

Monitor

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE



Barges unload sand at a reclamation site in Manila Bay on Aug. 12, 2023. Caritas Philippines and other groups, however, are concerned about the ill effects of such projects on the marine environment. BASILIO SEPE

Caritas PH pushes for nationwide ban on reclamation projects

By ROY LAGARDE

THE Catholic Church's social action arm has called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to permanently halt the reclamation projects not only in Manila Bay but also throughout the entire country.

Caritas Philippines' president, Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, argued that the projects 'are not in the best interest of the Filipino people.

"We call on President Marcos to issue an executive order banning all reclamation projects, not only in Manila Bay but across the country," Bagaforo said.

"Reclamation projects displace fisherfolk and coastal urban communities, destroy coastal ecosystems, and contribute to food

insecurity," he said.

The bishop made the appeal after Marcos ordered an indefinite suspension of at least 22 major land reclamation works in Manila Bay to assess their social and environmental impact.

The president's order came after the United States voiced security and environmental concerns over the projects near its embassy and the involvement of a Chinese firm blacklisted by Washington.

The national Caritas lamented the surge of reclamation projects in the country, particularly in Manila Bay, in recent years, aimed at creating more urban spaces for commercial and industrial development.

Instead of relying on reclamation projects, the church official urged the government 'to invest in sustainable development

that will benefit all Filipinos, not just a few wealthy individuals.

The international environmental group Oceana stated that the reclamation projects jeopardize food security and violate people's rights to a healthy, balanced, safe, and resilient environment.

"This is simply unjust and unacceptable," said Atty. Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Oceana's Vice President.

Citing data from the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA), Oceana reported that there were about 52 reclamation projects in the country as of February 2023, including the project in Coron, Palawan, which has been forfeited by the government.

Out of this number, 22 projects are located in Manila Bay, and half of them, or 11, are already

Caritas / A6

Pope Francis writing a second part of *Laudato si'*



Pope Francis. VATICAN MEDIA

August 21, 2023—THE Director of the Holy See Press Office says the second part of the *Laudato si'* encyclical letter which Pope Francis mentioned on Monday will focus on the recent climate crises.

Speaking off-the-cuff to a delegation of lawyers from member countries of the Council

of Europe on Monday, Pope Francis said he was writing a second part of his *Laudato si'* encyclical to update it to "current issues".

The Pope was expressing his appreciation for the attorneys' commitment to developing a legal framework aimed at protecting

Laudato Si' / A7

Nuncio: Reach out those who drifted away from Church



Papal nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown and other bishops are welcomed by parishioners before celebrating Mass at the Puerto Princesa Cathedral on Aug. 24, 2023. AVPP

PAPAL nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown called on Catholics of Palawan island on Thursday to continue the mission and seek out those who have gone astray.

Speaking during Mass at the Puerto Princesa Cathedral, he encouraged the faithful to see the lost members of the flock as an

opportunity to bear witness to the joy of the Gospel.

"We have to tell the people who, perhaps, drifted away from the faith or lost the light of faith, to come and see the Catholic life," Brown said in his homily.

"We have to tell them to come to

Nuncio / A6

Caritas PH decries Japan's nuclear plant water discharge

CARITAS Philippines has joined the fray in expressing alarm after Japan started releasing treated radioactive water from its crippled Fukushima nuclear power into the Pacific Ocean on Thursday.

The church's social action and advocacy arm expressed concern such a move will harm nature and the population.

"The decision is a reckless gamble with the health and well-being of people and the environment," said Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, president of the national Caritas.

Plant operator Tokyo Electric Power (Tepco) said the release began at about 1 p.m. local time, marking the start of the project that is expected to last for years.

The company initially planned to continuously release nuclear

Japan / A6

Kalookan bishop laments 'systematic' police abuses



Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan. FILE PHOTO

THE string of incidents involving alleged police abuse is a 'systematic' problem in policing, a ranking Catholic bishop said.

"The string of recent events pertaining to police officers abusing their authority in the past few weeks could be indicative of the fact that the problem is systematic," Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan said.

The bishop was reacting to a recent incident involving a dismissed cop, who cursed, hit, and cocked his gun at a cyclist after a road altercation in Quezon City.

The bishop is a vocal critic of

Bishop / A6

B1 Joy is missionary—share it with others!

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis at the Vigil on the occasion of the 37th World Youth Day, Parque Tejo, Lisbon, Portugal, 5 August 2023

A3

Pope Francis: 'Mongolia is a symbol of religious freedom'

B3

Eco-Theological framework of the rights of nature

Ukrainian Catholics receive warm reception at World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon

UKRAINIAN pilgrims who attended World Youth Day in Lisbon earlier this month said they were amazed by the number of people from around the world who assured them of their prayers and support amid the war with Russia.

Marina Aleykseyeva, 31, who lives in Kyiv, spoke to CNA before the Aug. 6 WYD closing Mass about the experience of their delegation, which was made up of about 500 Ukrainians living all over the world and more than 140 who traveled from Ukraine itself.

"We are here to pray for the country, to pray for peace," she said. "This World Youth Day is very, very special because all [of us] Ukrainians came here to pray for peace, to pray for the soldiers and for our families."

She added that this World Youth Day was also particularly significant because of the many people, especially young men, who could not come because they were fighting in the war.

Aleykseyeva said "it was unbelievable" how many people stopped them on the streets of Lisbon during the international youth gathering to say they were praying for Ukraine.

"Now we can return to our country and tell everyone that so many people who believe in God are praying for us from all over the world."



Marina Aleykseyeva, 31, from Kiev, Ukraine, (second from left with a pink baseball cap), together with fellow pilgrims from Ukraine, attended World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, Aug. 1-6, 2023. She said they traveled to the international gathering to pray for peace in their country. **HANNAH BROCKHAUS/CNA**

The Ukrainian Catholic pilgrims to WYD 2023 included both members of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the smaller Latin Church in the country.

Aleykseyeva, a Latin Catholic, said these differences mattered little to them, especially now.

"We are all here together to pray. No one now is thinking about whether you are Greek or Latin, you just pray together," she said, adding that "God is one," so it does not matter if someone prays differently or makes the sign of the cross differently.

On Friday, before the Stations of the Cross with Pope Francis, they marched together wearing

T-shirts with the faces of children who were killed since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Aleykseyeva said they wanted "to show that our children, our little children, die every day because of missiles."

"We have to show that it is not over," she emphasized.

The young Ukrainian woman said she and the other members of her group were even checking their phones during the WYD vigil the night of Aug. 5 to follow news about another air raid on Ukraine. The Ukrainians were joined in prayer by some young women from Italy who were nearby them in the field. **(CNA)**

Jesuits' superior general condemns seizure of university by Nicaragua dictatorship

THE superior general of the Jesuits, Father Arturo Sosa, condemned the confiscation this week of the Central American University (UCA) by the Daniel Ortega dictatorship in Nicaragua, denouncing the measure as "unjust" and detrimental to the country.

The expropriation of the assets of the UCA, considered one of the main private educational institutions in the country and whose closure has left more than 9,500 students without access to education, was strongly criticized both nationally and internationally.

Sosa expressed his consternation over the situation in a letter also posted on X addressed to the provincial curia of Central America in San Salvador, headed by Father José Domingo Cuesta, SJ. In his statement, issued on Aug. 17 from Rome, Sosa expressed his "great surprise and greater pain for the consequences for the youth and for the entire people of Nicaragua."

The superior general of the

Jesuits denounced the confiscation and expressed his solidarity with the UCA, its directors, and its teaching and administrative staff.

"The accusations made against the UCA are totally false and without any foundation," Sosa said.

"Furthermore, the right to legitimate defense has been denied. A fair trial, with impartial justice, would bring to light the truth of the entire plot that the government has executed against the UCA since the 2018 youth protests, as well as against many other works of the Catholic Church and thousands of civil society institutions, in order to suffocate, close, or appropriate them," he pointed out.

The Jesuit superior general said the measures against the UCA are a manifestation of the climate of violence and insecurity that has been established in the country.

"With similar slanders, they have also trampled on the rights of so many people, their reputation, their lives, and their property," he said.

Besides condemning the injustice

suffered by the UCA, Sosa also called for reconciliation and dialogue.

"I join the demand for this judicial measure against the UCA to be reversed and corrected, so that the government's aggression against it and its members cease, so that paths of dialogue based on truth, freedom, and the right to quality of education for the youth and for all the people of Nicaragua be opened."

In his letter, Sosa quoted the 36th General Congregation (GC36) of the society, which stressed the importance of remaining steadfast in the search for a better world and dedicated to "those who work in marginal situations and persecution to defend the truth."

The UCA, founded in 1960 by the Jesuits, has faced harassment and repression since the anti-government protests in 2018. The confiscation order has been seen as part of a larger pattern of government oppression that has also affected other Catholic institutions and critical voices. **(CNA)**

Faith meets ecology: Rosaries made from ocean plastic shine at World Youth Day



A rosary made from plastic refuse collected from the ocean. **PLASTIC BANK**

IN a unique blend of faith and environmental activism, pilgrims from Vancouver, British Columbia, handed out rosaries crafted from recycled ocean plastic to attendees of World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, this August. This initiative, backed by Plastic Bank, aimed to spotlight the dual themes of religious devotion and ecological stewardship.

Plastic Bank, a Vancouver-based social enterprise, has carved a niche for itself by transforming plastic waste into items of value. Their mission is twofold: curbing the flow of plastic into oceans and simultaneously addressing poverty by making plastic a resource too precious to discard.

"Of the 1,000 rosaries crafted, 100 were distributed during World Youth Day," Peter Nitschke, who is at the helm of Community Partnerships at Plastic Bank, shared with CNA Deutsch, CNA's German-language news partner. "The response was overwhelmingly positive."

He expressed hope that these unique rosaries would resonate with Pope Francis' message in *Laudato Si'*, urging global citizens to care for the planet. "In intertwining faith with environmental consciousness, our aim is to galvanize both pilgrims and the wider public to embrace the social recycling ethos," Nitschke stated.

The inception of this initiative, as Nitschke recounted, was serendipitous.

"Taylor Cannizzaro, our chief relationship officer, was en route to Rome for discussions on potential collaborations between Plastic Bank and the Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development. A chance encounter with a fellow passenger, a rosary artisan, sparked the innovative idea of crafting rosaries from plastic destined for the oceans."

The process, as detailed by Nitschke, is community-centric. "Locals collect plastic waste from varied sources, ranging from coastal areas to urban

neighborhoods. This not only aids in environmental cleanup but also economically uplifts these communities."

He highlighted a commendable effort from Brazil, where a parish succeeded in gathering over 24,000 kilograms (about 53,000 pounds) of plastic in a brief span. "Such endeavors underscore the transformative power of grassroots movements," Nitschke remarked.

Once collected, the plastic undergoes a metamorphosis, eventually finding its way into various products, including the rosary beads.

Nitschke also touched upon the societal implications of their initiative. "These rosaries are meticulously crafted by individuals at the Manila City Jail as part of a special program by the Philippine Bureau of Jail Management and Penology. This program offers inmates, termed as People of Deprived Liberties, avenues for skill development and earning opportunities."

Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si'*: "The growing problem of marine waste and the protection of the open seas represent particular challenges" and emphasized "our duty to care for the oceans as part of an integrated vision of human development." **(CNA)**

Vatican Briefing

Pope Francis meets 'Rocky' actor Sylvester Stallone at Vatican

Pope Francis received U.S. actor and director Sylvester "Sly" Stallone at the Vatican on Sept. 8. The "Rocky" actor met the pope in the Apostolic Palace together with his brother, actor and musician Frank Stallone; his wife, Jennifer Flavin; and their three daughters: Sophie, Sistine, and Scarlet. The Vatican released photos of the meeting but did not provide details of the encounter. A video shared by Vatican News showed Pope Francis meeting Stallone and telling him, "We grew up with your films." Stallone, jokingly making fists, responded: "Ready, we box!" **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: Don't overlook goodness because of scandal

Pope Francis on Sept. 6 encouraged people to look for the quiet goodness in the world, even when the tendency is to pay more attention to failure and scandal. "Just think how many hidden seeds of goodness make the garden of the world flourish, while we usually only hear about the sound of falling trees," he said during his weekly public audience on Sept. 6. "People, we too like scandal. 'Look at what barbarity, a tree fell, the noise it made!' But you don't see the forest that is growing every day. Because the growth is in silence," the pope added. He urged people to look "toward the light of the good" in the world and to fight the tendency to only appreciate others to the extent that they share our ideas. **(CNA)**

Pope Francis to publish apostolic letter on St. Thérèse of Lisieux Oct. 15

On board the plane taking him to Mongolia, Pope Francis announced Aug. 31 that he is preparing an apostolic letter on St. Thérèse of Lisieux to be published Oct. 15. The pontiff made his statement while greeting the 70 journalists who are accompanying him for a four-day visit to Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, including Andrea Gagliarducci of ACI Stampa, CNA's Italian-language news partner. During a general audience on June 7, Pope Francis announced that he was writing an apostolic letter on the patron saint of missions. "She was born 150 years ago and on this anniversary I intend to dedicate an apostolic letter to her," he said. **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: St. Kateri Tekakwitha is an example of patience in suffering

St. Kateri Tekakwitha teaches us to live an ordinary holiness and to confront the suffering of life with patience, Pope Francis said Aug. 30. At his weekly public audience, the pope spoke about the Native American saint in his continuing series of talks on apostolic zeal. "Kateri Tekakwitha's life shows us that every challenge can be overcome if we open our hearts to Jesus, who grants us the grace we need: patience and a heart open to Jesus. This is a recipe to live well," he said in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall. Francis described the intense difficulties the saint faced — including the loss at age 4 of her parents and brother from smallpox, and persecution after her baptism and conversion to Christianity — and the way Kateri responded. **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: People — not machines — are the value of work

Pope Francis told a group of entrepreneurs this week that work's greatest value comes from human beings, not from machines. He also said businessmen and businesswomen can contribute to the common good through job creation, especially for young people. "Today, an increasingly important way of participating in the common good is to create jobs, jobs for everyone, especially young people — trust young people: They need work, and you need them," he said in the message delivered Aug. 28. Francis' message was read by Bishop Matthieu Rougé of the Diocese of Nanterre, France, on the first day of the Meeting of Entrepreneurs of France at the Paris Longchamp Racecourse Aug. 28-29. **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: 'We cannot be indifferent' to people caught in drug addiction

Pope Francis said on Aug. 27 we are called to act like Jesus and cannot be indifferent to the situations that lead people, especially adolescents, into drug addiction. "Behind every addiction there are concrete experiences, stories of loneliness, inequality, exclusion, lack of integration," he said. "Faced with these situations, we cannot be indifferent." "The Lord Jesus stopped, became close, healed wounds," the pope said in a message to toxicologists Aug. 27 for the 60th International Congress of Forensic Toxicologists in Rome Aug. 27-31. **(CNA)**

Brazilian Cardinal Geraldo Majella Agnelo dies at age 89

Cardinal Geraldo Majella Agnelo, archbishop emeritus of São Salvador da Bahia in Brazil, died Aug. 26 at the age of 89. According to the Archdiocese of Londrina, where Agnelo had been living since 2014, the cardinal's health had been in decline since suffering a stroke in December 2022 and had worsened in recent days. The cardinal was buried in the cathedral crypt following the last Mass on Aug. 28. In a telegram of condolence for the cardinal's death, Pope Francis praised Agnelo for his "long years of dedicated service to Holy Mother Church, always guided by apostolic zeal, in the various missions that have been entrusted to him." **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: 'Look to Jesus always'

Christ is with us and walking beside us in our daily journey through life, including our struggles to be holy, Pope Francis said Sunday, Aug. 27. Emphasizing that Jesus is not just a historical figure, the pope said that "we are not alone on the path of life, because Christ is with us and Christ helps us to walk, as he did with Peter and the other disciples." "Let us look to Jesus — look to Jesus always — look to Jesus who walks beside us, who welcomes our frailties, shares our efforts and rests his firm and gentle arm on our weak shoulders," he said. Pope Francis spoke about the presence of Christ during his weekly Sunday address and Angelus prayer, which he delivered from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square to a crowd of about 10,000 people. **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: Synod on Synodality 'truly important' despite being 'of little interest to the general public'

Pope Francis acknowledged that the upcoming Synod on Synodality may be "of little interest to the general public" but underlined that the synod is "truly important" for the Catholic Church. "I am well aware that speaking of a 'Synod on Synodality' may seem something abstruse, self-referential, excessively technical, and of little interest to the general public," Pope Francis said on Aug. 26. "But what has happened over the past year, which will continue with the assembly next October and then with the second stage of Synod 2024, is something truly important for the Church." The pope spoke about the significance of the synod nearly one month ahead of the first global Synod on Synodality assembly taking place at the Vatican Oct. 4-28. **(CNA)**

Pope asks journalists for help to communicate Synod

By LINDA BORDONI / Vatican News



Pope Francis meets a delegation from the Italian "E' Giornalismo" prize during an audience in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Aug. 26, 2023. VATICAN MEDIA

Pope Francis is chosen as the 2023 recipient of the prestigious Italian "E' Giornalismo" award established in 1995 by well-known journalists. In his acceptance speech, he asks media professionals to help communicate the upcoming Synod on Synodality.

THE "E' Giornalismo" Award, established by a group of internationally-renowned Italian journalists in 1995, has been assigned to influential Italian press and TV personalities and journalists who have shaped the narrative of current affairs in Italy with objectivity, professionalism and creativity.

In a discourse to the delegation

awarding him the prize on Aug. 26, Pope Francis said that although he has always declined this kind of offer, he has chosen to accept this one to highlight "the urgency of constructive communication, which fosters the culture of encounter and not of confrontation; the culture of peace and not of war; the culture of openness to the other and not of prejudice."

Fight disinformation

And then, he issued a call for help: "At a time when everyone seems to comment on everything, even regardless of the facts and often even before being informed," he said, it is necessary to "cultivate the principle of reality, of facts."

Disinformation, the Pope added, is one of the sins of journalism, of which there are four: "misinformation, when journalism does not inform or informs badly; slander (...); defamation, which is different from slander but destroys; and the fourth is coprophilia, that is, the love of scandal, of filth, scandal that sells."

To combat disinformation, he continued, those who work in communications need to spread a culture of encounter, a culture of dialogue, a culture of listening to the other and his reasons.

He warned against the risks implicit in digital culture, which, he said, has brought us so many new possibilities for exchange, but risks turning communication into slogans.

No to steering public opinion with fake news

True communication, he said, is always based on giving the facts of both sides, and he expressed concern for "the manipulations of those who interestingly propagate fake news to steer public opinion."

At a time in which Europe is experiencing the continuation of war in Ukraine, the Holy Father appealed, "Please, let us not give in to the logic of opposition, let us not be influenced by hate language."

"My hope is that space will be given to the voices of peace, to those who strive to put an end to this as to so many other conflicts, to those who do not give in to the 'Cainist' logic of war but

Pope / A6

Manila archdiocese divests from 'coal, other destructive businesses'



Cardinal Jose Advincula, archbishop of Manila. RCAM-AOC

THE Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila announced it has divested from fossil fuels, the largest contributor to climate change, and what it called "other destructive businesses".

In his Aug. 31 message for the "Season of Creation," Cardinal Jose Advincula said the move was made 'years ago' in response to the calls of Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical "Laudato Si".

"This is to inform everyone that the Archdiocese of Manila has divested all our investments from coal and other destructive businesses since years ago," Advincula said.

The decision, according to him, was also "in consonance with our faith and the earlier social teachings of the Church".

"We commit to relentlessly support all initiatives that will protect, preserve, nurture, and respect God's creation," he said.

In 2019, the country's Catholic bishops agreed to divest from 'dirty energy' sources, such as coal-fired

power plants.

While only a few dioceses used to have investments in coal, the bishops emphasized the need for collective action to address the climate crisis.

In its February 2022 pastoral letter, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) called for unity among churches to urgently respond to the problem.

The Season of Creation is a global and ecumenical celebration that runs from September 1 to October 4, coinciding with the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

In the Philippines, the dioceses extend the observance to the second Sunday of October, known as Indigenous Peoples' Sunday.

The cardinal added that the archdiocese is committed to responding to the goals of Laudato Si' by mobilizing various institutions to become part of the Laudato Si Action Platform to achieve integral ecology." (CBCP News)

Pope Francis: 'Mongolia is a symbol of religious freedom'

By COURTNEY MARES | CNA



Pope Francis stands beside Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh in Sukhbaatar Square in front of the State Palace in Ulaanbaatar on Sept. 2, 2023. VATICAN MEDIA

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia—Pope Francis called Mongolia a "symbol of religious freedom" in his first speech in the Asian country sandwiched between China and Russia and underlined how Mongolia's democratic government is in a unique position to play "an important role on behalf of world peace."

In an address to government authorities in Mongolia's State Palace in Ulaanbaatar on Sept. 2, the pope asked that heaven may grant the "earth devastated by countless conflicts" a renewal and respect for international laws.

"May the dark clouds of war be dispelled, swept away by the firm desire for a universal fraternity wherein tensions are resolved through encounter and dialogue, and the fundamental rights of all people are guaranteed," the pope said in the speech to Mongolia's democratic leaders and diplomatic corps.

Speaking 200 miles from Mongolia's border with Russia,

the pope urged: "Together let us strive to build a future of peace."

The Mongolian Honor Guard stood watch in front of the State Palace as Pope Francis arrived in the capital city's Sukhbaatar Square on Saturday morning. The square is built on the spot where Damdin Sukhbaatar, a Mongolian revolutionary hero, declared Mongolia's independence from China in 1921.

Catholic pilgrims from Hong Kong and mainland China were among the small crowd of a few hundred people who welcomed the pope to the world's most sparsely populated sovereign country. Some of the visiting Catholics from China wore masks and sunglasses to shield their identities, a testament to the stark difference in religious freedom in the country on the other side of Mongolia's southern border.

Other Mongolian passersby stopped to see the pope,

including Tuvshin, 38, a Christian from Ulaanbaatar.

Tuvshin told CNA that he believes Mongolia is in "a tough neighborhood between Russia and China."

"So I think he [Pope Francis] has much bigger reasons to make this pilgrimage to Mongolia," he said.

Mongolia has strong ties with its geographic neighbors China and Russia as well as an important diplomatic relationship with the United States, which Mongolia calls its "third neighbor."

"Mongolia today, with its broad network of diplomatic relations ... plays a significant role in the heart of the great Asian continent and on the international scene," the pope said.

The Vatican's diplomatic contacts with Mongolia date back nearly 800 years.

Pope Francis recalled how Friar John of Pian del Carpine visited the third Mongol emperor, Guyug, in 1246 as an envoy of the pope and

presented to the Grand Khan an official missive from Pope Innocent IV.

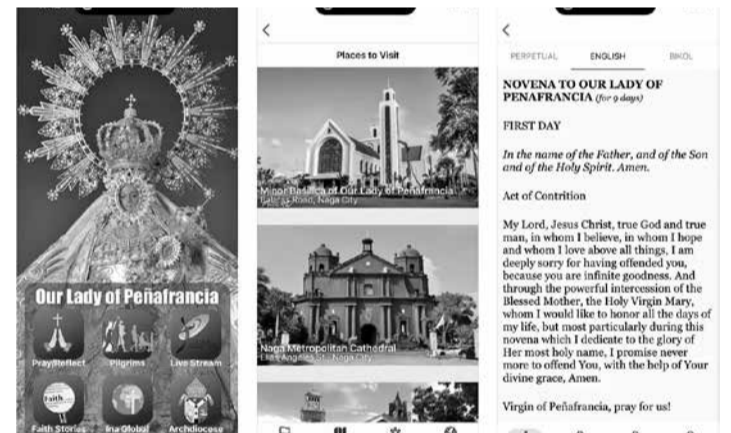
The letter in response bearing the seal of the Grand Khan in traditional Mongol letters can be found in the Vatican Library today. Pope Francis presented a copy of this historic document as a gift to Mongolia's leaders as a "sign of an ancient friendship that is growing and being renewed."

Today Mongolia is home to about 1,450 Catholics, far fewer than 1% of the country's 3.3 million people.

"I am pleased that this [Catholic] community, however small and discreet, shares with enthusiasm and commitment in the country's process of growth by spreading the culture of solidarity, universal respect, and interreligious dialogue, and by working for justice, peace, and social harmony," Pope Francis said.

The pope also spoke about the positive contributions of other religious traditions in

Caceres archdiocese launches app on Peñafrancia devotion



SCREENSHOT/APPLE STORE WEBSITE

THE Archdiocese of Caceres has launched its first mobile app, which will provide devotees with one-stop access to all matters related to Our Lady Peñafrancia devotion.

Besides prayers, event schedules, and faith testimonies, the 'InaPeñafrancia' app will also help users keep track of Peñafrancia activities abroad.

The archdiocese's Commission on Social Communications said its primary aim is to further promote the devotion to Our Lady of Peñafrancia.

"This will assist the devotees to foster more devotion and deepen their faith in God," it said.

"This is regional devotion that has been spreading

throughout the globe," it added.

The app is free and available for download on iOS and Android devices.

The device software was released as the archdiocese prepares to commemorate the centenary of the pontifical coronation of the image of Our Lady of Peñafrancia next year.

Pope Benedict XV authorized the canonical coronation of the image on May 13, 1920, in response to the petition of Bishop John Bernard McGinley.

The crowning itself occurred four years later, on September 20, 1924, led by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Guglielmo Piani, at the Naga Cathedral grounds. (CBCP News)

Mongolia, which is a Buddhist-majority country.

"The holistic vision of the Mongolian shamanic tradition, combined with the respect for all living beings inherited from Buddhist philosophy, can contribute significantly to the urgent and no longer deferrable efforts to protect and preserve planet Earth," Pope Francis said.

Pope Francis addressed about 700 people in the State Palace's Ikh Mongol Hall while sitting beside Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh. The pope applauded Mongolia's efforts to promote human rights, abolishment of the death penalty, and "determination to stop nuclear proliferation" as a nuclear weapons-free country.

The pope also praised

Mongolia's traditional herding and farming practices for respecting "the delicate balances of the ecosystem," adding that they provide an example to those who "reject the pursuit of myopic particular interests and wish instead to pass on to future generations lands that remain welcoming and fruitful."

After the speech, Pope Francis met privately with Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrai Oyun-Erdene inside the State Palace.

"I am certain that Mongolian Catholics will continue to offer readily their proper contribution to the building of a prosperous and secure society, in dialogue and cooperation with all others who dwell in this great land kissed by the sky," Pope Francis said.

EDITORIAL

Funding a confidential intelligence

WHILE the world is jumpy about “artificial intelligence” (AI), the Philippines is going heyday with “confidential intelligence fund” (CIF). The President is budgeting P4.56 billion in confidential and intelligence funds for 2024. The office of the Vice President is in tow seeking another P500 million in confidential funds on top of the P150 million in confidential funds sought by the Department of Education. (DepEd).

Ironically, some state universities and colleges, where intelligence is truly nurtured, will have their budgets shaved off for 2024. According to reports, 30 out of 117 state universities and colleges will have about P6.2 billion less from their last year’s P10.7 billion budget, or so it appears from the proposed national budget submitted by the Marcos Jr administration. But this is not really the most painful issue because students from poor families enrolled in these institutions of intelligence will always find a way to learn and survive.

The most puzzling issue is, why in the world is the office of the education secretary and of the vice president which are at the disposal of just one person need so much confidential intelligence fund? And why disdain accountability?

According to the guidelines of the Commission on Audit (COA) released in 2015, confidential funds are lump sum amounts provided for expenses related to “surveillance activities in civilian government agencies” to support their mandate or operations. On the other hand, intelligence funds are disbursements for “intelligence information gathering activities of uniformed and military personnel and intelligence practitioners” that have a direct impact on national security. Clearly, the COA guidelines provide that these activities are limited to those concerning peace and order as well as national security. It also prohibits the allocation of CIFs for the construction or acquisition of buildings and housing structures, and for representation, consultation fees, or entertainment expenses. The office of the VP and of the DepEd secretary may have to revise their job descriptions to tailor to COA specifications.

Last year was worse. The Office of the Vice President received confidential funds to the tune of P200 million even though its allocation was non-existent in the 2022 General Appropriations Act. Despite its glaring violations not only of the COA guidelines but most especially of the 1987 Constitution, no objection or a whimper of protest was heard from both Houses of Congress or from the public, or so it seemed.

In 2016, 21 government agencies requested confidential funds in their budget. Since then, the list have been increasing. The 2024 General Appropriations Act will be considering 28 government agencies with confidential funds tucked in their budget. The latest department to hop on the fray is President Marcos’ Department of Agriculture with P50 million in confidential funds for 2024—on top of the P2.31 billion in intelligence funds and P2.25 billion in confidential funds for the Office of the President.

Confidential and Intelligence Fund (CIF) maybe the new game in town. God forbid that this does not become the new semantics for pork barrel or, worse, corruption.

Cultivating constitutional literacy in our schools

THIS is a plea to the Department of Education emphasizing the vital importance of including in the school curriculum a comprehensive study of the Constitution, the laws of our country, and their practical applications. Understanding the Constitution and laws is the cornerstone of an informed citizenry.

Knowledge of the Constitution is not for lawyers and legislators alone—it is for everyone, and planting the seed of such knowledge is most timely when our young people are still in school and being prepared for life ahead. Constitutional literacy is a must in shaping responsible citizens and shielding them from the dangers of ignorance in a democratic society.

By equipping students with knowledge about the fundamental principles, rights, and responsibilities enshrined in our Constitution, we nurture the values of democracy, justice, and active civic participation.

A robust curriculum that encompasses constitutional literacy imparts essential life skills to students. Knowledge of the law empowers them to navigate legal systems, make informed decisions, and exercise their rights responsibly. It equips them with the tools to contribute meaningfully to society and engage in public discourse on matters that shape our collective future.

Ignorance of the Constitution and laws leaves individuals vulnerable to manipulation, misinformation, and the erosion of democratic values. An education that prioritizes Constitutional literacy acts as a bulwark against the spread of misinformation, ensures accountability, and safeguards the principles upon which our nation was founded.

By instilling in our youth an understanding of the legal system, we cultivate a society that upholds the rule of law. It fosters respect for due process, equality, and justice, strengthening social cohesion and promoting a culture of fairness.

Informed citizens are better equipped to recognize and address instances of rights violations. Constitutional literacy empowers individuals to advocate for their rights and those of others, enabling them to participate actively in shaping a just and equitable society.

Let us foster a future where constitutional knowledge is valued, empowering our youth to become engaged, responsible, and active participants in shaping a just and prosperous nation. Let us plant the seeds of constitutional knowledge in our youth now; they will be grateful for it later.



REJOICE IN THE TRUTH

CARDINAL ORLANDO B. QUEVEDO, OMI

THE Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is a region of intermittent conflict. Decades of rebellion between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under its Jolo founder, Nur Misuari, ended with his peace agreement with President Ramos in 1996 and the creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

But Moro rebellion did not stop. Hashim Salamat, a Maguindanawon from Cotabato City, broke away from the MNLF and founded the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Meanwhile, a Council of 15, headed by Muslimin Sema, also from Cotabato, ousted Nur Misuari from the MNLF leadership. And the rebellion continued until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed by President Noynoy Aquino and the Cotabateño, Murad Ebrahim, successor of the

late Hashim Salamat, in 2014.

At the present time, the negotiated peace with the MNLF and with the MILF is generally holding. Sometimes there are isolated conflicts between rebel commanders or between some rogue rebels with government troops. But presently the main cause of violence is terrorism by armed groups allied to ISIL in the Middle East or identified with some Southeast Asian terrorist groups. While military intelligence reports that these terror groups are dwindling, they still cause great concern to people in BARMM.

For any negotiated peace to last, a culture of peace has to be developed among warring groups.

The United Nations defined a culture of peace as “a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflict, by

A culture of peace (1)

tackling the root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations among individuals, groups, and nations.” Quite a loaded definition. Its main ideas:

- cultural values, behavior, and ways of life;
- rejection of violence and prevention of conflict;
- focus on root cause of conflicts;
- dialogue and negotiations.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao has a mosaic of different cultures. They are represented by cultures of settlers, the cultures of the main Muslim groups, and the different traditional cultures of Indigenous Peoples. There are significant divergences in the various Muslim cultures (such as Maranaw, Maguindanao, and Tausug), or among settlers (such

as Ilonggos, Ilocanos, Cebuanos, Tagalogs, Indians, Chinese, etc., and among B’laan, Teduray, Iranon, Badjao groups. But there are also significant common values and attitudes, such as, respect for human dignity and fundamental human rights, family-centeredness, desire for freedom and peace.

The development of a culture of peace, based on the values and desiderata, common to the various cultures of BARMM should not be ignored. For such ignoring would, in time, endanger any negotiated peace between warring groups, clans, armed groups, rebels and government troops. The root causes of conflict, such as injustice, land disputes, biases and prejudices would continue to remain. On the other hand, developing a culture of peace deals precisely with such bases of conflict and violence.



IN THE FENCE OF HOPE

BISHOP GERARDO A. ALMINAZA

IN a matter of days as of this writing, the global community of the Catholic faithful and our many fellow advocates will join in celebration of the annual Season of Creation. This year’s theme serves to evoke much pondering for each of us: “Let Justice and Peace Flow”—a message inspired by the prophet Amos who cried out: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”

Indeed, the dire state of our planet—the drying up of rivers and flooding of cities, the death of entire species that had been so carefully crafted by our Creator, the destruction from typhoons year in and out, and the disproportionate suffering of the most vulnerable yet least at fault for the climate crisis—is a situation brought about by ecological injustice, and the pursuit of unfettered economic growth at the cost of the peace and well-being of the rest of humanity.

I take this opportunity to ask you, dear reader, to bring your attention to another such injustice unfolding before us, which I hope we will jointly find to be disturbing. Last August 2, the House of Representatives approved on third reading a bill seeking to advance the development of the Philippine gas industry. House Bill 8456 was transmitted to Senate on the same day, and a few

days later, the upper house’s Committee on Energy conducted its first hearing to discuss its own set of gas industry development bills.

Brothers and sisters, it is heartbreaking to know that even as we live through the reality of catastrophic climate and ecological degradation, our country is still entertaining plans for reckless expansion of more fossil fuels, with big businesses like San Miguel Corporation and the men and women of our congress at its helm. Natural gas, or fossil gas, and its imported form LNG (liquefied natural gas) is a dirty energy source. Like coal and all other fossil fuels, natural gas produces greenhouse gas emissions. Its main component, methane, is a short-lived yet highly potent gas that is capable of warming the planet by over eighty times more than carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas which more of us are familiar with.

Adding insult to injury, the development and operation of natural gas projects—be it receiving terminals of LNG, power plants, or even other extraction and transportation facilities—cause massive disruption in ecosystems and communities where they are built. The Verde Island Passage (VIP), the extremely biodiverse “Amazon of the oceans” which is also unfortunately

the epicenter of gas projects being proposed in our country today, bears witness to the destruction that the gas industry is capable of. In Ilijan, an area of Batangas City, a massive piece of coastal land has been carved out and stripped of all vegetation, with a part of nearshore waters also dumped with soil to make way for a new LNG terminal and power plant. Such developments disrupt ecological systems, destroy the breeding ground of fish, and deprive fisherfolk of both their fishing grounds and the sustainability of their fish catch.

Many more such projects are planned in the VIP and the rest of our country. The threats posed by gas and LNG to people and the environment are the reason why we, too, in the Diocese of San Carlos are opposed to a planned LNG power plant of SMC. I thus find it so very timely that we have a Season of Creation themed after the celebration and protection of our waters and seas. In fact, the fourth week of September is also the Verde Island Passage awareness week—a coincidence that can all the more strengthen the call for attention to be paid to this most beautiful and important marine corridor, and all other waters facing threats from gas development.

Earlier this year, our beloved Pope Francis issued his statement in advance for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Reading it, I feel we can find much courage and inspiration to devote our time and energy to advocate for policies that will preserve our environment, while seeking to put a stop to those that will do otherwise, like the gas development bills.

“How can we contribute to the mighty river of justice and peace in this Season of Creation?” Pope Francis wrote. “What can we, particularly as Christian communities, do to heal our common home so that it can once again team with life? We must do this by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies...”

“...For the mighty river to continue flowing, we must transform the public policies that govern our societies and shape the lives of young people today and tomorrow. Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice.”

Brothers and sisters, may we become a mighty river, a roaring seas, where justice and peace for the whole of humanity and Creation will flow!

CBCP

Monitor

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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BY THE ROADSIDE

MSGR. EUTQUIO BELIZAR, JR. SThD

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2).

ASIAN Aberration. The Filipino's faith history is full of contradictions and ironies. Geographically his country is at the heart of Asia. Yet two colonizations have deeply ingrained in him not a few Western ways, including the religion he is mostly known for—(Catholic) Christianity, a legacy of the first colonizer, old Catholic Spain. On the other hand, the Cross which is recognized as his faith's symbol is also mainly seen in what it ordinarily signifies—suffering that is particularly abhorrent. Foreigners and Filipinos alike, for instance, regularly witness the country's massive poverty characterized by an ever-unresolved widening gulf between rich and poor, a political system endlessly run by elite families (“political dynasties” as they are locally known) and which is insatiably fed by a culture of corruption.

That, in turn, induces the voting masses into a vicious cycle of electing leaders that thrive on their poverty but scarcely deliver them from it. Politicians, businessmen, economists and athletes constantly speak of love of country but who prefer living or traveling abroad and buying imported goods, harping on foreign

investments, celebrities, experts at the expense of local ones. The lack of true practical love of country is an indication of what the author James Fallows once called in 1987 our Filipino “damaged culture”. To me that still forms very much part and parcel of the cross that we bear even today. The enormous suffering that flows out of it is, at least, what the Filipino considers his connection with the Savior on the Cross.

Nominal Christianity. Most Filipino Catholics recoil at this criticism but agree nonetheless. For how can we call any people Christian whose society is replete with undeniably glaring signs of social injustice, dehumanizing poverty and systemic corruption? From the perspective of faith it seems the decision made at Baptism has not been made one's own, individually and collectively. A decision is renewed year after year. It is also ignored day by agonizing day. Did not the Master himself allude to this with the words: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 16:25)?

Entering by the Narrow Gate. The other irony a Filipino contends with is the call to salvation. On the one hand, God means it to be universal, as expressed even early by Isaiah's words: “For my house shall be called the house of prayer for all peoples” (Is 56:7). That means he, a Gentile, is

among it beneficiaries. And yet, Jesus himself reminds us that just because all are called to be saved does not mean all will be saved. Even if God wants everyone to be saved does not mean it will be easy. When asked if “only a few would be saved”, Jesus replies: “Strive to enter by the narrow gate. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and not be able to” (Lk 13:23-24).

Discipleship and the Cross. What is the “narrow gate” that we need to enter? It is the gate of discipleship, Jesus answers. It means following in his footsteps. And that very much involves the Cross. “If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny you himself, take up his Cross daily, and come and follow me” (Lk 9:23). On other words, following Jesus or discipleship goes hand in hand with taking up one's Cross. The way of the Cross is the way of Jesus. It is the way to “lose” one's life in order to “find it”.

“Damaged Culture” Needs the “Formation of Cultures”. St. John Paul II may have given us an answer to what ails the Filipino culture. He had spoken many times of the Church's contribution to societal transformation through “the formation of cultures”. In *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 8, for instance, he affirms: “The Church is obliged to a deep reflection and commitment so that the new culture now emerging [in the world] may be evangelized in depth, true values acknowledged,

the rights of men and women defended, and justice promoted in the very structures of society.” That is to say, true evangelization must address the culture of peoples, in this case the Filipino culture. It must aim at inculcating in that culture true values from the Gospel but linking them to the upholding of social justice, human rights and structural changes in society.

The Discipline of the Cross Saves. If and because the Church must live by her commitment to evangelization as including the “formation of cultures”, she is aware of how much she needs to take up the discipline of the Cross to do this. The letter to the Hebrews urges Christians never to “neglect the discipline of the Lord” which, though “it may not be gladness at the present time but grief, afterwards it will bear a most peaceful fruit of justice to those who are trained in it” (Heb 12:5, 11). This discipline, no doubt, is none other than the way of the Cross. It is the discipline that saves because through it Jesus shares with us his triumph over sin and death when he rose from the dead.

Pope St. Leo the Great gives this assurance: “No one, however weak, is denied a share in the victory of the cross. No one is beyond the help of the prayer of Christ. His prayer brought benefit to the multitude that raged against him. How much more does it bring to those who turn to him in repentance.”

The cross and the Filipino



AND THAT'S THE TRUTH

TERESA R. TUNAY, OCDS

Tongue or hand—does it matter?

SEVERAL times on separate occasions I've been asked by fellow Catholics whether I receive Communion on the tongue or in the hand. Surprised that these devout Catholics would even ask, I'd say, naively, “Does it matter?” On hindsight I'd realize I should have just said “On the tongue”, because their common reaction to my “Does it matter?” would be eyebrows raised in incredulity. (Huh? Did I step on anyone's toes?)

Tongue or hand—I don't have any problem with that. I obey the Magisterium, and the Church teaches that both receiving Communion on the tongue and in the hand are acceptable methods. Adherents of either side have their reasons for their preference, and I consider both their viewpoints valid.

When I am at Mass in a church where everybody receives Communion in the hand, I do the same. When everybody chooses to receive Communion on the tongue (as in Traditional Latin Mass) I go along. For me, what matters most is the unalterable truth that it is His Body I am receiving—am I properly and wholeheartedly disposed to let Him in, with a clean conscience, humility, reverence, gratitude?

I believe the decision of how to receive Holy Communion is a personal one—a choice based on an informed

conscience and in line with the Church's teachings. While it is true that that decision is left to the one receiving Communion and that the priest or minister must respect that choice, delicadeza dictates that should priest and communicant differ in preference, one or the other should give in, lest the act of Communion be reduced into a scandalous moro-moro.

I say this because I have witnessed a lady turning her back on the Eucharist because the priest refused to give it to her on the tongue. I have also heard of a woman who obstinately kept her mouth open despite the priest's patience in waiting to place the host in her hand. Guess what happened? The priest put the Host (not without force) on the woman's shoulder! So comical if it weren't so sacrilegious.

Isn't it rather sad that someone could turn her back on the Body of Christ for whatever reason? Isn't it lamentable that a priest would treat the Sacred Host like an unwanted pandesal?

I recall a homily where the priest spoke about the expression “I love you” and how humans use it in so many ways or occasions. His observations were familiar, but his conclusion was not. He said that during Communion, at that moment the priest is standing before

And that's the truth / A6



FAITH JOURNEY

SR. PINKY BARRIENTOS, FSP

DURING the recently concluded World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal several meetings with Catholic Influencers were organized as part of the WYD. Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, prefect of Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education, urged hundreds of young digital influencers to make it their mission “to culturally translate the message of Jesus” in today's digital world. The cardinal told the young influencers “to be the leaven of hope in these new spaces of social construction that are social networks and digital networks.”

In today's digital speak an influencer is someone who has a massive following in social media, possesses a certain level of credibility

for his/her content, thus able to influence the decisions of his/her followers.

There is no doubt about how media shapes our thinking and life's decisions. We have been aware of this fact a long time ago. Before social media took us by storm, we were very concerned about how advertising affects us. For us who knew how media works, we were very concerned about the power of advertising in shaping our life's decisions. The power of media and its effects on our lives has never waned as technologies progress and turn digital. Instead, it has become more pervasive. Now that social media dominates the scene, content creators have become influencers in their own right. There are

Influencing others for God

still celebrities endorsing products, especially on Instagram and TikTok, but many so-called “influencers” in social media at present are ordinary people who found their passion and purpose in life by sharing with their millions of followers anything that ranges from serious and educational to superficial and hilarious. I have to admit, I am one of these die-hards who follow several accounts that I find interesting and where I get helpful insights that I put to good use.

In any given social media platform, one can become a social media influencer and achieve a certain level of credibility when the person gains access to millions of followers. What does an

influencer do? Simply put, social media influencers are content creators who make interesting videos or post captivating photos on any given topic and upload them online. We find a lot of them in the various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok promoting various products, lifestyles, and DIY lifehacks. Anybody now can be a content creator and an influencer. As long as one has an interesting story to tell, all that is needed of him or her is to create an interesting short video of it, and upload it on social media.

The challenge for the Church and for us in the ministry who are present in social media is to be

active in engaging those people who spend most of their lives glued on their devices. We have to become the voice that would negate the disinformation that proliferates in social media by providing them content that is based on the Gospel, truthful, insightful, and life-giving.

For us who are digital immigrants, it may take a bit of hard work to engage more actively to reach out to the young people today. But not for our young people who are very much at home in the digital environment. Considering that a significant percentage of the Philippine population is composed of young people, it is a formidable base. As Cardinal de Mendonça urged Catholic Influencers, they should use their presence in the digital environment to influence their “digital neighbor” by falling in love with Christ and making him the center of their

personal story. Our very own Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle echoed the same call, urging the young Filipinos present during a Mass at St. Mary Magdalene Church “to be social media influencers with a purpose.”

We all know that the various social media platforms provide us with a great forum for evangelization. It's only up to us to maximize their use. But it is also good to keep in mind that our success in reaching as much engagement in social media also depends on how much we put our heart and soul into the message that we communicate. We are all called to be God's influencers. Being so is nothing else but to lead others closer to God through our words, deeds, and examples in whatever ministry we are involved in. Jesus was the great influencer of all time. As Christians and a follower of Jesus, we are called to do the same.



TIME OUT WITH DOC JOE

JOSE S. YAMAMOTO, M.D.

I AM a physician who has been in clinical practice for several decades, but I continue to be intrigued by this question—What is the best approach to treating patients? Is the best time to intervene before people get sick or when they are already sick?

If a person does not have any medical complaint or nagging symptoms, obviously the chance of him seeing a physician or healthcare professional is nil. At the other end are professional athletes, sports advocates, and fitness and wellness advocates who, even with no or minimal symptoms, tend to be overly concerned

about their health. You can include in this group those concerned about their physical attributes, hence the growing popularity of wellness centers or spas.

Certainly, those who develop acute symptoms warrant immediate and close medical attention and intervention, whether it be through medical, surgical, or any of the minimally invasive interventions that are making a big impact on healthcare.

The most concerning aspect of health issues is when the patient develops what is known as chronic or even degenerative disorders and diseases. Here the approach that has been followed,

especially in mainstream medicine, is to find “a pill for every ill”. In other words, take care of the symptoms without necessarily looking into the root cause/s of how and why people get sick in the first place.

The continuously burgeoning healthcare cost globally is staggering in terms of human cost and financial cost. For reference, the United States, the wealthiest nation on earth, struggles with astronomical healthcare costs, and yet the quality of healthcare delivery to its people lags behind many of the less affluent nations. Their nationals struggle with the epidemic of diabetes,

heart disease, neurological disorders, degenerative diseases, etc. Despite the unbelievable amount of financial resources being spent, the US is nowhere close to solving its health problems. The overall quality of their childcare is even less than in other industrialized countries.

In the Philippines, we are also seeing an epidemic of diseases that mirror or mimic those seen in industrialized countries. With obesity and other metabolic diseases on the rise, as a physician, I would most likely look for a reasonable solution to intervention and education in the areas of LED (lifestyle,

environment, and diet). Yes, we are a small nation but our smallness has not insulated us from the global epidemic of obesity and metabolic disorders.

Eight or so years ago, I decided to expand my clinical practice as a thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon by adding the principles and practice of functional medicine. While I have found my surgical practice in and out of the academic environment very fulfilling, I realized that there is a big gap that continues to widen. The gap lies in the realization that many of the diseases encountered in modern medicine are chronic in nature and therefore did not develop yesterday or last week. For such diseases to manifest, it means the patient went through years of inattentive indifference.

In very short and clear

terms, our illnesses have root causes and functional medicine forces us to look into these root causes as key to the solution of our health issues. Imagine a fruit tree that has luxuriant branches, leaves, and fruits. From that observation, you would conclude that that fruit-bearing tree is well nourished. A withering tree will lead you to surmise poor nutrition, poor soil nutrients, and bad care. That is the kind of lens that functional medicine provides for us, especially doctors. First things first—consider the roots.

My first piece of advice on the journey towards the benefits of functional medicine is a very fundamental truth—get a good relaxing night's sleep of 7 to 8 hours. A night of good sleep helps equilibrate

Time out with Doc Joe / A6

Lifestyle, environment, and diet

In Palawan, Cardinal Advincula calls for better stewardship of creation

By ROY LAGARDE

A PROMINENT church leader on Aug. 25 called on the people of Palawan province to safeguard their environment against abuse or degradation.

While presiding over the Mass for the celebration of 400 years of Christianity on the island, Cardinal Jose Advincula of Manila emphasized that Catholics are entrusted with a mission to protect God's "gift" to them.

He highlighted that Palawan undeniably enjoys nature's blessings and abundant natural resources, which God has "entrusted" to its people.

"Living our Christian faith and the Church's mission in Palawan includes protecting the environment from abuse and destruction," Advincula said in his homily.

The Manila archbishop also urged the faithful to preserve their natural resources for future generations, rather than succumbing to "selfish interests".

Thousands of people gathered at the RVM Sports

Complex in Puerto Princesa City for the liturgy, marking the culmination of the year-long celebration of the local Church's 400th anniversary.

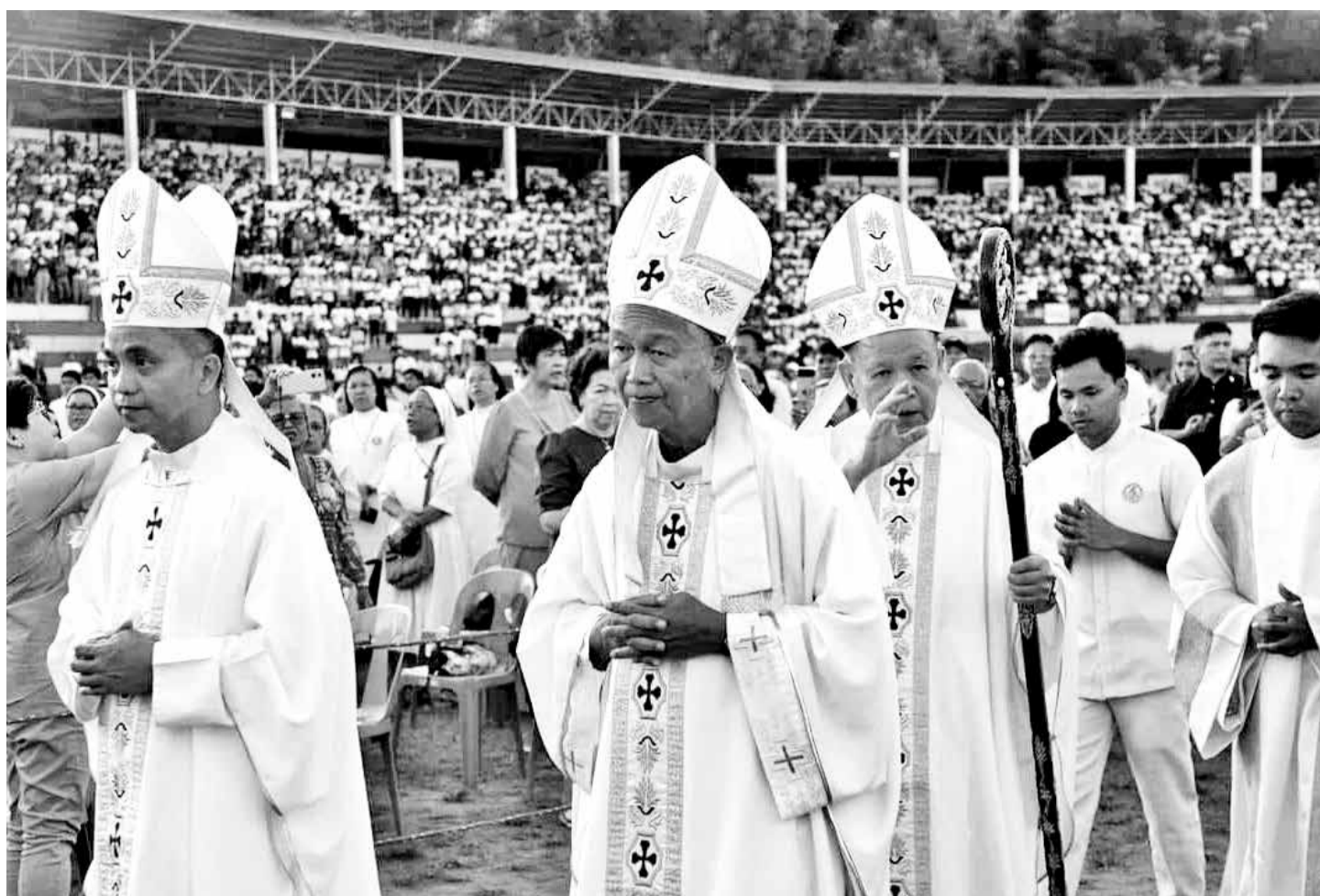
Palawan, renowned for its rich biodiversity and natural beauty, ranks among the country's fastest-growing tourism destinations.

However, the island's breathtaking environment, with its abundant resources, faces severe threats from mining and illegal logging operations.

Bishops Socrates Mesiona of Puerto Princesa and Broderick Pabillo of Taytay have repeatedly appealed to government authorities to protect the island from further environmental destruction.

Palawan is also home to different indigenous groups, each with their own rich culture and tradition.

"They are also the mission of the Church," Advincula said, urging the local churches to continue their social services and defend the rights of indigenous peoples. *(With reports from Joseph Ryan Moscoso)*



From left, Bishop Socrates Mesiona of Puerto Princesa, Bishop Broderick Pabillo of Taytay and Cardinal Jose Advincula of Manila before the Mass for the celebration of the 400 years of Christianity in Palawan province at the RVM Sports Complex in Puerto Princesa City, Aug. 25, 2023. **PIO PALAWAN**

Church saddened by death of migrant workers chief Toots Ople

THE Catholic Church's migrants commission on Aug. 23 expressed grief over the death of Susan "Toots" Ople, the secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers.

"We lost a hero," said Bishop Ruperto Santos, vice chairman of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI).

"It is sad news, a very sad occasion especially for our OFWs (overseas Filipino workers). Her heart is completely for them. Her whole life is for our country," he said.

The labor rights advocate passed away on Aug. 22 aged 61.

Ople was the first secretary of the DMW, a government agency formed

last year to protect the rights and promote the welfare of about two million OFWs.

She is the daughter of former senator and former labor secretary Blas Ople.

The cause of her death was not immediately clear but the DMW said it would be releasing more details soon.

The bishop added Ople had "served well doing all sacrifices for the best of our nation and utmost welfare of our people".

"Her legacy as of her father, Blas, lives on," Santos said.

"We, at CBCP-ECMI, pray and offer our Holy Masses for her eternal rest. We are one with our OFWs and her family in this moment of sorrow and bereavement," he also said. *(CBCP News)*



Department of Migrant Workers Sec. Susan "Toots" Ople. **PHOTO FROM DMW**

Caritas / A1

underway.

Outside of Manila, the PRA listed a total of 30 projects—4 were approved, plus Coron, and 15 applications under Executive Order 74 with memoranda of understanding.

The projects were

approved despite the fact that Manila Bay has been identified as a key biodiversity area by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and other groups, according to Oceana.

In Negros Oriental, the

local Church has also been at the forefront of the campaign against a mega reclamation project in Dumaguete City.

Bishop Julito Cortes of Dumaguete said the diocese is opposing the P23-billion project dubbed as the "Smart

City" due to the "irreversible damage" it could cause to marine life.

"If it is morally wrong, then, it is incumbent for Christians and people of goodwill not to support such projects, structures, or systems," Cortes said.

Nuncio / A1

church, receive that gift of light and faith and find the joy that the world cannot give you, the joy that success cannot give you," he said.

The nuncio presided over the liturgy held on the eve of the culminating activities for the year-long celebration of 400 years of Christianity on the island.

It was his first visit to the island, which he praised for its "incredible natural

beauty".

In 1910, St. Pope Pius X elevated the island, making it an apostolic prefecture. Some 45 years later, in 1955, Pope Pius XII established the Apostolic Vicariate of Palawan.

In 2022, St. Pope John Paul II divided Palawan into two present apostolic vicariates: Taytay in the north and Puerto Princesa in the southern part of the

island.

From approximately 82,000 Catholics in 1959, Palawan now has a population of approximately one million Catholics.

"But numbers are not that important because what is important is the depth of Catholic faith," Brown pointed out.

He further encouraged the parishes, mission stations, and Basic Ecclesial

Communities to ensure that all their efforts are geared towards evangelization.

"Let us be evangelizers in our day because that is the best way that we can honor the memory of 400 years of Catholic faith in Palawan," the archbishop added.

"I encourage you to live that faith, to live that light and to share that light with those around us," he also said. *(CBCP News)*

Pope / A3

continue to believe, despite everything, in the logic of peace, the logic of dialogue, and the logic of diplomacy," he said.

Reporting on the Synod

Finally, he looked ahead to the upcoming Synod on Synodality the Church is preparing to hold in October, and appealed to journalists to help the Church "rediscover the word together."

"In just over a month, bishops and lay people from

all over the world will meet here in Rome for a Synod on synodality: listening together, discerning together, praying together," he explained, noting that the word 'together' is very important in a culture of exclusion.

Acknowledging that to speak of a "Synod on Synodality" may seem somewhat "abstruse, self-referential, excessively technical, of little interest to the general public," the Pope said that what is happening

with the Church's synodal journey is something truly important for the Church.

"Please, let us get used to listening to each other, to talking, not cutting our heads off for a word. To listen, to discuss in a mature way. This is a grace we all need to move forward. And it is something the Church today offers the world, a world so often so incapable of making decisions, even when our very survival is at stake. We are trying to learn a new way of living

relationships, listening to one another to hear and follow the voice of the Spirit," he said.

Reiterating that synod participants want to contribute together to building a Church where everyone feels at home, where no one is excluded, Pope Francis reiterated his request "to the masters of journalism" for help to "tell this process for what it really is, leaving behind the logic of slogans and pre-packaged stories."

Help sought for Maui wildfire victims

THE lay arm of the Philippine Catholic bishops echoed an appeal for help for the victims of the deadly wildfires that erupted on the Hawaiian island of Maui.

The Council of the Laity of the Philippines or Laiko has penned an open letter to the public to support the relief efforts in Maui, where Filipinos constitute the second-largest population group.

Laiko president Raymond Cruz said that Filipino

Catholics at the Maria Lanakila Parish Church are coming together to assist each other and the community.

"Although there are so many needs that have to be addressed in our own country, we simply cannot look away from the plight of our brothers and sisters," Cruz said.

"The scale and intensity of the damages and number of lives that were lost are truly heart-breaking," he said. *(CBCP News)*

Bishop / A1

former president Rodrigo Duterte's ruthless war on drugs and known defender of its victims.

The bloody campaign against narcotics had earned for his diocese, which covers the three cities of Caloocan, Malabon and Navotas, the reputation of "killing fields" at the height of the drug war.

At the recent funeral of Jerhode "Jemboy" Baltazar, a 17-year-old boy killed by the police due to a supposed mistaken identity, he

reminded the cops of their sworn duty as law enforcers.

"Our dear cops, you are not the law. You are mere enforcers of the law," said David, who is also the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

"You were not given uniforms, armed, and being paid from the country's taxes just to kill people, but rather serve as our protector and savior of the country you are serving," he said. *(CBCP News)*

Japan / A1

wastewater over a period of 17 days but said that they would immediately stop it if any issues were detected.

Bagaforo said they support the bishops of South Korea and Japan in opposing Japan's controversial move to release

1.34 million tons of nuclear wastewater into the sea.

"We call on the Japanese government to reconsider its decision, and to find a safe and responsible way to dispose of the contaminated water," he said. *(CBCP News)*

Time out with Doc Joe / A5

many of the imbalances in our system. The good thing is, it does not cost anything. For those of us trying to find motivation to regain control of our health and wellness, that is a good start. Couple that with a deep prayer life and the peace that comes with a close relationship with God and you are definitely on your way to physical and mental health.

Everyone wishing to take responsibility for their health must start with a

And that's the truth / A5

us ready to give us the Host, Jesus Himself is saying to us "I love you."

That simple message, delivered without fanfare, struck me hard because it IS true. And I dare add: Don't we say "Lord I am not worthy that you should enter my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed"? That is the word He says to us at Communion: "I love you!"

strong belief in the principle of stewardship, in the fact that you and I are given the privilege of taking care of what our Lord has entrusted to us. As Christian believers, we should seriously take on the conviction that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and thus require our daily care. The lessons of Christian spirituality, of our spiritual journey enriched by our prayer life and deepened by Scriptural readings and reflections, may very well help us.

So, who are we to turn away from so great a Love? Or, what right has the priest to deprive us of that Love? When the Lord says He loves me—sinful, undeserving me—I can only manage a feeble "Thank You, Lord!" That spirit of gratitude unites me with God and His Church, takes me beyond tongue or hand—and it is all that matters. And that's the truth.

Albay bishop laments environmental challenges



Bishop Joel Baylon of Legazpi. CBCP NEWS

A CATHOLIC bishop has used his message for the annual “Season of Creation” to criticize environmental issues besetting the province of Albay.

Bishop Joel Baylon of Legazpi condemned, among others, irresponsible quarrying, deforestation, ever-expanding fish pens, and potential mining-related pollution.

“Here in our province, we

have strayed from the path of stewardship,” Baylon said in a pastoral letter released on Sept. 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

The bishop called on the faithful to “stand together” and protest environmental abuses and “become genuine stewards of the earth”.

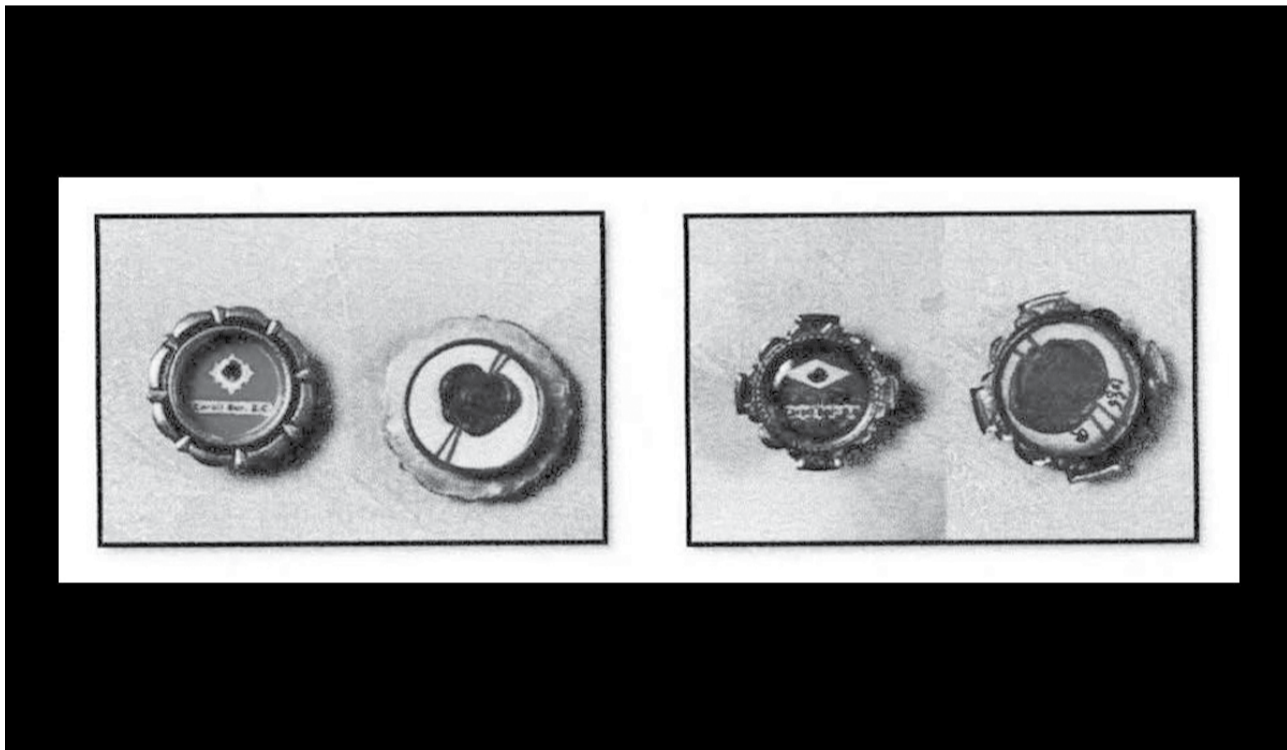
“May our actions not be driven by short-term benefits only, but by concern for an environment

where every person—now and in the future—can joyfully live and flourish,” he said.

He also urged the government authorities not to let greed rule their actions, decisions and policies.

“Let not greed, power, or personal gain blind us. Instead, consider what legacy we leave behind for our descendants,” Baylon said. (CBCP News)

Negros bishop certifies bone relics of St. Charles Borromeo ‘authentic’



The relics of St. Charles Borromeo kept by the San Carlos Borromeo Cathedral in Negros Occidental. DIOCESE OF SAN CARLOS

THE Catholic bishop of the central Philippine diocese of San Carlos has decreed the authenticity of the relics of St. Charles Borromeo held by their cathedral.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza made the decree after an “expert on relics” confirmed that the two relics “originated” from the bones of the patron saint of bishops, catechists and other spiritual leaders.

He mentioned that the relics have

been held privately for years due to the misplacement of their certificate of authenticity, which cannot be located.

“Through this decree, I hereby grant permission for these relics to be enshrined in the Cathedral Church and/or made available for public veneration,” Alminaza said.

The bishop’s decree was issued on July 13. The diocese made it public on Aug. 31.

According to Alminaza, the relics bear the symbols of authenticity: a red thread and a red wax seal, recognized as the coat of arms of the Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome.

“Hence, the two relics of Saint Charles have been officially authorized by the relevant office responsible for bestowing relics upon deserving ecclesial communities,” he said. (CBCP News)

Palawan bishop looks at NCIP halt order vs Ipilan mining with ‘guarded excitement’

A PALAWAN bishop has admitted to feeling a certain level of “guarded excitement” after the controversial mining project in the province’s southern town of Brooke’s Point was halted.

Bishop Socrates Mesiona of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Princesa expressed concerns that

safety protocols to ensure the community’s safety.

According to NCIP, the company failed to obtain the mandatory certificate of precondition (CP) and the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from the tribal communities.

“Anything can happen after that



The site where the Ipilan Nickel Corporation (INC) extracts nickel ore in Brooke’s Point town in Palawan province taken on March 2, 2023. MARK SALUDES/CARITAS PHILIPPINES

the decision may be reversed at any time.

“We will continue to pray and ensure our voices are heard, and I hope we can advance our advocacy efforts,” Mesiona said.

The bishop was reacting to the cease and desist order issued by the regional office of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples against Ipilian Nickel Corp. (INC) for its nickel mining operations.

In a resolution dated August 11, INC ordered the mining firm to completely halt operations within five days and to install

because it seems that they only have certain requirements they need to fulfil,” Mesiona said.

NCIP said that the order would only be lifted upon the company’s compliance with the necessary permits.

Mesiona and the vicariate’s clergy consistently opposed mining in Brooke’s Point, condemning these operations as a “rape of nature”.

Farmers and indigenous peoples have also decried how mining activities have allegedly ravaged their lands and impacted their livelihoods. (CBCP News)

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Laudato Si’ / A1

the environment.

“We must never forget that the younger generations have the right to receive a beautiful and livable world from us, and that this implies that we have a grave responsibility towards creation which we have received from the generous hands of God,” said the Pope. “Thank you for your contribution.”

In a statement later on Monday, the Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, explained that the new updated version of *Laudato si’* will focus in particular on the most recent extreme weather events and catastrophes affecting people across five continents.

Laudato si’ is Pope Francis’ second encyclical letter. It was published on 18 June 2015, and bears the date 24 May of the same year, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

The document on the “care of the common home” draws its title from the incipit of St. Francis’ Canticle of Creatures and opens with these words:

“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore—

‘Praise be to you, my Lord’. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. ‘Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs’.

Shortly after its publication, the Pope himself sought to clarify the meaning of this encyclical during an audience he held on 21 July 2015 with participants in the Workshop entitled “Modern Slavery and Climate Change the Commitment of the Cities”, in which he said: “This culture of care for the environment is not simply a ‘green’—I say it in the true sense of the word—attitude, it isn’t just a ‘green’ attitude, it’s much more than that. Taking care of the environment means having an attitude of human ecology. That is, we cannot say that mankind is here and Creation, the environment, is there. Ecology is total, it’s human.

This is what I sought to express in the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*: man cannot be separated from the rest; there is a relationship which is reciprocally influential, both the environment on the person, and the person in a way which affects the environment; and the effect bounces back to man when the environment is mistreated. For this reason, in response to a question I was asked I said: ‘No, it’s not a ‘green’ encyclical, it’s a social encyclical’. For in society, in the social life of mankind, we cannot forget to take care of the environment. Moreover, looking after the environment is a social attitude, which socializes us, in one sense or another—each person can give it the meaning he chooses—on the other hand, it enables us to welcome—I like the Italian expression, when they speak of the environment—Creation, what we are given as a gift, namely, the environment”.

In the encyclical, the Pope recalled that he chose the name Francis as a guide and as an inspiration for his pontificate: “I

believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”

And he launched his urgent appeal for protecting our common home to build a better future for all humanity, with no exceptions: “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental

challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: ‘Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation’. All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (Vatican News)

Tonel installed as Zamboanga archbishop



Archbishop Julius Tonel during his installation as the seventh archbishop of Zamboanga at the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Aug. 22, 2023. **SCREENSHOT/ARCHDIOCESE OF ZAMBOANGA VIDEO**

ARCHBISHOP Julius Tonel was formally installed as the new shepherd of the southern Archdiocese of Zamboanga on Aug. 22 and pledged to assist in promoting a just social order.

Tonel celebrated Mass before thousands of people at the Zamboanga Cathedral as he officially took possession of the church in his capacity as the archbishop of the historic city.

The former bishop of Ipil for 16 years has indicated that he intends to embrace his new ministry as well as lead around 700,000 Catholics in the area.

In his message after the Mass, he assured collaboration with civil

authorities, along with the clergy and laypeople, in the promotion of the common good.

“The challenge for all of us is to bridge the gap between the secular culture of our times and that of the Gospel. But we never tire in promoting a just social order participating in activities to offer our Christian response to the secularized world,” Tonel said.

“Let us establish fraternal communities irrespective of age, gender, race and religious beliefs. All of us are in this together to build the brotherhood of humanity,” he said.

As part of the installation rite presided over by

Cardinal Jose Advincula of Manila, the sacred pallium, an ecclesiastical vestment worn by the Pope and metropolitan archbishops, was imposed on Tonel.

Pope Francis appointed Tonel, who will turn 67 on August 31, to his new post on April 25, succeeding the late Archbishop Romulo Dela Cruz.

He received the pallium from the Pontiff at the Vatican’s Basilica of St. Peter during this year’s Mass on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29.

In his homily, Advincula asked Tonel to continue promoting a culture of encounter and dialogue with the poor, the youth, and

people of other religions.

“But the starting point is the encounter with Jesus. It is the encounter that will set things right and this can be accomplished with the strong integral faith formation known as catechesis,” he said.

“Let this be your priority for catechesis in what is known as the laboratory of dialogue,” the cardinal added.

Also at the ceremony were Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, the archbishop emeritus of Cotabato, eight archbishops, 28 bishops, and around 200 priests from different dioceses and religious congregations. **(CBCP News)**

Diocesan administrator elected for Ipil diocese

THE southern Philippine diocese of Ipil on Aug. 29 announced the election of a diocesan administrator, a week after it became sede vacante.

The selection of Monsignor Elizar Cielo, 47, was made by the College of Consultors of Ipil, the group of priests who have a canonical role in the governance of the diocese.

Cielo’s new role came after Archbishop Julius Tonel, who served as Ipil’s bishop for 16 years, was installed as the new shepherd of the

Zamboanga archdiocese on Aug. 22.

As diocesan administrator, Cielo will lead the diocese until a new bishop is installed for the diocese.

The priest holds a Doctorate in Canon Law from the Universidad de Navarra in Spain.

He has been Ipil’s vicar general and parish priest of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in the province of Zamboanga Sibugay’s Buug town prior to his election as interim head of the diocese. **(CBCP News)**



Monsignor Elizar Cielo, Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Ipil. **OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH-BUUG**

Capiz archbishop bestowed with pallium, urged to ‘search for the lost sheep’



Archbishop Victor Bendico of Capiz kneels to receive the pallium from papal nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown during Mass at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Roxas City on Aug. 18, 2023. **ARCHDIOCESE OF CAPIZ**

INVESTING the pallium on Archbishop Victor Bendico of Capiz, papal nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown said the entire church must seek the lost sheep.

The highly symbolic ceremony took place during Mass at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Roxas City on Aug. 18.

In his homily, the pope’s representative said the role of every bishop is expected to seek the lost sheep according to Jesus’ example.

“The bishop is called to imitate the Good Shepherd in seeking the lost and bringing them back into the fold,” Brown said.

“The job of every bishop is to go and search for the

lost sheep and bring them to the gate that is Jesus, through Jesus, and receive life, receive nourishment,” he said.

The pallium is a strip of white wool that the heads of archdioceses wear around their shoulders over their Mass vestments. It was blessed by Pope Francis at the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul in the Vatican on June 29, 2023.

The ecclesiastical vestment represents the power which the metropolitan archbishop has by law in his province, in communion with the bishop of Rome.

Overall, it serves as a reminder of the role of the

archbishop as shepherd to his people and their mission to spend their lives for the flock.

Pope Francis appointed Bendico, who was the bishop of Baguio, as Capiz archbishop on March 3 this year. He was installed to the new post on May 3.

The 63-year-old thanked the pope for the confidence in entrusting him with the office of pastoral care as archbishop of Capiz.

“Together with the bishops, the clergy, the religious and lay faithful of the ecclesiastical province of Capiz, we would like to renew and express faithfulness and obedience to the Holy Father,” Bendico said. **(CBCP News)**

Cardinal Sin family house in Aklan will be transformed into museum

THE house of the late Cardinal Jaime Sin’s family in Aklan province’s New Washington town is set to be transformed into a museum.

The project received approval through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Diocese of Kalibo and the Serviam Foundation, which acts as the property’s custodian.

The MOA was signed during a ceremony held after a Mass presided over by Bishop Ruperto Santos Antipolo on the former Manila archbishop’s 95th birth anniversary at Manila Cathedral on August 31.

The signatories representing the Serviam Foundation were Msgr. Rolando dela Cruz and Fr. Rufino Sescon Jr. The Kalibo diocese, on the other hand, was represented by Bishop Jose Corazon Tala-oc, and Fr. Justy More of the diocese’s Historical, Research, Cultural

Council.

“We encourage them (Kalibo diocese) to make use of the house for their cultural heritage purposes,” Dela Cruz said.

More said that with the establishment of the museum, the diocese “aims to preserve the memory of Cardinal Sin, and educate future generations about his life and teachings”.

Sin’s home diocese has recently begun a three-year preparation for its 50th anniversary in 2026.

The priest added that the museum is also intended to house a collection of ecclesiastical artifacts and archival materials.”

“We aim to provide visitors with a unique opportunity to learn about the significant historical events and tangible heritage that shaped the Diocese of Kalibo’s remarkable journey of faith,” he said. **(CBCP News)**



The Sin Family House in New Washington, Aklan. **DIOCESE OF KALIBO**

Joy is missionary— share it with others!



Pope Francis gives an address at the Saturday vigil for World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal's Parque Tejo on Aug. 5, 2023. **JMJ LISBON**

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis at the Vigil on the occasion of the 37th World Youth Day, Parque Tejo, Lisbon, Portugal, 5 August 2023

DEAR brothers and sisters, good evening!

It gives me much joy to see all of you! Thank you for having made the pilgrimage to be here! I think of the Virgin Mary, who also travelled, in order to visit Elizabeth: “Mary set out and went with haste” (*Lk* 1:39). We might ask, why did Mary set out and go with haste to visit her cousin? Certainly, Mary had just learned that Elizabeth was pregnant, but so was she; so why go, if no one had asked her to? Mary does something that was not asked of her, and that she did not have to do. Mary goes because she loved, and “whoever loves flies, runs and rejoices” (*The Imitation of Christ*, III, 5). That is what love does to us.

Mary’s joy is twofold: she had just received the angel’s message that she would welcome the Redeemer of the world, and she was also given the news that her cousin was pregnant. This is interesting: instead of thinking about herself, she thinks of the other. Why? Because joy is missionary, joy is not just for one person, it is for sharing something with others. Let me ask you: those of you here, who have come to meet others, to find Christ’s message, to find life’s beautiful meaning, will you keep all this for yourselves or will you share it with others? What do you think? Surely it is for sharing with others, because joy is missionary! Let us all repeat that, together: joy is missionary! And so we share this joy with others.

Yet, this joy we have, others have helped us to receive it. Let us look back, then, at all we have received, for it has prepared our hearts for joy. Each of us, if we cast our minds back, can recall those who have been rays of light in our lives: parents, grandparents, friends, priests, religious men and women, catechists, youth leaders, teachers, and so on. They are the “roots” of our joy. Let each of

us now spend a few moments in silence to think of those who have given us something in life, who are like the roots of our joy...

Did faces and stories come to mind? The joy that has come to us, thanks to these roots, is what we in turn ought to share, because we have *roots of joy*. In the same way, we too can be roots of joy for others. It is not about bringing a fleeting joy, the joy of the moment; it is about bringing a joy that generates roots. Let us ask, how can we become roots of joy?

Joy is not to be found in a locked library, even though study is necessary! Joy lies somewhere else. It is not kept under lock and key, but must be sought, must be discovered. It has to be found in dialogue with others, where we share these roots of joy that we have received. And this, at times, is tiring. Let me ask you a question: do you sometimes get tired? Think about what happens when we become tired: we have no wish to do anything; we throw in the towel (as we say in Spanish), because we have no desire to carry on and we give up, stop walking and fall. Do you believe that those who fall in life, who have experienced failure, who even commit serious or grave mistakes, that their lives are over? No! So what are they to do? They are to get back up! Now there is something very profound that I would like you to take away with you and remember: those who come from the Alps, who like to climb mountains, have a very beautiful song that goes like this: “In the art of climbing the mountain, what matters isn’t *not* to fall, but not to *remain* fallen”. This is beautiful!

Those who remain fallen have already withdrawn from life, have shut down, closed off from hope and desire, and remain on the ground. And when we see any friends of ours who have fallen, what are we to do? *Lift*

them up. When we need to lift someone up, or help them, do you notice *how* we are to do it? We look down on them. That is the only time, *the only time* that we are allowed to look down upon others, when we are offering to help them up. Yet, we often see people looking down on us, or over our shoulder, from above! How sad. Instead, the only way, the only

not feel like making the effort; we copy in exams because we do not feel like studying or we did not get the results we wanted. I am not sure if any of you like football... I do! Think of how much training is needed in order to score a goal; how much effort is required to achieve a certain result. In life, too, we cannot always do what we want, but we

are no courses that can teach us how to journey in life—instead we learn, we learn from our parents, our grandparents, we learn from friends, giving each other a helping hand. We learn about life, and that trains us in how to journey onwards.

I leave you with these thoughts. Carry on; if you fall, get back up; walk with a goal in mind,



Pilgrims arrived several hours to the site of the Saturday evening vigil on Aug. 5, 2023, with Pope Francis amid warnings about high heat in Lisbon, Portugal. **JMJ LISBON**

situation in which it is permissible to look down on others is... well, you tell me, out loud: *to help them up*.

That, then, is something like how life’s journey proceeds, how we are to keep moving forwards. In life, in order to accomplish things, we have to train ourselves to journey on. Sometimes, we do not feel like carrying on, we do

must do what leads us to respond to the vocation we sense deep within us—and everyone has their own vocation. Keep on walking. And if we fall, we get back up, or someone will help us get back up; let us not remain fallen; and let us train ourselves, train in order keep moving forward. All this is possible, not because we take a course on walking—there

and train each day of your lives. Nothing is free in life, everything has to be paid for. Only one thing is free: the love of Jesus! So, with this free gift that we have—the love of Jesus—and with the desire to carry on the journey, let us walk in hope, let us be mindful of our roots, and move forwards, *without fear*. Do not be afraid. Thank you!

Fine-tuning the Synodal Path [Part II]

Revisiting the instruction "Ecclesia de Mysterio" of 1997

By FR. JAIME BL ACHACOSO, JCD

ON 13 November 1997, the Pro-Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, presented to the Press the *Instruction Ecclesia de Mysterio, On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*. The document reaffirmed the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (especially of *Lumen Gentium*, n.33 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n.24). With the much-publicized and sometimes misunderstood synodal path and the approaching Synod on Synodality, that *Instruction* can provide a lot of light.

Specific Practical Provisions

Article 2: The Ministry of the Word: Preaching in General

This ministry refers to the pastoral preaching, *catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction*, among which the liturgical homily holds pride of place (§1). The *Instruction* emphasized the following norms (italics added):

1) "The non-ordained faithful, according to their proper character, participate in the prophetic function of Christ. Therefore, (they) can be invited to collaborate, in lawful ways, in the exercise of the ministry of the Word" (§2).

2) "The use of the expression *admitti possunt*—in c.766 of the Code which establishes the conditions under which non-ordained faithful may be invited to preach in *ecclesia vel oratorio*—makes clear that in no instance is this a right". Furthermore, "the terms in which these conditions are expressed in c.766...make the exceptional nature of such cases clear" (§3).

3) It is up to the Conference of Bishops to lay down the opportune criteria—which must receive the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See—to help the diocesan Bishop discern the advisability of making use of this prerogative (§3).

4) "Preaching in churches or oratories by the non-ordained faithful can be permitted only as a supply for sacred ministers ... It cannot, however, be regarded as an ordinary occurrence or as an authentic promotion of the laity" (§4).

Article 3: The Homily

The homily is the "preeminent form of preaching, (in which) the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living are expounded from the sacred text throughout the course of the liturgical year" (§1).¹ Thus, the *Instruction* makes the following reminders:

1) "The homily must be reserved to the sacred minister, priest or deacon, to the exclusion of the non-ordained faithful, even if these should have responsibilities as *pastoral assistants* or catechists in whatever type of community or group... All previous norms which may have admitted the non-ordained faithful to preaching the homily during the Holy Eucharist are to be considered abrogated by c.767, §1".

2) "The diocesan Bishop cannot validly dispense from (this) canonical norm, since this is not merely a disciplinary law but one which touches upon the closely connected functions of teaching and sanctifying" (§1).

3) "The practice, on some occasions, of entrusting the preaching of the homily to seminarians or theology students who are not clerics is not permitted" (§1).

Article 5: Structures of Collaboration at the Diocesan and Parish Levels

Noteworthy are the following reminders:

1) *Council of Priests (Presbyteral Council)* - "Membership in it is reserved to priests alone. Deacons, non-ordained members of the faithful even if collaborators with the sacred ministers—i.e., as per Article 4—and those priests who have lost the clerical state or who have abandoned the sacred ministry do not have either an active or a passive voice in the Council of Priests" (§1, italics added).



VATICAN MEDIA

2) *Diocesan and Parochial Pastoral Councils and Parochial Finance Councils* - These are the only two structures provided by the Code, which may have non-ordained faithful as members with the following conditions (§2):

1° They have "a *consultative vote* only and cannot in any way become deliberative structures."

2° "Only those faithful who possess the qualities prescribed by the canonical norms may be elected to such responsibilities."

3) *The Parish priest presides at Parochial Councils* - "Any deliberations entered into (or decisions taken) by a parochial council, which has not been presided over by the parish priest or which has assembled contrary to his wishes, are to be considered invalid, and hence null and void" (§3).

4) *Special Study Groups* - "Ordinaries may avail themselves of special study groups or of groups of experts to examine particular questions. Such groups, however, cannot be constituted as structures parallel to diocesan presbyteral or pastoral councils", nor to parochial pastoral or finance councils. "Neither may such a group deprive these structures of their lawful authority" (§5).

Article 6: Liturgical Celebrations

Two areas are covered in this article of the *Instruction*:

1) *The Holy Mass in particular* - "Abuses which are contrary to c.907 are to be eradicated" (§2) to wit:

a) "Deacons and non-ordained members of the faithful may not pronounce prayers—e.g., especially the Eucharistic Prayer with its concluding doxology—or any other parts of the liturgy reserved to the celebrant priest". This abuse is not uncommon in the Philippines.

b) "Neither may deacons or non-ordained members of the faithful use gestures or actions that are proper to the same priest celebrant." This is another area where abuses have proliferated in Philippine churches, many times at the instigation of the priests themselves.

2) *Use of Sacred Vestments in General* - Two possible abuses are addressed: (§2)

a) "The sacred ministers are obliged to wear *all* of the prescribed liturgical vestments". Again, the practice in many parishes—especially during concelebrations—of concelebrants just using a stole (without chasuble alb or sometimes even just over street clothes) during the Holy Sacrifice is a flagrant violation of this norm.

b) "The use of sacred vestments which are reserved to priests or deacons (stoles, chasubles or dalmatics) at liturgical ceremonies by non-ordained members of the faithful is clearly unlawful".

Article 7: Sunday Celebrations without a Priest

The *Instruction* starts by stating that "much good derives for the local community from this useful and delicate service" in those cases when

"in the absence of priests or deacons, non-ordained members of the faithful lead Sunday celebrations" (§1). However, it clarifies that:

1) "A special mandate of the Bishop is necessary for the non-ordained members of the faithful to lead such celebrations. This mandate should contain specific instructions with regard to the term of applicability, the place and conditions in which it is operative, as well as indicate the *priest responsible for overseeing these celebrations*" (§1).

2) "The practice of inserting into such celebrations elements proper to the Holy Mass—e.g., the use of the Eucharistic Prayers, even in narrative form—is prohibited" (§2).

3) "It should be emphasized (to) those participating, that such celebrations cannot substitute for the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and that the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and holy days of obligation is satisfied only by attendance at Holy Mass" (§2).

Article 8: The Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

It is in this article perhaps where the most obvious abuses can be observed. Thus, the *Instruction* starts by categorically stating that "the canonical discipline concerning extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must be correctly applied so as to avoid generating confusion". It proceeds to concretize this criterion:

Main Principle: "A non-ordained member of the faithful, in cases of true necessity, may be deputed by the diocesan Bishop (...) to act as an extraordinary minister to distribute Holy Communion *outside* of liturgical celebrations *ad casum vel ad tempus* or for a more stable period" (§1).

Thus, the so-called *extraordinary ministers* (or *lay ministers* of Holy Communion as they are commonly called) are so deputed, in principle, only for distributing Holy Communion *outside liturgical celebrations* (i.e., outside the Mass or Holy Week services).

1st Exception: "In exceptional cases or in unforeseen circumstances, the priest presiding at the liturgy—supposedly this includes the Mass—may authorize such *ad casum*" (§1). Again we that this should be in *exceptional* or *unforeseen* circumstance. Thus, to make use of this prerogative regularly would be an abuse.

2nd Exception: "Extraordinary ministers—i.e., those deputed as such by the diocesan Bishop—may distribute Holy Communion at Eucharistic celebrations (e.g., Holy Mass) only" in any of the following situations:

1) when there are no ordained ministers present;

2) when those ordained ministers present at a liturgical celebration are truly unable to distribute Holy Communion;

3) when there are particularly large numbers of the faithful such

that the liturgical celebration would be excessively prolonged because of an insufficient number of ordained ministers to distribute Holy Communion.

It is important to note that the *Instruction* categorically states that this exceptional function "is *supplementary* and *extraordinary* and must be exercised in accordance with the norm of law" (§2). This norm of Law is precisely concretized by the three situation outlined above by the *Instruction*.

Article 9: The Apostolate of the Sick

This seems to be one area where the laity can really collaborate with the pastoral work of the priests, given the shortage of sacred ministers and the non-sacramental nature (at least for the most part) of this *ministry*. Thus the *Instruction* reminds the Pastors of the following (§1):

1) "The non-ordained faithful particularly assist the sick by being with them in difficult moments, encouraging them to receive the sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick."

2) "In using sacramentals, the non-ordained faithful should ensure that these are in no way regarded as sacraments, whose administration is proper and exclusive to the Bishop and to the priest."

3) "In no instance may the non-ordained perform anointings either with the Oil of the Sick or any other oil"—i.e., not even by way of a paraliturgical rite.

4) "The priest (is the) only valid minister" of the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick...No other person may act as ordinary or extraordinary minister of the sacrament, since such constitutes simulation of the sacrament" (§2).

Finally, we might add that even if the *Instruction* does not specifically mention it, the administration of Holy Eucharist to the sick seems to be one where the extraordinary—non-ordained—ministers of the Holy Eucharist can really play an important role, given the shortage of priests.

Article 10: Assistance at Marriages

The *Instruction* first states "the possibility of delegating the non-ordained faithful to assist at marriages" since, on the one hand this is strictly an ecclesiastical norm (for the *canonical form* of marriage); and on the other hand, because such delegation "may prove necessary in special circumstances where there is a grave shortage of sacred ministers" (§1). It then proceeds to remind the Bishops of the following norms:

1) Only "the diocesan Bishop may concede this delegation" (§1).

2) The diocesan Bishop may concede this delegation "subject to the verification of three conditions" (§1; cf. c. 1112, §1):

1° "there are no priests or deacons available;"

2° "after he shall have obtained for

his own Diocese a favorable *votum* from the Conference of Bishops" regarding this move;

3° "the necessary permission of the Holy See".

3) "In such cases, the canonical norms concerning the validity of delegation, the suitability, capacity and attitude of the non-ordained faithful must be observed" (§2).

Article 11: Extraordinary Minister of Baptism

"Apart from cases of necessity, canonical norms permit the non-ordained faithful to be designated as extraordinary ministers of Baptism", but the *Instruction* reminds the Pastors of the conditions for the licitude of this extraordinary designation:

1) "There is *no ordinary minister* or in cases where *he is impeded*, (but) care should be taken to *avoid too extensive an interpretation* of this provision and such a faculty should not be conceded in a *habitual form*."

Article 12: Leading the Celebration at Funerals

1) "It is desirable that priests and deacons, even at some sacrifice to themselves, should preside personally at funeral rites in accordance with local custom, so as to pray for the dead and be close to their family, thus availing of an opportunity for appropriate evangelization."

2) "The non-ordained faithful may lead the ecclesial obsequies", with the following conditions:

1° "There is a true absence of sacred ministers." In the absence of further explication within this article of the term *true absence of sacred ministers*, we have to attend to the sense given to this term in the previous article as regards the sense of lack of ordinary minister for baptism, including the negative list of situations when this is not verified.

2° The deputed non-ordained extraordinary minister must "adhere to the prescribed liturgical norms" and should therefore "be well prepared both doctrinally and liturgically".

Conclusion

The *Instruction* ends by re-stating the two fundamental criteria in this matter:

First, the need to reinforce the identity of the ministerial priesthood, by respecting the principle of diversity in the People of God and more specifically of the proper status and mission of the laymen. "The Holy Father reminds us that the particular gift of each of the Church's members must be wisely and carefully acknowledged, safeguarded, promoted, discerned and coordinated, without confusing roles, functions or theological and canonical status."

Second, the shortage of ordained ministers must be addressed by fostering vocations to the priesthood, not by substituting priests with laymen. "Solutions addressing the shortage of ordained ministers cannot be other than transitory and must be linked to a series of pastoral programs which give priority to the promotion of vocations to the Sacrament of Holy Orders."

¹ Cf. CIC, c.767, §1.

(Due to space limitations, we are serializing the talk that Fr. Edwin Gariguez that will be delivered to the Conference of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines on Sept 11, 2023 (men religious) and on Sept 27, 2023 (women religious) at the Ezekiel Moreno Spirituality Center in Puerto Princesa. Fr. Gariguez is the Social Action Director of the Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan; he was formerly the executive secretary of the CBCP Commission on Social Action Justice and Peace and Caritas Philippines.)

Eco-Theological framework of the rights of nature

By FR. EDWIN A. GARIGUEZ

This reflection offers an examination of Christianity's historical anthropocentric theology vis-à-vis the paradigm shift to evolving eco-spirituality championed by Thomas Berry that calls for a new cosmology, emphasizing the need for humans to recognize their place within a larger ecological framework, while embracing a holistic, interconnected relationship with the natural world. More importantly, it explores the ecological conversion perspective both of Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* as aligned with the Rights of Nature. This transformative eco-theological framework advocates and promotes the intrinsic value of all creatures, underscores their interconnectedness, and challenges the utilitarian view of nature.

A. Critique of Christianity's anthropocentric theology

"Especially in Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion that the world has seen . . . Christianity in absolute contrast to ancient paganism, and Asia's religions, has not only established a dualism of man and nature, but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends . . ." — Lynn White, professor of history at the University of California, 1967 (in Gottlieb, 1996)

Anthropocentrism refers to human-centeredness. It is a perspective which views the non-human parts of the world as existing solely for the use or benefit of humanity. It assumes that human beings are the only species that has value whose interest is supreme. Such theory asserts that it may be acceptable to exploit and cause harm to the environment when such action will eventually benefit the human community, which is the primary consideration for any moral act.

In his critique of Christianity's long standing tradition, White argued that the dominant western

religion desacralized nature. In so doing, the anthropocentric ethic made it possible for humans to exploit the earth resources without qualms at all because the environment was now demystified. The world is no longer sacred but mere passive resource, for which human beings were given power and divine mandate to control and manipulate for their consumption.

Modern tools for exegesis and biblical interpretation would contest the assertion of White and would point out some necessary hermeneutical nuances in his argument. Some authors would also affirm practices and writings of some Christian mystics rather than to call for the outright condemnation of the Christian creation theology as the cause of the supposed anti-ecological stand of the Bible.

But admittedly, taking an honest and serious look at history, there are theologians who are also asserting that we cannot totally deny the complicity of the Christian Church in the plunder of the non-human nature. In the Christian mainstream theology, there was indeed a neglect of ecology if not an outright contempt for it (Clifford, 1996).

Sean McDonagh (1990), Irish Columban missionary and author of a number of books on the environment, also agreed that "despite its great achievement in helping bring the Catholic Church into the modern world, Vatican II did not pick up on (environmental) issue." But instead of being stuck in prolonged remorse, he invites us to seriously admit the gap and the seeming deficiency and try to discover the reason why the issue of this magnitude was not significantly considered by the Church or by the Council, for that matter.

It might be unfair to expect that we can find all the renewal agenda fulfilled in the documents of Vatican II. We need to appreciate the limited or seminal contribution that the Council provided in crafting our environmental theology. As Joseph Cardinal Suenens would like us to believe, Vatican II is not to be considered an end, but it is a journey



Caritas Philippines president Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo joins march to call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr to declare a state of climate emergency, April 20, 2023. **RONA ERNAS**

of "a pilgrim Church, going forward step by step along her unfinished path."

Thus, we need to understand the route of our journey for Church renewal, especially of our theological or eco-spiritual perspective on the environment.

The Catholic Church, though admittedly very slow and somehow ambivalent in responding to the ecological problems, is now beginning to wake up to the threat of destruction and the challenge for pursuing a transformative ecological consciousness. The late Pope John Paul II admitted that the prevailing situation of ecological crises and widespread incidents of destruction of the environment are occasioned by a distorted value system and a kind of spirituality that lacks understanding of the sacredness of the earth.

In his message for the World Day of Peace in January 1, 1990, the late Pope issued the document "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation," which is considered to be the first papal document exclusively dealing with the environment. In

the landmark document, the pope insisted that environmental concern must be a common concern and it has an essential moral and religious dimension

B. The crucial nexus: ecology and theology/spirituality

The global ecological crises that we experience today, ironically, came side by side with grand technological and industrial advancements and market-driven global trade which threatens the survival of our only planet. We are just beginning to realize that to promote a balanced ecology, we need to consider the complex nature of our ethical relationship with the whole environment and to critically assess our way of thinking about our connectedness to the Earth. And this goes beyond mere economic and political arena, for it challenges us to look into the realm of the human spirit.

It is no less than former United States Vice President Al Gore (1992, 12) who categorically expresses the pressing need for this approach:

The more deeply I search for the

roots of the global environmental crisis, the more I am convinced that it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, for lack of better word, spiritual. As a politician, I know full well the special hazards of using "spiritual" to describe a problem like this one . . . But what other word describes the collection of values and assumptions that determine our basic understanding of how we fit into the universe?

For Gore, what underlies the ecological crisis and distorted development paradigm is an inner spiritual crisis. This spiritual dimension determines the way we look and relate at the world and the way we frame our values and our relationship with the cosmos. It follows that if our basic values and ethical principles governing our relationship with the earth are flawed or distorted, then we cannot effect a creative and life-sustaining transformation.

The statement reflects a growing recognition that the environmental crisis is not just a matter of policy, technology, or economics, but

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(Second of two parts)

Teaching authority of the Church

By BERNARDO M. VILLEGAS

THE Pope and the Bishops cannot give moral and spiritual guidance effectively without getting down to brass tacks, which include very concrete descriptions of the evils that beset modern society. This is very obvious in the manner in which Pope Francis gives us economists moral and spiritual guidance on many issues related to the science of the allocation of scarce resources to address competing ends of society, i.e. economics. One of the most important problems that we economists have to help society resolve is the optimum blend between market forces and the role of the State in attaining authentic integral human development. What must be done to enable countries, especially among the so-called emerging markets, to attain sustainable, equitable and inclusive development? One of the most relevant writings of Pope Francis on this primordial question is found in a book entitled "This Economy Kills," which contains the answers the Pope gave to questions posed by two Italian journalists, Andrea Tornielli and Giacomo Galeazzi.

In a review of the book by Elizabeth Stoker Bruenig of *The New Republic*, the following summary is given: "This Economy Kills settles an important question in the papacy of Pope Francis: are his radical economics in keeping with the tradition of the Church? And if so, why do they seem to cause such upset among American conservatives? For Tornielli and Galeazzi, veteran Vatican reporters, the answer is clear: Pope Francis's theology is absolutely in keeping with predecessors from the Desert Fathers to the most recent popes, and his economics represent the application of timeless



Catholic bishops during Mass at the Cathedral Parish of Saint John the Baptist in Kalibo, Aklan on July 9, 2023. **CBCP NEWS**

theology to our most contemporary problems. Understanding Pope Francis's approach to modern economic ills will likely be the key to understanding his papacy—but his contributions to global dialogue on poverty and inequality will be integral to galvanizing people worldwide for change..." I would compare the critics of the Pastoral Letter of the CBCP entitled "The Truth Will Set Your Free" to the U.S. Catholic conservatives who have no clue about how to weave empirically observable facts concerning the economy with the unchanging theological and philosophical truths about man and society.

The very title of the book should give us an inkling that the Pope will not pull punches when he exposes the evils of neoliberal economics which puts unlimited trust in free market forces along the lines of the teachings of Nobel laureate Milton Friedman who was notorious for

saying that the only business of business is to make a profit. He and his disciples made the very unrealistic assumption that if we have a completely free wheeling economy, the problems of poverty will be automatically solved by what they call the "trickle down effects" of market forces. Encourage the rich to accumulate a lot of wealth and you will eradicate poverty by means of the so-called multiplier effects of business entrepreneurship through the employment generated and the goods and services produced.

The criticism by Pope Francis of the neoliberal theory of the benefits of free market economics already started when he was the Cardinal Bishop of Buenos Aires. In his words quoted in the "This Economy Kills": "Throughout this time, there has been financial terrorism proper. And it has had its consequences which are not hard to see: more rich people, more poor people, and a drastically

reduced middle class. There have been other less circumstantial consequences, such as the disaster in the field of education. At this moment in the city of Buenos Aires and in its residential suburbs, there are two million young people who neither study nor work. Given the barbarous form assumed by the financial globalization of Argentina, the church in this country has always taken the indications contained in the magisterium as its points of reference. They are, for example, the criteria outlined in no uncertain terms in John Paul II's allocution, *Ecclesia in America*." Already the Cardinal then did not hesitate to use damning words like "financial terrorism" and "barbarous form" of free-market economics forced down the throats of developing countries by international financial organizations like the IMF.

Cardinal Bergoglio could have stayed at motherhood statements

embodying the social principles of the Church such as "as much free market as possible and as much State intervention as necessary," dwelling on the interaction between the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of solidarity. But no, he could not help describing the state of affairs at the ground level and had to take his stand about the manner in which the Argentinian government was swallowing hook, line, and sinker the free market ideology of the IMF. This is another example of the Teaching Authority of the Church descending to empirically obvious examples of erroneous policies in the same way that the Filipino Bishops could not just remind us of the duty of telling the truth but had to give concrete examples of lies and half truths being perpetrated by one presidential candidate or another, such as the false claim that the Martial Law years were the golden age of Philippine economic development. In fact, the Bishops were being diplomatic when they used such a phrase as "historical revisionism." Using the frank language of Pope Francis who does not hesitate to use phrases such as "the economy kills", "financial terrorism," and "barbarous globalization," the Bishops could have been more direct and referred to all these distortions of historical facts as "shameless lies period."

As the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis in using his teaching authority has been relentless in criticizing neo-liberal economics, not only at the level of spiritual and moral guidance, but using observable data and events taken from the human sciences. The interaction between theory and practice is very obvious in the following words he addressed to several new nonresident ambassadors to the Holy See on May 16, 2013: "We have created

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Opus Dei and Pope's modification of Canons 295 and 296: How did it get to this point?

By ZENIT

ON August 8, the Holy See made known a Motu Proprio of Pope Francis (number 67 of this pontificate) with which two Canons are modified of the Code of Canon Law, specifically numbers 295 and 296, which relate to Personal Prelatures. At present there is only one entity recognized as such: the Personal Prelature of the *Opus Dei*.

The modification is as follows (translation of Pope Francis' original Motu Proprio in Italian):

Personal Prelatures were mentioned for the first time by Vatican Council II in the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 10, in regard to the distribution of Presbyters, in the context of a request by all the Churches.

This spirit was taken up again by the same Council in the Decree *Ad Gentes*, in which it is affirmed that in order "to facilitate specific pastoral works for the different social classes, the erection is foreseen of Personal Prelatures, as required by the correct exercise of the apostolate" (note 105).

The Motu Proprio *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (August 6, 1966), in the article dedicated to the "Distribution of the clergy and aids that must be given to the dioceses," in regard to Prelatures it recalls: "to foster special pastoral or missionary activities in favour of specific regions or social groups, in need of particular aid, the Apostolic See can erect fruitfully Prelatures made up of priests of the secular clergy, possessors of a particular formation, endowed with their own Statutes and under the direction of their own Prelate" (l. 4).

In line with this vision, in the Code of Canon Law of 1983, the Personal Prelatures are situated in Book II, in Title IV of Part I, where they care for "the Christian faithful," among the "sacred ministers or clergymen" (Title III, and the Associations of the faithful" (Title V).

Considering that with the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* (March 19, 2022), art. 117, competence over Personal Prelatures was transferred to the Dicastery for the Clergy, of which public Clerical Associations also depend, with the faculty to incardinate clergymen (art.

118, 2);

Considering Canon 265 and art. 6 of the M.P. *Ad Charisma Tuendum* (July 14, 2022) I decree the following:

Article 1

To Canon 295, § 1, regarding the Statutes and the Prelate, is added that the Personal Prelature is assimilated to the public Clerical Associations of Pontifical Right with the faculty to incardinate clergymen," that their statutes can be "approved or issued by the Apostolic See" and that the Prelate acts "as Moderator, endowed with the faculties of an Ordinary," resulting with the Canon in question being formulated as follows:

Can. 295, § 1. The Personal Prelature, which is assimilated to the public Clerical Associations of Pontifical Right with the faculty to incardinate clergymen, is governed by Statutes approved or issued by the Apostolic See, and to which a Prelate is appointed as Moderator, endowed with the faculties of the Ordinary, who has the right to establish a national or international Seminary, as well as incardinate the students and promote them to Sacred Orders under the title of service of the Prelature.

Article 2

In Can. 295 § 2, regarding the responsibilities of the Prelate in relation to the formation and sustenance of the incardinated clergymen of the Prelature, it is specified that he acts "as Moderator, endowed with the faculties of the Ordinary, and the same Canon is formulated thus:

Can. 295, § 2. Given that the Prelate is endowed with the faculties of the Ordinary as Moderator, he must watch over the spiritual formation of those he has promoted with the mentioned title as well as their adequate sustenance.

Article 3

To Can. 296, regarding the participation of the laity in apostolic activities of the Personal Prelature, is added the reference to Can. 107, resulting in the mentioned Canon:

Can. 296. Keeping the prescriptions of Canon 107, the laity can be dedicated to the apostolic works of the Personal Prelature through the Agreements established with the same;

however, the form of this organic cooperation, as well as its main functions and the rights linked to it, must be adequately determined in the Statutes.

What has been deliberated in this Apostolic Letter in the form of a Motu Proprio, I order that it be firm and stable while in force, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if it is worthy of special mention, and that it be promulgated in *L'Osservatore Romano*, coming into force on the day of its publication, and then included in the official commentary of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

How did it get to this point? Recent chronology up to this modification

Speaking chronologically, in March 2022 the new Constitution that reformed the Roman Curia made Personal Prelatures pass from the Dicastery for Bishops to the Dicastery for the Clergy. Although the *Opus Dei* isn't mentioned, it was the *Opus Dei* that was affected by this change as it is the only Personal Prelature in the Church.

When this implicit dependence was made known, Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, Prelate of the Work, sent a message to the faithful addressing this matter (also at that time Professor Eduardo Baura explained some aspects of that change.) The change of dependence was preceded, months before, by a private audience of the Pope with the Prelate of the *Opus Dei*.

On July 22, 2022 Pope Francis issued a Motu Proprio entitled "*Ad Charisma Tuendum*" with six specific provisions, namely:

Modification of an article of the Constitution *Ut Sit*, which made effective the change of the dependence of the *Opus Dei*: from the Dicastery for Bishops to the Dicastery for the Clergy;

Modification of the article of the Constitution *Ut Sit* by which the Prelate is to present an annual Report to the Dicastery for the Clergy;

Requested is the Adaptation of the Statutes of the Prelature of the *Opus Dei*;

Established is that the Prelate "will not be honoured with the Episcopal Order";

Regulated is the use of

Fr. Josemaría Escrivá. Founder of Opus Dei. **OPUS DEI**

pontifical insignias; and

Noted is that the Dicastery for the Clergy will address and decide on pending matters of the *Opus Dei* with the Dicastery for Bishops.

After the publication of this document, established by the will of the Pope, the Prelate sent a letter to the faithful of the Prelature underscoring that they "accepted it filially."

At the beginning of October 2022, the *Opus Dei* convoked an Extraordinary General Congress to introduce the changes requested by the Pope to the Statutes of the Prelature. At the end of November of the same year Pope Francis received once again Monsignor Fernando Ocariz in private audience. The audience coincided with the 40th anniversary of the *Opus Dei* as Personal Prelature.

Two weeks later, on December 18, the ABC newspaper published an interview with Pope Francis. One of the questions posed to the Pontiff was precisely the relation with the Work. Given that some of the media had presented everything as a "punishment" of the *Opus Dei*, journalists asked the Pope how they should interpret what he had up to that moment requested of the Work. To which the Pope answered:

"It's not only a question of the *Opus Dei*, but of Personal Prelatures. In the scheme of the Curia, the *Opus Dei* depended on the Congregation for Bishops, but in the Code of Canon Law, Prelatures are framed in another way, and the criteria had to be unified. The matter was studied and it was said

that "the Prelature should go to the Congregation for the Clergy." I did it dialoguing with them. Moreover, I have been a friend from Argentina of Mariano Fazio (Vicar General of the *Opus Dei*). It was a serene and normal thing done by canonists. Even canonists of the *Opus* worked in the process. On one hand, some said "At last the Pope has given it to those of the *Opus* . . . ! I didn't give them anything! And others, on the other hand, said "Ah, the Pope is invading us!" None of that. The measure is a resituating that had had to be resolved. It's not right to magnify the matter, or to make them victims, or to make them culprits who received punishments. Please, I'm a close friend of the *Opus Dei*, I love them very much and they work well in the Church. The good they do is very great."

Following the chronological path, in April 2023 the *Opus Dei* held its Extraordinary General Congress in Rome. At the beginning of June 2023, Pope Francis received in private audience again the Prelate of the *Opus Dei* who, according to a note of the Prelature itself, informed him that they had begun to work with the Dicastery for the Clergy on the document resulting from the Congress, for the decision the Holy See would take. Among the Pope's words to ABC and that last audience, which manifested a gesture of confidence to the Prelature, was the appointment of Monsignor Ocariz as Consultor of the Dicastery for Evangelization.

Just over two months

later, this second Motu Proprio arrived with which the Canons are modified that, although they do not mention the *Opus Dei* by name, affect it as it is the only existing Personal Prelature. In this context, the additional information given by the Pope to ABC should be taken into account:

"It's not only a question of the *Opus Dei*, but of Personal Prelatures."

"I did it dialoguing with them (. . .) it was a serene and normal thing done by canonists, even canonists of the *Opus* worked in the process."

What was the *Opus Dei's* answer?

Through a publication on its institutional Website, the Personal Prelature of the *Opus Dei* has noted that that they will study "what consequences these modifications might have for the legal configuration of the *Opus Dei*, also in the framework of the works being carried out with the Dicastery for the Clergy on the adaptation of the Statutes required in the Motu Proprio *Ad Charisma Tuendum*, in an atmosphere of communion with the Holy Father."

The key position can be summarized in a few words: "communion with the Holy Father." In tune with a July 2022 letter in which the Prelate anticipated "we accept it filially." Going back to the ABC interview, it illuminates the decision made clear by the Pope: "I'm a close friend of the *Opus Dei*, I love them very much and they work well in the Church. The good they do is very great."

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is fundamentally a spiritual and moral crisis. The environmental problems we face are not just the result of technical failures or market distortions, but are rooted in deeper cultural and spiritual attitudes that shape our relationship with the natural world.

Thus, to remedy the growing malady of earth imbalances, we need to situate the issues and challenges of global environmental threats vis-à-vis our understanding of people's respective ecological spirituality or the evident lack of it in the way we formulate our

respective positions, economic or political, at the local or global level.

Ecological spirituality involves the dynamics of living our fundamental relationship not only to the transcendent being (or to our personal God in the Christian sense) but also to the whole life-giving systems of which we are part. This is to re-live the primordial experience of non-dualistic existence that we once have when we find ourselves deeply connected to the sacred realities all around us. Eco-spirituality

affirms our fundamental oneness with the entire Earth community.

This framework runs counter to the mainstream medieval spirituality of fuga mundi (flight from the world), which somehow persisted even until today. This kind of spirituality considered heaven as our true home and it has nothing but contempt for the world, condemned as inherently evil and defiled. As a result, an escapist attitude was perpetuated—that one needs to withdraw from the world and to concentrate in putting his/her energies in pursuing

personal sanctification in order to save one's soul.

In ecological spirituality, the richness of the Christian tradition as the privileged locus of divine revelation is not to be denied. However, it needs to be complemented by a certain kind of spirituality that also considers the primordial experience of the sacredness of the earth, the kind of spirituality that acknowledges God's enduring presence in the whole of creation.

Eco-spirituality evolves as part of this trend of ecological

consciousness. It has found its staunch promoters from the ranks of the contemporary theologians, environmentalist and ecophilosophers. They are the ones who are advocating for a shift in paradigm from the prevailing anthropocentric orientation to a more inclusive recognition of our place in our common home, with us sharing common destiny and existence with all other creatures of the earth. One of the most prominent advocates of this perspective is Thomas Berry. (*To be continued*)

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new idols. The worship of the golden calf of old...has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money and the dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly humane goal. The worldwide financial and economic crisis (the Great Recession of 2008 to 2012) seems to highlight their distortions and above all the gravely deficient human perspective, which reduces man to one of his needs alone, namely, consumption. Worse yet, human beings themselves are nowadays considered as consumer goods which can be used and thrown away. We have started a throw-away culture. This tendency is seen on the level of individuals and whole societies: and it is being promoted." One of the harshest condemnations

by Pope Francis of neo-liberal capitalism is found in his Apostolic Exhortation entitled "The Joy of the Gospel": "Just as the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say 'thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless.

As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without means of escape." These observations are not mere speculations but are backed up by the hardest data provided by economists all over the world about poverty incidences, hunger, unemployment, underemployment, etc.

Pope Francis could not care less if politicians, businessmen, and others from the extreme right have been accusing him of being a "communist." There are practitioners of my profession who accuse him of interfering in ongoing debates among economists about the pros and cons of a free market economy. They claim that he is

taking sides in favor of those in favor of greater state intervention. These criticisms do not stop him from speaking the truth and the whole truth, theological, philosophical and empirical. At this third level, there is nothing he states that cannot be backed up by abundant data and information available from the most prestigious think tanks and research centers from all over the world.

Likewise, as the Filipino Bishops wrote in their Pastoral Letter of February 25, 2022, " We did not invent the historic event that happened in EDSA....Many of us were witnesses of the injustice and cruelty of Martial Law And up until now, the human rights abuses, the victims, the corruption, the grave debt and economic downturn of

the country due to dictatorship are well-documented. Again, we did not make these up. These are all written in our history...We are alarmed by the distortion of the truth of history and false narratives. This is dangerous, for it poisons our collective consciousness and destroys the moral foundations of our institutions." It is crystal clear that the Bishops in issuing that Pastoral Letter were continuing more than a century of the traditional teachings of the Church about the economic, political and social structures of society. They would have been remiss in their duty to give us Catholic faithful moral and spiritual guidance if they did not write that Letter. For comments, my email address is bernardo.villegas@uap.asia.

Institute for Faith Formation

Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan
Circular 2023-11
RE: Institute for Faith Formation
August 16, 2023
Memorial of San Roque, Healer



Reverend Fathers:

The Second Synod of Lingayen Dagupan of 2018 mandated the establishment of an Institute for Faith Formation to provide continuous and integral and holistic formation to the ministers of the different apostolates and ministries. (Article 53).

In the section on Faith Formation, we also embraced the vision of having trained and formed, morally upright, committed, competent and effective formation ministers in all parishes and barangays. (Article 55).

The implementation of this mandate was stalled by the pandemic restrictions. The time has arrived for us to plunge into the deeper waters of faith formation.

Please note the following instructions and information about the Institute of Faith Formation:

1. There will be three levels of formation programs. Level One will be on the fundamentals of Catholic faith. Level Two will be on pastoral skills in formation ministry. Level

Three will focus on skills in human relations and management. At the end of each level, examinations will be administered to the participants and only those who pass and complete the requirements will be allowed to enroll in the next level.

2. All the formation classes will be held at the ALD Formation Center (AFC) in Bonuan Gueset, Dagupan City from 8:30 am until 3:30pm.

3. The 12 lay members of the Parish Pastoral Council and one head of Christian Formation Department of the ALDCS will be required to attend the Level One Formation Program which will be offered in two batches at the option of the participants. It is also open for prospective Pasimbalo formators who might not be officers of the PPC. Batch One will have classes on September 2, 9 and 23; October 7 and 21; November 4 and 18 and December 2. Batch Two will have classes on September 16 and 30; October 14 and 28; November 11 and 25 and December 9 and 16. ARCHDIOCESE OF LINGAYEN-DAGUPAN ARCHBISHOP'S

HOUSE Jovellanos Street, Dagupan City 2400 Pangasinan, Philippines Telephone: 075 523 5357 | 075 522 1878 The participants may choose which batch to join at the start of the formation sessions.

4. Level One will cover the following subjects: Introduction to Theology and Ministry; Liturgy and Sacraments; Introduction to Scriptures (Old and New Testament); Church History; Christian Spirituality, Christian Morality; Basic Canon Law and Servant Leadership.

5. The participants must complete all the sessions of Level One and pass the examinations to qualify to participate in Level Two.

6. Each participant is to offer Php100 per session and the parish or school will offer Php200 to cover the expenses for two snacks and lunch. The priest teachers have graciously waived their honoraria in order to lower the cost of participation.

7. The team of teachers is composed of Father Mario Sanchez, Fr. Allan Abuan, Fr. Don Go, Fr.

Solomon Geslani, Fr. CJ Bataoil, Fr. Mel Serran, Fr. Jeff Segovia, Fr. Anthony Layog, Bishop Fidelis Layog and me.

8. The curriculum program for Level Two and Level Three will be presented to you in the last quarter of the year.

9. The graduation of both Batches One and Two of Level One will be held at the Saint John the Evangelist Cathedral on December 17, 2023 at 2:00pm.

This Institute has long been delayed in its launch and operation. I request you to encourage your members of the Parish Pastoral Council to participate wholeheartedly in the formation program. Lay empowerment is lay formation. There is no real empowerment without formation. Better late than never! May Christ be formed in us (cfr Gal.4:19).

Sincerely yours,
+SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen Dagupan

“Lord, save me!” (Mk 14,30c)

Renewal of our faith in the Lord in times of opportunity and affliction

A pastoral letter for the clergy, religious, institutes of consecrated life, parish communities, apostolates, and the lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Zamboanga

To the Pilgrim People of God in the Archdiocese of Zamboanga:

Lord, let us see Your kindness, and grant us Your salvation! (Psalm 85, 8; NAB) The words of the Responsorial Psalm for this Sunday's Holy Mass urges the Church to look upon the Lord in His kindness. By these we are reminded of our vocation and dignity as a people that relies on the Lord's plenteous salvation and help.

I am issuing this present Pastoral Letter as an invitation for the pilgrim people of the Archdiocese of Zamboanga to reflect upon the word of God for this Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time in our liturgy. The First Reading (1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a) gives us the prophet Elijah's experience of the Lord in His most mysterious, awesome, overwhelming Presence—not as a strong force of nature, but as a tiny whispering sound, to whom the prophet promptly covers his face as a gesture of profound reverence. The Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans in our Second Reading (Rom 9:1-5) proclaims the religious heritage of Israel. This heritage hence leads the believers to receive also Christ the Lord in faith and humble devotion. Moreover, the Gospel Reading (Mt 14:22-33) complements what was proclaimed as God's calming presence in the person of Christ as the blessed gift for the believers. It is Christ the Lord who comes down from the mountain, to rejoin His disciples, as they set out to sea on a boat, whilst threatened by crashing waves and violent weather. It is Christ the Lord who comes forth to meet them, persuading them not to be frightened—because He comes to them and He truly is near them. It is Christ the Lord who reaches out to the Apostle Peter, who, nearly sinking because he loses sight of Him, could only cry out: “Lord, save me!” [Kyrie, sōson me!] And it is Christ the Lord to whom the disciples shall pay homage as the one worthy of their faith.

The biblical notion of faith (Hebrew: āman; Greek: pisteuein) indicates two religious meanings: as a description of the One in whom we believe, and as an action word referring to the believers themselves. Faith in the Old Testament is understood as encountering the

God who is firm, reliable, truthful, and righteous. God is the faithful one because He keeps true to His promise, as to unite His people in a loving relationship (hesed). In the New Testament, as it is established already that God is reliable and compassionate, so the one who has faith must show acceptance, confidence, and trust in Him. Christ then as the consoling presence and blessed gift of God comes to His people as reliable, truthful, and loving. He comes in our midst in times of solace, in times of celebration, and more so in times of tempest and chaos. To believe in Christ then is to participate in the presence of Christ as the Reality that changes our perception of the world and of ourselves.¹ And so when we believe in the Lord, amidst the torrents and tides of life's struggles, or even in the ordinariness of what we do, we express our desire to be saved by Him. By this we can also say with the words of the bishop Saint John Chrysostom: “[The Lord] guarantees his protection. I do not depend on my own strength. I have in my hands His written word. This is my strength, my certainty, my tranquil haven. Even if the entire world is shaken ... [His] word tells me: ‘I will be with you until the end of the world.’ Christ is with me. What shall I fear?” Lord, save us! Increase our faith, our confidence in Your loving kindness. This is also the prayer that we make amidst recent challenges to the peace and order situation in our city. The recent spate of killings and suicide incidents again threaten our peace of mind, stability, and trust that the post-pandemic era will be better. Like the apostles shaken in the boat, agitated amidst stormy waters, we need to renew our encounter with the Presence of the Lord who comes to us, pulling us out of our fears, assuring us of His protection and care. When our faith becomes little, when it is tested, may we look upon Christ who emerges before us: that before Him we may not sink, that we may not despair.²

Lord, save us! Let us see your kindness, grant us your salvation. This is the same prayer that we place upon our lips as a pilgrim people of God in the

Archdiocese of Zamboanga, with the upcoming events of significance as an important highlight of our ecclesial life.

On the 25th of April, 2023, the Holy Father Pope Francis made his announcement that the incumbent Bishop of the Suffragan Diocese of Ipil, the Most Reverend Julius S. Tonel, will be designated as the Seventh Metropolitan Archbishop of Zamboanga.³ As a local Church of Zamboanga, we have received this announcement with great joy and expectation. Bishop Tonel now joins the ranks of his predecessors Archbishops Dela Cruz, Valles, Morelos, Cruces, Gonzaga, and Del Rosario in shepherding the Archdiocese of Zamboanga since its elevation as a Metropolitan Church for Western Mindanao on May 15, 1958. To this end I am reiterating these words delivered to our faithful Zamboangueno Catholics on the announcement day naming Archbishop Tonel for the Archdiocese of Zamboanga: *“Let us come together as one Body of Christ in the Archdiocese to pray for our new Archbishop, as he begins his new ministry among us. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen [Bishop Tonel,] as [the Lord] leads us on the path of faith and spiritual growth.”*⁴

The Lord has truly indeed listened to our prayers as an Archdiocese of Zamboanga with the appointment of a new shepherd for our local Church. As we make our prayer of faith, and renew our trust in His Presence, I enjoin our brothers and sisters to take upon this instruction:

- That there shall be a simultaneous **Day of Prayer and Fasting**, to be held on **Friday, the 18th of August, 2023**, in all parish churches, the seminary, and religious communities in the Archdiocese of Zamboanga. The rationale for this day of prayer and fasting will be for the following intentions: (1) in **thanksgiving for the gift of a new Archbishop of Zamboanga**. This shall be our spiritual preparation as an Archdiocese for the upcoming Liturgical Reception and Canonical Possession of Archbishop Julius Tonel as the Metropolitan



Archbishop of Zamboanga, effective the 22nd of August 2023; (2) **for the protection and security of the Zamboangueno people**, amidst the rampant incidents of criminality in the city, as well as the perilous conditions affecting our people due to inclement weather in the rainy season; (3) **for the intentions of the families affected by rising suicide incidents in the city**, that vulnerable members may find support and encouragement from proper channels; (4) **in commemoration of the tenth year since the Zamboanga Siege (September 9)**, that peace-keeping efforts between the government, the military, and law-enforcement authorities may assure everyone that such a tragic attack on our city shall never be replicated once more in our shores.

- This Day of Prayer and Fasting on the said date shall proceed with the ringing of church bells on the said date at 8:00 in the evening, followed by the communal recitation of the Holy Rosary. Furthermore, I enjoin on you, dear brothers and sisters, to pray with me as I conclude my pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Zamboanga, now that I prepare

also for my present designation as Vicar Apostolic-Elect of Calapan in Oriental Mindoro. I call upon everyone to show your support and solidarity for our new Archbishop. Likewise, I am humbly extending my gratitude for your wholehearted participation in our joint endeavors of guiding the local Church towards the path of synodality and renewal.

May I quote the words of the late Archbishop Carmelo D.F. Morelos, in concluding this pastoral letter: “May Mary our Mother, La Virgen del Pilar, accompany us in our journey towards a Church in Zamboanga renewed and re-evangelized, truly an authentic community of her Son's disciples joyfully living in harmony and solidarity with one another, with creation and with our God.”⁵

From the Sacred Heart Center, Archbishop's Residence, R.T. Lim Boulevard, Zamboanga City, on the 13th of August 2023, on the Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time.

Most Rev. MOISES M. CUEVAS, D.D.
Auxiliary Bishop of Zamboanga (2020 – 2023)
Vicar-Apostolic Elect of Calapan, Oriental Mindoro

1 (Cf. Romano Guardini, *The Lord*. Translated from the German by Elinor Castendyk Briefs. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954, pp. 198-199).

2 (St. John Chrysostom, “Homily before departing for the desert”, from *“God Always Helps: Nineteenth Sunday, Year A”*, by Fr. Francis Fernandez Carvajal. *In Conversation with God. Meditations for Each Day of the Year*, Volume Four – Ordinary Time: Weeks 13-23. London: Sceptre UK Ltd., 2005, p. 338).

3 (“Resignations and Appointments, 25.04.2023.” Summary of Bulletin. The Holy See Press Office, <https://press.vatican.com/content/salastampa/bollettino/pubblico/2023/04/25/230425a.html> (accessed 12-8-2023).

4 Bishop Moises Cuevas, Message on the Holy Father's Announcement Declaring Bishop Julius Tonel for the Metropolitan See of Zamboanga, 25 April 2023, Chapel of Saint Pius X, Metropolitan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

5 Archbishop Carmelo D.F. Morelos, Homily for the Holy Mass for Monday, Seventh Week of Easter, Opening

Liturgy of the Second Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly of Zamboanga [APAZ II], May 24, 1998, Acts and Decrees of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly of Zamboanga. Zamboanga: Sacred Heart Center, 1998, p. 120.

EVERYDAY JESUS

By ARCHBISHOP SOCRATES VILLEGAS

www.fathersoc.com

Church scandals

WE have seen scandals in the Church, in church organizations, in the hierarchy. When a priest, a bishop, a cardinal, or even a pope leads other people to sin, that is called "spiritual murder." It is murder because the one who is supposed to give life snuffs out the faint life of somebody. The one who is supposed to be a channel of blessing becomes a channel of sin. That is spiritual murder.

On the other hand, if we see the scandalous life of somebody—if we see the scandalous life of a priest, a cardinal or even a pope, or a bishop—and we allow our faith to

die, or be damaged, we call that "spiritual suicide." In other words, we cannot put all the blame on the scandals that others have brought into our lives. The fact is we give them permission to kill us. We give them permission to destroy us. We give them permission to look at us as inferior. When we see scandals of those in charge of us, that is spiritual murder and they are accountable to God. But if we allow them to kill our faith, that is spiritual suicide for us.

There are some among us who say that the Church is not holy. We claim that the Church is not

founded by Jesus Christ because of the lifestyle of priests, the religious, the men and women in the Church.

The Gospel for today precisely points that out: These scandals and sins that we are seeing in the Church are actually proofs that we, as the Church, are divine. If the Church were only a human corporation, it would have crumbled a long time ago. If we are still standing in spite of the scandals that the Church has seen, it can only be because this Church, this organization, is run not by men, but by the Holy Spirit.

Wrong questions

MANY of our problems in life come from our bad practice of asking the wrong questions. We ask the wrong questions. Therefore, we also get the wrong answers. The first wrong question that the Lord wants to correct is "How many will be saved?" That is a wrong question because the correct question is "How will we be saved?" The Lord does not give us numbers. The Lord shows us the way. We will be saved by entering through the narrow gate.

The next wrong question is "Where is the gate?" It is wrong to ask this because the question is not "where is the gate". It is like

asking "Where is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow? There is NO GATE." The proper question to ask is not "Where is the gate?" but rather, "Who is the gate?" The gate is not a place. The gate cannot be found in the map. The gate is a person—Jesus Christ.

Another wrong question is "What must I do?" It is wrong because what the Lord wants us to ask is "What must I continue doing?" We are a people who are good with the first act but sometimes fail to sustain it through the one hundredth act. We are a people who are good with ribbon cutting and inauguration. But when it comes to

sustaining our commitment, that is where we falter.

There are many more wrong questions that have led us to the wrong answers that lead us to frustration. Do not ask how many; rather ask how will we be saved. Do not ask where is the gate; ask who is the gate. Do not ask what must I do; ask rather what must I continue doing.

Let us look into our hearts and ask ourselves, "What are the questions in my heart right now that remain unanswered?" Maybe the source of our pain is the mistake we make of asking the wrong questions in life.

Baby steps

By BISHOP PABLO VIRGILIO DAVID

Reflections for August 13, 2023, 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Mt 14:22-33

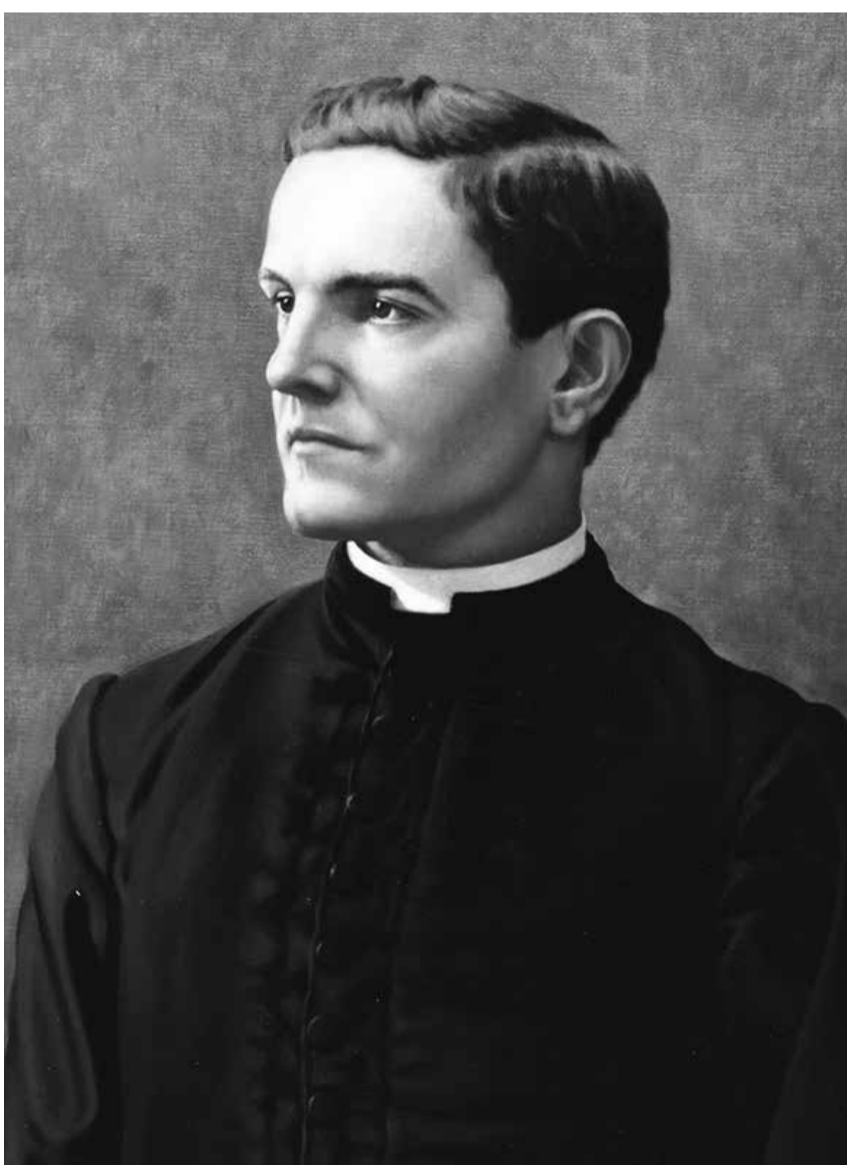
TODAY I invite you to focus our reflection on that part of the story about Peter. Matthew tells us when the disciples saw Jesus walking on water, they thought they were seeing a ghost and they were terrified. I don't blame them because they were actually already in a state of panic over the storm before Jesus came to them. And now, this! To calm them down, Jesus cried out and said, "Take courage, it is I. Do not be afraid!"

In St Mark's version of the same story (Mk 6:45-52), after Jesus says that, he goes into the boat and the storm calms down. But the version that we read today from Matthew has an additional part about Peter saying, "Lord, if it is really you, command me to walk toward you on the water."

You know, this scene reminds me of a video I saw recently of a young father, teaching his little child to walk. It was the older brother who was taking the video. The close to one-year old boy had already learned to sit and crawl towards his father. But this time when he wanted his father to take him in his arms, the father just stood up and extended his hands so that the boy himself would reach out to him. The boy reached out and managed to stand up on his feet and balance himself. So the father moved back a few steps away and kept his arms extended to the child. The boy made one baby step after another but soon lost his balance. Just before he fell, the father quickly came forward to catch him.

After two more attempts and two more falls, the father kept moving back a bit farther away with his hands still extended, and finally, the boy succeeded in making several steps to reach his father's arms, and the whole family applauded him to his great delight. He had learned to walk!

What was in Peter's mind when he said, "Lord, if it is really you, command me to walk toward you on the water.?" I would have expected him instead to say, "Lord, if it is really you, please come into the boat with us and help us survive this storm!" I think the additional episode in Matthew about Peter reaching out to Jesus is Matthew's way of suggesting how Jesus mentored Peter like a father mentoring his child to walk



Blessed Fr. Michael McGivney

on his feet. The secret is not in the feet but in the heart! That is why Jesus said, TAKE COURAGE! The English word Courage comes from the Latin words COR and AGERE: to act from the heart. Jesus had to make Peter believe in his heart that he could do it before he actually did it. It was when he lost heart and was overcome by fear that he began to sink.

Our first reading is about Elijah who is accompanied by the angel of the Lord to Mount Horeb. The writer tells us he was so depressed he prayed to God to be allowed to sleep and not wake up anymore. Why? Because he felt that his life had become a nightmare. He was the last surviving prophet of Israel, and he was now being pursued by the soldiers of the king to be eliminated. But the Lord kept putting him back on his feet to learn to face—first, a storm, then, an earthquake and then, a raging fire. But in the end, he felt the

presence of the Lord only in a soft breeze or a tiny whispering sound that gave him the inner strength and the courage to stand again on his feet.

Matthew tells us Jesus was in prayer before he walked on water to calm the storm. The lesson is clear: it is in prayer that we gain our balance and inner sense of stability. In prayer we are like children learning to walk. But first, we must learn to attune our hearts with the heart of God who draws us, who calls us to himself; he teaches us to focus our attention on his open hands, confident that he is there to catch us when we fall.

Today we are joined by our brothers in the Southern Luzon State Council of the Knights of Columbus. They are asking us to join them in prayer for the canonization of the founder of the Order, the Blessed Fr. Michael McGivney from New Haven in Connecticut. He was made a

Thoughts to live by

Reflections for August 27, 2023, the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Mt. 16:13-20

By CARDINAL ORLANDO B. QUEVEDO

1. 1st Reading, Is. 22:19-23.

Background -- In 701 BC, the Assyrian King laid siege to Jerusalem, a "tumultuous city" (v. 2), while Hezekiah was King of Judah. Sennacherib devastated Judah (vv. 3-5; see esp. 2 Kgs. 18:13-16). Judah had depended on its allies rather than on the Lord. Instead of mourning, the people rejoice. The Lord summons Eliakim to be master of Hezekiah's palace. The Lord places "the key of the House of David on his shoulder; what he opens, no one will shut, what he shuts, no one will open" (vv. 20-22) "He will have a seat of honor for his ancestral house" (v. 23).

2. Resp. Ps. 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8—David thanks the Lord for saving his life. "I thank you, Lord, with all my heart; in the presence of the angels to you I sing. I bow low toward your holy temple; I praise your name for your mercy and faithfulness" (vv. 1-2). "On the day I cried out, you answered; you strengthened my spirit" (v. 3). "The Lord is on high, but cares for the lowly and knows the proud from afar" (v. 6). "The Lord is with me to the end. Lord, your mercy endures forever" (v. 8).

3. 2nd Reading, Rom. 11: 33-36—Paul realizes how staggering the truth is that God wants both Jews and Gentiles to be saved. "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways" (v. 33). Paul quotes Isaiah and Job, enhancing his amazement: "For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor?" (v. 34; see Is.40:13). "Or who has given him anything that he may be repaid?" (v. 34; see Jb. 41:11).

4. Gospel, Mt. 16:13-20—The Confession of Peter (see also Mk. 8:27-29; Lk. 9:18-20). Jesus instructs the disciples to reject the teaching of the Pharisees (vv. 5-12). This prepares them for a new teaching. Peter's confession takes place "In the region of Caesarea Philippi," some 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, a town different from Caesarea, the seaport of Samaria. Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They reply, "Some say, John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets. But who do you say that I am?" (vv. 13-15).

5. Simon Peter replies, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus says to him, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father (v. 17). And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this

rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it (v18). I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven" (v. 19). "Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he is the Messiah" (v. 20).

6. In Mark and Luke, Peter serves as the spokesman for the other disciples. To the general idea that Jesus is the Messiah, Peter declares his extraordinary insight into the identity of Jesus as the Son of the living God. Jesus calls Peter's declaration a revelation of the Father, and not the result of human understanding. Here, Matthew may be inserting a post-resurrection confession of faith in Jesus that belongs to the appearance of the Risen Christ to Peter; see 1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34).

7. "You are Peter and upon this rock, I will build my church." Petros (Greek for the Aramaic "kephah") is a male form of "petra," meaning rock. The word "church" (Greek "ekklesia") occurs in the Gospels only here in Matthew and in Mt. 18:17. It refers to the community that Jesus will gather, with Peter as its solid foundation. The power of death (the netherworld) will not overcome the church. The keys of the kingdom given to Peter (see keys given to Eliakim, our 1st Reading), give him the authority both to teach authoritatively and also to bind and loose. His authority on earth will be confirmed in heaven. In Mt. 18:18 all the disciples are given the power of binding and loosing.

8. Jesus prohibits his disciples from revealing that he is the Messiah. The people believe that the Messiah would be a political one of glory and triumph, and not one who would save by suffering dying.

9. The Confession of Peter is a narrative of extraordinary faith, this coming soon after Jesus had said, "O, you of little faith" (v. 8). Ardent faith in Jesus is at the heart of discipleship, of denying oneself, taking up one's cross and following Jesus (see vv. 24-25).

10. Prayer—O, God, our loving Father, you revealed to Peter that Jesus is your Divine Son. He gave him authority to teach, bind and loose, an authority now exercised by his successor, Pope Francis. Grant, we pray, that our Holy Father Francis may exercise his power as a good Shepherd with love and wisdom, and that our faith may be deepened to follow the voice of the Good Shepherd faithfully. This we ask, through Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Prayers, best wishes, God bless!

venerable by Pope Benedict in 2008 and was beatified by Pope Francis in 2020. The Order that he had founded has become the biggest lay Fraternity in the world that consists of 2 Million families, 25% of whom come from the Philippines. Now they are praying for the cause of the canonization of this saintly priest, who became an Apostle to Poor Migrant Families, Protector of Widows and Orphans.

Fr. Michael was the eldest of thirteen children of a poor Catholic Irish migrant couple who came to the then predominantly Protestant United States. Like St. Peter, he was forced to face the storms of life at a young age. He entered the seminary, but three years before ordination he lost his father, the only breadwinner of his family. Since he was the eldest, he left the seminary in order to work as a manual laborer in a spoon-making factory to support his widowed mother and his brothers and sisters and to prevent them from being given away as orphans to orphanages.

With help from his bishop, he was eventually able to continue his studies in the seminary until he got ordained to the priesthood. He was only a young parish priest when he founded the Knights of Columbus as a fraternal association intended mainly to support the families

of women and children who had been widowed and orphaned like he was when he himself lost his own father.

In Fr. McGivney, we have a perfect parallel for the story of Elijah in our first reading and the story of Peter in our Gospel reading. I would dare say Fr. Michael had discovered what St. Peter had learned from Jesus. Like Peter, he discovered the secret of being able to "walk on water", towards the Lord, who alone can calm the storms of life. Both his difficult experience and his priestly formation nurtured his life of discipleship as a man of prayer and action. Not only did he receive the blessing of inner strength and courage to face the trials of life with faith and sense of equanimity. More importantly, he shared this blessing to countless other families. He died in 1890 at the young age of 38, but look what a huge impact he has made on people all over the world even with such a short life. 133 years later, he continues to do so through the Knights of Columbus, the Fraternal Association of Lay People that takes its inspiration from this holy man. We join them in praying that the Blessed Fr. Michael be quickly elevated into full sainthood. Blessed Michael McGivney, PRAY FOR US.

Caritas Chronicles

(From time to time, the programs and activities of Caritas Philippines or the National Secretariat for Social Action will be appearing on this page. They are lifted from the social media posts of Caritas Philippines—Ed)

August 19, 2023



Dampigan Farmers Association Grows Through Knowledge and Empowerment. The Dampigan Farmers Association in Barangay Dampigan, Sta. Rita, Samar was initially formed in 2014 by DSAC Calbayog as part of the Haiyan response. It was later strengthened through the Family Farming program, which helped the members to learn about diversified organic farming.

The association now has 32 active farmers, and its impact has grown, inspiring other farmers to join. The association has established a Self-Help Group (SHeG) with an average

monthly savings of PHP 8,000 from vegetable income. Members have also created backyard organic gardens for sustenance and extra earnings.

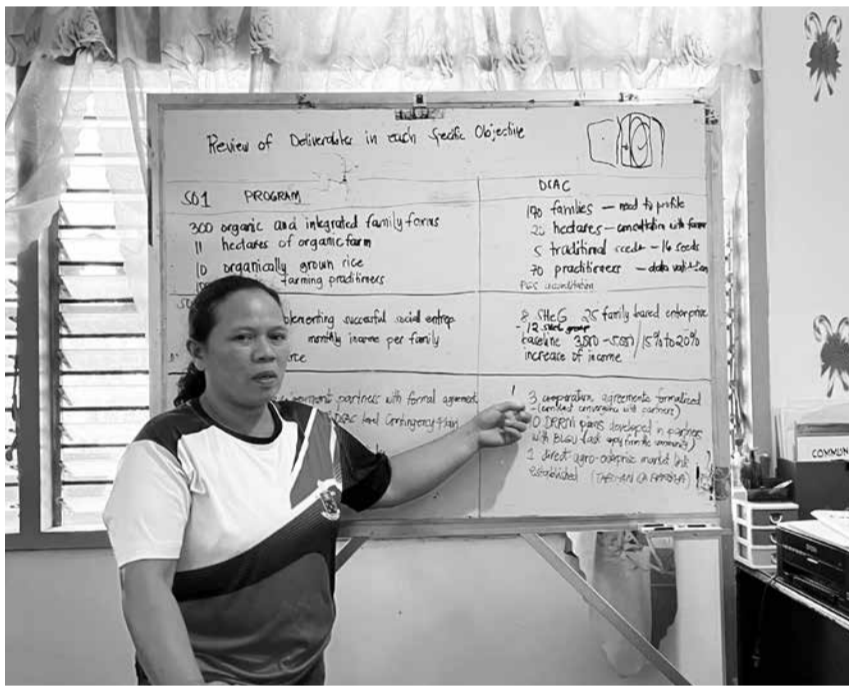
The association's social enterprise includes a processing center that produces delicacies such as chocolate moron, tart, buko pie, and banana cake. The association holds regular meetings, called Knowledge Inputs Technology Sharing (KITS), on the first Saturday of every month. These meetings discuss strategies for association sustainability, such as seed banking, resource mobilization, financial transparency, and agro

enterprise.

The association has actively participated in events such as the "Barangayan 2023" and "Taboan sa Parokya". They are also aiming to access the KADIWA program from the Department of Agriculture. Some members received awards during the "Barangayan 2023" event.

Family farming has become a source of motivation, bonding, and experience-sharing for the members. They are grateful to DSAC Calbayog, Caritas Philippines, Caritas Italiana, Caritas Australia, and Misereor for their support throughout the project.

August 22, 2023



The Family Farming program of Caritas Philippines, led by Ms. Charlene Fernandico and the Caritas Italiana projects' Accompanier Dodong Arellano, recently conducted a comprehensive project monitoring session at DSAC Calbayog.

During the session, the staff members involved in the project shared their progress, highlighting

accomplishments and target achievements over the past three years.

Here are some of the program's notable successes:

- 170 families were successfully assisted in practicing integrated organic agriculture on a 20-hectare land area.
- 5 families were supported with traditional rice seed varieties.

- 3 families were maintained with traditional vegetable seeds.
- 70 families were enabled to engage in integrated organic farming.
- 12 Self-Help Groups (SHeGs) were established.
- 25 family-based enterprises were initiated.
- Income levels were raised by 20%.
- The Community-based Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (CMEAL) framework was introduced.
- 3 cooperation agreements were formalized.
- 10 Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Plans were developed in collaboration with Local Government Units (LGUs).
- A direct agro enterprise market link was established.
- Capacity-building initiatives and trainings related to farming were provided.

The collective effort, dedication, commitment, and teamwork of the DSAC team are commendable for achieving these targets and making a holistic impact on the farmers they serve.

August 23, 2023

From vulnerability to victory. Believing that empowerment is not a solitary journey, but thrives within the community, the Capiz Archdiocesan Social Action Center/ Caritas Capiz (CASAC) conducted a refresher training for the two Self-help Groups in Capiz supported by the Alay Kapwa para sa Kabuhayan—PaMEALya Livelihood Program of Caritas Philippines on August 17-18, 2023.

The training aimed to re-introduce the participants to the concept of self-help groups, provide insights into various livelihood opportunities, and empower individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to uplift their socio-economic status.

A comprehensive session acquainted the attendees with the background and rationale, principles and foundations, goals, and program description and mechanics of self-help groups, highlighting the principles of mutual support, shared responsibility, and collective decision-making.

The attendees learned about the background and rationale, principles and foundations, goals, and program description and mechanics of self-help groups. They also discussed policy and guidelines



for establishing or strengthening self-help groups and launching livelihood initiatives.

The two self-help groups in attendance are the Patikang Agnaga Mothers' Group and the Olotayan

SHeG Group. They are composed of parents of the 50 academically-challenged scholars supported by the Alay Kapwa Stewardship Educational Assistance Program of Caritas Philippines.

August 24, 2023



Meet Rowel Borja and his family, beneficiaries of the DCSA-JP/Caritas Borongan Inc.'s Family Farming project in Brgy. Balogo, Balangkayan, Eastern Samar. The Borjas work collaboratively on their farm, which is their primary source of income.

Through the project, Rowel received essential farm inputs, vegetable seeds, technical assistance, capacity-building, and value formation. He is the sole farmer in the area who has adopted the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) farming technology, which he has found to be highly effective. During a visit by Caritas Philippines

and #TeamCaritasBorongon, Rowel shared his positive experience with SRI farming. He said that the project has significantly contributed to his family's well-being, particularly in supporting their children's education and daily necessities. The project also ensures a consistent food supply for their household.

Rowel and his family are grateful to Caritas Borongan and the project's funders for their invaluable support. They acknowledge the positive impact that the project has had on their lives.

Together, let's help more families like the Borjas achieve their dreams!

August 26, 2023



The 5th Leg of the Social Action Regional Assembly was held in Bocaue, Bulacan from August 25-26, 2023 and was attended by 11 Diocesan Social Action Centers (DSACs) from the National Capital Region (NCR) and Central Luzon.

Caritas Philippines presented the Simbayanhan (Good Governance) program and the Expanded Alay Kapwa Campaign. Fr. Tito Caluag, the head of the AK Expanded Campaign, gave a presentation about the campaign and how it will help in the sustainability, replicability, and scalability of the 7 Alay Kapwa Legacy Programs in the 86 Dioceses.

The participants from Luzon Central also identified and discussed the challenges within their region and identified some recommendations and areas of collaboration. Five Regional Coordinators were selected for the following positions:

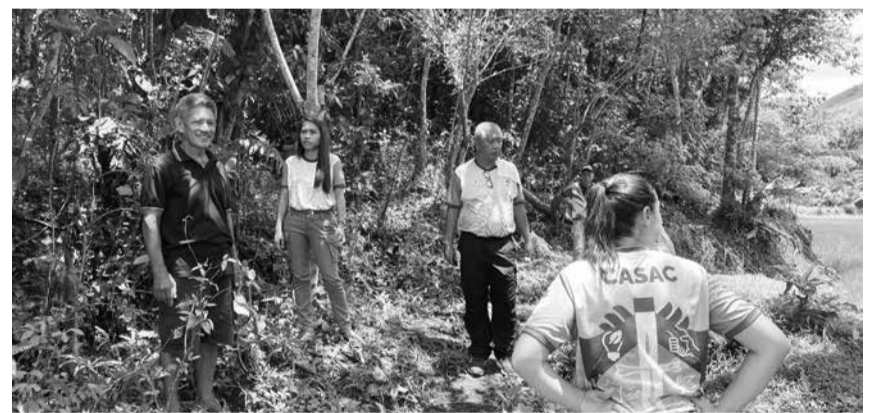
- Regional Coordinator: Fr.

- Melchor (DSAC Malolos)
- Regional Coordinator for Justice and Peace: Fr. Allan (DSAC Kalookan)
- Regional Coordinator for Good Governance: Fr. Aldrin (DSAC Cabanatuan)
- Regional Coordinator for Ecology: Fr. Moises (DSAC Antipolo)
- Regional Coordinator for Humanitarian: Fr. Rick (DSAC San Jose)

The assembly was a success and helped to strengthen the collaboration between DSACs in the NCR and Central Luzon. The new Regional Coordinators are committed to working together to address the challenges facing their region and to promote the values of social justice and solidarity.

Thank you very much to The Roman Catholic Diocese of Malolos - Ang Sandigan and the Diocese of Malolos-Commission on Social Action, #TeamCaritasMalolos for hosting the assembly.

August 27, 2023



Caritas Bamboo Forest Project kicks off in Cuartero. Bamboo's growth mirrors our aspirations for a sustainable future. Soon, a seed of change will rise through our unified efforts.

To jumpstart the implementation of the Caritas Bamboo Forest Project, an inception phase was conducted by the Capiz Archdiocesan Social Action Center/Caritas Capiz (CASAC) in Barangay Agnaga, Cuartero on August 19, 2023. The project outlined its goals, activities, and the potential collaboration of stakeholders involved.

The communities and partner stakeholders were also provided with full information about the Caritas Bamboo Project. This included the final project design, final target activities, a review and finalization of the community profiling and assessment, and information about the implementation schedule and upcoming series of activities.

The overall goals of the project are to: Establish a bamboo forest within the community that will serve as a natural habitat for local flora and fauna, contribute to carbon

sequestration, and prevent soil erosion.

Involve community members in all stages of the project, from planning to implementation, fostering a sense of ownership, unity, and pride.

Conduct workshops and awareness campaigns about the importance of bamboo ecosystems, sustainable living practices, and the benefits of reforestation.

As CASAC Director Fr. Mark Granflor said, the inception marked a promising start to a community-driven initiative aimed at environmental conservation and community engagement. The support and collaboration of various stakeholders reflect the commitment to realizing a sustainable and thriving bamboo forest that benefits both the local ecosystem and its inhabitants. As the project progresses, its impact is anticipated to grow, fostering a greener future for the community and beyond.

The Caritas Bamboo Forest Project is in partnership with USAID - US Agency for International Development and the Gerry Roxas Foundation.

Church partners with Comelec to safeguard PDLs' right to vote

By NIKKO BALBEDINA

WITH the country preparing for the upcoming barangay elections, the Church's Prison Pastoral Ministry has met with the Commission on Elections' Vulnerable Sector's Office (Comelec VSO) to promote voters' education among persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) and to protect their right to vote.

In a message to CBCP News, Bishop Joel Baylon of the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care (ECPPC) said that the collaborations between the Church and Comelec VSO aims to ensure that the "disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors of our society may be provided their rights."

"The ECPPC is closely working together with COMELEC so that this right may be respected and granted to our brothers & sisters in prison who are registered voters," Baylon said.

ECPPC Executive Secretary Gerry Bernabe meanwhile emphasized that the votes of PDLs still remain crucial despite their incarceration. "Securing the ability



The ECPPC led by its chairman, Bishop Joel Baylon, meets with representatives of the Comelec Vulnerable Sector's Office at the CBCP headquarters in Intramuros, Manila. **CBCP ECPPC**

of PDLs to participate in the elections reaffirms the Philippines' status as a democratic nation," Bernabe said.

The partnership will include allowing the ECPPC to provide voters' education seminars to PDLs inside various penal establishments.

Prison ministry volunteers after which will be also allowed to monitor both

onsite and satellite voting of PDLs in strategic detention-voting centers.

Meanwhile, the Comelec VSO had said that they too are "committed to working closely with religious groups and government agencies in order to create a safe space for persons deprived of liberty to exercise their right to suffrage."

"We're thrilled with the

results of our meeting," they said, "we are now able to take on this important project with a more precise plan of action."

The ECPPC is set to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with Comelec VSO on September 20, 2023 at the Palacio Del Gobernador in Intramuros, Manila, solidifying their collaboration.

Antipolo youth gathers Christian groups in 'shared spiritual journey'

YOUTH representatives hailing from diverse Christian denominations gathered for the first Rizal Ecumenical Youth Assembly at the Divine Mercy Hall of the International Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in Antipolo last Aug. 19, 2023.

Spearheaded by the Rizal Ecumenical Movement in partnership with the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Ecumenical Affairs (ECEA), 116 youth representatives

Echoing this, International Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage Rector Fr. Reynante Tolentino reminded the young participants to refrain from vilifying those whose beliefs do not coincide with theirs.

"As I have told them, we should not fall to hate and fake news but instead choose to love and respect," he said.

Meanwhile, newly installed Antipolo Bishop Ruperto Santos reminded



Representatives from various Christian youth denominations pose for a photo after the recently held Rizal Ecumenical Youth Assembly in Antipolo **CBCP ECEA**

from six different Christian churches built relationships amid "differences in faith traditions and cultures."

Rizal Ecumenical Movement couple coordinators Edna and Carlito Villaraza shared with CBCP News how the assembly became a "feast with Jesus" as the participants actively participated in the sessions.

In his message to the attendees, ECEA chairman Bishop Angelito R. Lampon said that differences between the Christian denominations "can become richness for one another."

"When we just have love for one other, we discover that we have so many more things in common than things that can separate us," he said.

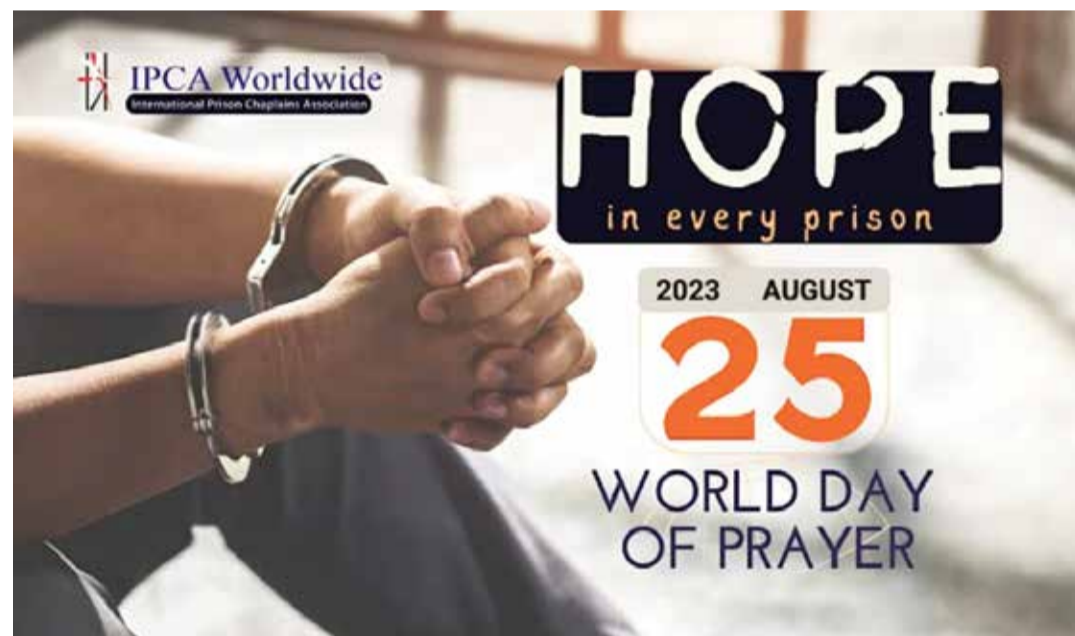
"We don't see anymore the brands of the churches where we belong, we only see that we are ONE in Christ," he added.

the participants that the International Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage is always open for them, encouraging them to consider it as their home.

The Rizal Ecumenical Movement reports that participants included representatives from the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the Apostolic Catholic Church, the United Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

Also among the participants were seminarians from John Paul II Minor Seminary of the Diocese of Antipolo, youth representatives, catechists and aspirants from The Sisters of Charity, and members of the Kabataan ng Diyosesis ng Antipolo.

Prison chaplains, volunteers observe International Day of Prayer for Prisoners and the Prison Ministry



Prison chaplains and ministry workers are invited to join the International Day of Prayer for Prisoners and Prison Ministry on August 25, 2023. **IPCA WORLDWIDE**

PRISON ministry workers and chaplains around the world joined hands in prayer for the wellbeing of prisoners and those who serve their

pastoral needs last Friday, August 25, 2023.

Spearheaded by the global ecumenical organization International Prison

Chaplains' Association (IPCA) Worldwide, this annual event aimed to bring together Christian prison ministers "to pray for

the intentions of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), especially those languishing and are deprived of justice."

Here in the Philippines, the CBCP's Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care (ECPPC) was one of the two representatives for Asia.

In a statement, ECPPC said that this joint prayer opens up doors for collaborations with other concerned organizations.

"We all know the magnitude of the problems being faced by this sector," they said, "Hence, this joint prayer can propel us also to joint actions for the benefit of the less privileged PDLs."

This year's observation was hosted by IPCA Oceania and was attended by Christian and lay Catholics involved in prison ministry from five different continents, the IPCA said. **(ECPPC)**

Cebu health seminar aims to empower women in dumpsite areas

By NIKKO BALBEDINA

IN Cebu city's Inayawan town, a seminar on health and empowerment is making significant strides in addressing the challenges faced by women living in the local dumpsite community.

The seminar, which was specifically tailored for women susceptible to health challenges and sexual violence, involved lectures on women's rights and sexual and reproductive health.

Around fifty women residing in the local landfill were encouraged to develop their "sense of self-worth" and to recognize "their ability to influence social change in their community."

Led by the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Health Care (EHC), in partnership with non-government agency Daredemo Hero Inc., the seminar also included providing basic health care and wellness check-ups to the attendees.

Speaking with CBCP News, EHC executive secretary Fr. Dan Cancino stressed



Around fifty women living in Cebu city's dumpsite area attended a women's empowerment seminar led by the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Health Care and its partner institutions. **EHC**

the continued importance of women's empowerment, noting the introduction of various methods aimed at advancing this cause.

Cancino further said that making health information and services publicly accessible, along with

workshops concentrated on skill development, holds significance not just in empowering women but also in constructing basic human communities.

"These simple efforts lead to abundant and more meaningful living," Cancino

added.

The seminar was also made possible through the collaboration of local barangay health and social workers, and volunteers from the Philippine Catholic HIV and AIDS Network or PhilCHAN.

Bishop calls for collective action against human trafficking

A CATHOLIC bishop has highlighted the grave issue of human trafficking and called for the church's continued effort in addressing the issue.

Reflecting on the celebration of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons launched at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in Antipolo, Bishop Ruperto Santos said that the church must search out and rescue those who are victimized by modern-day slavery and reintegrate them into our Church.

"[Through] our acceptance and caring, we restore to them their dignity and self-worth," he said.

In a recent statement by the Department of Labor and Employment, they cited a US research saying roughly 10 million Filipino men, women and children are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor around the world.

Santos, who vice-chairs the Episcopal Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI), urged the faithful to take the lead in advocating for the protection of Filipino migrants and seafarers.

"It is only right for us to lead the recognition, caring,

protection and prayer for our seafarers, voyagers and fellow countrymen overseas because our beloved patron saint is the Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage," he said.

"Let us be reminded of the Holy Family, that they too were migrants from distant lands who were seeking opportunities elsewhere and to fulfill our Lord's will," he added, "It is only right thing for us faithful to the Holy Mother to be spiritual frontliners: to be the spiritual, religious, and essential providers for our migrants."

On July 30, the Diocese of Antipolo launched its Diocesan Cluster Against Human Trafficking (DCAHT) to mark the celebration of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons with the theme: "Reach every victim of trafficking, leave no one behind."

The DCAHT is a collaborative effort between the diocese's ministries which aims to engage with the concerned agencies, conduct research, and database at the diocesan level, and standardize modules and guidelines for response. **(Hurt Allauigan)**