



The Roman Catholic Bishop of Pasig

PASTORAL STATEMENT AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PASIG RIVER EXPRESSWAY (PAREX)

*"Streams of the river gladden the city of God,
the holy dwelling of the Most High."*

(Psalm 46:5)

The Catholic Bishops of the Philippines in their 1988 pastoral letter *"What is Happening To Our Beautiful Land?"* asked these questions: *"How can fish swim in running sewers like the Pasig and so many more rivers which we have polluted? Who has turned the wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life?"*

The official seal of the Diocese of Pasig concretely expresses the importance of the Pasig River in the faith life of the people of Pasig, Taguig, and Pateros. It is a manifestation of the river as a **cradle of memory, symbol of life, and bearer of forever.**

The Pasig River is a silent witness to history. There are many memories that can be associated with it. For instance, the journey of the first Augustinian missionaries is believed to have passed through this river towards Maybunga and Pinagbuhatan.

Water is a symbol of life and Pasig River – being as it is - is a source of life and livelihood. From then to the present, this river has been utilized for growth and the upliftment of life.

The river is all-important to Filipinos because it forms part of our Christian faith, history, and evolution of life. Therefore, as the Diocese of Pasig, our call is:

No to PAREX! United with the concerns of the many Organizations and Coalitions, we oppose the harmful effects of the Pasig River Expressway (PAREX) by SMC infrastructure. *"Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home"* (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* # 13).

Pasig River needs our protection and most of all rehabilitation. PAREX, the 19.37km. lane elevated concrete behemoth, will sit right on top of the Pasig River and will be detrimental to the river itself, its surrounding communities, and to Metro Manila at large. We do not need another project like an expressway in order to be called a "livable city" that will cause harm and death. PAREX is not a solution to ease the traffic but will worsen our future. These are some reasons why we are opposed to PAREX:

1. **Impact on River Ecology.** Pollutants from passing motor vehicles will contaminate the Pasig River. PAREX will dredge several parts of the river. Dredging is not a remedy for flooding; it can make flooding worse. It can also make water quality worse by releasing buried toxins. Dredging is therefore a false solution.
2. **Health Impact.** PAREX will cause health problems from the increased air and noise pollution in the vicinity.



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3. **Impact on Availability of Green Public Space.** PAREX will result in a net reduction in green public space at a time when Metro Manila has a significant shortage. PAREX will destroy the ecosystem and the biodiversity of the river. There are many organizations and individuals who never stop in their advocacies in saving the river.
4. **Economic Impact of Urban Blight.** Neighborhoods underneath the “shadow” of PAREX are likely to suffer “urban blight”. Because these areas will be less attractive for homes and economic activity, there will be diminished potential for development, jobs, and livelihood opportunities and a reduction of real estate market values.
5. **Impact on Disaster Risk and Emergency Response Capacity.** PAREX will increase the overall disaster risk in Metro Manila and reduces the capacity of Metro Manila public and private agencies to mount an effective emergency response. In the event of a major earthquake, a total or partial collapse of PAREX will likely inflict additional serious damage to other physical infrastructure underneath, such as the bridges along the Pasig River, restricting significantly the navigability of the waterway, and reducing the available rescue/evacuation areas.
6. **Impact on Culture.** PAREX will destroy our heritage.

“Change is something desirable, yet it becomes a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity.” (Laudato Si # 17).

We should not allow PAREX to erase our river of memory and to kill the river of life forever!

Let us be reminded that *“God created us to be stewards of His creation” (Gen. 1:27-28). “God, who created our world, loves life and wishes to share this life with every creature.” (What is Happening To Our Beautiful Land?).*

May Mary, Queen and Mother of the whole of creation, give us wisdom and enlightenment and intercede for us in our advocacy to shield our dear Pasig River from permanent deterioration and death.

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✠ MYLO HUBERT C. VERGARA, D.D.
Bishop
Diocese of Pasig

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord
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