable to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and of the Viaticum, entrusting each and every one to divine Mercy by virtue of the communion of saints and granting the faithful a Plenary Indulgence on the point of death, provided they are duly disposed and have recited a few prayers during their lifetime...” The letter goes on to say that the Church “makes up for the three usual conditions required”. The latter include receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

I inquired from my friend if I could talk to the attending isolation-ward physician. Since experience tells me that the sense of hearing is often the last sense to go, I asked for an opportunity to “speak” to the comatose man through speaker phone. He acquiesced. I do not know how well my message was received by the dying man as I walked him through the five conditions for acquiring a plenary indulgence for which the Church had made some flexible provisions for the sake of mercy. Only God knows.

The same letter also states that “for the attainment of this

Spaces of Hope / A6

Living Mission / A4

ings received from the hands of God. Among them, too, is a strong sense of justice and a true charity toward their neighbor. This active faith has been responsible for many organizations for the relief of spiritual and material distress, the furtherance of the education of youth, the improvement of the social conditions of life, and the

promotion of peace throughout the world.”

Indeed, both genuine ecumenical discussion and concrete practice can profitably begin by observing these authentic Christian practices and virtues; then, all Christians can commit themselves to giving “common witness” to the Christian faith concretely lived in daily life.

Candidly Speaking / A4

understand us, no matter how much we complain in a filial way.

It will also greatly help if we can have a list of intentions to pray for and to offer our tasks for. These days, these intentions are endless. There are just so many people in great need of things, both material and spiritual. We have to do whatever we can to help them meet those needs.

Of course, real love is not just a matter of good intentions and sweet words. By its very essence, it has to be expressed in deeds. And nowadays, despite the stay-at-home order, there will always be things to do.

Usually they are small tasks, even menial in character. But if done out of love for God and for others,

they can acquire tremendous power to help people in their needs. God’s mysterious ways and the Christian doctrine about the communion of saints will see to it that even in our hidden work done with love can reach out to people we may not even know.

It is also good that we come out always with some plan or schedule of activities during the day, so that we do not get lost and confused easily, and so that we can manage our energies properly. We have to realize that while God’s grace can make the impossible possible, we continue to remain human with our natural limitations.

Let’s hope that in the end, we are always on the move, acting with zeal. That way, we can effectively fight boredom and dryness!

Cardinal Chito elevated among top-ranking cardinals

POPE Francis elevated our very own Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle to the rank of Cardinal-Bishop, the newest and youngest member in the Order of Bishops. The latter is composed of the cardinals whom the Pope has appointed as titular heads of suburbicarian churches which are ancient churches in the dioceses around the City of Rome and the Eastern Rite Patriarchs. The promotion puts Cardinal Tagle, the first Cardinal in the Philippines and Asia, together with Benjamino Cardinal Stella of Italy, in the highest of the three orders in the College of Cardinals – Order of Bishops, Order of Priests, most of whom are diocesan bishops, and Order of Deacons most of whom are curial officials” (Code of Canon Law No. 3

50). The Cardinals who are titular heads of suburbicarian churches have the right to elect one of their members as the Dean of the College of Cardinals when the post is vacant (Canon Law No. 352). Earlier this year, they elected Giovanni Battista Cardinal Re as Dean and Leonardo Cardinal Sandri as Vice-Dean.

Due to absence of vacancy in suburbicarian sees, Pope Francis issued a “rescript setting aside the requirements of canon law” to name Cardinal Tagle to the rank of Cardinal Bishop. He is the titular head of San Felice da Cantalice Centocelle and is the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and President of Caritas Internationales.

On June 26, 2018, Pope Francis also issued a similar rescript to add to the College of Cardinals four senior officials from the Roman Curia: the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin; the Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches Leonardo Sandri; the Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, Marc Ouellet; and the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples Fernando Filoni, who was appointed Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Pope Francis cited the size of the College of Cardinals and the number of bishops who were over 80 and cannot enter a conclave. Cardinal Stella is the Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy and named titular bishop of Porto

Santa Rufina.

Pope Francis also appointed as Vice Camerlengo or Chamberlain Archbishop Ilson de Jesus Montanari of Brazil; he is the Secretary of the Congregation of Bishop and Secretary to the College of Cardinals, and continues in both roles. Pope Francis appointed on February 14, 2019 Cardinal Kevin Farrel, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life as Camerlengo. While the Pope is alive, the job is titular. When the Pope dies or resigns, the Chamberlain is in charged with “sealing the papal apartments, chairing consultations about the papal funeral, making the practical preparations for the conclave to elect the next pope, and

Duc in Altum / A7



Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

Locked down or up?



Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco

COVID-19 has left and continues to leave a vicious trail that has left everyone anxious, distressed and many dead. For the first time, the world has come against something that has effectively humbled man’s overdependence on technology, economic wealth and power, production and transportation and even political systems boasting to provide for every person’s basic needs.

Without a vaccine at sight, the best possible measure against the virus was to lock down entire cities and countries. This, we hope, would somehow stem the virus or as experts redundantly repeat: flatten the curve of infections. Despite this, we are not free from the anxiety of a possible surge of infections once people become complacent after the quarantine.

Meanwhile our quarantined lifestyle, which continues to take a heavy toll on businesses, disrupt educational

and cultural institutions, postpone celebrations and other social events, etc., has also led us to discover and rediscover many valuable realities. Families and individuals, for example, living together in confinement have become aware of many things that perhaps, their fast-paced professional life, digital and social-media addiction, and intense week-end social lifestyle have masked.

News abound –both in print and digital media– how families are rediscovering and treasuring bonding moments, sharing chores, simplifying elaborate celebrations but cherishing them more, and once-forgotten family traditions come to the light even when there continue to exists the usual family tensions, arguments and trials. But being together in a crisis like COVID, has challenge each one to bring out the genuine gift of presence, patience,

sacrifice, forgiveness and joy!

Families unceasingly come up with countless creative confinement activities that are making the most out of the lockdown. These continuing months of quarantine will indeed be something we will turn to, and see how God in His mysterious providence is able to bring more good out of the evil of COVID-19. Thus, it is next to impossible to describe or upload all the good each one is reaping and will forever carry as a legacy of these trying times of the pandemic.

As I read or watch the many wonderful family activities being shared through Viber and other social media platforms, I realized that they seem to converge in the following areas: sorting, scrolling, surprising, composing and celebrating. Here is how they are applied.

a) Sorting comes with the time that people now have at hand. They sort

Whatever / A6

Covid-19: Church urges gov’t to protect inmates in prisons



The New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City. FILE PHOTO

IF ever there were a time to show compassion to low-risk and vulnerable inmates, it is now, the Catholic Church’s Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care said.

As Covid-19 begins to hit jails and lockups around the country, ECPPC chair Bishop Joel Baylon urged the government to apply the compassionate aspect of the law during this pandemic.

In a statement released April 30, he urged President Duterte to use his clemency power to commute sentences of people eligible for compassionate release and other inmates at high-risk from the virus.

“We propose that in releasing qualified PDLs (persons deprived of liberties) to decongest our jails and prisons, priority should be given to the elderly, those who are sick and the youth,” Baylon said.

Among those that should be released, he said, are the those who were earlier freed through the benefits of good conduct time allowance, but were subsequently

ordered rearrested.

In releasing the qualified prisoners, the bishop also asked that support services be given to them.

According to him, this can be in the form of transport services and inclusion in the Pantawid Buhay program of the government.

The Free Legal Assistance Group earlier asked the Supreme Court to look into requests for the release of qualified prisoners to decongest detention facilities in the country amid the threat of Covid-19.

As of the latest count, a total of 233 prisoners and jail personnel have contracted coronavirus, according to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP).

Bishop Baylon also raised concern on the transfer of 18 Covid-19 positive inmates from the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City to the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City.

“We believe that transferring female PDLs to this male camp is not advisable,” he said.

The prelate stressed that transferring confirmed Covid-19 cases to the NBP will endanger all the prisoners and prison personnel in the country’s main penitentiary.

“At present, there are more than 7,000 inmates in this camp and this transfer will put other PDLs and even the prison officials and personnel in great jeopardy,” said Baylon.

Instead, he urged the authorities to bring the infected inmates to the adequate Covid-19 referral hospitals.

“We strongly recommend that they be placed in medical facilities, where their needs can be attended to properly, and not in penal institutions, where the possibility of transmitting the virus to other detainees and correctional personnel is very high,” said Baylon.

At least 18 CIW inmates found positive of Covid-19 have been transferred to the NBP to contain the spread of the virus within the Mandaluyong-based facility. **(CBCP News)**

Bishop to gov’t: Don’t be a burden for OFWs

MANY overseas Filipino workers deserve assistance and help and not additional “burden”, a Church official said.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga said that requiring OFWs to pay premiums to state insurer Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) is “lacking of compassion and only gives anxiety to them”.

“It is now the time to be considerate and be more caring to our OFWs,” said Santos, vice chairman of the bishops’ Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People.

After drawing flack, President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday suspended the collection of higher premiums for OFWs.

He also directed the PhilHealth to make the premium contribution of

OFWs on a “voluntary” basis.

PhilHealth has earlier required OFWs with income amounting between P10,000 and P20,000 to pay 3 percent of their annual salaries this year—a raise from 2.75 percent in 2019.

According to the prelate, many Filipino workers abroad are much affected by the Covid-19 pandemic because of the “no work, no pay” policy.

“And so with 3 percent mandatory contribution is to make them suffer more,” Santos added.

“Our OFWs have sacrificed so much for our country, made our economy afloat. Now they need our assistance and help, but we make them to suffer more with this 3 percent,” he said. **(CBCP News)**

Caritas to gov’t: Strengthen agri sector to cushion Covid-19 economic impact



A farmer is seen leading his carabao as they begin plowing a field at a farm in Basey, Samar. FILE PHOTO

CORONAVIRUS pandemic is a health issue but it could lead to a food security crisis if proper measures are not taken, the Catholic Church’s social action arm said.

Caritas Philippines said it is “high time” for the government to provide “stronger” support to agriculture as the world braces for a crippling economic meltdown due to the pandemic.

“It’s about time we strengthen our programs on food security, providing the needed support to farmers and fisherfolk who remain until this time the poorest sector in the country,” said Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, National Director of the Philippine Caritas.

According to him, the current crisis compels the country to ensure that each family is secured with ample supply of basic food requirement.

“And this can only be provided if the agriculture sector is given priority,” he said.

The bishop issued the statement as the government continues to find solutions to stretch its ability to provide food rations and ensure that the food sector has enough supply to feed the whole country at least in the next three months.

“The social amelioration program is not efficiently solving our food security problem, however we see it as a necessary short-cut solution,” Bagaforo said.

“Thus, we at Caritas Philippines, strongly urge our government, especially the Department of Agriculture to start mobilizing farmers at the community level while we still have time,” he said.

The Kidapan prelate pointed out that cash aids to poor families are not enough to combat the negative economic impact of Covid-19.

“Our food industry needs to be supported most importantly by our agriculture sector. We will triumph in this crisis if we can ensure that no Filipino family experiences

hunger,” he said.

Bagaforo, however, said that “while we find solutions to our food security problem, we must continue to be vigilant and ensure that the implementation of the Enhanced Community Quarantine continue to be within the bounds of law, and that our authorities enforce maximum tolerance, respect and compassion, especially in locked-down areas.”

Citing Caritas’ programs on sustainable agriculture, he said that their community farms are helping deliver fresh vegetables to families struggling from the work suspension in Iligan, Nueva Vizcaya and Camarines Sur provinces.

A local farmers’ cooperative supported by the Diocese of Libmanan and the Gratia Plena program of the Diocese of San Jose are also supplying thousands of sacks of commercial and organic rice to Luzon provinces.

In the Diocese of San Carlos, the Caritas Kindness Store is providing opportunity to local farmers to sell their harvest at fair prices without the interference of middle traders. The same are being experienced by Mindanao farmers.

Bagaforo added that Caritas’ backyard gardening program has also ensured food security at household level, while providing additional stable income to farming families in Iloilo, Bukidnon, Quezon, Leyte, Samar, Capiz, Oriental Mindoro and Zambales provinces.

He also said that the seedlings distribution being conducted simultaneously to providing food relief in the Archdiocese of Cebu also strengthens the call for food production at household level.

As of April 26, the Covid-19 response of Caritas’ social action network has already reached more than P1.4 billion, helping more than 4 million families across the country. **(CBCP News)**

Whatever / A5

out the house, old stuff, clutter here and there, etc. There are even those, with a more practical mind, who start sorting out their life and asking themselves what they have to change or improve. And if they do make it out of this ordeal or not, what will they leave behind.

b) Scrolling often happens in our smartphones and computers. Now we are more mindful about what we see as we scroll up or down. Perhaps, it occurs to them to ask if that particular person in his contacts lists is doing well and what if I send him a message or a call? But

scrolling also is applied to the very people they live with, as we also become more discerning of their needs –a chat, a smile, a hand or a glass of water— which perhaps we have taken for granted in more normal settings.

c) Surprising moments arise when some member surprises another. The element of surprise never fails to brighten up family life, but even more now when anxiety permeates our homes. Surprise is demonstrated by chores, games, some song or dance number, a hug from behind and an inspiring complement for the food

or work well done.

d) Composing refers to how our confinement leads us to compose ourselves better in work, family gatherings and rest. There are still unavoidable tensions, but physical restrictions give us no alternative but to face issues and resolve them as best as we can. It also means literally composing emails or handwritten letters –how we miss these ones!– to our loved ones when we don’t know how to best express our apology, gratitude and love to

them.

e) Celebrating is no longer confined to birthdays and anniversaries during confinement. The family learns that every precious moment spent together is a grace from God to be shared with one another! Thus, every passing day is one to give thanks for and celebrate in the most ordinary but grace-filled way!

As we continue to journey in this ordeal together, being locked down seems to have given us more upsides that will surely forge deeper love and self-giving in our families.

Spaces of Hope / A5

indulgence the use of the crucifix or the cross is recommended (cf. Enchiridion indulgentiarum, no. 12). In this connection, several communities of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Cebu, led by Fr. Godo Atienza, have produced about 500 hand-held palochina crosses for distribution to those afflicted with Covid-19.

The ECQ has provided unexpected opportunities for service. Who would have imagined giving a Lenten recollection to four different groups in one day? Yet it happened. Within the third week of April, Mrs. Evelyn Nacario, who had helped organize an ecumenical network

providing relief goods, invited San Roque Parish to help channel about 300 packs of relief goods that included fresh vegetables from a mountain barangay of Cebu City. Actual distribution occurred April 25, a happy partnership with the barangay, Caritas-Cebu which had contributed packed rice, the imPACT network of Evelyn, and the Cebu City Alliance Church. The spirit and work of the Year of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue continues.

Meanwhile, the so-called creativity of love, as Pope Francis puts it, is alive in the activity center for street children behind the St. Joseph the Patriarch parish in

Mabolo, Cebu City. Led by its indefatigable Executive Director, Fr. Pat Ornopia, the staff and volunteers continue to feed street children and other homeless people on a daily basis. In another effort, relief goods were also distributed last by a sister-group of the activity center to “Labangers” who are recovering drug dependents. The work was led by a determined Ms. Mathesa Lusica.

Amidst these uncertain times, the resilient faith of the People of God will see us through.

Meanwhile, we pray that the relief goods for our tres Marias and other parishioners will reach the intended beneficiaries.

And That’s the Truth / A4

parish—there was nothing I could not do in the name of charity. Because of this quarantine I’m rather sad that my house is just two blocks from our church and yet I couldn’t even visit the Blessed Sacrament, but is there anything I can do? Yes, staying home forced me to confront the tasks I had been putting off for years at home: unloading my closets. I couldn’t believe I have accumulated so much

junk all these years! Souvenirs from travels; photographs waiting to be sorted out and filed into albums; clothes, shoes and bags bought at bargain sales but never worn; white elephant appliances like a soft ice-cream maker used once and stashed away, forgotten; expired toiletries and medicines; wrapped Christmas gifts from 2015 that were not sent to recipients; etc. etc. Seeing all these boxes of

belongings suffocating my closets, I realized that I had been hoarding, which is a sin, a greed of some kind. I’m sorry, Lord. I am so thankful that under the ECQ I now have the time to put my house in order, so to speak. As they say, charity begins at home.”

The ECQ really is a purgatory of sorts. It ties our hands as it takes away the things we cling to. It forces us to take a good look at our

unsatisfied cravings and where our appetites, our excesses, have led us to. And yet, like an abduction victim gagged and hog tied in a dark room in the middle of nowhere, a glimmer of gratitude happens—gratitude for the gift of life. The enemy is merciless but still hasn’t found us. Images of unnamed coffins, mass graves, and corpses rotting in the streets warn us; we could be one of those dying alone tomorrow, or

the day after, or next week, who knows? And it’s not only us, our loved ones going through this—it’s the whole world. Activities are on hold—except those that sustain life. Thus we embrace this purging as we are given the grace to see and value what really matters in life. In spite of the inconveniences, I am enjoying the ECQ. In fact, I kinda wish it would be Extreme Community Quarantine. And that’s the truth.

Archdiocese donates Covid-19 equipment and test kits to DOH, gov’t hospital

PANGASINAN— The Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan has donated a medical equipment to help detect coronavirus among patients at a government hospital in Baguio City.

Archbishop Socrates Villegas said the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) unit is now functional at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

“With this additional equipment, the BGHMC hopes to test additional 360 cases per day above their current output,” Villegas said.

In his letter of transmittal of the PCR equipment, he told BGHMC’s head Dr. Ricardo Runez that the archdiocese is grateful for the hospital’s willingness to collaborate.

“In accepting our offer, you have affirmed our chosen approach to this pandemic, which is to be more discerning and imaginative in facing this unprecedented health problem facing humanity,” the letter reads.

“It is this same discernment and imagination that we will use to solve this pandemic by God’s grace,” it added.

Remember politicians in prayer, bishop says

BATAAN— A church official said that people need to do more than attacking political leaders nowadays.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga said that politicians need help and prayers more than ever because of the coronavirus crisis.

“We should also pray for all our politicians,” Santos said. “This is the time to show their true worth, to live up to the expectations of our people and to show real, true service.”

Santos said the pandemic is a call for government leaders to serve the common good and they may find just solution to Covid-19.

“Our situation is a call for them

When the pandemic is over, Villegas said that the PCR will be donated to a hospital in Dagupan City “so that the poor and the sick may have better access to health facilities”.

Aside from the PCR, the archdiocese also donated Covid-19 testing kits to the Department of Health “to help in stemming the tide of this pandemic”.

The initiative is a collaborative effort of all the priests in the “spirit of stewardship” which is called “Pananabangan” in the archdiocese.

The archbishop also said that even before the donation, the priests have been “quietly” offering Masses, sacrifices and prayers for their parishioners.

“They continue tirelessly to go to the barangays with no internet access to offer the Church’s absolution and pardon for sins,” said Villegas.

“The food bags and hygiene kits coming from various unknown donors literally come flowing,” he said. **(CBCPNews)**

to be servants to their constituents, opportunity to help and unite our people to overcome this Covid-19 pandemic,” he added.

The Balanga diocese on April 16 released a special prayer for politicians, asking God to guide them during these trying times.

“May their life be a living testimony of self-giving and self-service; neither for personal privileges nor for personal convenience,” part of the prayer reads.

“Inspire them to be like your Son, Jesus, reaching and seeking the least and the last; helping the poor and marginalized; protecting and promoting the sanctity of human life,” it also stated. **(CBCPNews)**

Bishop: Martial alaw amid Covid-19 is ‘out of proportion’

SORSOGON— A Catholic bishop thumbed down President Rodrigo Duterte’s threat to declare martial law over rebel attacks as the country grapples with the coronavirus pandemic.

Retired Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon said there’s not enough reason for a military rule.

“Martial law is a solution which is out of proportion to the problem,” Bastes said.

Duterte threatened to declare martial law after accusing communist rebels of killing two soldiers who helping relief operations for those affected by the Covid-19 lockdown.

“I’m warning everybody and putting the armed forces and the police on notice that I might declare martial law. There will be no turning back,” Duterte said in a televised speech on April 24.

Bishop Bastes said such “isolated case” can be handled by the military and the current situation does not warrant martial law.

“Duterte has the penchant of



Bishop Emeritus Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon. DIOCESE OF SORSOGON

declaring Martial for any crisis of lawlessness,” the prelate said.

Both parties earlier agreed to a ceasefire as the country continues to wrestle with the spread of the virus.

The government’s ceasefire lapsed on April 15, while the rebels extended their ceasefire to April 30. **(CBCPNews)**

Workers / A1

cash assistance, saying that its funding is already very close to depletion.

The government’s “social amelioration program” also faced with criticisms due to its failure to include the majority of the vulnerable sectors as recipients of the financial aids.

“While we recognize and appreciate the efforts of the government to provide relief packages to our workers at this time, we also see that these are fill-gap measures only and provides no actual solutions to our labor problems,” Bagaforo said.

“We need to see our government and business owners initiate just and concrete actions for our labor force. To show compassion for our workers is a must. To show that we care is imperative,” he added.

Alminaza, co-chairperson of the

Church People-Workers Solidarity, also lamented the “worsening condition” of workers “due to lack of concrete actions” from the government.

“These already bad working conditions of our workers are being exacerbated by further negligence of the government in this time of pandemic,” he said.

The church officials stand with the labor groups calling for the government and business conglomerate to do what is best for the common good.

“We reiterate our demands for free mass testing, universal health care, adequate and timely delivery of goods and services, immediate release of financial assistance to all workers and poor families, realignment of government budget to healthcare and other basic social services among others,” Alminaza said. **(CBCP News)**

Homonhon controversy sparks calls for mine closure



Residents of Homonhon Island in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, stage a protest against the loading of chromite ore by a foreign vessel. EVA MONTES

EASTERN Samar— The government’s move to allow a Chinese-manned vessel to load mineral ores despite the province-wide quarantine measures sparked calls to close the mining operations on Homonhon Island.

Homonhon residents started an online petition on Change.org urging the government to stop all mining operations on the island off Guiuan, the southernmost town in Eastern Samar province.

According to them, the decades-long mining operations “have caused immense and tremendous environmental and ecological damages to the island”.

chairing a committee of cardinals taking care of the ordinary affairs of the church until the new pope is elected.” The Deputy Chamberlain assists him.

It is now final, religious and work gatherings are prohibited both under the ECQ and GCQ. IATF on Covid-19 gave the final decision after receiving several complaints against its previous decision allowing such gatherings when GCQ is declared. It may be recalled that the spread of covid in South Korea started from a religious gathering in a local church. Our shepherds will not risk the health and lives of the flock. Online Masses continue.

Like a broken record, we must remind again and again everyone to follow the health protocols imposed by civil and health authorities during this pandemic. We must support our frontliners, especially those working in the hospitals, who chose to put their life on the line, and not be with the members of their family even during special moments like birthday, anniversary, Online Masses and meals. They risk their life to extend a helping hand to their covid patients. We empathize with them, we can relate with them, four frontliners doctors in the family would be happy seeing briefly their family, already satisfied with just

“Please help us bring this appeal to our government officials to give our island time and a chance to heal itself,” the petition, which was started on April 17, reads.

The appeal, spearheaded by the island’s St. John the Baptist Parish, also stated that mining caused division among the more than 8,000 residents of Homonhon.

Controversy ignited at the historic island, where Christianity first landed in the Philippines 499 years ago, after environment authorities withdrew its decision to delay the loading operations.

MV VW Peace, a Panamenian-registered

vessel manned by a crew of 13 Chinese and four from Myanmar, arrived Homonhon on April 4 to load about 7,000 tons of chromite ore.

The loading was, however, delayed until April 11 when the Department of Environment Natural Resources (DENR) reversed its earlier decision to suspend the activities.

The DENR said that guidelines are in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

As of April 29, the petition already has more than 12,500 supporters.

Bishop Crispin Varquez of Borongan said the

diocese is supports the collective opposition of Homonhon parishioners against mining.

“Not only that we are opposed to any form of mining operation in the island at any time before, now, or in the future, we are also against the mineral ore loading operations at this time that the whole province is under quarantine,” Varquez said.

“The said operation is unbecoming to the spirit of the quarantine currently in place and puts at risk the health and well-being of the residents of Homonhon and the people of Eastern Samar,” he said. **(CBCPNews)**

7,000 metric tons of chromite ore despite the lockdown. Were those foreign crew put on 14-days quarantine? Why is implementation of Heal as One Act not being implemented equally? Senators, high government officials and foreign nationals got scot-free when they unashamedly violated health protocol. Why are ordinary citizens who breached curfew or quarantine arrested, detained, put on inquest and required to pay P3,500.00 bail to get out of detention? To think that the violations committed by higher officials and foreign nationals are worst than what the ordinary citizens did.

Why did the DOH issued clearance for the foreign vessel to dock and load chromite ore when the required 14-day self-quarantine was never complied with by the foreign crew of that vessel. The Chinese continued its chromite ore mining despite the pandemic. The residents are against the loading not because they are pro-mining or anti-ining, they are concerned with the health risk it may bring to the residents due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Happy 1st Birthday to my grandniece, Catrione Gaelle “CC” Rosales Castro, baby girl of my niece Mary Gretchen and Charlie Castro.

Order of Malta / A3

forty years, he was active in the order’s pilgrimages to Loreto, Assisi, Lourdes, and other international locations.

Dalla Torre entered the Order of Malta in 1985 and made his solemn vows as a professed knight in 1993. From 1994-1999 he served as grand prior of Lombardy and Venice, and from 1999-2004 was a member of the Sovereign Council.

In 2004, he was elected

grand commander, and after the death of the 78th grand master, Fra’ Andrew Bertie, he stood in as interim lieutenant. He served as grand prior of Rome from 2008 to 2017.

Dalla Torre was appointed interim grand master April 29, 2017, after the resignation of Matthew Festing, which marked the end of a month-long back and forth between the Order of Malta and the

Holy See, beginning with the dismissal of Grand Chancellor Albrecht von Boeselager from both his position, and his membership in the order, in early December 2016.

Boeselager had been dismissed because of allegations that under his tenure the order’s charity branch had inadvertently been involved in distributing condoms in Burma to

prevent the spread of HIV. Boeselager, whose brother Georg von Boeselager was appointed a member of the Board of Superintendents of the IOR in 2016, was reinstated after Festing was asked to resign by Pope Francis.

The death of the Order of Malta’s Grand Master comes as the organization continues its reform. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

POGO / A1

again provided that they follow the precautionary measures.

The Philippine gaming regulator made the decision after POGOs were labeled as business process outsourcing (BPOs), which is allowed in quarantine areas.

POGOs cater mainly to Chinese online bettors.

The government had banned mass gatherings to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, fresh calls have surfaced to allow church services as long as health and safety protocols are in place, particularly in areas under the general community quarantine.

The archbishop lamented that the government preferred to allow gambling “which breeds vice and not the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with our people”.

“My point is allow the celebration of Holy Eucharist in areas under GCQ with precautions,” Jumoad. **(CBCP News)**

Pope names Filipino archbishop new nuncio to Guatemala



Archbishop Francisco Padilla, the new apostolic nuncio to Guatemala. SCREENSHOT/AVOSA YOUTUBE ACCOUNT

POPE Francis has appointed Filipino Archbishop Francisco Padilla as his new envoy to Guatemala.

The appointment of the 66-year-old archbishop, who is currently the apostolic nuncio to Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Yemen, was announced April 17.

Upon his appointment, Padilla has also been serving as apostolic delegate in the Arabian Peninsula.

Ordained a priest in 1976, Padilla was formerly a priest of the Archdiocese of Cebu and holds a doctorate in Theology.

He entered the Diplomatic Service of the Holy See in 1985, and his first assignment was in the Apostolic Nunciature of the Dominican Republic.

Padilla then worked in the

pontifical representations in Venezuela, Austria, India, Japan and Australia.

In 2006, he was ordained as archbishop in view of his work as nuncio to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

Prior to his appointment to the Arabian Peninsula in 2016, Padilla served as nuncio in Tanzania since 2011.

The prelate also has a brother who also served as apostolic nuncio, the retired Archbishop Osvaldo Padilla.

Padilla is one of the three Filipino apostolic nuncios who are active in the service. The others are Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the nuncio to Spain, and Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, the nuncio to Australia. **(CBCPNews)**

Int’l Eucharistic Congress in Budapest postponed to 2021



PHOTO FROM IEC 2020 FACEBOOK PAGE

THE Vatican announced April 23 that due to the health situation caused by the coronavirus, the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress, to be held in Budapest in September, has been moved to the year 2021.

A statement from Holy See press office director Matteo Bruni said the decision to move the eight-day gathering to September 2021 was made by Pope Francis together with the Hungarian bishops and the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses.

The schedule of the Sept. 13-20 event included Mass, prayer, catechesis, and talks, as well as cultural and spiritual events around the Hungarian capital.

A three-day symposium featuring talks on the Eucharist by religious and theologians was planned in the lead-up to the congress.

Pope Francis had been asked to visit Hungary for the event by Hungary’s President János Áder, who extended the invitation during a February meeting.

The Vatican had not made any official announcement about a papal trip to Budapest, but during an Angelus address Dec. 15, Pope Francis asked for prayers for the conference’s success.

“For more than a century, the Eucharistic congresses have been reminding us that the Eucharist is

at the center of the Church’s life,” he said.

“We pray that the Eucharistic event in Budapest may foster processes of renewal in Christian communities,” he continued, “so that the salvation of which the Eucharist is the source may also be translated into a Eucharistic culture capable of inspiring men and women of good will in the fields of charity, peace, family, care of creation.”

The International Eucharistic Congress first took place in France in 1881 with the goal of increasing devotion to the Eucharist and bringing awareness to the large number of Catholics in the country.

It has continued to be held every few years in a different city and has crossed the globe, taking place in Jerusalem, Nairobi, Melbourne, Korea, the U.S., and throughout Europe.

The last congress was held in Cebu, Philippines in 2016. There were 12,000 participants at the congress, though millions took part in associated Masses. Hungary last hosted the Eucharistic Congress in 1938.

The event aims to give witness to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and to promote a better understanding of the liturgy and the Eucharist in the life of the Church. The congress is now typically held every four years. **(CNA)**

Philippine bishops to consecrate nation to Mary



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle blesses a statue of Our Lady of Fatima during a prayer vigil to mark her feast at the Shrine of Fatima in Portugal on May 13, 2019. COURTESY OF THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA VIA RCAM

THE Philippines, through its archdioceses and dioceses, will be consecrated to the care of the Blessed Mother amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The bishops are expected to lead the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in their respective cathedrals on May 13, the feast of Our Lady of Fatima.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Valenzuela City has earlier invited the bishops to celebrate the feast “in a special way”.

“I think this is a wonderful initiative,” Archbishop Romulo

Valles, president of the episcopal conference, stated in his letter to the dioceses on April 27.

This consecration reaffirms the bishops’ previous consecrations of the Philippines to Mary. In 2013, during the Year of Faith, the CBCP also consecrated the country to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In the Manila archdiocese, the consecration will be preceded by instructions regarding the meaning of the consecration.

A triduum of penance and the recitation of the Rosary will also begin on 10 May. This

preparation will then culminate on May 13 with the actual communal consecration.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo will lead the prayer of consecration at the Manila Cathedral with the mayors of the five cities covering the archdiocese: Manila, Mandaluyong, Pasay, Makati and San Juan.

“It will be beautiful when all the people God, led by their civil and religious leaders, put themselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin,” Pabillo said.

“We do this to implore the protection of the powerful intercession of

our Blessed Mother in this difficult time, especially as we move to the transition to a new way of life after the quarantine,” he added.

Pope Francis has earlier encouraged the faithful to pray the rosary during the whole month of May.

In a letter addressed to all Catholics and released by the Vatican April 25, he noted that it is a tradition to pray the rosary at home with family during May.

“Contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial,” the pope said. **(CBCPNews)**

Asian bishops postpone major gathering due to pandemic



9th FABC Plenary Assembly in Manila in 2009. FILE PHOTO

THE Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) has announced that it will postpone its general conference set in November this year at Baan Phu Waan, Thailand, to a later date due to the new coronavirus pandemic.

The association of episcopal conferences of the Catholic Church in the region noted that because of the “fluid situation” no future date has been fixed for the meeting.

A central committee meeting that has been scheduled for June this year “also stands postponed,” read a letter addressed to members of the federation.

The FABC, which aims to foster solidarity and responsibility for the welfare of the Church and of society in the region, includes bishops’ conferences from across Asia.

“Most of our countries in Asia are under lockdown,” noted the federation’s letter dated April 2.

“But we feel a greater sense of bonding during this dark moment in the history of the modern world,” added the federation’s message to its members across the region.

The communique was signed by Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon, president of FABC, and Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay, convener of the federation’s meeting this year.

The church leaders said that “it is in moments like these that we experience a greater dependence of God and our faith is strengthened.”

“We are confident that all of us will rise out of this crisis with a deeper sense of religiosity,” read the letter.

Despite the constraints brought about by the health emergency across the Asian region, some FABC planning and regional meetings for the general assembly were already held.

“Much reflection and discussions have taken place,” said the church leaders. “Although recently we have been unable to travel, we have been in contact through video conferencing,” they added.

The church leaders noted that the “situation is volatile, and we do not know what the morrow will bring.”

They expressed optimism, however, that “we may be able to project” future activities “when things could limp back to normal.”

The federation marks the 50th anniversary of its foundation this year.

During his visit to Thailand in November, Pope Francis noted that the anniversary “is a fitting occasion” to revisit “shrines where the missionary roots that left their mark on these lands are preserved.”

The pontiff called on Asian church leaders “to welcome with parrhesia a future that you yourselves must help develop and create.”

“Both the Church and society in Asia will benefit from a renewed and shared evangelical outreach,” added Pope Francis.

The foundation of the FABC was held during a historic gathering of 180 Asian Catholic bishops during a meeting in Manila in time for the visit of Pope Paul VI to the region in November 1970.

The governing body of the federation is the plenary or general assembly, which convenes once in four years with the presidents and official delegates from each member conference.

Official delegates to the assembly take up pastorally relevant questions for study and deliberations. It is customary that two Asian theologians each present a major paper addressing the theme of the assembly.

The FABC has played a significant role among churches in Asia.

It strengthened the bonds of communion among the bishops in the region and contributed to the development of a shared vision about the Church and its mission in the region. **(Joe Torres/LICAS. news)**



Pope Francis laughs with Carmelite nuns in Madagascar on Sept. 7, 2019. VATICAN MEDIA

Words of Vocation

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 2020 World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 3 May 2020

DEAR Brothers and Sisters,

On 4 August last year, the 160th anniversary of the death of the Curé of Ars, I chose to write a letter to all those priests who daily devote their lives to the service of God’s people in response to the Lord’s call.

On that occasion, I chose four key words—pain, gratitude, encouragement and praise—as a way of thanking priests and supporting their ministry. I believe that today, on this 57th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, those words can be addressed to the whole people of God, against the backdrop of the Gospel passage that recounts for us the remarkable experience of Jesus and Peter during a stormy night on the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mt 14:22-33).

After the multiplication of the loaves, which had astonished the crowds, Jesus told his disciples to get into the boat and precede him to the other shore, while he took leave of the people. The image of the disciples crossing the lake can evoke our own life’s journey. Indeed, the boat of our lives slowly advances, restlessly looking for a safe haven and prepared to face the perils and promises of the sea, yet at the same time trusting that the helmsman will ultimately keep us on the right course. At times, though, the boat can drift off course, misled by mirages, not the lighthouse that leads it home, and be tossed by the tempests of difficulty, doubt and fear.

Something similar takes place in the hearts of those who, called to follow the Teacher of Nazareth, have to undertake a crossing and abandon their own security to become the Lord’s disciples. The

risk involved is real: the night falls, the headwinds howl, the boat is tossed by the waves, and fear of failure, of not being up to the call, can threaten to overwhelm them.

The Gospel, however, tells us that in the midst of this challenging journey we are not alone. Like the first ray of dawn in the heart of the night, the Lord comes walking on the troubled waters to join the disciples; he invites Peter to come to him on the waves, saves him when he sees him sinking and, once in the boat, makes the winds die down.

The first word of vocation, then, is gratitude. Taking the right course is not something we do on our own, nor does it depend solely on the road we choose to travel. How we find fulfilment in life is more than a decision we make as isolated individuals; above all else, it is a response to a call from on high. The Lord points out our destination on the opposite shore and he grants us the courage to board the boat. In calling us, he becomes our helmsman; he accompanies and guides us; he prevents us from running aground on the shoals of indecision and even enables us to walk on surging waters.

Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm. “Vocation, more than our own choice, is a response to the Lord’s unmerited call” (*Letter to Priests*, 4 August 2019). We will succeed in discovering and embracing our vocation once we open our hearts in gratitude and perceive the passage of God in our lives.

When the disciples see Jesus

walking towards them on the sea, they first think that he is a ghost and are filled with fear. Jesus immediately reassures them with words that should constantly accompany our lives and our vocational journey: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” (Mt 14:27). This, then, is the second word I wish to offer you: encouragement.

What frequently hinders our journey, our growth, our choosing the road the Lord is marking out for us, are certain “ghosts” that trouble our hearts. When we are called to leave safe shores and embrace a state of life—like marriage, ministerial priesthood, consecrated life—our first reaction is often from the “ghost of disbelief”. Surely, this vocation is not for me! Can this really be the right path? Is the Lord really asking me to do this?

Those thoughts can keep growing—justifications and calculations that sap our determination and leave us hesitant and powerless on the shore where we started. We think we might be wrong, not up to the challenge, or simply glimpsing a ghost to be exorcized.

The Lord knows that a fundamental life choice—like marriage or special consecration to his service—calls for courage. He knows the questions, doubts and difficulties that toss the boat of our heart, and so he reassures us: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear!” We know in faith that he is present and comes to meet us, that he is ever at our side even amid stormy seas. This knowledge sets us free from that lethargy which I have called “sweet sorrow” (*Letter to Priests*, 4 August 2019), the interior discouragement that hold us back from experiencing the beauty of our vocation.

In the *Letter to Priests*, I also spoke about pain, but here I would like to translate the word differently, as fatigue. Every vocation brings with it a responsibility. The Lord calls us because he wants to enable us, like Peter, to “walk on water”, in other words, to take charge of our lives and place them at the service of the Gospel, in the concrete and everyday ways that he shows us, and specifically in the different forms of lay, priestly and consecrated vocation. Yet, like Saint Peter, our desire and enthusiasm coexist with our failings and fears.

If we let ourselves be daunted by the responsibilities that await us—whether in married life or priestly ministry—or by the hardships in store for us, then we will soon turn away from the gaze of Jesus and, like Peter, we will begin to sink. On the other hand, despite our frailty and poverty, faith enables us to walk towards the Risen Lord and to weather every storm. Whenever fatigue or fear make us start to sink, Jesus holds out his hand to us. He gives us the enthusiasm we need to live our vocation with joy and fervour.

When Jesus at last boards the boat, the winds die down and the waves are calmed. Here we have a beautiful image of what the Lord can do at times of turbulence and tempest in our lives. He stills those winds, so that the forces of evil, fear and resignation no longer have power over us.

As we live out our specific vocation, those headwinds can wear us down. Here I think of all those who have important responsibilities in civil society, spouses whom I like to refer to—not without reason—as “courageous”, and in a particular way those who have embraced the

consecrated life or the priesthood. I am conscious of your hard work, the sense of isolation that can at times weigh upon your hearts, the risk of falling into a rut that can gradually make the ardent flame of our vocation die down, the burden of the uncertainty and insecurity of the times, and worry about the future. Take heart, do not be afraid! Jesus is at our side, and if we acknowledge him as the one Lord of our lives, he will stretch out his hand, take hold of us and save us.

Even amid the storm-tossed waters, then, our lives become open to praise. This is the last of our vocation words, and it is an invitation to cultivate the interior disposition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Grateful that Lord gazed upon her, faithful amid fear and turmoil, she courageously embraced her vocation and made of her life an eternal song of praise to the Lord.

Dear friends, on this day in particular, but also in the ordinary pastoral life of our communities, I ask the Church to continue to promote vocations. May she touch the hearts of the faithful and enable each of them to discover with gratitude God’s call in their lives, to find courage to say “yes” to God, to overcome all weariness through faith in Christ, and to make of their lives a song of praise for God, for their brothers and sisters, and for the whole world. May the Virgin Mary accompany us and intercede for us.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 8 March 2020, the Second Sunday of Lent

FRANCISCUS

Liturgical law in times of the coronavirus pandemic

(Part 1)

By Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD

THE ongoing coronavirus pandemic has not only brought entire nations to their knees and governments at their wits’ end on how to contain it, but has also taken its toll on Church authorities. With the recent dispositions from the Holy See defining a specific situation for imparting general absolution and the generalized recourse to attending the Holy Mass via internet, the question now arises on just how far such concessions can extend. Two specific questions have been asked: (1) Is the attendance at Holy Mass via internet a valid one, or is it just a matter of the relaxation of the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation? (2) Can the Sacrament of Reconciliation be administered via the internet in the foreseeable future? An underlying question is also implied: (3) Is the government right in saying that the reopening of churches for liturgical celebration is not an urgent matter, since alternative ways of worship have been put into effect?

To answer these questions, we need to start with a review of sacramental theology and liturgical law. Vatican II affirmed that it is through the liturgy or the public worship of the Church that “the work of our redemption is exercised” and that the liturgy is “the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the Church” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, n.2). Therefore, the Council concludes, “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her powers flow” (SC, n.10).

What is liturgy?

The Code of Canon Law gives a working definition of sacred liturgy in c.834, which states: §1.The Church fulfills its office of sanctifying in a special way in the sacred liturgy, which is indeed the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ; in it through sensible signs the sanctification of humankind is signified and effected in a manner proper to each of the signs and the whole of the public worship of God is carried on by the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and the members. §2. This worship takes place when it is carried out in the name of the Church by persons lawfully deputed

and through acts approved by the authority of the Church. From the above, the following essential elements of a liturgical action can be deduced, the last three of which are juridic requirements: 1) A fundamental element of the liturgy is that it is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. Thus, in the Holy Mass, it is Christ who consecrates the Eucharist; when the confessor absolves, it is Christ who forgives sins; even when an ordinary faithful baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes. 2) Sensible signs are used, which both signify and effect the sanctification of mankind. In this regard, it is important to comment that the liturgical sign should keep close relation with the sanctification that it signifies (to the exclusion of the vulgar and the inane). 3) The public worship of God is carried out by the whole Mystical Body—i.e., it is offered in the name of the Church. Thus, c.837, §1 states: Liturgical actions are not private actions but celebrations of the Church itself, which is “the sacrament of unity”...therefore liturgical actions pertain to the whole body of the Church and manifest and affect it.... Every liturgical act is never just a private act of an individual, but constitutes the culminating moment when the whole Church renders public and complete worship to God. 4) The actions are approved by the authority of the Church. Thus, c.846 explicitly establishes: §1. The liturgical books approved by the competent authority are to be faithfully observed in the celebration of the sacraments; therefore no one on personal authority may add, remove or change anything in them. §2. The ministers are to celebrate the sacraments according to their own rite. 5) The actions are carried out by persons lawfully deputed—a deputation that is different, as previously mentioned, from that enjoyed by all the faithful by virtue of baptism, which is a sharing in the common priesthood mentioned in c.836 and described by Vatican II.

The existence of liturgical laws Vatican Council II emphasized the importance of liturgical laws, leading to a greater systematic autonomy to liturgico-sacramental norms in the present Code of Canon Law (CIC). Such a systematic emphasis on the



Fr. Reginald Malicdem, Rector of the Manila Cathedral, celebrates the mass streamed online as a lockdown is imposed to slow the rate of the coronavirus disease spread in Metro Manila, April 2, 2020. COURTESY OF ROMAIN GARY LAZARO

canonical discipline of sacred liturgy shows an acknowledgment of the insufficiency of the proclamation of the Word of God alone. The Church also has the fundamental mission of carrying out the salvation that it proclaims “through the sacrifice and the sacraments around which revolves the whole liturgical life” (SC, 6). Thus, the Code establishes the doctrinal principle that liturgy—at the center of which are the sacraments—is simultaneously an act of worship and an act of sanctification: through it “God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified” (SC, 7). To those who object to the very notion of liturgical laws, a recent Instruction from the Congregation for Divine Worship pointed out that the finality of the liturgical norm is not only to avoid errors, but above all and precisely to unify efforts in the transmission of the truth. In this regard, the liturgical norm finds its reason in the double quality of any liturgical act—i.e., they are public (of the community, of the Church), and they express the faith.

Principles of liturgical law Liturgical actions are not private actions but are celebrations of the whole Church—i.e., the People of God united and ordered under the guidance of the bishops. This public character of liturgical actions, as

well as their intimate connection with the principles of the Faith, constitute the ratio legis on which is based the exclusive competence of the ecclesiastical authority in the regulation of all matters regarding the liturgy. 1) Principle of Substantial Unity. “By virtue of its pastoral authority, [the Church] can ordain what may be useful for the good of the faithful, according to the circumstances, times and places. But it does not have any power to change what pertains to the will of Christ, which is what constitutes the immutable part of the Liturgy.”¹ This principle is premised on the distinction between changeable and unchangeable (immutable) elements of the liturgy: immutable elements are those which depend on the foundational will of Christ—e.g., the substance of the sacraments and whatever is more directly related to that substance; changeable elements are those which do not belong or are not directly related to the substance of the sacraments. The basis of this principle is three-fold: 1^o The liturgy belongs to the public patrimony of the entire Church, and should therefore be subject to the regulation only of the capital offices. Thus, Vatican Council II had

categorically declared that “no other person, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority” (SC). 2^o The liturgy is the principal factor for ecclesial communion. Thus, any arbitrariness in its celebration implies a rupture of this ecclesial communion and must therefore be avoided. 3^o Lex orandi, lex credendi. The liturgy is closely linked to the deposit of faith. Hence, any laxity in liturgical discipline is at the same time effect and cause of important dogmatic errors. 2) Principle of Centralization. This reinforces the previous principle, and is contained in c.838: —§1. The supervision of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, which resides in the Apostolic See and, in accord with the law, the diocesan bishop (c.838, §1). —§2. It is for the Apostolic See to order the sacred liturgy of the universal Church, to publish the liturgical books, to review their translations into the vernacular languages and to see that liturgical ordinances are faithfully observed everywhere. Thus, the following are reserved to the Holy See: 1^o All that refers to the validity of the sacraments (c.841).

Liturgical / B7

Distribution of communion during a TV Mass

Father Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy and sacramental theology and director of the Sacerdos Institute at the Regina Apostolorum university, answers the following query:

Q: I am writing to ask for your advice regarding the liturgy during this unique time in our history. As a community of religious sisters we, fortunately, possess some consecrated hosts. Is it liturgically sound if we watch the Holy Father’s televised Mass and for our superior to distribute the reserved hosts to us at the time of communion? — M.P., Rome

A: In this time of the coronavirus crisis there are probably many houses of religious sisters and consecrated laity in similar positions. In the current lockdown, it is a very good thing to follow a live-streamed Mass whether by the Holy Father or indeed by any of the many priests who have undertaken similar initiatives. It is a moment of prayer, of pondering God’s Word along with the celebrant, and of making an act of spiritual offering and communion with the Eucharistic sacrifice. It is not, however, participating at Mass, which requires physical presence, and so it would not be sound liturgical practice to distribute Communion during the live streaming of the Mass. Communion may be administered immediately after the Mass has concluded, or at some other suitable time, and always following the approved rites of the Church for distribution of Communion outside of Mass. The Church has two similar but different forms of this rite: a rite for administering communion to the



A Catholic priest gives communion in Borongan town, Eastern Samar April 22. ALREN BERONIO/ESTE NEWS

sick, and the “Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word of God.” In the context of a community of religious, it would be this second rite that is to be used. According to the rubrics of the rite: “26. This rite is to be used chiefly

when Mass is not celebrated or when communion is not distributed at scheduled times. The purpose is that the people should be nourished by the word of God. By hearing it they learn that the marvels it proclaims reach their climax in the paschal mystery of which the Mass is a sacramental memorial and in which they share

by communion. Nourished by God’s word, they are led on to grateful and fruitful participation in the saving mysteries.” The rite has the following structure: — Introductory Rites: Greeting and penitential act. — Celebration of the Word of God.

— Communion rite: Our Father, Sign of peace, “Behold the Lamb of God... Lord I am not worthy...”, distribution of Communion, moment of silence or a song, concluding prayer. With respect to the celebration of the Word of God it indicates: “29. The Liturgy of the Word now takes place as at Mass. Texts are chosen for the occasion either from the Mass of the day or from the votive Masses of the Holy Eucharist or the Precious Blood, the readings from which are in the Lectionary. A list of these passages can be found in nos. 113-153 of this Ritual. The Lectionary offers a wide range of readings that may be drawn upon for particular needs, such as the votive Mass of the Sacred Heart. See nos. 154-158 below. “There may be one or more readings, the first being followed by a psalm or some other chant or by a period of silent prayer. The celebration of the word ends with the general intercessions.” If, for example, the rite of distributing Communion were to be celebrated immediately following a live-streamed Mass, it would be a legitimate option to use one of the other readings suggested in the above rubric so as not to repeat the readings of the day. If the rite is celebrated separately, then the best option is to use the daily readings. There is also a briefer form of the rite with a very short reading. This may be used when there are only one or two people for Communion.

Why is it about time to reopen the doors of our churches in ‘Covid-19 free’ areas

By Fr. Elias L. Ayuban Jr., CMF

YESTERDAY, a fellow canon lawyer asked my opinion as regards the giving of communion to healthy parishioners who follow online masses while observing necessary precautions in a diocese where there is no reported case of COVID-19.

This is not the first query I received concerning the matter and, mostly likely, not the last. So, allow me to share with you my reflections from the canonical and pastoral perspectives with regard to the measures adopted by the Philippine Church in general, not only in the giving of communion (or lack of it) outside the Eucharistic celebration, but also in the continued suspension of public masses and other liturgical celebrations.

At the outset, I would like to clarify that this is just a humble and personal position and does not, in any way, intend to undermine, much less contradict, the existing ecclesiastical and civil norms. Pope Francis encourages us to discern and walk together as a Church and so I write these reflections in light of this call to synodality. Besides, we do not only have the right, but also the obligation to reverently manifest to our Pastors and other Christ’s faithful our “views on matters which concern the good of the Church” (c. 112, 3).

It is my hope that these and other insights will help pave the way for further soul searching and discernment on how to best respond to the spiritual needs of the faithful in this time of pandemic, without compromising our physical health and the well-being of others.

In provinces where there is no reported case of COVID-19 positive, I am of the opinion that the celebration of public masses and other liturgies should be gradually resumed while keeping all the necessary precautions, such as: social distancing; the wearing of face masks; communion by hand, no holy water at the entrance, but instead, alcohol or sanitizer; no touching of images; regular disinfection of the benches and liturgical vessels; non-participation of children, elderly and sick people (the latter can



A Catholic priest celebrates Mass streamed online on April 14, 2020. COURTESY OF THE DIOCESAN SHRINE OF NUESTRA SEÑORA DE ARANZAZU

receive communion in their homes); and, other measures as deemed opportune.

If going to the market or grocery store is allowed, where social distancing is more difficult to implement, I see no prevailing reason why an organized Sunday gathering in a cathedral or spacious parish church, where physical separation can easily be executed, not permitted. In this regard, I found the additional schedule of masses in the diocese of Tagbilaran at the beginning of the lockdown a timely measure to guarantee that there would be less churchgoers in a given mass.

Moreover, after over a month of ECQ (and now GCQ) and no case of coronavirus infection has been reported, it is reasonable to say that the threat can come from the outside, not from the inside. Ergo,

restrictions and control should be focused more on those who enter the province who are potential carriers, and not those who have been in the place throughout the entire duration of the lockdown.

The spiritual needs of our brethren may vary. Others can continue living as good Christians without the benefit of receiving holy communion, but others get their principal spiritual nourishment from it. It is the latter that I am more worried about. And as ministers, we are mindful of the right of the faithful “to be assisted from the spiritual riches of the Church, especially by the word of God and the sacraments” (c. 213).

It is about time to “reopen the doors of our churches” for people to pray. While it is true that we can pray anywhere, there is no place like the church and no celebration like the

Mass. Pope Francis, in his homily at Santa Martha, expresses support for access to sacraments and churches with the presence of the people. “A familiarity without community, without bread, without the Church, without the people, without the sacraments is dangerous,” the Holy Father stressed (Zenit.org, April 17, 2020).

Yes, these restrictions are in accord with the government policies, but the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and individual bishops can negotiate and engage because the right to worship is at stake here. The Italian Bishops’ Conference (CEI), for example, has already formally protested the Italian government’s decision to keep the ban on public Masses throughout the country (Zenit.org., April 27, 2020).

This is also the time for individual

bishops to give dispensations as needed within the bounds their competence (c. 85). While communion apart from the Mass is intended for exceptional cases, in these times of crisis, while public Masses are suspended, the local Ordinary can allow the administration of holy communion to parishioners who are healthy while observing the liturgical rites (c. 918). This is, by the way, my response to the above question of my colleague.

In closing, I believe that this is a privileged moment to evangelize and to be evangelized, and to demonstrate the merciful face of the institutional Church. I am afraid that we might lose the rare opportunity if we will not revise our positions, bearing in mind that “the salvation of souls is the supreme law” (c. 1752).

I choose to be positive LAIKO responds to the call of ‘Laudato Si’

By Fr. Johnpaul Menchavez

OUR “screens” these days show us so many testing POSITIVE. The number of the infected, the deaths, and the enforced community quarantine, the economic recession... I worry, above all, that all these, plus the apparent uncertainty of our fate risks a pernicious and a more serious danger: that we all be NEGATIVE, pessimists, hopeless and miserable in spirit.

The spiritual leader of the close to 1.5 billion Catholics imparted a solemn blessing to Christ’s faithful relatively recently. Pope Francis prayed to God: “You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing...a time to choose what matters.” I agree. And I feel that one of the crucial choices in this very delicate situation in human history is this: to choose to be POSITIVE.

It is pretty obvious that I am not referring to a suicidal attempt. I speak of getting a different ‘virus’ that comes from within, that every human being is capable of ‘mutating’ on one’s own. We all desire to be happy, and we can be if we want, yes, even today and now. Some would call it a mindset, others—an approach to life—and there are those who describe it as the state of the soul. I see it as a choice, a very personal one and it could change your world, and those around you. I’m a chaplain by profession and not a Chaplin, but Charlie’s words really hit the mark: “You’ll never find a rainbow if you’re looking down.”

Yes. Today, look up and realize that the spectrum has indeed expanded and the world is slowly changing, and with its “silver linings” even. The sky is bluer, and the stars are more visible at night. Look a little beyond and you find out that the rooms, streets, markets, and even our seas, are now tidied up. Look around you and you’ll see that family members are spending more time with one other. People are “connecting” with

old and new friends. Look from within, and you will appreciate the silence, the peace, and the spiritual developments that are taking place... Prayer is becoming central at home. Solidarity is at its finest. Heroism is on the rise. Humanity is advancing in knowledge and wisdom (as countless books are read), and quality as well (as personal hobbies are cultivated).

I’m not counselling you to be naïve but these are the certain things that we cannot ignore today. This is POSITIVE. Our language experts teach us that the certainty is the original sense of the word “positive”. A late Middle English word from the Latin “positivus”, which has “posit-“ ‘placed’ at its root, from the verb “ponere”, it was used to refer to laws as being formally ‘laid down’, which gave rise to the sense ‘explicitly laid down and admitting no question’, hence ‘certain’. Words evolve and acquire derived meanings. At the turn of the 20th century, it started to allude to the sense of “concentrating on what is constructive and good”. With positivity (certitude of the good things), one can have a positive outlook (optimism).

Symbolically, POSITIVE is represented by a plus sign (+) in contrast with NEGATIVE (-). For Christians, this may further cast light on something dear—the big icon not only for math problems, but any equation in life: the Cross, the glory of Jesus the Christ. NEGATIVES (minuses) can always be made POSITIVE with a vertical line, a vision for transcendence connecting the two points: one above (God) and another at the bottom (man). The words of the Holy Father addressing the world in this time of crisis recently could indeed be understood: “God turns to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things.” With Him, we will always be, and we have to choose to be: POSITIVE.

By Jun Cruz



Hundreds of young people join the launching of Laudato Si Generation – Philippines at the Quezon City Memorial Circle June 22. COURTESY OF LAUDATO’ SI GEN – PILIPINAS

THE Vatican believes that climate change is a moral issue and has an effect on human dignity. “*We know what we can do, and what we have to do becomes an ethical imperative*,” said the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

In June 26, 2019, the Vatican requested the Catholic Church of the Philippines (CBCP) for a report on their response to Pope Francis’ call for environmental action. The request was relayed through, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, His Excellency, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, DD.

The Philippine Church’s call for a ‘radical shift’ to renewable energy

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines - Episcopal Commission on Lay Apostolate (CBCP-ECLA) with its implement-

ing arm, the Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas (LAIKO), presented some of the concrete steps it took to protect the planet.

The report expounded on “*Our Best Practices in Response to the Challenges Posed by His Holiness, Pope Francis, Marking the 4th Anniversary of the Publication of the Holy Father’s Papal Encyclical, the Laudato Si’, ‘On Care for our Common Home’*”.

In this report, the CBCP-Laiko explained in detail how it forged an unprecedented long-term partnership with WeGen Laudato Si’ Inc. in October 2016.

LAIKO stated that it engaged in a partnership with WeGen to put the Catholic Church in the Philippines and its varied institutions at the forefront of the urgent and radical shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

The document of partnership

(MOA) between CBCP-Laiko and WeGenLaudato Si’ was signed by LAIKO Chairman, Bishop Broderick S. Pabillo, SDB, D.D, and WeGen Laudato Si’s Chairman Michael Saalfeld and its then CEO, Atty. Julito R. Sarmiento.

“Let there be light”

After the signing, WeGen Laudato Si’ established strategic relationships with most of the 85 Catholic dioceses covering the entire Philippines to assist their dioceses, parishes and other Catholic institutions to transition towards the use of renewable energy.

These partnerships with the Dioceses have already produced a modest, yet irreversible result (of more than 200 Solar Installations nation-wide) towards “easing the impact of climate change through responsible mitigation and adaptation measures”.

To make our religious activities safer from the spread of the virus

Protocol for religious service in the Archdiocese of Manila

Note: These guidelines are given due to our extraordinary situation. They are therefore temporary in nature. Furthermore, the situation is so fluid that we foresee that there will be other guidelines that will follow when the situation changes or when there are other directives that will come from the government or from the church hierarchy. These guidelines are given so that we are prepared when religious services will already be allowed.

Schedules

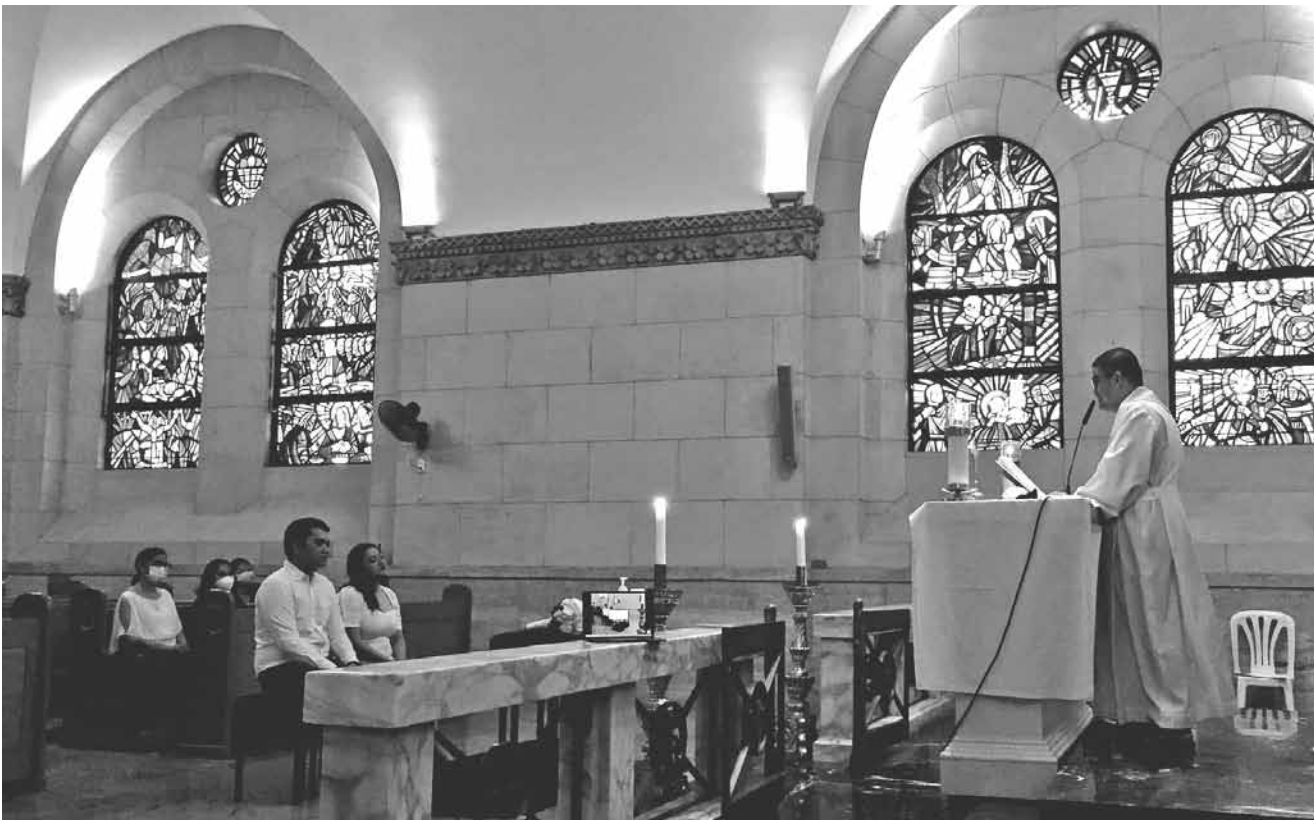
1. There should be at least a half hour gap between masses to allow the church to be disinfected after each service.
2. Since we have lesser masses on Sundays, we can have more services on weekdays.
3. Ask the people to come on the times when there are lesser people. Encourage the faithful to come on weekday masses if they cannot come on Sundays.
4. The presence of difficulty, and in some cases impossibility, of fulfilling the Sunday obligation renders the obligation suspended during these extraordinary circumstances. While Sunday and weekday Masses will already be celebrated in parishes, the live streaming of Masses, at least on Sundays, will continue for those who are unable to participate in the community celebrations due to sickness, old age, fear and caution.
5. Because we will have lesser mass schedules on Sundays and less people can come on Sundays, the parishes may start their “anticipated masses” on Saturdays at 3 pm, thus have three or four masses on Saturdays and invite the people to join in these masses.
6. We can have more schedules of baptisms during the week so that people will not congregate on Sundays

Physical structure

1. Clearly mark the entrance and exits to the church so that incoming people will not meet outgoing ones. Have marshals who shall man the entrance and exits on Sundays to keep order.
2. Each entrance and exit should have footbath container.
3. There should be hand sanitizers at the entrances.
4. The places to be occupied in the pews should be indicated to help people keep social/ physical distancing. The people should strictly occupy only those places indicated.
5. There should be notices in front of religious images telling people not to touch or wipe the images. Short prayers can be posted in front of the images to help the people pray in front of them.
6. All holy water fonts should be emptied and covered so that they may not be used.
7. If the adoration chapel is small and enclosed, it is better not to open it. Encourage the people to pray in church instead.
8. Let there be non-touch garbage disposal bins in parish offices and around the church and remind the people to dispose their waste in the proper places. The maintenance people in the parishes are to be taught to properly dispose the garbage.
9. Let the parish comfort rooms be properly maintained and soap be available for proper hand washing.
10. For those churches which are air-conditioned, it would be better if the air-conditioning is not used during this time. It will not be so hot after all because there will not be any over-crowding. Explain to the people that open areas are better than closed spaces to ward off the virus.
11. For those parishes with mortuaries, do not accept clients who have many days of wakes. These days, the shorter the wake, the better. Anyway, they cannot expect distant relatives to travel these days and online services are available for them to participate without being physically present at the funerals.
12. If we allow less people to participate physically in baptisms, weddings and funerals, let the parish be ready to offer to the people online services. So the parishes should have their own equipment, good internet connection, and properly trained people.

Services of the RCAM

1. We will ask RCAM to buy mask, alcohol and sanitizers in bulk to get



A priest presides over a simple wedding at the Manila Cathedral on April 30. ROMAIN GARRY LAZARO

- them cheaper and the parishes will just have to buy them from RCAM.
2. Since online masses will have to continue for quite some time, let the Commission of Social Communion help the parishes how to technically improved their online capability, like what gadgets to use for better output and how to improve their internet connections. Let the Social Communication Ministry of the parishes be given added training.

During the Holy Mass

1. All the people attending the mass and other church services should wear face mask. In fact, the marshals and ushers should see to it that all people in the Church and its offices should wear face masks. For those who do not have, low priced face masks should be available in the parish offices.
2. The body temperature of all those who enter the church building shall be taken, by thermal body scan, which will be a standard equipment in all parishes.
3. The person/s who prepare/s the hosts, water and wine for consecration need/s to observe proper hygiene and health protocols.
4. Let there be only one or two altar boys serving in the mass. If possible, the mass servers should not be children, and if they are below 18 years old, they should have the written permission of their parents.
5. If the mass servers are all children, let the extraordinary lay ministers be trained to serve also as mass servers.
6. Instead of choirs, we will just request a song leader and an instrumentalist to lead the people in singing. There can be less singing in the mass.
7. The ushers and marshals shall be going around the church to remind people of the social distancing.
8. Once the indicated spaces to be occupied are filled, we will no longer allow the people to enter the Church. They can stay outside but with proper social distancing. Because of this, the sound system should also be clear to the people outside and TV monitors can be set up so that the people outside the church can also know what is happening in the mass.
9. In parishes where there are parking spaces within the Church compound, if there is need and if their budget would allow, they can set up big monitors in the parking lot and a loud sound system so that if the church is full the people can participate in the mass in their cars.
10. If there are enough priests, masses can be celebrated outside of the church, like in gymnasiums, still observing social distancing.
11. We need to recruit younger people as volunteers to help in the ministries, like collectors, lay ministers, and ushers to lessen possibilities of infections among the elderly. If the elderly volunteers insist to serve they may be allowed but with proper warning and precautions. Their time of service, however, should be shortened to limit the possibility of exposure to any infection.
12. In the Church lecterns, the microphones should have coverings; these are to be changed after each mass.
13. Things used in the mass should be washed with hot water and properly ironed. This can be one way of disinfecting them.
14. There will no longer be offertory

- processions. The offerings can be dropped in a basket at the back of the church or in a box and one or two persons will bring these in front during the offertory. There will be no offering of the bread and wine coming from the people.
15. The collection during the offertory will be done through bags attached to sticks, not and not bags that are passed around.
 16. There will be no holding of hands at the Our Father and no handshakes at the giving of peace. A bow with a smiling face can already be a good sign of peace.
 17. Before communion the priest shows the Sacred Host to the people and says: “The Body of Christ” and the people answer “Amen”. When the communion is given to the hands to each communicant, there will no longer be any conversation between the minister and the communicant.
 18. If the congregation is small enough especially on weekday masses, only the priest will give communion.
 19. The lay ministers and the priests will wash their hands with alcohol before and after they give communion. It is good that this is done in view of the people to give them assurance of the hygienic practice.
 20. The flow of the communicants should be so directed that there be

25. People will be catechized on the need for internal disposition before receiving communion, like participation in the live stream Masses, short liturgy of the Word with the family, and personal prayer. These prayers can also be printed in tarpaulins outside barangay chapels where communions outside the mass will be given.
26. In those areas without nearby chapels, communion can be given but outside the house. Let the communicants, dressed in a decent way, wait for the ministers to pass to give communion. It would be good if there is a small table with sacred images or a crucifix as an indication that someone is this house is receiving communion. The parish should be advised beforehand and the people be told around what time the minister will be coming to give communion.
27. Young and healthy women religious and seminarians will be requested to help in distributing communion to the sick and the elderly
28. The “Mass in Time of Pandemic” [Recently provided by the Holy See] can be celebrated, according to the rubrics given for Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, on any day except Solemnities, the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, days within the Octave of



Livestream equipment at the Manila Cathedral. ROMAIN GARRY LAZARO

- no meeting of people. They come from one side and go to the other side after communion.
21. All the ministers and the priests should wear face masks during the giving of the communion.
 22. The face mask should be worn by all the mass servers – the altar boys/girls, the lay ministers, the sacristans and the lectors when not reading.
 23. After the mass, the people would not be immediately allowed to enter so that the pews can be disinfected. A group of volunteers can be organized to do this. It can be called the SANITATION MINISTRY.
 24. Ministers can bring communion to the sick and the elderly. Arrangements can be made that communion be distributed in chapels for those who are not disposed to join the community celebrations due to fear and caution.

- Easter, the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls’ Day), Ash Wednesday and the days of Holy Week. Please see again the communication from the Holy See regarding the text and the use of this Mass.
29. The oratio imperata is to be prayed in every mass.
 30. Children and the elderly will be advised to stay at home and join in the online mass. They may received communion which will be distributed outside the mass at the places indicated.

For Baptism

1. Only the parents and one set of godparents will be allowed per child for the baptism. If there are many to be baptized, the children to be baptized can be organized by smaller batches.
2. Let the parishes allow baptisms

- to be celebrated during set times on weekdays to decongest baptisms on Sundays.
3. The Holy Oils should be applied, using cotton, on the one baptized. The cotton with holy oils should be burned after the celebration. The cotton applied to one child should not be used for another child. One cotton ball per child.

For confirmation

1. We can forgo mass confirmations this year. Those who are to be baptized as adults or who get married can be confirmed by the parish priest as church discipline dictates.

For confessions

1. The small confessional boxes should be reconfigured to allow social distancing. If this cannot be done then have the confessions done outside the confessional box, with one meter distance between the penitent and the priest. A special place should be designated for this where people can see that confessions are available.
2. Both the priest and the penitent should wear face masks.
3. Priests may not hear confessions via telephone or Zoom teleconferencing, though they may use these methods to offer the penitents spiritual counsel.
4. When the sacrament of Reconciliation is not possible, for example to a patient who is isolated or in quarantine, they can make an Act of Perfect Contrition. An Act of Perfect Contrition always has been a part of our Catholic tradition. God is always present to us, even when the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not possible. While a priest cannot give absolution over the phone, he can use the phone to give a blessing and even guide a person through an Act of Perfect Contrition. This is done when the person expresses faith in and love of God above all things and resolves to make a sacramental Confession as soon as possible. All his/her sins, even mortal sins, are forgiven.
5. The parishes can organize kumpisalan ng bayan with penitential service to enable the people to come to confession, which they were not able to do last lent. If there are too many people, then two or three kumpisalan na bayan can be done. Proper social/physical distancing should be observed as during the mass. The parishes in the

- vicariates can help one another here.

For weddings

1. We allow only simple weddings this year, with only the bride and the groom with one set of sponsors and the immediate family. Wala na munang mga abay.

For Anointing of the Sick

1. The appropriate protocols like the wearing of face mask, gloves and the necessary preparation and post-visit guidelines must be followed.
2. The laying on of hands may be done without physical contact on the head of the sick.
3. Sanitize the oil stock before and after each anointing to avoid contamination of the sacred oil.
4. A cotton ball or cotton buds/tips can be used instead of the thumb for anointing. For each anointing, use

Pastoral instruction: Let us be one with the whole Church

My dear People of God in the Archdiocese of Manila,

As we strive to be personally connected with God, let us also be connected with each other in and through the Church as the Body of Christ. Let us join then in the activities that are meant to draw us closer to one another and to God.

I invite the parishes, religious communities and families of the faithful in their homes to participate in the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on May 13, the 103th anniversary of the apparition in Fatima.

At 8:30 in the morning, let us follow the live stream of the praying of the holy rosary and the prayer of consecration of the whole country to the Blessed Virgin. This prayer will be done simultaneously all over the country. The National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Valenzuela City will be the center of this activity.

At 12 noon, let us unite our hearts as an archdiocese for the live streaming of the Eucharistic Celebration at the Manila Cathedral. At the conclusion of the Mass, the bishop together with the Mayors of the different cities within the Archdiocese will consecrate the archdiocese and the cities to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In preparation for this important event, let us be one through a triduum of fasting, prayer and reflection on May 10, 11 and 12 through TV Maria live stream and Radio Veritas:

3:30 PM
Praying of the rosary and the Flores de Maria devotion

4:30 PM
Reflection of Bishop Broderick Pabillo
Prayers to be led by different sectors of the Church

TV Maria will live stream all these activities (TV Maria facebook page, Sky Cable – Channel 210; Destiny Cable – Channel 96; SatLite – Channel 102; Sky Direct – Channel 49; Cable Linek Channel 18). You can also tune in to Radio Veritas. I invite the social communication ministry of the parishes to hook in to broaden the reach of these broadcasts. Even individually please invite your friends and relatives in the archdiocese to participate in these activities.

Let us entrust ourselves to the maternal protection of Mary, our Mother during this time of crisis. We pray that through her prayers as at Cana in Galilee, joy and celebration may return after this time of trial.

The Holy Father is calling for a day of prayer, fasting and acts of charity on May 14 to be participated in not only by Christians but by all religions to implore the Almighty to end this pandemic. Being in the Year of Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue, this

is a very concrete sign of common activity of all religions since prayer, fasting and acts of love are common to all, and we are all affected by this pandemic. I ask our faithful in the archdiocese to fully participate in this activity. To make our act of charity concrete, I invite everyone to extend material help to at least one person within your reach, no matter the amount, to make that person/s feel the care we have for each other. May this sign of unity among us draw us all to the One Source of all Goodness.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours in the Lord Jesus,

+ BRODERICK S. PABILLO
Apostolic Administrator of Manila
May 6, 2020

A call for compassion

“I was imprisoned and you visited me.”-- Mt. 25:36



Bishop Pedro Arigo celebrates Mass inside the NBP Minimum Security Compound during the Prison Awareness Week in October 2019.

THE COVID-19 global pandemic has adversely affected practically all the people in the world, rich and poor alike, regardless of race and creed. There is really a need for a united and concerted effort to curb this menace.

They say that critical times call for equally critical and drastic solutions. While we truly appreciate the government in its efforts in battling this pandemic, we wish to air the following concerns:

1. On the matter of the strict implementation of the ECQ rules:

State authorities have declared that they will be very strict in the implementation of the rules regarding the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in the entire country, with violators being severely dealt with—with no chance for these to explain their side, and that they will just be apprehended, and detained with corresponding criminal charges filed against them in court.

While this hardline stance may somehow deter people from going out of their homes and venturing

into the streets, we are concerned that this may pose more problems than solutions, mainly because of the big possibility that those who will be caught belong to the poor and indigent sector.

In certain areas we have learned, for instance, that many alleged ECQ violators were rounded up and brought to a sports complex where physical and social distancing was unfortunately not properly observed. We were informed that the detainees are not provided with food and water. The only way that they can be released is by posting bail with the courts for their temporary liberty. But where will they get the money to post bail, when these are mostly the poor? And since they are unable to bail themselves out, they eventually land in jail, thereby further contributing to the congestion in our prisons and exposure to the COVID-19 virus and other illnesses. But is this not the very purpose of the ECQ, i.e., to prevent the spread of the COVID virus through social distancing?

We are very concerned about

the recent fatal shooting of an ex-soldier, who was said to have mental problems, after he allegedly tried to pull out a gun after being confronted by a police officer for violating quarantine rules. Even as we call for an in-depth investigation into this matter, we would like to appeal to our law enforcers to always exercise maximum tolerance and prudence in the performance of their duties especially during these troubled times.

2. On the matter of the transfer of PDLs with COVID-19 to the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa:

We are deeply concerned about the report that the COVID positive female PDLs of the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) were ordered transferred to the New Bilibid Prisons—Medium Security Camp, an all-male facility. We believe that transferring female PDLs to this male camp is not advisable. At present, there are more than 7,000 inmates in this camp and this transfer will put other PDLs and even the prison officials and personnel in great jeopardy. Also, aside from PDLs, there are many residents in the area near the facility and the probability of transmission is very likely.

3. On the matter of moves calling for the release of PDL's with minor cases to help in jail decongestion:

We join the call from other cause-oriented human rights groups for the expeditious release of vulnerable inmates who are ill, old, as well as the youth in conflict with law, and low-risk offenders. We all know the general condition in our country's detention facilities (cramped, overly-congested and mostly unkempt) hence the probability that one will get infected and in turn infect other fellow detainees as well as the jail personnel manning the facilities, is very high. We call on the jail and prison authorities to implement this

with great prudence, always taking into consideration the best interest of all PDLs.

Allow us then to make the following recommendations:

1. We beg the police to observe the proper rules of engagement and show utmost respect for the human rights of those under investigation and/or accused persons under our laws. Detainees should be provided with basic needs, e.g., food and potable water, a decent sleeping gear and be detained in a place where proper physical and social distancing can be observed. A good number may be turned over to their respective barangay officials who will then check the individual stories of those arrested. Alternatives to detention should be considered, such as education of the violators and community service upon their release.

2. We propose that in releasing qualified PDLs to decongest our jails and prisons, priority should be given to the elderly, those who are sick, the youth, as well as those existing PDLs who were earlier granted release through the benefits of the good conduct time allowances (GCTA), but were subsequently ordered re-arrested; and finally those who are already qualified for Executive Clemency and favorably recommended by the Board of Pardons and Parole.

Needless to say, we also ask that support services be given to those who will be released, like those national prisoners who will have to travel back to their provinces. This can be in the form of transport services and inclusion in the Pantawid Buhay program of the government.

3. Finally as to the housing of COVID-19 positive PDLs, we strongly recommend that they be placed in medical facilities where their needs can be attended to properly, and

not in penal institutions where the possibility of transmitting the virus to other detainees and correctional personnel is very high. With the terrible congestion in our penal institutions, the transmission to other inmates is very high and it will be very catastrophic. We call for the urgent testing for correctional employees, and all PDLs who are under investigation or monitoring (PUIs and PUMs), and the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for our correctional front liners and medical teams. We also urge the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) on COVID response to strictly mandate observance of protocols on isolation of COVID patients, PUIs and PUMs, testing and proper treatment for the said patients.

At the outset we enjoin everyone to cooperate and observe all the reasonable measures laid down by our civil authorities to combat this menace. Let us continue to pray for and honor our frontlines, especially the medical workers, law enforcers, jail and prison officials and personnel, for their noble efforts and sacrifices. We include in our prayers those who are still battling with the disease, that they may be healed soon.

Rest assured that the Church is always ready to work hand in hand with the State to curb this pandemic and mitigate its adverse effects on our populace. May God bless us and deliver us all through these tough times!

Legazpi City, 30 April 2020.

+JOEL Z. BAYLON, D.D.
Bishop of Legazpi
Chairman, CBCP-Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care (CBCP-ECPPC)

Goodness is an overflow of God's goodness to us

Statement of affirmation and appeal

THE Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas affirms and congratulates the Inter-Agency Task Force for its hard work and effort in stemming the tide of the Pandemic Virus. We are highly cognizant of the measures it has implemented to address the impact of the pandemic in the economy, food security and the general well-being of the Filipino people. Hence as good citizens, we gladly complied with the guidelines set-forth by the IATF to prevent even more the spread of the Covid-19.

As the IATF continues to assess its next moves after May 15, 2020, and with the withdrawal of its earlier decision to allow Religious gatherings (in general) in areas declared as General Community Quarantines (GCQ), we present this appeal so as to give the Filipinos a sense of the new normal in their spiritual gatherings and an opportunity to uplift our Spiritual Well-being, which are both humane and essential.

The Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas believes that giving the people the opportunity to connect with the Almighty God, especially through religious encounters and spiritual events will directly translate into goodness for themselves and for others. These are great opportunities to inspire and challenge them to



Residents pray the novena outside their homes in Parañaque city's San Dionisio village on May 3, 2020. PATRICK DOMINICK ROMERO

do good things and share from the treasury of their good heart. “A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart” (Luke 6:45)

We recommend that a further review be made, which may include looking into the possibility of delegating this decision to the local executives, who have greater appreciation, information and control over the Religious groups present among their constituents. We are willing to submit our plans, protocols and guidelines to assure them of our strict observance of these safety and health measures.

With strict compliance to Government Guidelines on Social Distancing and Sanitation, the lay faithful requests for Religious Gatherings (Ex. Catholic Masses, Baptisms, Anointing of the Sick and Funerals, etc.) to be allowed in the GCQ areas. We demand that our right to religious worship be not curtailed when the necessary safeguards are followed.

For the Laiko Board of Directors,

ROUQUEL A. PONTE
President
04 May 2020

Jesus as the way to the Father

5th Sunday of Easter, Year A, (John 14:1-12)
May 10, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

JESUS, in today’s Gospel, speaks of preparing a place for us so that where he is we may also be: “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places... I am indeed going to prepare a place for you and then I shall come back to take you with me, that where I am you also may be” (John 14:2-3). But how can one dwell in the mansion of God? How can he be united with the Father? Jewish conventional wisdom teaches that it is achieved through the observance of the law: “Who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell in your holy mountain? He who walks blamelessly and does justice” (Ps 15:1-2). Literally of course, the text is about one’s being worthy to enter God’s sanctuary, but the substance is there. Thus Prophet Baruch: “Had you walked in the way of the Lord, you would have dwelt in enduring peace” (Bar 3:13). For a Christian, however, it would not be enough to follow the law. Keeping the law may bring some form of peace to a person or to a community, but it would never bring one to an experience of God’s life. It is not insignificant that Matthew makes Jesus declare: “Unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of God” (Matt 5:20).

The unity with God is given to a Christian not so much by following the law, as by being in communion with Jesus, for “no one comes to the Father but through me” (John 14:6b). To bring home the point, John has Jesus say: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6a). These three terms used to describe

Jesus has to be explained. The term “way” depicts the mediatorial role of Jesus between the community of men and God the Father. It is unfortunately that, for some people, religion is about theories or laws that should regulate relationships. Of course, these are important, but these do not belong to the heart of Christianity. It is not even about duplicating the crucifixion, as some people are inclined to think. Christianity is first of all about the person of Jesus. It is Jesus who is the way to God, not a formula to be observed or magic words to be uttered. If we wish to be united with the Father, then we have to be united with Jesus, we have to be committed to him, and follow his way of life. That is why Paul can say: “Continue to live in Christ the Lord in the spirit which you receive him” (Col 2:6). The way of life that he lived, which is that of a loving obedience to the Father’s will, is what is of importance. Hence, Paul says: “Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance” (Eph 5:2).

The claim that he is the truth underlines his mediation of the Father’s revelation. He is the way precisely because he is the truth. This recalls what the Matthean Jesus affirms: “No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son—and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Matt 11:27). It is strange that some people are anxious to hear about new revelation from God, when God has already fully revealed himself in

Jesus. The life of Jesus, that is the life of God; what Jesus taught, that is the teaching of God. In the words of a New Testament writer, “in this the final age, [God] has spoken to us through his Son” (Heb 1:1). John himself makes a similar affirmation: “No one has ever seen God. It is God, the only Son, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed him” (John 1:18). Hence, if we wish to know the goal of our existence, and the way how to reach it, we only have to hear it from Jesus himself.

The reason for this is that he is the life. If the term “way” depicts his mediatorial role between God and men, and if “truth” expresses his mediation of revelation, the term “life” used to describe Jesus emphasizes his mediation of salvation, which is none other than life with God, unity with him. As we noted earlier, it is only in being in communion with Jesus that one can be in communion with the Father. It is for this unity and life that he came: “I came that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). So long as we do not have life, our heart will remain restless, because it was for the experience of this life that we were created. In fact, the present realization that all mankind is just one family, the experience that after all the world is one global village—this is to be taken as sign that finally the world is becoming aware that we are moving to a certain goal, which for a Christian is none other than union with God, but made possible through union with the risen Lord.

Jesus the way to the home he prepared for us

5th Sunday of Easter, Year A, (John 14:1-12)
May 10, 2020

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

WHEN we reflect on what Jesus is in himself and for us, we cannot help being amazed at the richness of the meaning of his titles as we can derive them from the readings of today’s Liturgy of the Word.

St. Peter speaks of him as the “LIVING STONE” and the “CORNERSTONE” upon whom the building of the Church rests. (See today’s Second Reading, vv. 4 and 7.) The first title sounds contradictory for a stone is surely a “dead thing.” Not so with Jesus. He has all the solidity of the stone, while at the same time being full of life. And, more than that, from him all other stones that make up the Church of God derive their life and solidity, thereby becoming, in turn, “living stones.”

As the original “Living Stone,” Jesus is then the source of our life and the reason for our presence and role in the Church. Without him, there would be no Church as a spiritual edifice. There would be no other “living stones” used by God to construct the Temple of His wonderful plan.

The image of Jesus as “Cornerstone,” instead, connotes both solidity and primacy. It is like speaking of strong foundations and supporting beams in a building. No house would stand without them. Likewise, without Christ as its cornerstone, there would be no enduring Church. Persecutions and defections would have soon reduced it to nothing. But the Church has survived for two thousand years – a clear sign that She rests on a most solid cornerstone!

But Jesus is not only the source of the solidity of the Church over the centuries. He is also the foundation of our hope that there is LIFE beyond the barriers of time and space. He is the one who has prepared for us a future of unending happiness. His final plan is that he and all his disciples be together for ever in the Father’s house – that is: HEAVEN! That is our real “homeland” and lasting abode!

This certainty is one of the factors that make the difference between believers and those who are not sure or flatly deny that there is life after death. The latter view death as the end of everything they are and have. Hence, they look to it either with fear or with resigned fatalism. When they

reach old age, they see themselves like bundles of garbage on the sidewalk, waiting to be collected by the “basureros” and dumped into “Smokey Mountain.”

The “believers,” instead, see death as a “second birth”—their entry into eternal life. That is why they wait for it with expectation and hope. They are like retired people waiting for the bus or boat that will take them on a pleasant excursion – a pleasure-filled excursion that will last for ever!

Most people used to consider old age and retirement as a sort of “pre-departure area.” But the truth is that all of us, in this life, are in the “pre-departure area,” regardless of age, profession, or social status. People do die at all ages, in the most varied circumstances. And no one can boast: “Death will never catch me!” Death does catch all. What makes the difference is the way we look at it.

With his promises, recorded in today’s Gospel, Jesus tells us that we should look forward to our death as the moment when he will come to take us with him, so that where he is we also may be. (See v. 3.) Such is our eternal destiny, our supreme calling. There is no greater view and aspiration than this.

Some may laugh at such an assurance. Their perception has become so materialistic that they are not able to conceive anything that stretches beyond the confines of what can be seen, touched, measured, or weighed. They even look at the believers as “self-deluded people” who try to find refuge in imaginary worlds that are only the fruit of their disappointments in life .

But we know that our faith in eternal life has a much more solid foundation than our frustrations. Its foundation is no less than the word of Jesus himself, who is “THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE.” He is the one who said that he came to earth that people might have life and life to the full. (See Jn 10:10). And he assured his disciples (and all human beings) that he has gone to prepare a place for them promised that he would come back to take them where he is (See today’s Gospel text, vv. 2-3.) This is what we to believe and continue to hope in. This is what gives us joy and light, even in the dullest and darkest moments in this earthly life.

The challenge to love in words and deeds

6th Sunday of Easter, Year A, (John 14:15-21)
May 17, 2020

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

PROFESSION of our faith and our love for Christ in words is good and needed. But along with the words—and even more important than they—there should be a profession of faith and love for him through our lives.

Actions speak louder than words. The world is filled with crowd-drawing speakers and charismatic preachers, but it is always in dire need of real, consistent Christians. For most of us, an authentic Christian life is the only profession of love for Christ we can offer, and the only one which most people are inclined to accept. The testing ground of our love for Christ is not so much the pulpit, or the microphone of a Radio or TV station or a website. It is especially our behavior – the way we relate to God and respond to the needs of our fellow human beings, be they near us or far away

To respond to Christ’s love for us throughout our life, in constant faithfulness (and not just occasionally), is a daunting task. And we are weak. We often falter and fall! Jesus knew it, and that was why he promised his disciples (and us) that he would not leave them/us orphaned (Jn 14:18). He promised to stay with his disciples/us to the very end to guide and support us. (See Mt 28:20.)

Jesus’ presence is made operative

THE central message of Easter is that Jesus is alive! But if he cannot be found among the dead, where is he? Where do we encounter him? In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks of the Paraclete. It may be noted that John uses the term another Paraclete—to indicate that Jesus is the first Paraclete. Literally, the word means “called-to-one’s-side” or helper, and has reference to the Holy Spirit that the Father sent as a response to the prayer of his Son. As Paraclete, Jesus revealed the Truth about God the Father to his disciples until his death; but after his Ascension, the Spirit now reveals the Truth about Jesus. Thus, as Paraclete, the Holy Spirit continues the work of Jesus. This is what is meant when Jesus says that “I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete—to be with you always: the Spirit of Truth” (John 14:17a). As Helper, the Spirit will be the source of Truth; and will act as Paraclete, as the disciples suffer hostility from the world. For John, the coming of the Paraclete is the return of Jesus to the community of disciples. That is why Jesus says that, even with his departure, he will not leave them orphaned, he will continue to abide with his community. In fact, they will share his life, even as Jesus shares the life of his Father. Thus, the Holy Spirit appears to be the spiritual presence of Jesus in the community. In other words, if we ask the question, where do we meet Jesus? John’s answer is: we encounter him in the Holy Spirit, who is present in the community.

Because Jesus abides in the Church through the Holy Spirit, we are therefore given a very rich understanding of what being Church means. First of all, since, as the First Reading (Acts 8:5-8, 14-17) tells us, the Church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to confer the Spirit on the developing Christian community to incorporate them fully into the fellowship, this implies that local churches cannot be isolated from Rome, even as the expanding church in Judea and Samaria cannot sever itself from the Church in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit that is at work in the mother Church in Jerusalem is shared in the community at Samaria



and Judaea. The spiritual presence of Jesus is thus shared and expanded. Until his death, Jesus was physically present only in the community of disciples, but with the coming of the Holy Spirit, he becomes present in all the communities that profess his name, and are at the same time linked to the mother Church in Jerusalem. How do we say this in our time? Perhaps this means that all communities must form a unity with the mother Church in Rome.

Secondly, because the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church, the community is in communion with the Risen Lord. The Risen Lord lives in the Church because the Holy Spirit is there. But quite apart from being present, the community shares the life of the Risen Lord, who shares the life of the Father. For this reason, the Church experiences the continuing action of God among men. The Father is revealed by Jesus and his saving-presence is shared through the Holy Spirit. That is why the Church is an icon of the Trinity: the saving work of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is shared in the Christian community. In other words, being Church is an experience of Trinitarian life.

And finally, this Trinitarian life is lived in love. “He who obeys the commandments he has from me is the man who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father. I too will love him and reveal himself to him” (John 14:21). The fact that the Spirit lives in the Church—this signifies that the Church is a charismatic Church. There never was a time that the Church was not charismatic, or it is not a Church at all. But this should

not be taken to mean that ecstatic experience is always a necessary element of being Church. There was and there will be ecstatic experience; miracles of healing and driving of spirits might be present, but what being charismatic necessarily implies is the observance of the commandment of love, which is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in today’s Gospel, the presence of the Father is linked with the commandment of love: “If you love me and obey the commands I give you, I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you always: the Spirit of Truth” (John 14:15-16).

In contemporary theological reflection, the Church is viewed as a Church of Communion, and there is no doubt that today’s Gospel provides a solid basis for such a theology. In the Church, the members are in communion with the Trinitarian God and with one another. In practice, this implies that the love of God dwells in the community and is shared among the members. On the other hand, the members are assured of the presence of the Trinity by their observance of the love-commandment. Their love for one another is a sign that the Trinity dwells in the Church. Which means that it is not enough to view the Church simply as an institution. Of course, to see the Church as a structured visible society has its own merits, but to look at the Church as a Communion is to emphasize the work of grace that unites all members in Christ and draws them into the communion with the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Free the child prisoners before they die

By Fr. Shay Cullen

WE are all feeling the restriction of confinement in our homes with the Coronavirus lock-down which is to continue. We cannot go where we please so let's think of the prisoners jailed unjustly for years. Many of them are political prisoners and human rights activists caged like animals, and above all, they who suffer most- the children behind bars. All are in danger of the Coronavirus.

Many thousands are imprisoned without any evidence against them and without being charged. Many are jailed for non-serious offenses. The Coronavirus puts them in grave danger of death, a painful and desperate death. They die gasping from slow suffocation, alone, abandoned, unaided, unknown, isolated and unreported as if they never existed.

The children are the most vulnerable as they are weak from malnutrition, racked by asthma, some with tuberculosis and damaged by physical and sexual abuse and hurt. They are jailed in subhuman conditions. Most sleep on concrete floors and sub-human conditions. They are deprived of education, exercise, sunlight, fresh air, good food, medical help, legal help, entertainment, visitors, without showers and toilets. It is a desperate, dangerous situation. They must be freed at once.

I can reveal and prove that many of them are tortured. Here is a small fragment of the evidence of their torture in their own pictures.

Raymond (not his real name),13 years old, is now safe in the Preda home for rescued boys. He is a small boy, one of many, picked up on the streets by the tanods (local community guards) in Metro Manila and jailed in the so-called Bahay Pagasa (House of Hope). He, like others, ran away from an abusive, violent father. He lived on the streets

begging. Like hundreds of street children, he had nowhere to hide and was jailed. Just imagine if your young boy was punished like this.

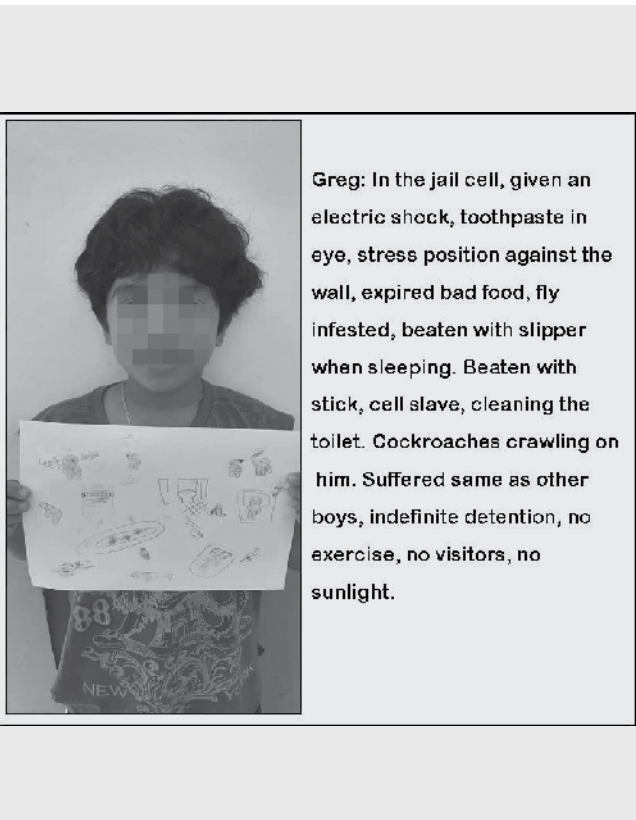
There are six images drawn on the page. In Raymond's drawing, he shows the torture and abuse he suffered in the local government-run Bahay Pagasa. It reads like the torture that suspected terrorists were made to suffer.

On a single page are six images, the first a picture of flies on rotten food. They ate bad tasting, fly-infested expired food from cans. The cans were likely donated by companies. Then the centre's budget for fresh food disappeared.

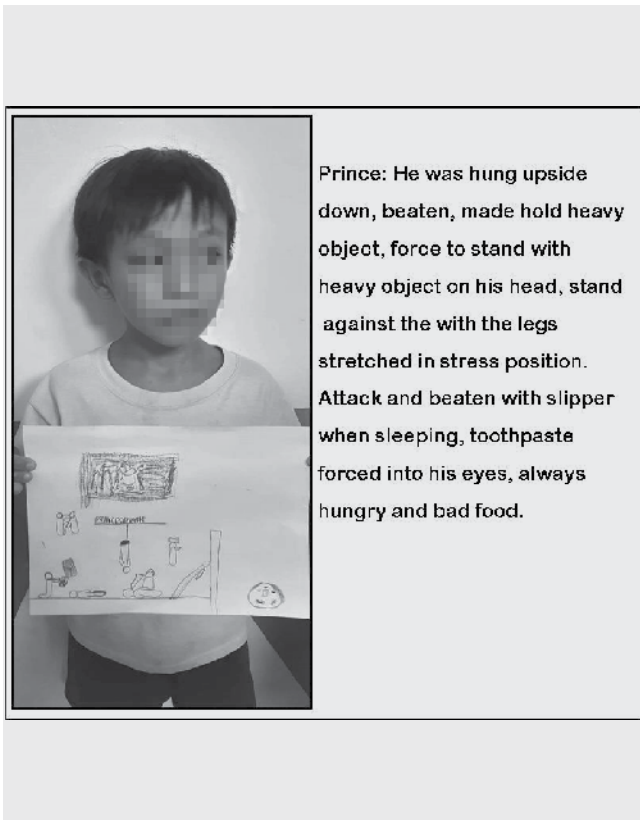
The second image is of Raymond forced to climb the steel bars of the cell and left to hang there for pain-filled hours, a cruel punishment. Sometimes, he was punched and whacked with a rubber slipper. Below that, to the left, Raymond is shown being beaten with a stick and spat upon as if he was dirt. To the centre right is a drawing of when he is sleeping. The older boys, some adults or the guards put toothpaste in his eyes causing painful stinging and beat him with a rubber slipper when he fights back.

In the upper right side of the drawing, Raymond shows how he was put in a steel drum and the others beat the sides of the drum to inflict severe noise, causing pain, hurting and damaging his eardrums. The bottom right side of the drawing is when he was forced to clean the filthy, clogged toilet bowl. He sometimes sleep on metal grills. The Bahay Pagasa is a regime of cruel torture and child abuse and it is common.

The Philippines system of law enforcement is very weak, arbitrary and in general there is much abuse of authority. The law is there to protect, not to punish unjustly. Yes, the dangerous criminals-



Greg: In the jail cell, given an electric shock, toothpaste in eye, stress position against the wall, expired bad food, fly infested, beaten with slipper when sleeping. Beaten with stick, cell slave, cleaning the toilet. Cockroaches crawling on him. Suffered same as other boys, indefinite detention, no exercise, no visitors, no sunlight.



Prince: He was hung upside down, beaten, made hold heavy object, force to stand with heavy object on his head, stand against the with the legs stretched in stress position. Attack and beaten with slipper when sleeping, toothpaste forced into his eyes, always hungry and bad food.

murderers and rapists- need to be held in jail to protect the public, but not the children especially with Coronavirus hovering nearby. This is the great hidden scandal of the local governments- the torture of children in the Bahay Pag-asa. They need to be overhauled and made compliant with the guidelines issued by the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC).

Alvin is 12 years old. His drawing shows how he was forced to hang on the bars and beaten. He was hung by the feet, so the blood rushed to the head and gave him a severe headache. He was forced to stand against a wall with legs stretched out in a painful, stress position, He cried with the pain. His picture shows also rotten food. He was hit on the ears, and was forced to hold up a heavy box causing pain. He had to kneel

for hours in a stress position. He was shouted at, insulted and beaten with a rubber slipper when in these stress positions.

There are many more child victims who have and are suffering like this. We must raise our voices in any way we can and demand that they be released without delay.

As Jesus of Nazareth said, to be his true follower we have to have commitment and action to help free the oppressed and the captives as he did (Luke 4:18) To be a member of God's family, we will be asked when did we visit the prisoners and help them? (Matthew 25:35) Matthew exposed the torture and massacre of the children by King Herod (Matthew 3:16) and he wrote about how Jesus told his audience that the most important in the world are children.

Let's us act now. Share this article on your Facebook account and send it to the Commission on Human Rights at chrcre@yahoo.com and Secretary Eduardo Año of the Department of Interior and Local Government at emano@dilg.gov.ph. Ask him to act with the JJWC headed by the Secretary Rolando Bautista of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The DSWD is the "lead social protection agency" that is requesting the release of old and sick prisoners so they, too, must release all detained children in the different Bahay Pagasa. Then, they must act to close the Bahay Pagasa that are houses of torture and abuse and instead build genuine child development centers. Acting together, we can bring change.

Liturgical / B2

2° All that refers to the licitud of the sacraments the regulation of which the Holy See has not decentralized to the Episcopal Conferences and to the diocesan Bishops.

3° The edition of liturgical books (c.383, 2).

4° Recognition of versions of liturgical books in the vernacular (c.383, 2).

5° Vigilance over the fulfillment of the universal liturgical norms everywhere (c.383, 2).

3) Principle of Liturgical Elasticity. The rituals in force do not impose uniformity, but rather permits the use of different forms for celebrating, which are expressions

of the richness of the liturgy of the Church. They are at the service of the pastoral function of the liturgy of stimulating and increasing the sense of Christ among the faithful (cf. IGMR, n.313).

A particular application of this principle is what has come to be known as inculturation—i.e., the incidence of the different cultures of peoples in whatever is fitting to better express the inexhaustible riches of Christ, provided that it is compatible with the Gospel and does not contradict ecclesial communion.

A different matter is the exaggerated adaptation of the liturgical norms to more specific and even simply personal circumstances—e.g.,

not to wear all the vestments for Mass on a warm day—under the guise of a misunderstood principle of contextualization. Such "experimentation with the liturgy is illicit, unless it counts with the expressed authorization of the Holy See".²

4) Principle of Decentralization. The ecclesiology of Vatican II, which re-emphasized the particular Churches and the dignity of the diocesan Bishops, opened a wide margin for Particular Law in the matter of liturgy. Thus, after establishing the aforementioned principles, the rest of c.838 enumerates the different

² SCDW, Instruction *Varietates legitimae*, 25.1.1994, n.66.

competencies, corresponding to the need for a certain plurality of liturgical forms, in accordance with the different mentalities and traditions of different peoples (cf. SC, 37-39). This is channeled through:

a) Primarily the Episcopal Conferences: It pertains to the conferences of bishops to prepare translations of the liturgical books into the vernacular languages, with the appropriate adaptations within the limits defined in the liturgical books themselves, and to publish them with the prior review by the Holy See (c.838, §3). The Instruction *Varietates legitimae* gave further indications on the ambit of this power of the Episcopal

Conference and the procedure for its exercise (nn.55 & 66-67).

b) Secondly the Diocesan Bishop: It pertains to the diocesan bishop in the church entrusted to him, within the limits of his competence, to issue liturgical norms by which all are bound. (c.838, §4).

4) Principle of Full and Active Participation of the Faithful. Of less juridic impact than the foregoing principles is one which is latent in the whole liturgical renewal ushered in by Vatican II, and that is the desire for the full and active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy, each one according to his state and condition. (*To be concluded.*)

Activities / B4

a new cotton ball/tips and new oil on the cotton.

5. It is permitted that only the forehead be anointed.

6. For communion of the sick and viaticum, enough consecrated hosts must be brought to avoid unnecessary contamination of the host/s.

For funerals

1. Only let the immediate family be allowed during funeral masses in the church, observing proper social distancing.

2. Avoid having several dead people for one funeral mass to avoid large crowds. This would mean more funeral masses or telling the people not to bring their dead to the church anymore if a mass has already been done during the wake.

3. Proper social distancing is to be observed during wake masses.

Blessing of sacramentals

1. A place should be indicated where people can have their medals, rosaries, statuettes and other materials blessed. The place should be big enough so that the people need not congregate as they wait for the priest for the blessing.

2. The parish can have containers with holy water available for people to bring home. They should be properly instructed that this holy water can be used in their homes to remind them of their baptism.

Parish Ministers and volunteers

1. Our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, ushers and other ministers need retraining considering the extraordinary circumstances and the appropriate protocol. The Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission will provide instructional videos. Parish Priests and ministry coordinators will be responsible for their re-training.

In parish offices

1. Parish offices should be so designed that proper distancing is observed.

2. There should be thermometer check for all who enter the parish office.

3. There is sanitation handwash facility upon entering the office.

4. Let the parish offices set up facilities for online donations and let these be transparent and user-friendly.

5. An important work of the parish office now is to build up the data base of the parishioners so that text or email blasts can be given to them inform them of what is happening in the parish. This can also create a sense of belongingness to the parish.

Recollections

1. Organize more online recollections, talks and Bible studies and tell the people to attend these for their spiritual nourishment. Encourage the people to tune in more to Radio Veritas and to TV Maria which can broadcast these talks.

2. The spirituality of stewardship should be promoted in the talks. In this spirituality all the faithful are reminded that we belong to the

family of God, which is the Church. Each is obliged to support the church according to one's capability. We give to the church not because we have received a service from it. We support it regularly and voluntarily because we are part of it.

To get in touch with the parishioners

1. Let the parish have zoom capability so that it can organize meeting with some parish leaders without asking them to physically come to the church.

2. Let each parish invest in its social communication infrastructure and have people properly trained for its social communication ministry.

Health ministry

1. Let all parishes set up a functional health ministry whose activities could include:

- To identify the sick and the elderly in the parish and minister to them.
- To help comfort the sick and their family.
- To help people make referrals when they get sick
- To take care of health care workers within the parish and have good relations with them.
- To guide people to have healthy lifestyle
- To minister to the mentally sick.

2. When volunteers join the ministries in the parish, health precautions should be given to them by this ministry. The would-be volunteers should be made to understand that their health is

their responsibility, so they have to observe necessary precautions.

3. A part of the work of this ministry is to help bring communion to the sick and the elderly. Only young volunteers are to be asked to do this.

Social Communication Ministry

1. Every parish should have a social communication ministry, with proper equipment and well trained people.

2. Let the parish have their own online mass every Sunday.

3. Let each parish maintain its own facebook where people can get relevant information about and from the parish

4. The task of the socom ministry is also to help the people to be responsible users of the social means of communication and not be addicted to it or be manipulated by it.

Maintaining good relationships

1. Let the parish priests and parish leaders maintain good relationships with the barangay leaders and the LGU officials.

2. We follow up the relationships we have established during this quarantine period and maintain long term engagements with them.

3. Inform our donors of what we have done and maintain good relations with them.

Parish personnel

1. The general policy is that as much as possible we do not lay off regular personnel so as not to

add to the unemployment problem of our people. If need be, we have to retool or reschedule our personnel to take on new jobs that the new situation calls us. However it should be properly explained to them that if the financial situation of the parish does not improve, then their work load – consequently their wages—will be diminished and some other benefits may no longer be given. All of these however should be done in consultation with our legal office and thus done according to law and charity.

Finances

1. We expect our revenues to fall. People have no money and we have to do a lot of charitable works. Thus let us minimize our expenses, especially our capital expenses. Improvements and projects can wait but proper maintenance should be done so as not to incur greater expenses later on.

2. The finance department of RCAM will set up guidelines for online donations. All the parishes should be open to online donations but the transparency and proper accounting of the donations should remain.

3. Let the parishes strive to give their contributions to the curia because these go to the salaries of our catechists and to the apostolic fund of the priests. We priests and the catechists continue to receive our allowances even in this situation.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo
Apostolic Administrator of Manila
May 6, 2020

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

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

MORAL ASSESSMENT

CINEMA RATING

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

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

The Platform

DIRECTOR: Galder Gaztelu-Urrutia;
SCREENPLAY: David Desola, Pedro Rivero
LEAD CAST: Ivan Massague, Antonia San Juan, Zorion Eguileor, Emilio Buale Coka, Alexandra Masangkay
MUSIC: Aranzazu Calleja; **CINEMATOGRAPHY** Jon Dominguez;
GENRE: Horror- Thriller-Drama **COUNTRY:** Spain
LANGUAGE: Spanish **DISTRIBUTED BY:** Netfixix;
RUNNING TIME: 94 minutes

Technical assessment: 4
CINEMA rating: V18

Moral assessment: 2
MTRCB rating: R 18

The Vertical Self-Management Center is a 333-floor facility known as The Hole. Each floor (or level) serves as a cell with two inmates and a huge hole in the middle where a platform laden with gourmet food descends from level 1 to the lowest level. This daily banquet is prepared meticulously in a five-star kitchen. The prisoners in the cells on the upper tier get to eat first while those below are left with scraps if they are lucky. Every so often, the prisoners are drugged and transferred to different floors randomly. For a diploma, Goreng (Massague) has himself confined in The Hole and learns its rules from his first cellmate Trimagasi (Eguileor). The two bond while in level 48, where they get a fair share of meals daily. However, when they get transferred to level 171, Goreng finds himself tied up in bed for Trimagasi to strip off pieces of his flesh for both of them. Fortunately, Goreng is saved by the descending Miharu (Masangkay) before he is mortally wounded — Miharu travels the platform every month in search of her child. Goreng then wakes up on level 33 with Imoguiiri (San Juan). Imoguiiri, unaware of the savagery happening,

commits herself to be able to help the prisoners “reach spontaneous solidarity”. She explains that if people will only eat what they need, the food ration is sufficient for everyone. They get transferred to level 202 where Imoguiiri commits suicide and forces Goreng to feed on her. He then wakes up on level 6 with Baharat (Coka). After a failed attempt to get help from the prisoners in level 5, he joins Goreng in forcibly rationing food to all levels so no one will go hungry and they would be able to send a message to the people on level 0 where food is prepared. They encounter resistance and are mortally wounded before reaching the lowest level. They find a little girl hiding and decide to give her the untouched Panna Cota they were saving to be sent back to level 0 as a message. Baharat succumbs to his wounds and Goreng lets the girl ascend the hole and be the message that humanity is not totally broken.

The first thing we have to be clear about is that the movie contains brutal violence bombarding the senses, and that it is intended for audiences whose maturity and metaphoric wisdom can sieve through the treatment. The Platform is classified as



a horror-thriller movie which might come as surprise for those expecting corpses and ghouls chasing innocents at heart pumping speed. The horror here is much more terrifying — the loss of one’s humanity just to survive. The movie is technically well crafted. Point in case, it either manages to convey the allegories or turns off viewers because the violence is a little too relatable. Massague gives that low-keyed performance while Eguileor swings from charming to chilling. The setting delivers clinical coldness and desperate pain. The brilliance of the narrative is that it takes a simple premise anyone can understand and relate to: hunger and helplessness. Then it complicates it with physical and moral challenges, after which it challenges the viewers to recalibrate their moral compass amidst the reality presented, instead of what is ideal or by the book — as Goreng tells Imoguiiri, “solidarity does not happen spontaneously, it sometimes needs to be wrapped in s#*t”.

The movie’s release is very timely when the world due to the Covid-19 pandemic is nearly experiencing scarcity in the basic resources while people are forcibly locked in their homes. How many times have we been told that there is enough food and basic needs for everyone, yet municipalities have had to implement strict anti-hoarding ordinances. And how many have taken advantage of the situation and sold their hoarded facial masks and alcohol three or four times their retail price?

A person’s response to a life and death situation reveals his true nature. The Platform amplifies how the need to survive seemingly supersedes compassion, kindness, and selflessness. “Hunger unleashes the madman in us.” It does not matter if you belong to the upper and privileged sector. As long as there are people below you and people above you, once your survival is threatened, humanity is forgotten. For a few who still hope and hold on to their core goodness, the struggle is to effect change — below and above. The people need to change so the entire system can be shaken into reality. As the movie demonstrates, the well-meaning objectives of the administration is corrupted when they are out of touch with the effects of its policies and the responses of the people.

Change cannot happen with only or a few people working for it. It has to be a collaborative effort. People need to work together and have a common selfless goal. Working together means being in solidarity for the sake of the helpless, the voiceless, and the disadvantaged. While most reviews look at The Platform as a snide attack against capitalism, we can also surmise that the greed and self-preservation attributed to the capitalists are easily absorbed by people in any level of socio-economic structure as soon as they experience dearth and power — as shown in the film, relationships change when the cellmates move from higher to lower levels.

There is the issue of being corrupted by the system and the metaphor of the girl ascending as the message. Goreng had no choice but embrace the violent and despicable — not to survive but to effect change. However, he felt he is no longer worthy to be a symbol of change. The girl — the daughter Miharu has been protecting from starving and from the system — remained innocent, pure, and thus the symbol of hope and the message that humanity has not died.

ORATIO IMPERATA

PRAYER FOR PROTECTION against the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

God our Father,
We come to you in our need
To ask your protection against the Coronavirus (COVID-19),
That has claimed lives
And has affected many.

We pray for your grace
For the people tasked with studying the nature and cause
Of this virus and its disease
And of stemming the tide of its transmission.

Guide the hands and minds of medical experts
That they may minister to the sick
With competence and compassion.

And of those governments and private agencies
That must find cure and solution to this epidemic.

We pray for those afflicted
May they be restored to health soon.

Grant us the grace
To work for the good of all
And to help those in need.

Grant this through our Lord,
Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with You,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. Amen.

Mary Help of all Christians, pray for us.
St. Raphael the Archangel, pray for us.
St. Rock, pray for us.
St. Lorenzo Ruiz, pray for us.
St. Pedro Calungsod, pray for us.

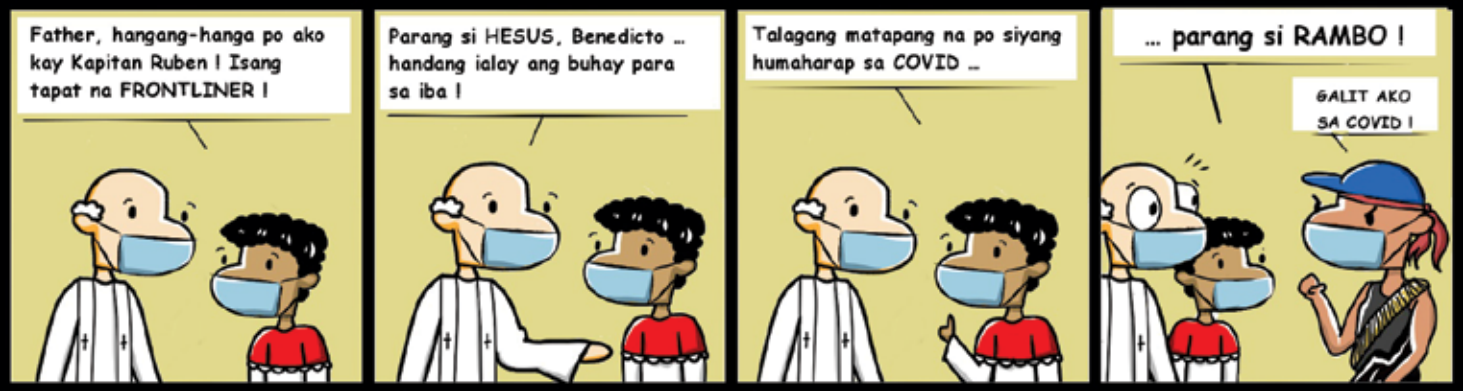
Onward



DIRECTOR: Dan Scanlon
LEAD CAST: Tom Holland, Chris Pratt, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Octavia Spencer
SCREENWRITERS: Dan Scanlon, Jason Headley, Keith Bunin
PRODUCER: Kori Rae
EDITOR: Catherine Apple
MUSICAL DIRECTORS: Jeff Danna, Mychael Danna
CINEMATOPHAPERS: Sharon Calahan, Adam Habib
GENRE: Fantasy, Adventure
DISTRIBUTOR: Press Play Pictures
LOCATION: USA
RUNNING TIME: 1 hr 42 min

Technical assessment: 3
Moral assessment: 3.5
CINEMA rating: V13
MTRCB rating: G

Buhay San Miguel



FAITH WATCH

- Your Catholic Channel -

<https://www.youtube.com/faithwatch>

Daddy issues come in many forms. Kids rebel, some cower. It’s the latter for the timid and tentative elf Ian Lightfoot (voiced by Tom Holland) who lost his dad when he was too young to remember. Rowdy elf and older brother Barley (voiced by Chris Pratt) shares the same longing for dad. So when mom Laurel (voiced by Julia Louis-Dreyfus) hands them a gift from dad that would make daddy resurrect from the dead for a day, the two boys melt. But the gift requires some magical spell, because it turns out they’re a family of wizards. Problem is, technology has made it so easy to automate tasks, no one casts magic spells anymore. Ian manages to

muster some juju and makes dad materialize, but only from the waist down. The two brother-elves must find the gem that will get dad’s upper half appear, with the help of a map held by the riotous Manticore (voiced by Octavia Spencer). So on they go to find the gem that would complete dad’s transformation — even for a day.

This animated fantasy adventure deserves an A for diversity, for representing people of color and gender preferences without endorsing anything, just stating matter-of-factly. Meanwhile, the screen is busy with elves, dragons, and wizards flying around, not quite sure when and how to use their magical powers

because alas, technology can do everything for them. While the story is not unique, lines like “There’s a mighty warrior inside of you, you just have to let him out” come to life because it’s Pratt (Guardians of the Galaxy) and Holland (Avengers) behind the characters. The movie doesn’t wow us as does the signature Pixar innovative storytelling that made Toy Story, The Incredibles, and Up, but it’s a fun ride nonetheless.

Eclipsing the daddy issues in the movie is brotherly love. Barley is genuinely happy — never jealous — that his brother Ian is a wizard. Between the two, it is Ian who needs desperately to talk to his father. But he gives up the chance for his brother.

Such selfless love warms the soul. The movie also shows magic in two ways. There’s the magic of simplicity that makes us appreciate simple things, but that appreciation somehow has been eclipsed by technology. There’s also the magic of believing (although here we must alert for some parental guidance because of some scary scenes, like a fire-spewing dragon). Ian needs to first believe that he has magical ability before he can make the magical staff work. As we say, if we want to move mountains, we must first believe. A CINEMA reminder, though, lest impressionable minds get carried away: while it makes for good entertainment, belief in magic is not a gospel value.