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Bishop Broderick Pabillo, Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Manila, celebrates Chrism Mass at the Manila Cathedral on June 19, 2020. Usually held on Holy Thursday of the Holy Week, the Chrism Mass in the archdiocese was postponed after the government declared a lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic in March. COURTESY OF THE MANILA CATHEDRAL

Bishop: Gov't support to private schools a matter of 'survival'



Bishop Roberto Mallari, chairman of the CBCP Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education. DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE

By Roy Lagarde

The government should take concrete steps to help private schools cope with the coronavirus crisis, a Catholic bishop said.

Bishop Roberto Mallari of San Jose de Nueva Ecija, chairman of the Church's Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education, said that government intervention is necessary for the "survival" of private schools.

"It's important to know that even private schools need help from the government for their survival. I pray that we, especially the present government, recognize the role of private schools in nation building," Mallari said.

"They are not just there to earn money. But most of them, if not all, exist because of a great sense of mission to contribute in the formation of young minds," he said.

The bishop was reacting to reports that hundreds of private schools are at risk of closure over lack of enrollees.

Some 400 private schools are on the verge of closing down operations, according to a survey by the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Association of the Philippines (COCOPEA).

The study also showed that around 370,000 private school teachers went on "no work no pay" status, or have taken pay cuts since the Covid-19 pandemic started.

Fewer enrollees

Bishop Mallari said one reason for the enrollment drop is because parents want to protect their children "so they want to keep them at home".

"But parents should also know that it is not good also for the mental health of their children to

Support / A6

'When prophets fail, Jesus is betrayed' — Archbishop Soc

THE Catholic Church's migrants ministry is targeting to give financial assistance to some overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who lost their jobs as a result of the coronavirus shutdown.

Fr. Restituto Ogsimer of the bishops' Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People, said the program is for land-based and sea-based OFWs who did not receive cash aid from the government.

Initially, according to him, about a thousand OFWs will receive the financial assistance by June.

He said that land-based OFWs will receive at least ₱5,000, while sea-based OFWs

will receive a cash voucher worth ₱4,000.

"So this is just for distressed and displaced OFWs who did not receive financial aid from any government agencies," Ogsimer said in a virtual media forum on May 27.

The short term project, he said, is a collaborative work of several dioceses, religious orders and the Vatican's migrants and refugees section. Ogsimer also said that they are also eyeing to provide microfinance aid to OFWs as part of their long-term programs.

He added that the church is also looking at providing community-based support system for returning OFWs and



Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan blesses the tomb of Cardinal Jaime Sin to commemorate the latter's 15th death anniversary in the crypt of the Manila Cathedral June 21. SCREENSHOT/MANILA CATHEDRAL

their families.

"We are looking at church communities adopting an OFW family to assure them that

there is a support community that will accompany them in these times of crisis," he said. (CBCP News)

Catholic educators urge Duterte to veto anti-terror bill



Fr. Elmer Jose G. Dizon, President of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines. PHOTO FROM CEAP

THE country's Catholic schools are urging President Rodrigo Duterte not to sign a new measure that they say tramples upon the people's rights.

In a statement, the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines described the anti-terrorism bill as "problematic" because of its many "contentious" provisions.

Veto / A7

Bishop calls for implementation of universal health care law

IT is "high time" to implement the Philippines' Universal Health Care law as the country faces the coronavirus pandemic.

This was the proposal of Bishop Oscar Jaime Florencio of the Military Ordinariate of the Philippines.

"I guess it's high time to implement [the law], especially that we are now in this pandemic," he said.

He said the implementation of the law can also be a "test" of how effective it is.

"If there are things to be ironed out, and there are still problematic issues such as funding, then we will just put some limits in the implementation," said the bishop.

Senator Risa Hontiveros, one of the

Law / A7

Bishop: Keep fighting for freedom from 'anti-people' policies

A CATHOLIC bishop rallied the Filipinos to continue fighting for freedom from 'anti-people' policies on the eve of the country's Independence Day.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo, Manila's apostolic administrator, said that protecting and nurturing freedom should never end.

"We celebrate Independence Day with hope that true independence will come upon us, if, now, we defend our freedom," Pabillo said.

"So we fight the virus, we fight policies that keep our people poor, and we fight the anti-terror bill that threatens our hard won freedoms," he said.

For his part, Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos said that every Filipino reaping the benefits of freedom must help protect it for the next

generations.

"In today's context, I invite all to seriously consider how best to express our love for country and honor the precious memory of those, who offered their lives for our freedom and do it," he said.

According to him, there's more people can do to celebrate the country's independence amid the coronavirus quarantine.

"I exhort every Filipino citizen to read well the signs of the times and make their voices heard in the various platforms available," he added.

The prelates made the statement as the country commemorates its 122nd Independence Day on Friday, June 12.

It also comes amid the growing opposition to the controversial anti-terrorism legislation. (CBCP News)

Vatican Briefing

Pope Francis to Catholics: Do not fear persecution, violence

Pope Francis on Sunday encouraged Christians to fear sin, not the hostility, violence, or persecution they may face when sharing the Gospel with the world. "Jesus advises these disciples of yesterday and today who suffer persecution: 'do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul,'" the pope said June 21 from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square. Speaking before the Angelus prayer, he said, "there is no need to be frightened of those who seek to extinguish the evangelizing force with arrogance and violence." (*Hannah Brockhaus/CNA*)

Cardinal Sarah remains head of Vatican liturgy department after 75th birthday

Cardinal Robert Sarah said that he would continue to serve as prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship beyond his 75th birthday. Bishops are required to submit their resignation to the pope when they turn 75. The Guinean cardinal celebrated his 75th birthday Monday, June 15. In a June 17 post on his official Twitter account, Sarah wrote: "Thank you for the messages that have reached me from around the world on the occasion of my birthday. Let us continue the path with Christ. For my part, I am happy to continue my work within the Congregation for Divine Worship. Always pray for the pope." (*CNA*)

Pope Francis names lay finance expert as secretary of Vatican 'central bank'

Pope Francis on June 15 appointed Fabio Gasperini, an Italian financial adviser working at Ernst & Young, to the second-ranking position at the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA). This is the first time in its history that the secretary of APSA will be a layperson. Gasperini fills the position following the end of the five-year term of Msgr. Mauro Rivella in April. Gasperini is well known in the banking and finance world, with 25 years' experience advising financial services institutions across a broad range of areas, from retail banking to asset management, investment banking, insurance, and capital markets. (*Hannah Brockhaus/CNA*)

Pope Francis: God awaits us in our darkest moments

In our darkest moments God awaits us and is ready to transform us, Pope Francis said at his general audience Wednesday. Reflecting on Jacob's struggle with an angel described in the Book of Genesis, the pope said June 10 that the episode offered an insight into prayer. "We all have an appointment in the night with God, in the night of our lives, in the many nights of our lives: dark moments, moments of sin, moments of disorientation," he said. "There is an appointment with God there, always. He will surprise us when we do not expect it, when we find ourselves truly alone." (*CNA*)

Vatican bank reports €38 million profit in 2019

The Institute for the Works of Religion (IOR), commonly called the Vatican Bank, said it had made a net profit of 38 million euros in 2019 as it released its annual report June 8. According to the report, the IOR recorded a net profit more than double that of the 17.5 million euros it reported in 2018. This could be due to the boom in global markets in 2019, a year in which the S&P 500 grew by more than 28%. An IOR press release June 8 attributed the net result to a "risk-based and faith consistent investment process," adding that the "priority and commitment of the Institute to the ethical and social principles of Catholic teaching is applied to the management and investment policies of its own account and to those of its clients." The 2019 Vatican bank financial statements were audited by Mazars Worldwide. (*Courtney Mares/CNA*)

Pope: Catholics cannot ignore the poverty caused by the pandemic

Coronavirus pandemic has revealed poverty that Catholics cannot ignore, Pope Francis said June 13. "The word of God allows for no complacency; it constantly impels us to acts of love," Pope Francis wrote in his message for the 2020 World Day of the Poor. "This pandemic arrived suddenly and caught us unprepared, sparking a powerful sense of bewilderment and helplessness," the pope said. "This has made us all the more aware of the presence of the poor in our midst and their need for help." Pope Francis said that "time devoted to prayer can never become an alibi for neglecting our neighbor in need." "Prayer to God and solidarity with the poor and suffering are inseparable," he said. (*Courtney Mares/CNA*)

Pope Francis starts fund of 1 million euros for Rome's unemployed after coronavirus

As Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis has started a fund with 1 million euros (\$1.1 million) to help those in the Diocese of Rome who are facing economic difficulty because of the coronavirus. In a June 8 letter to Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, Rome's vicar general, Pope Francis said "there are many fathers and mothers of a family who are fighting with difficulty to be able to set the table for their children and to guarantee there will be the minimum needed." The 1 million euros will go to the Diocese of Rome's charitable organization, Caritas, and is intended to help those who are most gravely impacted economically because of the coronavirus and the measures put in place to control its spread. Especially, the pope said, the fund is for those who are likely to be excluded from institutional sources of support. (*Hannah Brockhaus/CNA*)

Cardinal Pell's prison journal will be 'spiritual classic,' publisher says

AUSTRALIA—The publisher of the prison diary of Cardinal George Pell said the text reveals the courage, conviction, and Christian charity of the cardinal.

"This journal reveals the Cardinal Pell I know and that every faithful Catholic should get to know," Fr. Joseph Fessio, SJ, of Ignatius Press told CNA June 20.

Pell "proclaimed Christ and the Church's moral teachings without fear and with full knowledge of what the cost would be. And he paid the price with good humor and, like Christ, a love of his enemies," Fessio added.

The publisher expects to publish in Spring 2021 either an abridged version of Pell's prison journal, which runs to 1,000 pages, or the first volume of the full text, Ignatius Press said Saturday. News of the text's publication was first reported by AP.

Pell was convicted in 2018 of multiple counts of sexual abuse. On April 7, Australia's

High Court overturned his six-year prison sentence. The High Court ruled that he should not have been found guilty of the charges and that the prosecution had not proven their case beyond a reasonable doubt.

The cardinal's case deeply divided Australia, as many legal scholars said there was no evidence to support allegations against Pell, and criticized his trial.

Pell spent 13 months in prison. The cardinal still faces a canonical investigation at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, though after his conviction was overturned, several canonical experts said it was unlikely he would actually face a Church trial.

Speaking to Australian students earlier this month, Pell said his time in prison was "difficult and unpleasant," but not the worst possible form of suffering. He said his time in prison reinforced the truth of Christian view of



Cardinal George Pell. CNA FILE PHOTO

redemptive suffering.

"I'm still teaching the same Christian message," Pell told the Australian Catholic Students' Association. "And I'm here simply to say that it works. Not in the sense that I was acquitted, but that this Christian teaching helped me to survive."

Fessio sent a letter to Ignatius Press' mailing list earlier this week notifying

them that the journal would be published, and requesting financial support to offer Pell "appropriate advances on these volumes, which he can then use to remove much of the worry he now has about his legal debts."

"I've already read the first half of the journal and it is extraordinary," Fessio wrote.

"I think it's going to be a spiritual classic." (*CNA*)

Rome's Irish College will not receive Irish seminarians next academic year

ROME—The trustees of the Pontifical Irish College decided last week that the national seminary in Rome will no longer host men studying for the priesthood in Ireland, beginning in the 2020-2021 academic year.

The decision was taken because of the decline in Irish seminarians, according to the acting rector of the Irish College, Fr. Paul Finnerty.

Finnerty told CNA that during the last decade the average number of Irish seminarians received at the college has been nine. During this semester, which is now in its exam period, the college had five seminarians.

"I am looking forward to the next chapter in the college's almost 400-year history and helping to shape its vision along with my colleagues," Finnerty said about the decision.

The college has hosted priests from around the world, including from Ireland, who are doing postgraduate studies, and it will continue to do so.

It also hosts a sabbatical program for Irish priests and will continue to offer a semester abroad program, in place since 2016, for American seminarians.

In a June 12 statement on the website of the Irish College, Finnerty said "the formation of priests for mission in Ireland is one of the keys to the renewal and revitalisation of the Irish Church. I believe that the decisions taken by the trustees today have this goal in mind."

The Irish bishops affirmed the decision of the trustees not to receive seminarians in the 2020-2021 academic year during their summer meeting June 12.

According to a statement, the bishops "recognised that the College continues to provide an important service to the Church in Ireland and confirmed that they are open to the possibility of sending seminarians to the College in



Facade of the Pontifical Irish College in Rome. VATICAN MEDIA

the future."

During their meeting, the bishops also discussed the wider future of seminary provision for the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The bishops "acknowledged the trustees' commitment to explore new ways in which the College can be of service to the Church in Ireland," including "both its historical ministry of priestly formation—initial and ongoing."

"Bishops agreed that the broad, global, and universal viewpoint offered by a Roman experience has been enriching for many down through the centuries. This remains true today, and into the future," the statement concluded.

In his own comments, Finnerty said "of course, formation in the Christian life is not the preserve of the seminary, nor indeed of any house of formation. Rather, formation begins in the family, it is sustained in the community of faith, and our prayer is that Christian discipleship will be renewed and

revitalised using all of the resources available."

"The Irish College is an almost 400-year-old resource for the Church in Ireland that is ready to play a key role in the renewal and revitalisation of the Irish mission."

The Pontifical Irish College was founded in Rome in 1628. It moved to its current location on the Coelian Hill, close to the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran, more than 90 years ago.

It is one of two national seminaries of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

One of the college's significant alumni is Servant of God Ragheed Ganni, an Iraqi seminarian and then priest who lived at the college from 1996 to 2003 while studying at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum).

Fr. Ganni returned to Iraq to serve at a parish in Mosul in 2003, two years after his priestly ordination, and in 2007 he was martyred after offering Mass at his Chaldean Catholic parish.

Rockville Centre diocese faces bankruptcy amid abuse lawsuits

NEW YORK—The Diocese of Rockville Centre has requested a pause in the proceedings of numerous sex abuse lawsuits it is facing, and said it may have to declare bankruptcy if it is not granted.

Two fellow New York dioceses, Buffalo and Rochester, have filed for bankruptcy within the last year. Each diocese had been named in hundreds of clergy sex abuse lawsuits following the opening of a window in the statute of limitations in the state in cases of sexual abuse under the Child Victims Act.

Sean Dolan, director of communications for the Rockville Centre diocese, said it had requested "a stay pending an appeal of the court's denial of its motion to dismiss approximately 35 cases." He said the request reflects the diocese's

"dedication to the fair and just treatment of all abuse victims, rather than continuing on a course that is marked by exhausting litigation expenses for the benefit of those racing to the courthouse ahead of others."

Since the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program was established in 2017, he said, the diocese has given over \$57 million to 320 victims of sexual abuse. It also has pending offers or is actively investigating another 50 claims, he added.

He said the diocese is expecting proceeds from its insurance policies to contribute to compensating victims. But the diocese has yet to be reimbursed for the large legal costs of lawsuits filed under the Child Victims Act.

"Because of that, and the additional strain on its finances resulting from

the COVID-19 pandemic, the Diocese does not have the resources to continue litigating the nearly 100 pending cases through to judgment. What is more, insurance will not, as a matter of law, cover punitive damages sought by 74 of these plaintiffs that, if awarded, would likely total in the hundreds of millions of dollars," he said.

"If these actions are not stayed pending appeal, the substantial sums that the Diocese will have to expend in continuing to litigate these actions will be unavailable to survivors."

The Diocese of Rockville Centre said that while bankruptcy is a last resort, the diocese could pursue such action, noting that the request for a pause will help victims rather than shield predators.

"The Diocese's stay

motion is not an attempt to turn its back on victims or shield predators from any punishment they deserve," Dolan said in a May 29 statement.

"The Diocese may have to seek such protection to preserve value so as to enable it to carry out its mission of supporting the Catholic faith on Long Island, while ensuring that all survivors receive fair settlements," he said.

Michael Dowd, a lawyer for alleged victims, called the prospect of bankruptcy "callous," the New York Post reported.

The diocese serves over 1.4 million people in New York's Nassau and Suffolk counties. Since the coronavirus quarantine closed Mass and other Church gatherings, the diocese said it has received far fewer tithes, including two weeks which had no donations at all. (*CNA*)

Vatican should renew China deal for 'one or two years,' says negotiator



Pope Francis greets two bishops from continental China during the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment at the Vatican in October 2018. VATICAN MEDIA

With the Vatican's interim deal with the Chinese government due to expire in September, an archbishop who helped to negotiate the agreement said this week that he believes it should be renewed for one or two more years.

Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli was instrumental in the negotiation and signing of the 2018 agreement between the Holy See and China that regularized the country's government-appointed bishops who had been out of communion with Rome.

"The deal is an interim deal, which expires, as you said, in September of this year. We have to find a formula. We have to see what to do after this deadline. I think we should probably reconfirm it for one or two years," Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli said in an Italian television interview June 7.

"However, the Holy See has not yet made a decision in this regard, a decision that will then be communicated to the Chinese authorities," he added.

After the Vatican signed the interim agreement with Chinese Communist Party authorities on the appointment of bishops in September 2018, Chinese government persecution of Catholics continued with the demolition of churches and crosses and the continuing detention of underground clergy.

"It is undeniable that they are still situations that still require a journey," Celli said in an interview with Tgcom24 television program Stanze Vaticane.

The archbishop, a long-serving Vatican diplomat who was president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications from 2007 to 2016, spoke of the "need for respect" and for "mutual understanding" between the Catholic Church and China.

"It will not be easy. The Holy See still wants to continue on this step. We want to move forward and we want to reach a normality in which a Chinese Catholic can express all of his fidelity to the Gospel and also with respect for his being Chinese," Celli said.

"I always say, I use a very simple expression, that the Catholic Church in China must be fully Chinese, but it must also be fully Catholic," he added.

Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, a key figure in the Vatican's ongoing negotiations with China, has compared the Catholic missionary practice of "inculturation" to the Chinese government's term, "sinicization." The cardinal said in 2019 that inculturation and sinicization can be "complementary" and "can open avenues for dialogue."

Since coming to power in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping has mandated the "sinicization" of all religions in China, a move which the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom called "a far-reaching strategy to control, govern, and manipulate all aspects of faith into a socialist mold infused with 'Chinese characteristics.'"

The Chinese government is in the midst of implementing a five-year "sinicization plan" for Islam, a religion that has faced increased persecution

in the country with at least 800,000 Uyghur Muslims held in internment camps.

Catholic acceptance of the "sinicization" program has been a much-discussed topic following the signing of the 2018 agreement between the Vatican and China. Most recently a state-affiliated Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association in Zhejiang province issued a statement requiring "patriotism" to be added to the celebration of the liturgy as a condition for churches reopening.

In a video announcing the pope's prayer intention for March as a prayer for "the unity of Christians in China," Pope Francis said: "The Church wants Chinese Christians to be truly Christians, and to be good citizens."

Pope Francis also added this line to his prayer May 24 entrusting China to Mary. The pope added "and good citizens" to the end of his prepared petition that Chinese Catholics may be "joyful witnesses and promoters of charity and fraternal hope."

The terms of the 2018 interim agreement have not been released, however Pope Francis gave some insight into the process that led to its signing in an interview on Sept. 25, 2018, two days after the agreement was signed.

"You know that when you make a peace agreement or a negotiation, both sides lose something," Pope Francis said. "This is the law. Both sides. And you move ahead."

He said that "the bishops who were in difficulty were studied case-by-case," and that "dossiers came on to my desk about each one. And I was responsible for signing the case of the bishops."

Following this, drafts of the agreement were put on his desk, Pope Francis said. They were discussed and "I gave my ideas."

He stated that under the agreement with China, the Chinese government will not appoint the bishops: "No, this is a dialogue about eventual candidates but Rome appoints, the Pope appoints."

"I signed the agreement," Pope Francis stated. "I am responsible."

"The others, whom I appointed, in all have worked for more than 10 years. It's not an improvisation. It's a path, a true path."

Pope Francis noted the efforts of Archbishop Celli, along with Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Fr. Rota Graziosi, an official in the Roman Curia, in forming the 2018 interim agreement.

"We do not look only at the present, but we try to look to the future and give the future of our relationship a deep and respectful basis and I would say that we are working in this direction," Celli said of the ongoing negotiations over renewal of the agreement.

"On our journey we must all be faithful to the Gospel," he said. "It is not an easy path, but it seems to me that we have embarked on a respectful path ... trying to understand each other in order to be able to see how to still resolve those knots that remain, and those situations that undeniably leave much more than thoughtful, I would say worried."

"However we must carry it forward," Celli said. (Courtney Mares/CNA)

Pope Francis thanks seafarers for their sacrifices during pandemic



Seafarers at work. PHOTO FROM THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA

VATICAN— In a video message June 17, Pope Francis told maritime workers that their many sacrifices before and during the coronavirus pandemic have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

"These are difficult times for our world, for we have had to deal with the suffering caused by the coronavirus. Your work as maritime personnel and fishermen has thus become even more important, since it is providing our greater human family with food and other primary needs," the pope said in the June 17 message.

He noted that during the coronavirus emergency there have been significant changes to seafarers' lives and already risky work, involving "many, many sacrifices."

"Long periods spent aboard ships without being able to disembark, separation from families, friends and native countries, fear of infection... All these things are a heavy burden to bear, now more than ever," he stated.

"I would like to say something to all of you," he said. "Know that you are not alone and that you are not forgotten."

Around 90% of the world's trade is transported by sea, but measures taken to slow the spread of the coronavirus have caused serious complications for the shipping trade in the last few

months.

With travel restrictions, many ports and airports have had to close, leaving seafarers stuck at sea and unable to return home.

The inability to change over crews is also causing seafarers and fishing vessel crews to be overworked.

Kitack Lim, Secretary-General of the UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO), said Tuesday some seafarers have been stuck at sea for 15 months, well over the 11-month maximum dictated by a maritime labor convention, Reuters reported.

Speaking to a Capital Link forum, the UN shipping chief said "this is now a real safety issue, endangering the safe operation of ships. We cannot expect seafarers to stay at sea forever."

An organization representing seafarers said June 15 that crews cannot be forced to work after their contract ends, explaining that they have the right to return home or, if that is not possible, to remain on the ship as a passenger.

"The consequences could be that the ship is unable to sail if the manning level is inadequate, but that is not the responsibility of the seafarers," the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) said.

The IMO said in a joint statement with the International Civil Aviation Organization at the end of May that from mid-June around 150,000 seafarers per month will be in need of international flights to return home or to change ships.

In his video message, Pope Francis said that though the work of shipping and fishing vessel crews keeps them apart from others they are close to him in his thoughts and prayers.

He also said they are in the prayers of the chaplains and volunteers of the Apostleship of the Sea, a Catholic agency which offers pastoral care to seafarers. "The Gospel itself reminds us of this, when it speaks to us of Jesus and his first disciples, who were fishermen," he explained.

"Today I would like to offer you a message and a prayer of hope, comfort and consolation in the face of whatever hardships you have to endure," Francis said.

"May the Lord bless each of you, your work and your families, and may the Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea, protect you always," he concluded. "I too give you my blessing and I keep you in my prayers. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me." (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

India denies visa to US religious freedom investigators

INDIA— India has barred U.S. representatives from investigating the country's reported violations of religious freedom, continuing what critics call a trend of Hindu nationalism that threatens religious minorities in India.

The investigation, called for by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), followed reports of the abuse of Christians, Muslims, and other religious minorities in India. The reports prompted USCIRF to delegate India a "country of particular concern" (CPC) in its 2020 annual report. India joined a list of 13 other CPCs in the report, including North Korea and China.

"We see no locus standi for a 'foreign entity/government' to pronounce on the state of our citizens' constitutionally protected rights," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, according to a report by IndiaToday. He said India is a "pluralistic society with a longstanding commitment to tolerance and inclusion."

Although India's constitution protects the freedom of religion, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has manipulated the constitutional stipulation that religious freedom is "subject to public order," using the clause to promote Hindu nationalism, according to the USCIRF report.

One such instance of Hindu



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nationalism is a new policy that would fast-track the citizenship of non-Muslim migrants by treating them as refugees fleeing religious persecution. The same status would not be conferred on 100 million other migrants, potentially making them illegal residents of India.

This policy incited violent riots in northeastern Delhi in February, killing 27 and injuring over 200, according to a CNA report. The riots saw Hindu mobs attacking unarmed people and especially targeting Muslims.

Reports indicate that Indian Hindus, who make up nearly 80% of India's population, have systematically targeted Muslims in lynch mobs for slaughtering or eating beef—a practice that Hindus consider to be a religious offense. Since the BJP came to power in 2014, there have been over 100 lynch mob attacks in India, which often originate on social media. The law

enforcement is known to arrest the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of these attacks.

Religious discrimination and violence has also been directed toward Christians in recent years.

In January, Hindu groups attempted to prevent the building of a huge statue of Jesus in Bangalore. They claimed a Hindu god lives on the hill where the local Catholic archdiocese was planning to erect the statue.

In 2008, Hindu nationalists organized attacks on Christian homes, schools, and churches in Karnataka, physically beating hundreds of Christians. The Saldhana Report, an independent report on the attacks released in 2011, revealed that the attacks were backed by India's highest government authorities.

Dozens of Catholics in the same region were attacked in 2019 while conducting a

Marian pilgrimage, resulting in the arrest of six Hindu Nationalists.

The USCIRF's delegation of India as a CPC, which precipitated the investigation, was not unanimous. Gary Bauer, the president of American Values who serves as a USCIRF commissioner, dissented from the majority opinion, along with two other USCIRF commissioners.

"The trend line on religious freedom in India is not reassuring. But India is not the equivalent of communist China, which wages war on all faiths; nor of North Korea, a prison masquerading as a country; nor of Iran, whose Islamic extremist leaders regularly threaten to unleash a second Holocaust," said Bauer. "I am confident that India will reject any authoritarian temptation and stand with the United States and other free nations in defense of liberty, including religious liberty." (CNA)

EDITORIAL

Saving private schools

EDUCATION is one of the most essential needs that cannot be placed at the backburner even in times of pandemic—always at the forefront, in season and out of season. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs may not mention it verbatim, but it pervades rather strongly in all human need for self-actualization, esteem and all the rest down the line.

Thus, it escapes beyond normal comprehension why political power will give more attention to the peripheral such as the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 or over-use its brains in justifying, no matter how capricious, the non-renewal of the franchise of ABS-CBN, while watching sans qualms a good number of private schools at the brink of closing up and leaving thousands of school children tightening the noose around fewer options. Unless, of course, its overarching agenda is to perpetuate power or to save it from early symptoms of disintegration. For sure, power that discourages critical thinking—and even kill dissent—will abhor the fundamental pillars of learning.

The chairman of the Church's Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education, Bishop Roberto Mallari, has called on government's intervention in the sad "survival" plight of private schools. "It's important to know that even private schools need help from the government for their survival. I pray that we, especially the present government, recognize the role of private schools in nation building," so said the bishop.

According to a recent survey of the Coordinating Council of Private Education Association of the Philippines (COCOPEA), around 400 private schools are on the verge of ceasing operations. It indicated that some 370,000 private school teachers went on "no work no pay" status, or have taken pay cuts since the inception of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Of course, the incumbent power will not heed the call for the government to rescue those dying private schools. After 4 years or so, the observant already knows how this present dispensation has handled competently or otherwise pressing issues of consequence to the masses and the common good while, on the other hand, it regards with determination those in the radar of favored oligarchy.

Formation under the new normal

WE know that our need for formation is a continuing one. It's a never-ending affair. That's because not only do we have to pursue the ideal of the fullness of our humanity, let alone, our Christian perfection—already a formidable, overwhelming task—but we also have to contend with the changing circumstances as we go along, which can be very tricky to us. And some of these changes can be drastic and radical!

We can imagine, for example, how things will be after this pandemic we are having at the moment. We cannot anymore do things the way we used to do them. There will be new challenges in many fronts—personal, professional, social, etc. The need for adaptation is going to be very exacting.

But we just have to find ways to adapt to the new or the next normal. Remember Christ saying, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. For the patch will pull away from the garment, and a worse tear will result. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will spill, and the wineskins will be ruined. Instead, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." (Mt 9,16-17)

We have to take time to study how we can pursue this indispensable task of our continuing formation given the drastic changes and the new challenges of our times. It would be advisable to consult with some people who may give us new ideas and techniques, especially in the area of the new technologies.

Of course, it is important that we are very clear about what are truly essential in our formation—that God is the source and end of everything, that we have been created in his image and likeness, that we are meant to sanctify ourselves usually in the middle of the world and to help in the work of human redemption through our personal apostolate, that God meets us in all the circumstances of our life and invites us to love him and everyone else, etc.

For all these, we are supposed to be strong and stable humanly and spiritually, knowledgeable about the doctrine of our Christian faith that gives us the global picture of things. We have to learn how to pray and do the necessary practices of piety given the likely scenario that our days will have more things and more challenges.

We have to learn how to deal with our weaknesses, limitations, failures, temptations and sins. Of course, we also have to learn how to properly deal with our successes and achievements and the other good things in life that can spoil us if not handled well. Yes, we have to learn how to strike a good balance between the new and the old, our immediate requirements and our ultimate necessity.

We can imagine that the new or the next normal will require of us more resilience, patience and humility, since it is most likely that we will have to study new things. We may even have to change profession, not to mention our social and economic status. We should be ready to strengthen our spirit of sacrifice, otherwise we will likely fall into depression and the like.

In all this, we should try to maintain a calm and cheerful bearing and outlook, knowing that God takes care of everything, and that everything will work out for the good if we are with God. (cfr. Rom 8,28) We just have to learn how to be sport and game, considering these new challenges as some kind of a divinely-directed adventure.

Although we may not be able to avoid worrying completely, let us consider these worries as an occasion to get closer to God, begging him for some help, asking for some miracle if we want it, etc. Our spirit of divine filiation, that conviction that we are children of a good father who takes care of us in everything, should remain strong!



Panaghoy

Bp. Broderick Pabillo

WE have heard the conviction of Rappler CEO Maria Ressa and former researcher-writer Rey Santos Jr. by Manila Regional Trial Court Judge Rainelda Estacio-Montesa under the Cybercrime Law. This may simply be one case, but seen in the Philippine context in the last few months, this is scary. It is a slide to the dangerous slope of authoritarian rule!

The case itself is very dubious. I am no lawyer but I try to understand with common sense. How can Maria Ressa and Rey Santos be convicted of an article that was written on May 29, 2012 based on the Cybercrime Law that was passed only on September 12, 2012? If this is the jurisprudence now, then it is truly scary. Anybody of us can be convicted of anything we wrote in the past! Besides, the prescription period for filing a case against this article has already lapsed. Under the Revised Penal

Code, as revised by Republic Act 4661, libel prescribes in one year, meaning you can only be sued for libel within a year of publication. Wilfredo Keng filed his complaint in 2017, or 5 years after the article was published in 2012. The Department of Justice (DOJ) used an obscure law—Republic Act 3326—as basis to extend libel's prescription period from one year to 12 years.

Although Rappler was exonerated in this case, yet there is a series of cases (still seven cases!) filed against Rappler and its head Maria Ressa. This is outright persecution to bring down the institution because of its critical stance against the policies of this government. This persecution is done using the law, with its twisted and unjust applications, to give it a semblance of legality.

We have the closing down of ABS-CBN on May 4 when its franchise expired. It

expired because Congress did not act on it. From the investigations done it is clear the loopholes are being sought to deny the franchise. To us ordinary people the end is clear: to harass ABS-CBN. Congress and the DOJ are just looking for laws how to do it "legally." At the time that people need information and encouragement because of the pandemic, a dominant voice of the media is threatened to be shut down.

The passing of the Terror Bill (I call it for what it is, because it is intended not to fight the terrorists but to terrorize any opposition) adds another push to this slippery slope. The main problem of the people now is not terrorism but lack of job, empty stomachs, health concerns because of COVID 19, but the ever-pliant Congress speedily passed the Terror Bill without appropriate discussions and consultations – because it is

a priority bill. (by the way, priority to whom?) They did not even pass the Bayanihan II which is meant to address the economic plight of the people affected by the lockdown. When this bill becomes a law, the government can easily put critics to jail as it now easily tags them to be reds or terrorists.

These developments are very disconcerting, to say the least. We are being pushed to the slope of authoritarian rule – all using the semblance of law, which is not meant to serve the common good but to entrench the ruling power. Any voice of protest is being shut up. Independent thought is being muffled. And fear is being instilled in many. Will we allow it to happen?

"I've been the cautionary tale: be quiet or you're next. It's a chilling effect not just to me and to Rappler, but to journalists and to anyone who asks critical questions," said Ressa.

And That's The Truth

Teresa R. Tunay, OCDS



The two popes: for adults only

THE Covid-19 pandemic has compelled families to stay home, more and more people have turned to television to prevent boredom. Families (and some religious sisters, sssh!) who had never even heard of Netflix before won't be weaned now from Korean dramas and a smorgasbord of other movies—for comfort in the time of Covid. Suddenly, Netflix is a household name. The streaming service business is enjoying a freak surge in subscription rates globally, and leading the pack is Netflix which has reportedly gained 16 million more subscribers since the world started lockdowns. You may have heard of the unexpected smash hit Netflix release, "The Two Popes".

You may have liked it, even recommended it to others—no one

can blame you, for the film is truly an artistic masterpiece. However, while the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) gives it an R13 rating, CBCP's arm on film, CINEMA (acronym for Catholic INitiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation (CINEMA) is giving it a V18 rating—for adults only. In its 20 years of rating and reviewing movies, CINEMA has been mindful of the fact that majority of Filipino moviegoers pay good money to be entertained, not to be made to think. This fact is reflected in the list submitted by film distributors of blockbuster movies shown in the Philippines.

Because "The Two Popes"—a story supposedly starring Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI—is quite entertaining and gives the impression

of being a documentary, local audiences may unquestioningly take it as true-to-life. CINEMA sees the yellow light flashing here: Please proceed with caution. It is marketed, honestly enough, as being "inspired by true events" but still it is fiction through and through, written and directed by non-Catholics. Its director, Brazilian Fernando Meirelles, has said during media interviews that though born and raised Presbyterian, "I am agnostic. Religion divides people, puts people against people." The author and screen writer Anthony McCarten, on the other hand, was raised Catholic but is now admittedly a lapsed one, because, in his own words, "Being Catholic was like being in an airless room." Both claim to

And That's the Truth / A6

Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimagala



THERE is no doubt whatsoever that if we want to have our heart to be in its best and ideal condition, it should be conformed after Christ's Sacred Heart. It should not be allowed to throb for anything else, something that we should train our heart to avoid. Instead, we have to do everything for it to be raised to God all the time, whether we are in our good or bad times, in our successes or failures, in our joys and sorrows, etc.

Our heart, which is the very core of our being, the

most intimate part of our life, the place where things start and end, where we meet God and hear his voice,...this heart of ours comes from God, is actually shaped after the most sacred heart of Jesus who is the pattern of our humanity, and belongs to God. We should be clear about this fundamental truth of our faith.

Remember what the Book of Proverbs says about this point: "My son, give me your heart," (23,26) as if God is begging us to give our heart to him since we always have

the tendency to expropriate it to be solely our own, using or misusing it for our own self-indulgent purposes.

That could be the reason why Christ, when asked what the greatest commandment was, said that it is to love God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Mt 22,37) God is not asking too much from us with that commandment. He is not asking something unreasonable. In fact, he is offering what would be the best deal for us.

We need to broaden and

Christ's Sacred Heart and our heart

deepen our understanding of the true nature and character of our life here on earth, and of the role of our heart in it, always guided by our Christian faith and not just by any purely human estimation, no matter how brilliant it is, if only to realize that we need to conform our heart to Christ's Sacred Heart.

We need to constantly ask ourselves as we go through the many affairs of our day, "Where is my heart? Is it with God? Is it throbbing in synch with Christ's Sacred

Candidly Speaking / A7

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PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

"It is not work that kills men; it is worry"—H. W. Beecher

"Do not let your heart be troubled; do not be afraid" (Jn 14:27)

DESPITE official government sources saying the numbers of confirmed Covid-19 cases are due to more testing and honest information dissemination, the fact is, those numbers are increasing, and seemingly exponentially. There seems to be no end in sight, one might add. It does not help that the one at the helm has developed a pattern of delayed reaction at each critical point, starting with a denial of the problem's seriousness, a hesitation to offend friends from whose land it originated, and then imposing a seemingly militaristic solution to a largely health problem where education and persuasion could have best responded to the crisis, in the first place. This is not this author's opinion. It is the view of many health experts. One could raise the question of whether or not government management of the corona virus crisis is anchored in the widespread assumption of Filipinos' lack of discipline and that, hence, soldiers and policemen are better enforcers of guidelines and rules than anybody or anything, reason and health workers included. One could easily build a case regarding Filipinos' lack of discipline; but the same Filipinos once bonded in millions as one to forge the first bloodless People Power Revolution in history. And yet one could say we are in an entirely uncharted territory, and that, no matter what the situation on the ground is, we are still "doing good" compared to, say, the US and Brazil. As if the comparison is rational.

But the numbers do not lie. The Philippines, after it began easing what is considered the world's longest lockdown, has, according to the World Health Organization, the fastest increasing cases of Covid-19 infections

in the Western Pacific. Local legislators are naturally up in arms against what they call "something very wrong" in government handling of the crisis responsible for "delays in actions and responses", "loss of focus" on strengthening "the health care system", promoting "scare" instead of "care", bad leadership leading to missteps by the country's health department. One could go on. Understandably government sources defend themselves by pointing to other variables, such as differences in socio-economic realities among countries in Asia as well their health care capacities.

The net effect of all this among us ordinary citizens is fear and anxiety. We are in a crisis. We know our leaders are trying what, in all their honest assessment, their best. But their best is not enough. The crisis, instead of abating, is seemingly spiraling out of control. The lack of a clear coherent direction and consultation by those in top leadership positions with leaders on the ground is compounding the mishandling of those at the lower rungs. For instance, the good-intentioned programs aiming to help many Metro Manila residents or stranded OFWs and ordinary passengers to return to their provinces, instead of fulfilling dreams of new beginnings, have generated nightmares of Covid-19 cases where there used to be none and understandable resentment of local leaders. In one fell swoop, the once well-protected and quarantined communities suddenly acquired confirmed infections.

In many cases one encounters a Covid-19-realities-induced fatigue. People do get tired of staying at home for prolonged periods and even from following health protocols, such as the wearing of face masks and social distancing (heaven knows how we fare with hand-washing too). People get tired of hearing news on the virus and the

increasing numbers it infects and kills. Even the hopeful numbers of recoveries could seem unreal and a bit contrived.

It is good to know we have not just human sources of comfort. We have a God who addresses us directly even and especially in our anxieties and insecurities.

1. Peace that overcomes fear is a gift. "Peace is my farewell to you, My peace is my gift to you. I do not give it to you as the world gives peace. Do not be distressed or fearful" (Jn 14:27). It is therefore a gift of the Prince of Peace who by his cross and resurrection has reconciled mankind with God. But a gift has no point if it is not accepted. Only when we accept the gift with the Giver in our hearts will we "not be distressed or fearful".

2. Peace means living in the present. One may object and ask how this can happen when it is the present that is full of Covid-19 realities and fears. But it is also in the present that we can avoid the virus not only by carefully observing health protocols but also by observing God's protocols, such as showing our love for him by worship, meditation and prayer, and love of neighbor by our acts of compassion and service to others, seeing brothers and sisters in one another instead of suspected virus-carriers. "Do not worry about tomorrow," says the Master. "For tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Mt 6:34).

3. Peace comes from knowing Who we belong to. If I were a child of a king, I would never fear his officials, his soldiers, his subjects, or any forces within his kingdom. But we are children of more than a king, for all in heaven and earth are under his command. There is absolutely no one and nothing that is not subject to him. "But now this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob,

By the Roadside / A7

Battling anxiety and insecurity during Covid times



Whisper from the Desert

Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSsR, STD

Pandemic poems

WE are experiencing the worst crisis in our lifetime. Things are that bad and the worst is yet to come. The impact of the virus will be felt in decades to come. Can anything good come out of this? I wish to share two of the poems I wrote under the lockdown.

Viruses

There are no coffins for them. They are buried in distant shallow graves or burned without goodbyes. The virus that started in Wuhan has spread all over the world and is now in the neighborhood. The inept rulers acted too late and we are now on lockdown.

Maintain social distance. Stay at home. No problem for those who can hoard food, alcohol and toilet paper. It's going to be a long vacation, bingeing on Netflix, posting selfies and Tiktok on Facebook or Instagram. Or work in one's room - thanks to the internet.

Meanwhile, those outside are cursed and called hard-headed, undisciplined as they huddle shoulder to shoulder at the police checkpoints trying to get to work or just go home on foot. Home is at the dump or under the bridge or in shanties separated by flimsy walls. No panic buying for them. They have to choose: infection or starvation or get shot by the police.

The despot is clueless what to do after welcoming his Chinese friends from Wuhan. All he knows is curse and kill and sleep, and issue incoherent orders in online midnight monologues. He wants more power & money and his minions in congress comply. He thinks he can fight the veerus with the gun or by slapping it or turning cities into concentration camps all over the land.

And the body count continues to rise. There are no coffins for them. They are just buried in distant shallow graves or burned without goodbyes like the over 30,000 murdered by the virus that started in Davao and spread by hitmen and trolls all over the land. What's a few thousands more?

We do not forget. There is a time for reckoning. And he cannot flee to the Middle Kingdom to be protected by his masters. Someday when both viruses are destroyed And the madman is locked-in, buried or cremated, We will go out dancing in the streets and cry Never Again.

It Takes a Virus

The sky is clear and falcons fly freely in the air. There are no smoke coming out from factories. The rivers and canals are blue The shops are closed, the streets are empty. Where's everyone?

Everyone is at home all day long. No need to leave at dawn and come back late at night. Fathers and mothers are playing with their kids or teaching them. They gather 'round the table and feast on their meager meal. Food is shared among neighbors or delivered by strangers.

They wave and smile at their neighbors from a distance It's been a while since they've seen each other. They sing at the top of their voices or play the guitar in their balconies and rooftops and get a round of applause. When was the last time this happened?

There are no students in the schools And no worshippers inside the churches except for the homeless and the stranded. They are housed and fed as donors and volunteers abound. There is a pandemic of kindness all around.

Priests celebrate mass on empty churches as the faithful watch them online in their homes. The pope gives his blessing in front of an empty square watched by millions of people around the world. No distance, quarantine or lock down can separate them.

There is a blessing in all of this. This is the time of sabbath and the great jubilee. The earth and everyone are given a chance to rest and recover. The chains are unshackled and debts will be cancelled. Bumbling tyrants cling to their thrones knowing their time is up.

Do not tremble. The end is coming but not for us but for a global order that puts profits over people and the environment where autocrats rule for their popularity & messianic pretensions. Everything is crashing down – industries and empires. A new world order is emerging from the ruins of the old.

It only takes a virus to trigger all these. The rest is up to us now.



Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

HAPPY 17th Anniversary to my beloved Diocese of Kalookan!

On June 28, 2003, on the 25th year of his Pontificate, St. Pope John Paul II issued the Papal Bull disjoining from the Archdiocese of Manila the Kalookan City-South and the Municipalities (now cities) of Malabon and Navotas, establishing the new Diocese of Kalookan.

The Papal Bull established the Parish Church of San Roque in Caloocan and elevated it to the level and dignity of a Cathedral Church, granted it all the distinctions, privileges and honor which all Cathedral Churches in the Catholic world enjoy.

On August 22, 2003, in the solemn Rites of Liturgical Reception and Canonical Possession, His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin, D.D., installed Bishop Deogracias S. Iñiguez, Jr., D.D., as the First Bishop of the new

Diocese, in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines Most Rev. Antonio Franco, D.D., the Archbishops and Bishops of the Roman Catholic, the Bishops of Protestant Churches, the Clergy, Religious and Catholic faithful.

With the retirement of Bishop Iñiguez in January 2013, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Most Rev. Francisco de Leon, D.D. as the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese. Bishop De Leon was then the Auxiliary Bishop of Antipolo and now Bishop of Antipolo.

On October 14, 2015, Pope Francis filled up the vacancy, no more sede vacante Diocese. He appointed Most Rev. Pablo Virgilio "Ambo" Siongco David, D.D. as the Bishop of Kalookan, who was then the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of San Fernando in Pampanga.

Bishop Ambo was formally installed as Bishop of Kalookan by His Eminence Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle on January 02, 2016, in the presence of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Roman Catholic, the Clergy from different Dioceses, Religious and Catholic faithful.

The motto of the Diocese is "Duc in Altum" (Lk: 5:4) or "Put out into the Deep". These are the words spoken by the Master of the apostles as they gathered themselves before Jesus. The motto captures the spirit and direction of the Diocese. "Powered by the love of Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Diocese of Kalookan sails forth with faith and courage accompanied by Mary to cast its net so that a bountiful harvest may be reaped for the glory of God and the salvation of the souls."

The title of this column is named after the motto of

Diocese of Kalookan @ 17

the Diocese "Duc in Altum" and approved for usage by the then Bishop, now Bishop Emeritus Iñiguez.

On the occasion of the 17th Anniversary of the Diocese, everyone can watch at the Diocese's FB Page (Roman Catholic Diocese of Kalookan) the Clergy Concert entitled "LayKo si Pads, Suportahan Kita." It was held last January 13, 2020 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) as fund raising project of the Council of the Laity of Kalookan (CLK) and the Diocese for the completion of the Divine Mercy Spiritual and Renewal Center, the retirement house of the clergy and formation center for the seminarians and the laity of the Diocese. It was the 4th of a series of concerts initiated by CLK and its 3rd at PICC. The performers were the Diocesan clergy, the religious

Duc in Altum / A7



Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco

WORKING from home? Or perhaps, at some point during this confinement of nearly four months, you are beginning to doubt whether the place could still be home!

Web and zoominars have eaten quality-bonding family time. Flexi-time has redefined your work hours and added more load than you can handle. Calls, emails and texts interfere with the sacred family atmosphere that you had wished to nurture. Finally, the constant creeping anxiety of not knowing how long this 'new normal' will last.

What is clear, until a COVID vaccine is found, we are in for a very long haul! What can we do so that our work will not take us away from home but help us to convert that home into the center of our heart?

Here are a few ideas that may help:

a) Defining spaces/boundaries. Before the tablet and smartphone,

children knew the difference between the playroom and the dining room. Today, they have everything in their gadgets. Likewise, at home spaces must be defined and respected. And these areas must not overlap with the other zones, that is, we try to work only inside the room or upon the desk in our study. Consciousness of these demarcations can help, so to speak, not to bring our work home. For example, even though our worktable is only in the living room, we strive to avoid bringing anything from that place to the dining table. All office work and materials must remain in that defined working space. The same goes for the places we might allot for rest and recreation.

b) Lines of Time. Keeping ourselves within physical territories is easy, but it is trickier to stay within non-physical conventions as time. If, however, we make a gentle effort everyday to keep

to a clear and realistic schedule of daily goals, we will in no time be able to accomplish more and also help foster deeper family moments. Time and space have to be set in motion together. When we are not conscious of time, we could fall into workaholicism; when we don't draw the space for what we do, we easily waste time in trivial things. But let's not forget the keeping up with time is not only a matter of efficiency, but also of our thoughtfulness towards the others. Thus, when it's time for dinner, we serenely step out of our workspace and move into the warm family dinner.

c) Remembering to be Reminded. Attentiveness to space and time are crucial in our days of confinement. But our minds and bodies could be intensely engaged in what we are doing that we can forget other essential things. Thus, to time and space we add

Whatever / A7

Work away from home

Manila bishop: Holiness requires working for justice

A CATHOLIC bishop said that priestly holiness demands working to change social structures that oppress people.

Celebrating an unusual Chrism Mass in a nearly empty Manila Cathedral on June 19, Bishop Broderick Pabillo, the apostolic administrator of the Manila archdiocese, implored priests to confront a wide range of injustices.

"It is negligence and plain cowardice on my part to be silent in front of injustices suffered by others," Pabillo said in his homily.

The Chrism Mass that each bishop celebrates with his clergy during Holy Week was postponed because of the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Traditionally, the Mass, during which holy oils used in sacraments

are blessed, is held on Maundy Thursday, the day on which Christ instituted the Eucharist and the priesthood.

Friday's service at the cathedral, which also falls on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was only limited to around 20 priests who are members of the archdiocesan curia, vicars forane and seminary rectors.

Metro Manila remains under general community quarantine status, which prohibits mass gatherings.

In other areas, many dioceses already held Chrism Mass after restrictions on religious gatherings were eased.

Reflecting on today's feast, Pabillo said that holiness is for everyone, not just priests and the religious.

According to him, the devotion to the sacred heart calls for repentance and reparation of sins not just by prayer and penance, but also by works of justice and charity.

"We have to rejuvenate this devotion," he said. "Also part of the devotion to the sacred heart is to work for justice because there cannot be true love if there is injustice."

The bishop also exhorted the faithful to pray not just for the protection of their priests during the pandemic, but also that "they may be true to their duties".

"As priests, may our hearts be reformed according to the heart of Jesus, always burning for love even when we are hurt, discouraged and rejected," Pabillo said. (CBCP News)



Bishop Broderick Pabillo celebrates Chrism Mass at the Manila Cathedral June 19. COURTESY OF THE MANILA CATHEDRAL

Parishes to get churchgoers info for contact tracing

CATHOLIC parishes will be required to keep attendance records for contact tracing in case someone tests positive for coronavirus.

Bishop Mylo Hubert Vergara of Pasig said the measure will be implemented when parishes in the diocese would reopen for in-person services.

He said that churchgoers will be given a form requiring some basic information when they attend Mass or other religious services.

"They will submit that form at the exit doors before leaving the church after the celebration," Vergara said.

Aside from contact tracing, parishes are also required to adhere to physical distancing and hygiene directives such as wearing face masks.

The bishop also said that holy water fonts inside churches should remain empty and covered as



A worker disinfects the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Pasig City, March 24, 2020. PHOTO FROM THE PASIG CATHEDRAL

precaution against the spread of the virus.

Religious services in Metro Manila remain highly

restricted to curb the spread of Covid-19.

While Metro Manila was eased to general community

quarantine last week, religious gatherings are still limited to 10 people. (CBCP News)

Bishop decries death of Filipino seafarer waiting for repatriation

A CATHOLIC bishop decried the death of Filipino seafarer Mariah Jocson, calling the incident a "tragic ending."

"A life was lost. A life could be saved," said Bishop Ruperto Santos, vice chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People.

"Our attention should be more focused on the situation of our [overseas migrant workers] as to give them hope, to help and heal them," said the prelate.

"Prioritize to help our [workers], let them come home and let them feel welcome home," said Bishop Santos of the Diocese of Balanga in Bataan province.

Jocson, 28, a crew of a cruise ship that stopped operations due to the pandemic, reportedly committed suicide after months of waiting for repatriation back to the Philippines.

She was found dead in her cabin on the Royal Caribbean ship, Harmony of the Seas, which was anchored off Barbados, on June 9.

Bishop Santos the government should bring home Filipino workers because there are "repatriation funds" and chartered planes can bring stranded workers home.

Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. confirmed in a statement that Jocson took her own life onboard the cruise ship where some 2,000 crew members were also waiting to be returned home.

"[I]t is my sad duty to report that a



Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga, chairman of the CBCP Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People. FILE PHOTO

28-year old female mariner committed suicide in her cabin in the ship where she's had to stay because repatriation flights back to the Philippines have been suspended again," Locsin said in his Twitter account.

"We are partly reminded that Filipino resilience is no excuse to stretch them to breaking point. They are not rubber; they are people," he added.

Locsin said Jocson's was the second suicide among Filipino migrant workers who were unable to come home since the pandemic struck.

Jocson reportedly worked as assistant waitress of the Rhapsody of the Seas,

which is also operated by Royal Caribbean. She and the ship's crew were later quarantined on the Harmony of the Seas.

Reports said eight other crew members had reportedly committed suicide since May.

The suicides included that of a 32-year old Filipino hotel utility employee who died in mid-May on Virgin Voyages' Scarlet Lady anchored off the coast of Florida.

Jocson's suicide brought to at least five the number of suicides among Filipino migrant workers amid the global health crisis.

Bishop Santos called for prayers and Holy Masses for Jocson and other migrant workers who have lost their lives.

"We invoke our almighty God in His mercy to remember their services and sacrifices for their loved ones, and forgive their human frailties," said the prelate.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello said the death of Jocson heightened the need for greater awareness and advocacy on the psycho-social needs and mental wellness of overseas Filipino workers.

"An array of counselling and helpline services should always be available to our [migrant workers], especially those still onboard cruise ships," he said in a statement on June 12. (LICAS.news)

Catholic university sacks professor over rape remarks

A CATHOLIC university in Manila decided not to renew the contract of a part-time professor who reportedly harassed the sexual harassment of an opposition senator.

A De La Salle university professor "recommended" on a social media post that opposition Senator Risa Hontiveros hold a "closed-door session" with prisoners to teach them not to rape.

The remark was a reaction

to Hontiveros' criticism of a social media post by a police station in Lucban town in Quezon province telling women not to wear skimpy clothes to avoid being harassed.

"You 'gherlsz', you don't wear short skirts and run to us when you get harassed," read the now-deleted post on the local police office's social media page.

Hontiveros countered that there is no dress code for rape

or sexual harassment.

"Instead of teaching women how to dress, we should teach men not to rape," she said in a tweet on June 13.

The De La Salle professor's post drew flak from members of the Catholic university community, resulting in an online petition to hold the professor accountable.

"This behavior is one that we have no tolerance for, and does not reflect our values and morals as an

institution," the university's student government said in a statement on June 14.

Mary Julie Balarbar, chairperson of the university's Marketing and Advertising Department where the professor is a faculty member, said the university "will not tolerate any behavior that goes against the values and morals of the university." (Marielle Lucenio/LICAS.news)

Support / A1

stay at home without doing anything," he added.

"They should be kept busy. They have to find a way of doing their usual activities in the new normal," the prelate also said.

As of mid-June, the Education department said that about 318,930 students have so far enrolled in private schools for the upcoming school year, which is a lot fewer compared to around 4 million recorded last year.

'Save private schools, save children'

Bishop Rex Andre Alarcon of Daet also appealed to the government to help private schools survive the impact of the pandemic.

He warned that the closure of private schools will have a negative impact on families and communities, including loss of jobs and interruption in the education of students.

"The closure of private schools may result in the further congestion of public schools, the very problem the government seeks to address," said Alarcon, who also chairs the bishops' youth ministry.

The prelates said government assistance for private schools is very much needed, as he called on private sectors to help schools.

"Let us help save our schools. Saving our schools is saving our children, and ensuring the future of our nation," he said.

And That's the Truth / A4

be fans of Pope Francis, but obviously they know only the image of Pope Francis that ill-informed media has fabricated and reinforced over and over again to suit their tastes or push their agenda. Thus the discerning viewer will see that in spite of the script's apparent sophistication, "The Two Popes" is in reality a Good Pope Vs Bad Pope story.

Its creators underscore the contrast between everything good they see in one pope and everything bad they imagine in another. Meirelles and McCarten owe Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI an apology. Besides depicting the two pontiffs as caricatures—a far, far cry from the real-life Francis and Benedict. It is obvious that the creators, in spite of their "research" leading to the manufacture of Francis and Benedict's conversations, do not grasp the essence of Catholicism, nor appreciate its structure, mores and traditions. The film contains serious errors, which makes the movie dangerous, especially to impressionable minds. When artists do not

Cash aid

In Metro Manila, Catholic schools appealed to include their personnel as beneficiaries of the government's cash aid program amid the coronavirus crisis.

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippine - National Capital Region (CEAP NCR) said the downtrend enrollment brought by the pandemic has affected their finances.

The appeal was contained in a letter dated June 20 to Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, chairman of the Senate's basic education committee.

"Our meager savings are fast depleting and in no time could no longer sustain the needs of our personnel," the letter read.

The schools stressed that their operations are totally dependent on the tuition and fees of our students.

But the pandemic, they added, has affected many sectors in various ways, especially their finances.

"Private schools' employees were not spared from this dilemma," they said.

The schools particularly sought the help of Sen. Gatchalian to include their personnel in the government's second tranche of cash aid under the Social Amelioration Program (SAP).

CEAP is an association of more than 1,500 Catholic schools nationwide. In NCR, it has about 171 member schools with more than 30,000 employees.

serve Truth, the truths they serve will misguide their audience.

The bottom line is, the plot is simple enough: two men begin as adversaries and after two days of oratorical jousting end up intimate enough to bare their souls to each other. Lending "The Two Popes" a veneer of venerability is the priestly vestments, the setting, the titles. The story could have been about just any two persons, and the narrative's trajectory would be the same, but the lead characters being a cardinal and a pope makes it different and sensational. Had it been "The Two Farmers", "The Two Cops" or "Ang Dalawang Sorbetero", what possible danger could their conversations pose to souls of the faithful?

When filmmakers find our popes fascinating enough to spin a tale around them, we as Catholics should try our best to scrutinize what passes for entertainment and expose what is crying to see the light, lest we become complicit in spreading bad ecclesiology by default. And that's the truth.

5 employees of Cebu's Sto. Niño basilica Covid-19 positive



Basilica del Santo Niño de Cebu. PHOTO FROM THE BASILICA'S WEBSITE

CEBU City— The Basilica del Santo Niño de Cebu will remain closed to the public after five of its employees tested positive of coronavirus.

In a statement released June 8, the Augustinian Province of Cebu, however, said none of its priests assigned at the basilica contracted the

virus.

“Data show that out of 41 swab tests, 5 are positive. Moreover, all the Augustinian priests have negative swab test results,” said Fr. Andres Rivera, Jr., the Order's provincial superior.

Some priests and church personnel have been isolated inside the

convent since May 25 after being exposed with another employee who had Covid-19 symptoms.

“The five persons who are positive remain asymptomatic and are now on their 13th day of the quarantine period,” Fr. Rivera said.

He also informed the public that the basilica

will remain off limits to the public even as the city has shifted to general community quarantine.

Fr. Riveras said that no public Masses will be held “to sanitize the whole basilica compound and to strengthen its safety procedures and protocols”. (CBCPNews)

‘Broken record’: Dumaguete bishop renews appeal for end to killings

DUMAGUETE City— A Catholic bishop said the calls for an end to the ‘culture of impunity’ already sounds like a ‘broken record’ after another killing incident in the central Philippine city of Dumaguete.

In a statement released Friday, Bishop Julito Cortes of Dumaguete decried “unabated series of killings” in his diocese, which remain unsolved.

“Despite sounding like a broken record, we keep on asking why this culture of impunity prevails in our city,” Cortes said.

His comment came after Harrison Gonzales, a barangay captain, was shot and killed by four unidentified assailants on June 16.

The diocese, he said, mourns the death of Gonzales, as they hope for the “just resolution of the case”.



Bishop Julito Cortes of Dumaguete. PHOTO BY JUDALINE FLORES PATRLOW

“Words fail us whenever somebody takes another person's life for whatever reason and leaves

the dead victim's families groping for answers,” Cortes said.

The bishop also asked the faithful to continue to pray for an end to killings as he led Mass on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

He encouraged them to “be the heart of Jesus to others” and “be instruments of consolation” especially to those “whose hearts rage with hate and are filled with evil intent”.

“Let us vow to always be compassionate towards our neighbors, towards one another, even to those we do not know,” the prelate added.

In May, Cortes also deplored the killing of local broadcaster Cornelio Pepino, the latest media killing in Negros Oriental province in the past three years. (Ryan Christopher Sorote/CBCPNews)

Duc in Altum / A5

men and women, special celebrity guests and last but not the least Bishop Ambo and His Eminence, Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, before the latter left for Vatican for his new post as the Prefect of the Congregation for Peoples or Propaganda Fide.

On its 17th Anniversary amidst the covid-19 pandemic, we pray to “strengthen in us the bonds of community and forgive our misgivings brought by disunity and individualism. Grant that we may follow the example of your son, who loved all especially the least, the last and the lost, that in doing so we may fulfill our mission as the Body of Christ in the

world. Enlighten us that we may become beacons to all the corners of the world and show others your love in the midst of the challenges we face, especially in this time of pandemic, through the intercession and example of Mary, our Mother, and San Roque, our patron, may we offer our lives to help build your kingdom in our community and in the whole world.”

Happy Anniversary and Congratulations to the Diocese of Kalookan and to us, its parishioners, most specially to our Bishop Most Rev. Pablo Virgilio “Ambo” David, who like St. Pope John Paul II, has been using the social media to communicate his

messages so as to reach all sectors of society, especially during this pandemic. He evangelizes the Gospel by posting his Homilies and Reflections through his own FB account, the Diocese of Kalookan's website and The Roman Catholic Diocese of Kalookan FB Page. During this pandemic when the health and government authorities prohibits mass gathering like the participation of the public in Holy Masses, Bishop Ambo inspires and gives hope to the faithful through his homilies in Online Masses.

During this covid-19 pandemic, Bishop Ambo is also active in giving the parishioners of his

Diocese with food packs in the form of rice, eggs, milk, vitamins, canned goods, vegetables, chicken, which the people need most specially those from the mission stations which he established in the areas in the peripheries of society of the Diocese of Kalookan. The aids and assistance of the Diocese is not limited to the Catholics; even the residents from different religions receive aids and assistance. The residents of the Diocese are really blessed to have a bishop like Bishop Ambo. The parishioners in return always pray for the bishop's good health and safety. God bless the Diocese of Kalookan. Mabuhay!

Veto / A1

“We pray that the President heed the cries of our people who are struggling to survive because of the pandemic, and veto this particular version of the bill,” said Fr. Elmer Jose Dizon, CEAP President.

The bill, passed by lawmakers on June 4, allows authorities to detain suspects without charge for up to 24 days, carry warrantless arrests, and detain people for making social media posts critical of the government.

The measure replaces the Human Security Act of 2007, with

harsher penalties including life imprisonment without the benefit of parole.

The draft law also creates a new Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC), consisting of members appointed by the executive, that would permit authorities to nab people it designates as “terrorists”.

“These are all valid concerns that prompt a re-examination to ensure that the most sacred of freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution are not set aside as empty promises,” the CEAP said.

The group also questioned the inclusion of the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education as “support agencies” of the ATC.

“The CEAP remains firm in safeguarding the constitutionally guaranteed academic freedom of educational institutions and of faculty against any form of suppression,” it added.

CEAP now has about 1,500 members, which include top colleges and universities in the Philippines. (CBCP News)

No such thing as ‘holy alcohol’, says archdiocese

SAN FERNANDO City— The Archdiocese of San Fernando's liturgical office has warned against the use of alcohol as sacramental.

In a statement issued June 8, the San Fernando Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission stressed that “there is no substitute to holy water”.

“There is no sacramental holy alcohol, that we should make the sign of the cross when we rub it to ourselves. Moreover, it should not be sprinkled on the faithful,” it said.

Since March, many churches across the country have emptied holy water fonts over coronavirus

concerns.

But it is “fake news” that the church has replaced holy water with “holy alcohol”, church authorities said.

“Blessed water is the matter of baptism, using another material element or liquid makes such baptism invalid,” the commission added.

It also stressed that there are no such things as holy face masks, holy face shield, holy sanitizer, holy personal protective equipment or holy goggles.

“This is an irreverent marketing strategy or gimmick,” it said. (CBCPNews)

Whatever / A5

remembrance. This is like the soul that penetrates both time and space: that I am working, cooking or cleaning while remembering those I am working, cooking and cleaning for. Likewise, we are open that other family members remind us, not only for lunch or dinner, but also to greet us, take a peek or drop a cup of coffee in between activities, etc. These gestures of materialized remembrance allow time and space to bear fruit.

d) Forging Spirituality. Finally, the ultimate bonding element to time, space and remembrance is

spirituality. When we make sure to start and end our work, or any other activity for that matter, with a prayer for the family. In this we are becoming part of something bigger and wonderful. This unique prayer never fails to bring peace, joy and the constant spice of one's hidden sacrifice for the other members.

When we make the sincere effort to combine these elements for working from home, we will surely be more at home than away from it. And from within, we will constantly set one another afire with the blessings we reap from our work, recreation and rest.

By the Roadside / A5

he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name; YOU ARE MINE’ (Is 43:1).

4. Peace comes from cultivating an ever deepening sense of God's abiding presence. In the many typhoons I had endured as a child in Eastern Samar my home province, it was always a source of comfort and strength to be aware of the presence of my father who was always there to protect us from danger. And he never failed his family. God, in an infinitely better degree, is always present and stands by our side, accompanying us through this crisis. But we need to sharpen and deepen our awareness of his presence by prayer, the sacraments and solitude, the easier for us to put our faith in his saving love. “Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. FOR YOU ARE WITH ME. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Ps 23:4).

5. Peace comes from renewing our trust and submission to God in his Spirit. We all received the Holy Spirit when we were baptized, and more fully at Confirmation. But somewhere along the twists and

turns of life, we lost touch with him. St. Augustine dramatizes this reality with his own admission, which many of us share with him, of how he looked outside when God (through his Spirit) was inside. When we allow ourselves to be enamored by creatures instead of by the Creator, when we turn more and more to the world rather than to the Lord, troubles and anxieties are trebled not diminished. In contrast, as many renewed Catholics testify, God's Spirit liberates us from fear. “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again. The Spirit you received brought about your adoption as children, so that by the same Spirit you call God, ‘Abba, Father’”(Rom 8:15).

In the end, because it is divine forces that create peace and aid us in overcoming fear and insecurity in these Covid times, prayer is our principal recourse as disciples of Jesus the Master. If it is true, as the saying goes, that “courage is fear that has said its prayers”, then we must listen to St. John Mary Vianney who says: “God commands you to pray, but he forbids you to worry.”

Candidly Speaking / A4

Heart? Do we really know what is in that Sacred Heart of Christ?, etc.”

That way we would get some ideas of what to do to conform our heart to Christ's Sacred Heart. Yes, there will be some difficulties, awkwardness, even mistakes, but if we persist, for sure the way to see and imitate what is inside Christ's Sacred Heart would open to us.

The secret is in our persistence and perseverance. Let's not forget that God is a loving father to us. He cannot allow us to wallow in our difficulties without him helping us. And we also have to understand that the difficulties we will experience in this regard would always be helpful to us if considered in faith. There is always a reason behind them.

We should just try our best to attain that level where the very

stream of our consciousness has God always in the middle of everything. Let's always make our faith functional, so that this reality would be captured in our heart and mind. To be sure, we are not inventing things here. We are not playing make-believe. God is first of all already in our heart. All we have to do is to learn to acknowledge him.

If we become more and more familiar with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we would know why we always have to be patient, understanding, compassionate, magnanimous, etc. The very image of Christ, the pattern of our humanity and the savior of our damaged humanity, would be formed in us.

We can echo the same words of St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me!” (Gal 2,20)

Law / A1

authors of the law that was signed by President Rodrigo Duterte last year, said the pandemic should prompt the government to implement the law.

The senator rejected the earlier proposal of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation to postpone the implementation of the law due to budget constraints.

PhilHealth president Ricardo Morales recommended a delay on the implementation of the law as he pointed out a projected fund deficit until 2024.

He said the pandemic resulted

in lower collection of PhilHealth contributions.

Government spokesman Harry Roque, however, said the proposal to delay the implementation of the Universal Health Care law is “a violation of the literal provisions of the law.”

The Universal Health Care law, which automatically enrolls all Filipino citizens to the National Health Insurance Program, was enacted in February 2019.

Its implementing rules and regulations were signed in October. (Licas.News)

Vatican cites Maasin as world's first diocese to go full solar

The Vatican has cited a central Philippine diocese for being the first to switch to renewable energy in the whole Catholic Church.

In a new document, the Vatican acknowledged the Diocese of Maasin in Southern Leyte province for leading the Church in the use of solar energy.

"The Diocese of Maasin has become the first diocese in the world to equip all parishes with solar panels," part of the 265-page document read.

Released on June 18, the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*, the book aims to guide Catholics on how to bring out concrete ecological actions.

Titled "Journeying Towards Care for our Common Home: Five Years After *Laudato Si'*", the book also contains "best practices" of the different countries and organizations from all over the world.

In 2018, the Maasin diocese

allowed the wide-scale installation of solar panels in its 42 parishes with the help of WeGen, a next generation energy-tech business, as its supplier of technology and manpower.

The Vatican document also cited the renewable energy advocacy of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on the Laity.

The lay apostolate body has also partnered with WeGen to encourage the use of solar energy in church institutions and communities.

"In this project, they also promote information and communication campaigns to spread the teachings of Pope Francis and the *Laudato si'*," the document stated.

The document was drafted by the "Holy See Interdicastery Table on Integral Ecology", which was created in 2015 to evaluate ways to best promote and implement integral ecology.

(CBCPNews)



Vatican officials present the document "Journeying towards care for our common home: Five years after *Laudato Si'*" during a press conference June 18. SCREENSHOT/VATICAN NEWS

Pope Francis adds 3 titles to Catholic litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Pope Francis has approved the inclusion of three additional invocations in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also called the Litany of Loreto.

In a June 20 letter to the presidents of bishops' conferences, Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for the Divine Liturgy and the Discipline of the Sacraments, said the invocations "Mater misericordiae," "Mater spei," and "Solacium migrantium" should be inserted in the Marian litany.

"The titles and invocations which Christian piety has reserved for the Virgin Mary over the course of the centuries, as the privileged and sure way to an encounter with Christ, are innumerable," Sarah wrote.

"Even in this present moment which is marked by feelings of uncertainty and trepidation, devout recourse to her, which is full of affection and trust, is deeply felt by the People of God," the cardinal continued.

Sarah said Pope Francis welcomed people's desire to include these invocations in the formulary of the litany.

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also known as the Litany of Loreto, has



Pope Francis with an ancient icon of Mary in the Basilica of St. Mary Major on Jan. 28, 2018. VATICAN MEDIA

been an approved prayer for the intercession of Mary by the Church since the late 16th century, with its usage recorded even prior.

It consists of the recitation of formal and informal titles of Mary, followed by the request to Mary to "pray for us."

The litany can be prayed in Latin or the vernacular.

In his letter, Cardinal Sarah noted where each invocation should be added, using the Latin formulations. "Mater misericordiae," which means, "Mother of mercy," should be placed after "Mater

Ecclesiae."

"Mater spei," which means "Mother of hope," should follow "Mater divinae gratiae," and "Solacium migrantium," which means "Comfort of migrants," should follow "Refugium peccatorum."

"With every good wish and kind regard, we wish to entrust this notification to you for your information and application," Sarah wrote to the bishops' conferences. The letter is dated June 20, the day the Church celebrates the memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Sarah said "the Church which walks along the pathways of history as a pilgrim towards the heavenly Jerusalem and enjoys inseparable communion with Christ her Spouse and Saviour, entrusts herself to her who believed in the word of the Lord."

"We know from the Gospel that the disciples of Jesus had in fact learned from the very beginning to praise her as 'blessed amongst women' and to count on her maternal intercession," he wrote. (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Vatican urges Catholics into action on Pope Francis' *Laudato si'*

WITH a new 200-page document, the Vatican is encouraging Catholics to put their faith into action to promote integral ecology and care of creation, following the inspiration of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*.

The introduction of *On the Journey for Care of the Common Home* says "the intention is to offer an orientation to the action of Catholics (but not only) in the secular dimension and to ask every Christian to examine their own behavior, also in everyday life..."

The document was presented June 18 in Italian. The booklet will be available in other languages in the near future.

The call to action was written in view of what Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato si'*: "a healthy relationship with creation as a dimension of the integral conversion of the person."

The text was put together by the Holy See's interdicastery group for integral ecology, formed in 2018. The booklet's release falls during the fifth anniversary of the publication of *Laudato si'*.

It is composed of 12 thematic sections, each beginning with a quotation from *Laudato si'*. This is followed by a brief introduction and contextualization of the quotation and a list of references for related papal documents and speeches from Pope Francis and several of his predecessors.

Each section concludes with actions to take and examples of "best practices" from Catholic groups and bishops' conferences around the world on caring for the common home.

According to the document's introduction, the starting point is what Pope Francis calls the encyclical's pillars, including the relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, "the belief that everything in the world is intimately connected," "the invitation to look for other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the proper value of each creature," and "the serious responsibility

of international and local politics."

"On the basis of these main axes, efforts have been made to identify and propose some operational guidelines, always keeping in mind that the concrete contribution the Church can offer is not primarily technical-scientific, but rather educational-pastoral and cultural," the booklet states.

Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the secretary for relations with states, presented the document with other Vatican officials and lay Catholic leaders.

In response to a question about the United States leaving the Paris Agreement, Gallagher said in the area of environmentalism, "the state is not the only actor here..."

"I think this is an irresistible world movement, social movement, a movement of faith, a movement of human commitment, and I think humanity will not be blown off course by any decisions by anybody, but obviously we welcome anybody coming back to the table," the archbishop said.

The Holy See and the Vatican City State are also making their own changes to be more environmentally friendly with "little everyday actions," Bishop Fernando Vérgez Alzaga said.

The secretary general of the governorate of Vatican City State, he described these measures, which include recycling, using more energy efficient lights in the Vatican and in St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel, recycling the water used in fountains, and the installation of solar panels.

A project being pursued but which had to be paused during the coronavirus emergency is the installation of a composter on Vatican property.

In the Vatican Gardens, they have also stopped using chemical pesticides and have planted 250 new trees and around 2,300 hedge plants, he said. This information can also be found in the back of the new document. (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Cebu's oldest parish marks 440th anniversary

BANTAYAN ISLAND— One of the country's oldest parish churches marked its 440th anniversary June 11 with a simple celebration due to coronavirus quarantine.

The commemoration was held with a Mass at the Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Church, located on a small remote island of Bantayan in northern Cebu.

The observance was held with a limited attendance in compliance with the government protocols against Covid-19.

In a video message to Bantayan parishioners, Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu offered his prayer of thanksgiving "for the gifts the Lord has bestowed in your parish".

The archbishop said he is also praying that the pandemic would bring people closer and "stronger in faith".

"Together let us believe that our faith founded on the apostles grow even stronger with difficulties," Palma said.

Built in 1580, the church structure has undergone many repairs but has kept intact a large part of the foundation and walls made of coral stones just like other centuries-old churches in the Philippines.



Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Church on Bantayan Island, Cebu. COURTESY OF FR. JUN AGRAVANTE

For many years, the Bantayan church has been a famous pilgrimage site and a tourist destination aside from the island's pristine beaches.

During holy week, thousands of Catholics flock to the island for various

church festivities.

The parish has also produced a number of religious and priests including Archbishop John Du of Palo and retired Auxiliary Bishop Emilio Bataclan of Cebu. (CBCPNews)



Eucharistic adoration following Pope Francis' Corpus Christi Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on June 14, 2020. VATICAN MEDIA

The Eucharist satisfies our hunger for material things and kindles our desire to serve

Holy of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Vatican Basilica, 14 June 2020

“REMEMBER all the way which the Lord your God has led you” (*Deut 8:2*). Today’s Scripture readings begin with this command of Moses: *Remember!* Shortly afterwards Moses reiterates: “Do not forget the Lord, your God” (v.14). Scripture has been given to us that we might overcome our forgetfulness of God. How important it is to remember this when we pray! As one of the Psalms teaches: “I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old” (77:11). But all those wonders too, that the Lord has worked in our own lives.

It is vital to remember the good we have received. If we do not remember it, we become strangers to ourselves, “passers-by” of existence. Without memory, we uproot ourselves from the soil that nourishes us and allow ourselves to be carried away like leaves in the wind. If we do remember, however, we bind ourselves afresh to the strongest of ties; we feel part of a living history, the living experience of a people. Memory is not something private; it is the path that unites us to God and to others. This is why in the Bible the memory of the Lord must be passed on from generation to generation. Fathers are commanded to tell the story to their sons, as we read in a beautiful passage. “When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded you?’, then you shall say to your son,

‘We were slaves... [think of the whole history of slavery!], and the Lord showed signs and wonders... before our eyes’” (*Deut 6:20-22*). You shall hand down this memory to your son.

But there is a problem: what if the chain of transmission of memories is interrupted? And how can we remember what we have only heard, unless we have also experienced it? God knows how difficult it is, he knows how weak our memory is, and he has done something remarkable: he left us a *memorial*. He did not just leave us words, for it is easy to forget what we hear. He did not just leave us the Scriptures, for it is easy to forget what we read. He did not just leave us signs, for we can forget even what we see. He gave us Food, for it is not easy to forget something we have actually tasted. He left us Bread in which he is truly present, alive and true, with all the flavor of his love. Receiving him we can say: “He is the Lord; he remembers me!” That is why Jesus told us: “Do this in remembrance of me” (*1 Cor 11:24*). Do! The Eucharist is not simply an act of remembrance; it is a *fact*: the Lord’s Passover is made present once again for us. In Mass the death and resurrection of Jesus are set before us. *Do this in remembrance of me*: come together and celebrate the Eucharist as a community, as a people, as a family, in order to remember me. We cannot do without the Eucharist, for it is God’s memorial. And it heals our wounded memory.

The Eucharist first heals our or-

phaned memory. We are living at a time of great orphanage. The Eucharist heals *orphaned memory*. So many people have memories marked by a lack of affection and bitter disappointments caused by those who should have given them love and instead orphaned their hearts. We would like to go back and change the past, but we cannot. God, however, can heal these wounds by placing within our memory a greater love: his own love. The Eucharist brings us the Father’s faithful love, which heals our sense of being orphans. It gives us Jesus’ love, which transformed a tomb from an end to a beginning, and in the same way can transform our lives. It fills our hearts with the consoling love of the Holy Spirit, who never leaves us alone and always heals our wounds.

Through the Eucharist, the Lord also heals our *negative memory*, that negativity which seeps so often into our hearts. The Lord heals this negative memory, which drags to the surface things that have gone wrong and leaves us with the sorry notion that we are useless, that we only make mistakes, that we are ourselves a mistake. Jesus comes to tell us that this is not so. He wants to be close to us. Every time we receive him, he reminds us that we are precious, that we are guests he has invited to his banquet, friends with whom he wants to dine. And not only because he is generous, but because he is truly in love with us. He sees and loves the beauty and goodness that we are. The Lord

knows that evil and sins do not define us; they are diseases, infections. And he comes to heal them with the Eucharist, which contains the antibodies to our negative memory. With Jesus, we can *become immune to sadness*. We will always remember our failures, troubles, problems at home and at work, our unrealized dreams. But their weight will not crush us because Jesus is present even more deeply, encouraging us with his love. This is the strength of the Eucharist, which transforms us into *bringers of God*, bringers of joy, not negativity. We who go to Mass can ask: What is it that we bring to the world? Is it our sadness and bitterness, or the joy of the Lord? Do we receive Holy Communion and then carry on complaining, criticizing and feeling sorry for ourselves? This does not improve anything, whereas the joy of the Lord can change lives.

Finally, the Eucharist heals our *closed memory*. The wounds we keep inside create problems not only for us, but also for others. They make us fearful and suspicious. We start with being closed, and end up cynical and indifferent. Our wounds can lead us to react to others with detachment and arrogance, in the illusion that in this way we can control situations. Yet that is indeed an illusion, for only love can heal fear at its root and free us from the self-centeredness that imprisons us. And that is what Jesus does. He approaches us gently, in the disarming simplicity of the Host. He comes as Bread broken in order to break open

the shells of our selfishness. He gives of himself in order to teach us that only by opening our hearts can we be set free from our interior barriers, from the paralysis of the heart.

The Lord, offering himself to us in the simplicity of bread, also invites us not to waste our lives in chasing the myriad illusions that we think we cannot do without, yet that leave us empty within. The Eucharist satisfies our hunger for material things and kindles our desire to serve. It raises us from our comfortable and lazy lifestyle and reminds us that we are not only mouths to be fed, but also his hands, to be used to help feed others. It is especially urgent now to take care of those who hunger for food and for dignity, of those without work and those who struggle to carry on. And this we must do in a real way, as real as the Bread that Jesus gives us. Genuine closeness is needed, as are true bonds of solidarity. In the Eucharist, Jesus draws close to us: let us not turn away from those around us!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us continue our celebration of Holy Mass: the Memorial that heals our memory. Let us never forget: the Mass is the Memorial that heals memory, the memory of the heart. The Mass is the treasure that should be foremost both in the Church and in our lives. And let us also rediscover Eucharistic adoration, which continues the work of the Mass within us. This will do us much good, for it heals us within. Especially now, when our need is so great.

Liturgical law in times of the coronavirus pandemic: Online Masses (Part 2)

By Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD

AFTER a month's interruption—giving way to the pressing question of *The Corona Wedding (I & II)*—let us pick up the thread of this matter that we started discussing in early May. At that time, we posted three questions that had been asked by many: (1) Is the attendance at Holy Mass via internet a valid one, or is it just a relaxation of the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation? (2) Can the Sacrament of Reconciliation be administered via the internet in the foreseeable future? An underlying question is also implied: (3) Is the government right in saying that the reopening of churches for liturgical celebration is not an urgent matter, since alternative ways of worship have been put into effect? In the interim, the first question above had given rise to yet another question: (4) Can the Local Ordinary transfer the liturgy of Sunday to another day of the week, to allow people to fulfill their Sunday obligation on another day, given the limitation of attendance to Masses on Sunday by state-mandated health protocols—e.g. GCQ limits it to 10 people inside the church, while MGCQ limits it to 30-50% of the church's capacity—for physical distancing? Let us tackle these questions in turn.

A. The attendance at Holy Mass via Internet

First let us remove the proverbial *red herring*. A fundamental requirement for valid attendance at Holy Mass is that a valid Holy Mass is being celebrated somewhere in fact. Given an actual Mass is being celebrated, one attends it by being *present* in the celebration—i.e., actively participating in the liturgical rite according to one's state and condition, either as a member of the congregation or as one of the sacred ministers, acolytes and lectors. In this regard, it is enlightening to recall the first Mass celebrated, which was in the context of the Last Passover Supper that Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated with his 12 disciples in the Upper Room, during which he instructed them: "Do this in remembrance of me." Attendance at the Eucharistic Sacrifice therefore

must imitate as much as possible the circumstances of that Last Supper—i.e., of celebrating as a community *at the same time and in the same space*.

When one assists a *recording* of a Mass, one *is not in the same time* as that Mass. Simply put, there is no Mass ongoing to attend (the recording of a Mass IS NOT a Mass). One cannot attend something that already happened. On the other hand, social media have made it clear that there is in fact a Mass in English being celebrated and livestreamed from somewhere in the world almost every half hour, thus making the viewing of a recorded Mass unnecessary.

More debatable is the notion of being *in the same space* as the Eucharistic celebration. Some people argue that one can be present either by being physically proximate—i.e., close enough to directly hear, see and at the given moment even touch the Eucharistic Celebration (by the reception of Holy Communion); or by being physically remote—i.e., not close enough to directly hear, see and touch the ongoing Eucharistic Celebration—but simultaneously witnessing it through the aid of technology—i.e., through a sound and visual monitoring system—from the transepts, clerestory, or rear of a vast temple (e.g., St. Peter's Basilica in Rome) or even outside it (the typical overflow crowd on Sunday Masses in the Philippines (e.g., Santo Niño Shrine in Cebu). In these cases, nobody has ever questioned the validity of such attendance.

Some have objected, however, to extending this notion of being in the same space to the case of a live-streamed Mass. At first glance, it would seem that assisting at a live-streamed Mass is the same as attending that Mass from the rear or outside the temple, via closed-circuit TV and a sound system: the only difference is the length of the cable—as far as halfway around the world in the case of attending a Mass by the Pope at St. Peter's or just a few kilometers in the case of attending the live-streamed Mass from the Manila Cathedral. However, the Supreme Legislator—the Holy See—has chosen to be quiet on this point at



The faithful maintain physical distancing protocols and wear face masks during a Mass at the St. Joseph the Worker Cathedral in Tagbilaran City, June 28, 2020. COURTESY OF BP. ALBERT UY

this time; hence further discussion on this point would be pointless.

What is more important is the pastoral need to foster attendance to the Eucharistic Celebration during this time of pandemic, while reminding the faithful that the obligation to attend Holy Mass on Sunday and other holy days of obligation does not apply in the present condition of difficulty or impossibility to do so. In this case, what is important is the piety and attention that the faithful put in their assistance to the live-streamed Mass. A family (a *domestic church*) that is the most basic ecclesial community, gathered around a TV monitor on a wall—with a table in front of it, complete with lighted candles, crucifix and flowers (especially if it is a Sunday, feast or solemnity), with the boys even in their acolyte's vestments and ringing the bell at the opportune moments, with the entire family dressed for the occasion and observing all the liturgical postures and gestures—can indeed receive a lot of graces attending that live-streamed Mass, which nourishes their supernatural life in this period

of relative isolation. Even more, if there is real difficulty to attend a live-streamed Mass, assisting a recorded Mass would still be preferable to being totally detached from the Eucharistic celebration and thus losing the good practice of going to Mass.

Of course, we need to preclude just *watching* the online Mass (like watching a movie), whether livestreamed or recorded. That would not be *attending*: for that matter, even physical presence at an actual Holy Mass would preclude valid attendance if a person were just really *watching* it absent-mindedly. In this case the crux of the matter is not the actuality or virtuality of the Mass, but rather the subjective absence of the supposed attendee, due to his lack of attention.

Finally, it would be wrong to agree with the government's position that there is no urgency to reopen the churches to bigger gatherings for the Eucharistic celebration—limiting attendance at liturgical ceremonies until now to ten people, even in a huge temple like the Manila Cathedral or the Santo Domingo Church—with

the excuse that alternative forms of liturgical celebration have been put to effect, an obvious allusion to the online Masses. In fact, despite everything that had been said above regarding the merit of attending such online Masses, at the end of the day something very important is lacking in such online celebrations: one cannot receive Holy Communion and Our Lord Jesus Christ had said that *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.* (Jn 6:53-56).

B. Transferring the liturgical celebration of Sunday Mass to a weekday

With the previous matter settled, this second issue almost becomes moot and academic, except that for some people, even attending a live-streamed Mass might be impossible

Liturgical / B7

Responsibility for liturgical laws

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

Q: What is the authority to carry out the liturgy? In our Vietnamese Church, the liturgical committee is only responsible for advising and guiding. Whether or not the liturgical laws are observed is solely up to the priests. If they like it, they do it, but if they don't like it, they don't do it. According to the Vietnamese way of thinking, what works in the past is good — they don't like changes. The bishop does not put much attention to liturgy because there is no direction from the episcopal conference. Accountability is nonexistent. So who will be responsible for the implementation of the liturgical laws, Father? — J.T., Nam Dinh, Vietnam

A: This published question is a first from the northern region of Vietnam. The essence of the question is, Who is responsible for implementing liturgical laws?

On the one hand this is fairly simple. Every liturgical actor is responsible for implementing liturgical laws which should be carried out, not as a mechanical execution of external rules, but as an internal means of offering worship to the Almighty.

Therefore, everybody, from the faithful in the pew, readers, acolytes, other ministers, deacons and priests should faithfully carry out the rites in accordance with the liturgical books. Nobody, not even a priest, may change anything prescribed in the rituals, for to do so is to deprive the faithful of their right to participate in a Catholic celebration.

However, there are many areas where the books allow for initiative and freedom. For example, choosing votive celebrations on weekdays, composing prayers of the faithful, determining what is sung and by

whom, the degree of solemnity with which a given celebration is carried out and similar things. In these cases the pastor, or even the celebrant, has the final say although he may have the benefit of a parish liturgy team to help him prepare and organize the celebrations.

Even though liturgical laws are primarily pastoral, they are still laws, and as such have regulatory and disciplinary authorities. First and foremost, this is the local bishop. The instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004) says of the bishop:

"1. The Diocesan Bishop, High Priest of his Flock

"[19.] The diocesan Bishop, the first steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to him, is the moderator, promoter and guardian of her whole liturgical life. For 'the Bishop, endowed with the fullness of the Sacrament of Order, is 'the steward of the grace of the high Priesthood,' especially in the Eucharist which he either himself offers or causes to be offered, by which the Church continually lives and grows.'

"[20.] Indeed, the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church is found whenever the rites of Mass are celebrated, especially in the Cathedral Church, 'with the full and active participation of the entire holy People of God, joined in one act of prayer, at one altar at which the Bishop presides,' surrounded by his presbyterate with the Deacons and ministers. Furthermore, 'every lawful celebration of the Eucharist is directed by the Bishop, to whom is entrusted the office of presenting the worship of the Christian religion to the Divine Majesty and ordering it according to the precepts of the Lord and the laws of the Church, further

specified by his own particular judgment of the Diocese.'

"[21.] It pertains to the diocesan Bishop, then, 'within the limits of his competence, to set forth liturgical norms in his Diocese, by which all are bound.' Still, the Bishop must take care not to allow the removal of that liberty foreseen by the norms of the liturgical books so that the celebration may be adapted in an intelligent manner to the Church building, or to the group of the faithful who are present, or to particular pastoral circumstances in such a way that the universal sacred rite is truly accommodated to human understanding.

"[22.] The Bishop governs the particular Church entrusted to him, and it is his task to regulate, to direct, to encourage, and sometimes also to reprove; this is a sacred task that he has received through episcopal Ordination, which he fulfills in order to build up his flock in truth and holiness. He should elucidate the inherent meaning of the rites and the liturgical texts, and nourish the spirit of the Liturgy in the Priests, Deacons and lay faithful so that they are all led to the active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist, and in like manner he should take care to ensure that the whole body of the Church is able to grow in the same understanding, in the unity of charity, in the diocese, in the nation, and in the world.

"[23.] The faithful 'should cling to the Bishop as the Church does to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ does to the Father, so that all may be in harmonious unity, and that they may abound to the glory of God.' All, including members of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life as well as those of all ecclesial associations and movements of any

kind, are subject to the authority of the diocesan Bishop in all liturgical matters, apart from rights that have been legitimately conceded. To the diocesan Bishop, therefore, falls the right and duty of overseeing and attending to Churches and oratories in his territory in regard to liturgical matters, and this is true also of those which are founded by members of the above-mentioned institutes or under their direction, provided that the faithful are accustomed to frequent them.

"[24.] It is the right of the Christian people themselves that their diocesan Bishop should take care to prevent the occurrence of abuses in ecclesiastical discipline, especially as regards the ministry of the word, the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals, the worship of God and devotion to the Saints.

"[25.] Commissions as well as councils or committees established by the Bishop to handle 'the promotion of the Liturgy, sacred music and art in his diocese' should act in accordance with the intentions and the norms of the Bishop; they must rely on his authority and his approval so that they may carry out their office in a suitable manner and so that the effective governance of the Bishop in his diocese will be preserved. As regards all these sorts of bodies and other entities and all undertakings in liturgical matters, there has long been the need for the Bishops to consider whether their working has been fruitful thus far, and to consider carefully which changes or improvements should be made in their composition and activity so that they might find new vigor. It should be borne in mind that the experts are to be chosen from among those whose soundness in

the Catholic faith and knowledge of theological and cultural matters are evident."

Later on, Chapter VIII of the document, "Remedies," illustrates how the bishop should address abuses:

"4. The Diocesan Bishop
"[176.] The diocesan Bishop, 'since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, is to strive constantly so that Christ's faithful entrusted to his care may grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments, and that they may know and live the Paschal Mystery.' It is his responsibility, 'within the limits of his competence, to issue norms on liturgical matters by which all are bound.'

"[177.] 'Since he must safeguard the unity of the universal Church, the Bishop is bound to promote the discipline common to the entire Church and therefore to insist upon the observance of all ecclesiastical laws. He is to be watchful lest abuses encroach upon ecclesiastical discipline, especially as regards the ministry of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments and sacramentals, the worship of God and the veneration of the Saints.'

"[178.] Hence whenever a local Ordinary or the Ordinary of a religious Institute or of a Society of apostolic life receives at least a plausible notice of a delict or abuse concerning the Most Holy Eucharist, let him carefully investigate, either personally or by means of another worthy cleric, concerning the facts and the circumstances as well as the imputability.

"[179.] Delicts against the faith as well as *graviora delicta* [serious offenses] committed in the celebration of the Eucharist and the

Responsibility / B7

Reach out, communicate, and stay on course

Pastoral letter to our Filipino seafarers on the celebration of International Seafarers' Day

THE sea is your life. Our life here on earth is our voyage. There are times as you sail, you experience or encounter waves that are rough and violent. It is terrifying. But no matter how rough the sea may be, it returns to reassuring calmness in its majestic vastness.

Life has its ups and downs. It presents many cruel trials and costly troubles. Yet we go on in life. We set our sights on the shore, on our port.

Whether on the water or on dry land, our life can be rough sailing. We are continuously battered and bruised by this unforgiving Covid 19 pandemic. These lockdowns, quarantines, and closing of companies are added storms to our earthly journey. But remember, even if the waves are big and the winds are so strong, we have to raise our sail and keep our hands on the deck.

Along the sea of life; placid or turbulent, deep or vast, when a "storm gathered and it began to blow a gale" (Mark 4:37), remember to do these three essential imperatives:

Reach out Communicate Stay on course

First, our goal is our port; not only to dock to our destination but to get there safe and sound, with our goods complete and whole. The key is to **reach out**.

It is always a long voyage. There is separation from your loved ones and surely loneliness sets in. Weather can be cruel. Works can be difficult. When these creep in, don't isolate yourself. Acknowledge the current situation you're in and initiate to reach out to your trusted shipmate(s). Reach out to us.

You have the Church, especially the Apostolatus Maris on your side, ready and willing to assist you. You are not alone in your journey. We are with you, working for you and welcoming you at our chaplaincies. You have us and we are reaching out to you.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us reach out to our seafarers with compassion and kind understanding.



COURTESY OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA-PHILIPPINES

They are our modern-day heroes, not to be falsely labeled as coronavirus carriers. They should be accepted, assisted, and accommodated.

A stranded male seafarer was housed by Apostolatus Maria in Manila. He was young and wanted to come home. But he had strong reservations, worried, and afraid. He confided to his chaplain, "padre, when I went home to my province before, I was always very much welcomed. Everyone was nice, warm, and happy to see me." With tears rolling down his cheeks he continued, "but now Padre, with this Covid19 pandemic, being in the cruise ship makes me the suspected coronavirus carrier. Everyone avoids me. I feel that we, the heroes, have become villains."

Our modern-day heroes remain to be our heroes. They are humans. They are our essential, frontline workers. Aren't their sacrifices and

services put food on our tables, and medicines as well as supplies at the hospitals that have reached us?

Now is the time to make them feel that we have not forgotten and abandoned them. We are reaching out to them with care, affection, and respect.

Second, our desire is to hear from one another to know what is happening and how each other is doing. We want to be informed and updated. Sometimes we worry. Most of the time, we miss them. We want to see, speak, and listen to them. So, whenever possible and able, we must **communicate**.

Let's give them good news such as: "we are safe" or "I am doing good and missing you so much." Communicate with affection. Assure them of your fidelity and that you will never fail them. Don't let your conversations focus on financial expenses, material needs,

or insufficient budgets. Let it center on inspiring family stories and the children's exemplary achievements.

Be vigilant about fake news which will only aggravate their stress and distract their focus from work. Avoid uttering abusive or offensive words. Let your communication be truthful, hopeful, and always end on a positive note.

The depths and vastness of the sea is mysterious, and at times, even dangerous. The unpredictable weather can make the waves unstable or uncompromising. There can be violent storms, strong winds, or heavy rains. Do everything to stay strong, to remain sound and secure so that with your **communication**, there will be a sigh of relief, comfort, and satisfying words of "thanks be to God you are safe, and we will see each other again."

Our dear seafarers, always communicate with us, your

Apostolatus Maris. Connect with us. We are always here to listen and to be of help.

Lastly, we put our hearts into our works. We always do our best. We opt for the success and satisfaction of our superiors. We don't want to fail them, but to make them proud of us, their seafarers. And they find us very responsible, trustworthy and dedicated to our assigned tasks. So, it is to **stay on course**.

It is our hope and prayers that our journey would be smooth sailing. So, we must be focused and firm. We should stay steady and stay on course.

The ship faithfully follows the course. There is no deviation, no short cuts or cutting trips. It is direct and will cruise straight to the required destinations. So like the ship, stay on your line, on your deck, on your course.

As you fare out into the distant shores and ports, you will surely face trials and even temptations that will test your resolve, your principles. And when confronted with all these, be faithful and stay on your course. You may be beset by storms of seasickness, separation and sadness but don't waver, don't be perturbed. Stay on course and remember Jesus, the captain of your soul is telling you "**take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid**" (Matthew 14,27).

Our dear seafarers, the Philippine Church with her Apostolatus Maris, journeys with you. You have our prayers for safety, strength and sound health. We appreciate and very much grateful for your sacrifices and services to our country. Remember in our hearts and minds: you are special and essential, you are our modern-day heroes and hope. As you venture forth to the open seas, **Reach out
Communicate
Stay on course**

+RUPERTO CRUZ SANTOS, DD
Bishop of Balanga and
CBCP Bishop-Promoter of
Apostolatus Maris Philippines

June 27, 2020

Staying at home: OPO

OUR dear under twenty years old church workers,

You miss the church. We miss you too. You are always there to fulfill our Sunday obligations, best dressed in every celebration of the Holy Eucharist. You are always available for any parish activities and projects. You serve well at the altar, sing beautifully with the choir, and read well the Scriptural readings. You are courteous in greetings and ushering your fellow church goers to their seats.

We always see you with your friends on your favorite seats. We know very well your common gestures of standing silently in front of your patron saints and touching reverently their vestments. We observe you spending the time kneeling before the crucified Jesus. How happy are we at the end of the Holy Mass as you reach for our hands, politely asking us: "bless me Father."

We hope and pray we can do those things again, and sooner. This Covid19 pandemic makes you, our dear churchgoers who are under twenty, confined at home. Our government authorities, taking into consideration our common good and mutual safety, ordered this directive.

The problematic and perilous time of Covid19 led to the temporary suspension of mass gatherings, including religious services. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is very limited with the participation of less than ten (10) lay faithful for both the Enhanced Community Quarantine and the General Community Quarantine; and fifty (50%) of the total Church capacity for Modified General Quarantine. Regardless of the enhanced or modified Community Quarantine, those who are above sixty and below twenty years of age are not allowed to travel.

Yes, it is very difficult for you to completely stay at home. But by reflecting deeper, we come to know that your staying at home is like reliving what Jesus did after He was found at the temple at a very young age and before starting His public ministry. The gospel of Saint Luke tells us that "Jesus went down with them, returning to Nazareth, and He continued to be subject to them" (Luke 2:51).

The private life of Jesus was His staying at home. In fact, there was not much written about it. But the Bible says: "And Jesus increased in wisdom, and age, and in divine and human favor" (Luke 2:52). Your staying at home is to lead you to these three most essential imperatives as you transition into

adulthood. What are these? They are for you to:

Obey Pray Offer

First, whenever there is a task to do or wherever you're assigned to fill in, you obey. When there are days or times to be present, you show up. It's obedience.

It is very easy for us to remind you or even correct you because you listen and in the end, you do what is expected of you. There is always enthusiasm as you participate in any parish celebrations. That is your obedience.

Now, the way you obey us in the Church should also be how you obey at your respective homes. The way you listen to us and follow our instructions in the Church must also be the way you obey your parents, and even more. Obey them with much love. Sincerely follow their advice. Be obedient.

The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus is His obedience to God the Father. The daily life of Jesus at home was His obedience to His parents, Joseph and Mary.

The whole life of Jesus was encapsulated by a selfless life of obedience for He completely obeyed the will of the Father. To fulfill the will of the Father, Jesus "humbled Himself by being obedient to death, death on the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Jesus was also obedient to Joseph and Mary "by being subject to them" (Luke 2:51). He stayed and lived with them until He started His public ministry after His baptism at river Jordan by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17).

Thus, the very life of Jesus is best described by His obedience to the divine plan of God the Father. The unconditional submission of Jesus to the parental guidance of Joseph and Mary was His obedience to them.

Our dear youth church workers, staying at home is to live the 'what' and 'how' to do in the Church. Your home is now your Church. Listen to your parents and obey them.

Second, pray. At the Church you are always asked and reminded to pray. You are always taught to pray. In the Church, prayer is our life. Everything you do is a form of prayer. Your serving at the altar, singing with the choir, leading and assisting the churchgoers to their assigned seats, and doing the collections are all prayers in actions.

The very life of Jesus is a life of prayers. Before making decisions such as choosing His disciples (Luke 6:12), performing miracles

like the raising of Lazarus (John 11:41), or undertaking a very important decision such as the agony in the Garden (Matthew 26:34), Jesus always resorts to prayers. He taught His disciples to pray (Luke 11:1). He invites us to "watch and pray" (Matthew 26:41).

Now, whatever you do in the Church, continue to do them in your home. Transform your home into a house of prayer. Pray before and after you do household activities. Be prayer leaders and share your prayers with your family members.

Staying at home is the most opportune time to be with family at prayers. Speak about Jesus, share your favorite Gospel passages and read spiritual readings to them. Instead of video games or videoke, sing religious or Gospel songs. Instead of dance or picture challenges, heed the invitation of Jesus, urging us "could you not keep watch with me for an hour" (Matthew 26:40)?

At home, we have more than enough time to pray. We have to pray constantly and consistently especially during this troubling time of Covid-19. And at home, we are with God.

Lastly, offer. Our Church is not a meeting place. It is not an excuse to us from our household duties. We go to Church for divine worship and pastoral works. We go to church to celebrate the Sacraments, connect ourselves to God, and be in communion with our people. We enter the Church to participate in our Liturgical services, to perform our ministries, and to provide acts of mercy to others.

You come to the Church to offer, give the best of your time, talents, and even treasures. You do everything in the Church and for the Church to the best of your abilities. You are there not just to be present or just to while your time away. You are with us, in the Church, in order to give something that is not in excess or insignificant. You share yourself not just once but most of the time, your very self. Yes, we miss your availability and visibility here in the Parish. For the safety of all and from the common preventive measures from this Coronavirus, you our dear below twenty years old Churchgoers must stay at home, where you are now most needed. What you offer and do in the Church are now most essential for your family members at home. Can you see that your house is now the continuation of your services at the Church? Can you realize now that what you do in the Church should be extended to your family? To stay at home is

to be more productive, useful, and helpful to them. It feels as if Jesus is urging us "go back to your family and tell them how much God has done for you" (Luke 8:39).

The very private life of Jesus was surely involved sharing house chores. He also learned and worked with Joseph as He was called the "carpenter's son" (Matthew 13:55). Jesus did what should be done at home. Being "obedient to them" (Luke 2:51), Jesus followed the house rules and fulfilled the words of Joseph and Mary.

Jesus lived a life of self-giving and offered for our own good. He shared what He had, even His own life, as an offering to the Father for our salvation. Jesus said, "there is no greater love than this, to give one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). Because of God's love, Jesus accepted the cross, carried it, and was willingly crucified. By His death on the cross, He granted to us the Father's forgiveness. We received God's mercy which made us, once again, in communion with Him. Jesus continued to assure us of offering what is best and most beneficial to us as He promised "after I have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall come again and take you to me, so that where I am, you also may be" (John 14:3).

Now, our dear below twenty Church workers, in this troubling and uncertain time of Covid-19, with the preventive measures of staying at home, we learn and live our **Obedience, Prayers, and Offering**. In our vernacular, our polite way of saying yes is **OPO**. Here, **OPO** means our self-surrender. It signifies that we give up our time for our parents and those that are at home. Our **OPO** is to sacrifice our comforts just to be with them and attend to their needs. Our **OPO** is offering of ourselves, as to be of service to our family members. It is sharing what we say and do from the Church to our home. Let our **OPO** be our visible and tangible actualization of the fourth commandment in which the almighty God asks us to "honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12).

After staying at home, with our obedience, prayers, and offerings, we are ready and they will know that we "must be in my Father's house" (Luke 2:49). Staying at home, **OPO**.

+RUPERTO CRUZ SANTOS
Bishop of Balanga
Chairman, CBCP Episcopal Chairman on
Pontificio Collegio Filippino
June 25, 2020

Our opposition to the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 is our peace

THE Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP), is saddened by the passing of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (House Bill 6875), by the House of Representatives which will now be submitted to the President for final action. We are concerned that the Bill will greatly impact on the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Our alarm on the Bill's passing stems from the recent practice of using the terms Terrorist and Terrorist Groups loosely and indiscriminately in defining enemies of the State and in derailing the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations. Even several civil society organizations, including our member confederation, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) have been tagged as such, placing them in grave threat.

At a pivotal moment in the possible return to the peace talks on December 5, 2017, President Rodrigo R. Duterte declared the Communist Party of the Philippines-New Peoples Army as a terrorist organization beginning an era of referencing the NDFP as Communist Terrorist Group (CTG) and closing the door to peace talks. On November 5, 2019, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of National Defense in a Congressional briefing listed the NCCP along with various humanitarian organizations as among "CTG Front Organizations".

PEPP upholds the primacy of principled peace negotiations to end the ongoing armed conflict between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (House Bill 6875), only gives

further legitimacy to the criminalization of expressions of freedom and democracy and will translate into more repression in the short term and more violence in the long term.

At a time of great national humanitarian crisis when the country is faced by a pandemic that threatens everyone and when the reality of hunger and other health concerns stalk the people in ways never before experienced, it is the call for national unity against the pandemic and its serious long-term implications that is more urgent than ever. The Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform appeals to President Rodrigo R. Duterte to hear the voices of Filipinos who bear the promise of peace in their hearts and veto this Bill when it comes to him for action.

At times like these, the Anti-Terrorism Bill will not serve to end the conflicts of our land. The meager resources of government are most needed not for anti-terror expenditures but for setting and re-building the economic and social structures that everyone needs as we fight the pandemic before us.

As Christian leaders, our opposition to the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (House Bill 6875) is based on our enduring call for broader peace. A peace that is not just silencing of the voices of dissent and the incarceration and destruction of lives that are defined as terrorists. But a peace that addresses the root causes of dissent and seeks resolution by negotiation. This call reflects our deep affinity with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who speaks of a people, a nation, a brotherhood and sisterhood that is called to settle disputes in peaceful dialogue, the words of Jesus teaches us that where there is conflict, "first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gifts." (Matthew 5:24).



Protesters wearing face masks carry placards at a rally against the anti-terrorism bill in Quezon City, June 12, 2020. MARK SALUDES/LICAS.NEWS

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| Issued and signed on the 5th of June 2020. | SR. MARY JOHN D. MANANZAN, OSB
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Co-chair, Ecumenical Bishops Forum |

No one can silence the truth Statement on the Anti-Terror Bill

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-19)

WE are drastically returning to the dark times. The powerful few are exploiting the Filipino people's worsening vulnerability.

Instead of focusing and channeling all the time and energy to fight the pandemic, President Duterte certified the Anti-Terror Bill as "urgent" on June 1. On June 3, the House of

Representatives voted on the draconian bill—an overwhelming 173 lawmakers gave their thumbs up, 31 voted no, and 29 abstained.

The Anti-Terror Bill aims to bestow enormous powers to the Chief Executive, which, if abused, can weaponize the law in order to create fear even among legitimate critics. We have clearly seen at the beginning of this administration that certain landmark policies it enforced were wrongfully implemented. An infamous example is the war on drugs, which unjustly claimed thousands of lives and orphaned countless children. If such executive

powers are made accessible, it opens a door for misuse and abuse... a corruptive power that scheming government officials may not be able to resist.

The Families for Truth Justice and Peace condemns any attempt to pass this vicious measure. This attempt to grab more power to silence legitimate critics not only curtails freedom and peaceful redress but also a clear attempt to deny people's right to hold decision makers accountable. It is unconstitutional. It robs the Filipino people its civil liberties. This must be stopped, for it denies the people truth,

justice and peace. The Filipino people are closely watching and fervently praying. No one can silence the truth. "Let me not be put to shame, Lord, for I have cried out to you; but let the wicked be put to shame and be silent in the realm of the dead. Let their lying lips be silenced, for with pride and contempt they speak arrogantly against the righteous." (Psalm 31:17-18)

FAMILIES FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE AND PEACE
5 June 2020

AMRSP Statement on the anti-terrorism bill and the reopening of churches

"We wait for peace to no avail; for a time of healing, but terror comes instead." (Jer. 8:15)

WE, the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines, are deeply concerned by troubling developments in our midst even as the pandemic continues to wreak havoc to our lives.

While our embattled nation continues to suffer from the tempests of the COVID-19 virus, and its effects on the lives of millions of Filipinos, especially the poor, the leaders of the land have, unfortunately, been trying to fast track the passage of a controversial House Bill (HB) No. 6875, which seeks to amend Republic Act 9372, also known as the "Human Security Act of 2007."

On the 29th of May, 2020, the House of Representatives decided to adopt, in toto, the recently-approved Senate Bill entitled "An Act To Prevent, Prohibit and Penalize Terrorism, thereby Repealing Republic Act Number 9372, Otherwise Known As The 'Human Security Act of 2007.'". President Duterte then wrote to the Congress to deem the said bill as "priority", thus expediting the usual process of legislation, or as Senate Pres. Sotto puts it, "deemed as passed."

While we agree acts of violence have indeed ravaged our beloved land, causing the deplorable loss of lives of many of our sisters and brothers, and other effects of such adverse acts, we firmly believe that only through efforts for peaceful resolution of hostilities while addressing the root causes of such violent acts comprehensively, and not just militarily, will genuinely answer the roots of violence that is rampaging across our land.

We are women and men of peace. Dialogue is our way and we believe peace is the fruit of justice. Thus, we denounce the wicked and the ruthless as the Holy bible says: "The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, and numbered are the years stored up for the ruthless." (Job 15:20)



Redemptorist missionaries call to junk the anti-terrorism bill during a rally outside the Baclaran Church in Parañaque City June 12. PHOTO FROM BACLARAN CHURCH

In the midst of a pandemic it seems government has been deaf to the cries for mass testing, relief for the most vulnerable and the poorest of the poor, protection for our health workers and a comprehensive plan to address this public health issue without draconian measures to curtail fundamental rights and freedoms.

These are the urgent concerns that we as a people need to address. These are the challenges that government can address by channeling resources for its resolution. Instead we see our legislators addressing other peripheral issues that fail to answer lingering questions about the effectiveness, efficiency, competence and foresight of government leaders. Covid-19 is the enemy in our midst. Terrorism is not our immediate concern. Marawi's rehabilitation and the continued displacement of communities should be our priority. People's health, safety and well-being should be first in our agenda.

Sadly, we traverse the path of the wicked and ruthless. Our legislators

chose to prioritize an Anti-Terrorism Bill that seeks to amend the Human Security Act of 2007.

We raise our concerned voices over this bill that may curtail fundamental rights and freedoms.

1. We are bothered by the broad and vague definition of terrorism and terrorist. It can include acts of dissent, free speech, right to assemble, right to organize, freedom of belief, among others. By such a broad definition it is open to abuse and misuse.

While the Section IV of the Bill does indeed acknowledge that "terrorism, as defined in this Section shall not include advocacy, protest, dissent, stoppage of work, industrial or mass action, and other similar exercises of civil and political rights", Human Rights lawyers, civil libertarians and other cause-oriented groups have raised their concerns over the bill, saying that there are red flags all over the bill, thus prone to be misused by persons in authority.

With the very vague definition of terrorism and other terrorist activities (SB Sec 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,

11, 12) in the said Bill, and the track record of the current administration in cracking down on any perceived dissent (which became even more evident by its crackdown on certain groups and even individuals who posted their criticism on how the government is handling the current crisis in social media) this Bill can be used to stifle dissent and curtail rights to free speech, to organize and form associations, to peaceably assemble in redress of grievances.

2. We are wary that the bill runs contrary to the fundamental law of our land – the Philippine Constitution.

We find that the contents of the proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill, which is now being rushed in the Congress, to be terribly disconcerting to say the least. An example is the creation of the Anti-Terror Council (ATC), based on Sec. 25 of SB 1083. According to the SB, the ATC will be composed of the Executive, the secretaries of the DILG, DND, DFA, DOJ, DOF, ICT, the National Security Adviser, and the AMLC Executive Director can "designate", after finding of probable cause, any person or entity as a terrorist or a terrorist group. However, there are no provisions on how these persons or entities unilaterally branded as "terrorists" can present counter-evidences proving otherwise in the courts of law, and their bank accounts and assets "frozen" by the AMLC (exactly what happened to the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, our oldest Mission Partner, after going through the ordeal of incessant red-tagging by the AFP).

Even the mere powers of the ATC, such as being able to order the arrest of any suspected individual and detention without charges for up to 14 days (extendable to 10 days), is already a clear usurpation of the power of the Judiciary and a violation of the Constitutional

provision of allowing only up to 72 hours (3 days) of detention. Even the provision regarding the 60-90 days of surveillance and possible wiretapping of communications which only requires a written authorization from the Court of Appeals (Sec 16, Sec 18, Sec 19), are already clear violations of the right to privacy of communications based upon mere suspicion. These are reminiscent of the PD 1836 and PD 1877 of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

3. We are deeply concerned that this bill if it becomes law will further shrink democratic space and curtail fundamental rights and freedoms. We are witness to the unceasing attacks on the right to life through extrajudicial killings, the right to be free from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, free speech and freedom of the press, right to information and right to organize. Even now organizations and individuals critical of government policy have been red-tagged and subjected to harassment and vilification online and offline. This bill will only exacerbate the very precarious human rights situation.

4. We believe that this bill will only worsen the division and disunity of our society and peoples. By drawing the line between friend and enemy we might see no end to the spiral of violence in our midst. Four years ago, it was a war against drugs and drug addicts, then a new front was opened with a whole of nation approach to end the local communist insurgency and now we seek a new war that may encompass and consume us all—a war against "terrorism and terrorists".

5. We fear the return of an authoritarian order with too much power concentrated in the hands of the executive branch of government. The law is weaponized to deal with perceived enemies and critics without

Statement of the Archdiocese of Manila against the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020

“THERE are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers”. (Proverbs 6:16-19)

We, the clergy of the Archdiocese of Manila, are against any form of terror or lawlessness and we condemn those engaged in these activities that are meant to destroy lives, properties and the peace we all deserve to experience. We believe that it is the duty of the government to ensure the safety and security of each citizen.

However, after prayerful discernment, diligent study, critical analysis, and prudent discussion of the nature and implications of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, we strongly oppose the passage of House Bill 6875 and Senate Bill 1083 and humbly urge President Rodrigo R. Duterte to heed the plea of different concerned groups calling for the Bill's rejection.

Moreover, allowing the passage of a Bill that has vague, amorphous and deleterious provisions will only do more harm than good to our people.

1. The Bill very clearly and concretely derogates from some

established legal principles that are aimed at protecting our fundamental human rights. One's freedom of expression, rights to privacy, property, ownership and freedom of movement are not anymore guaranteed under this Bill as it allows spying, confiscation of properties and detention beyond the legally allowable time. So, while our rights have been extremely limited, this Bill gives draconian powers to State agents, which, as history will tell us, are almost always abused and mis-used.

2. We can all argue that we should not fear specially if we are not guilty of anything that violates the laws of our land. But we have reason to fear because of the Bill's ambiguous and expansive provisions leaving them open to arbitrary and whimsical interpretations which can advertently make us all vulnerable. Even legitimate dissent or criticisms, which are signs of a healthy and working democracy, may be misconstrued as inciting to commit a terror act. Weaponizing this measure to silence critics and detractors will give this government a free-pass even for its inefficiency, ineptness and abuses.

3. The proponents of this measure should not trivialize the concerns of those opposed to it. We are

concerned not simply because of what they alleged as “trust issues”. Even if we presume full regularity in the implementation or enforcement of this measure, it is the measure itself that poses grave concerns.

So, while we agree that the government is responsible for the protection of its citizens from any form of harm or terror, it shall do so within the bounds of existing democratic principles and processes. The government should not make as an excuse the upholding of national security while undermining human rights and civil liberties. To do so makes the government terrorist against its own people.

Guided by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), we are duty-bound to oppose such measure as it is contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of man and to the teachings of the Gospel (CCC 2242).

O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more. (Psalm 10:17-18)

CLERGY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA
June 25, 2020

The Franciscan family statement on anti-terror bill

AND he said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; who say, ‘The time is not near to build houses; this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh.’ Therefore, prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.” (Ezek. 11:2-4)

Peace to everyone!

We, the followers of St. Francis of Assisi, religious and lay, the members of the Franciscan family in the Philippines, express our deep concern over the ever growing suffering of our people due to poverty, lack of opportunities and COVID 19 pandemic, while many of our leaders are busy justifying the passage of the anti-terror bill, which we believe will weaken our rights to redress on behalf of the poor.

While our country continues to agonize because of the pandemic, we are terrified to know that our lawmakers have turned their attention more to the anti-terror bill (House Bill 6875) certified urgent and priority bill by our President Rodrigo Duterte on June 1, 2020, to amend the Republic Act 9372 (Human Security Act of 2007).

As citizens of our country, we expect our government leaders to show more mercy to the poor at this time by providing comprehensive plans and concrete actions for their benefit.

As we see, in this time of emergency, the government up to now has failed on many counts to provide the needed mass testing, to protect the health care providers in the frontline and to ameliorate the

worsening condition of the people.

The government has even failed to provide decent accommodations for the many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who were put under quarantine upon their return. We buoyed up our economy through their remittances.

Now, after placing the National Capital Region (NCR) in General Community Quarantine (GCQ) from the Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ), the government's program has not matched the need for efficient public transport system. How can ordinary Filipinos such as the daily wage earners survive this? Yet the House Bill 6875 is the government's top priority, which will demand a big budget. It can be better used for the new poor, new unemployed and to buy more new health facilities. An unhealthy population is a threat to economy.

We strongly believe that the Anti-Terror Bill is mercilessly unconstitutional. This is a clear violation of the constitutional mandate that no law shall be enacted depriving any person of life, liberty and property without due process of law.

This proposed Anti-Terror Bill is in essence anti-poor. It condones terror itself. This will not give peace and security to anyone.

We, Filipinos, will not be at peace with the bill, even if some assure us that they will not abuse it. Let us not be naïve. Those in authority devoid of human and spiritual values will abuse their power and extra powers.

We, Franciscans, are lovers of peace. We do not want war. We denounce any form of violence and terrorism. We have a long tradition

of non-violence. We believe that peace is the fruit of justice, dialogue and respect for human dignity.

Our seraphic father St. Francis of Assisi on his “Letter to the Rulers” in 1220, eight hundred years ago, said:

“Brother Francis, your little and looked-down-upon servant in the Lord God, wishes health and peace to all mayors and consuls, magistrates and governors throughout the world and to all others to whom these words may come:

Reflect and see that the day of death is approaching. With all possible respect, therefore, I beg you not to forget the Lord because of this world's cares and preoccupations and not to turn away from His commandments.”

Let our government leaders obey God's commands by using its resources and energy to address the most pressing needs of our nation. Many are already terrorized, physically and psychologically. And this House Bill 6875 has terrorized our already terrorized people.

Failure to help the poor population will spell the downfall of everyone; our nation becomes more vulnerable to terrorists and stronger nations. Let us learn from the rise and fall of nations in the ancient past.

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters!

FRANCISCANS
Inter-Franciscan Ministers' Conference of the Philippines (IFMCP)
Franciscan Solidarity Movement for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (FSMJPIC)

June 11, 2020

A statement of strong dissent



Benedictine nuns express their opposition to the anti-terrorism bill in a protest held in front of St. Scholastica's College in Manila June 12. COURTESY OF SR. MARY JOHN MANANZAN

THE Missionary Benedictine Sisters of the Manila Priory and the Academic community of St. Scholastica's College Manila express their strong dissent to the Anti-Terrorism Bill already submitted by Congress to Malacañang.

It seems to us the present Human Security Act (Republic Act. No. 9372, “An Act to Secure the State and Protect our People from Terrorism”) is sufficient if the targets are the real terrorists deemed so by common understanding.

The Anti-Terrorism enrolled bill submitted by Congress is objectionable to us because of the following reasons:

1. Now a person can be detained for 24 days without a judicial warrant of arrest (Sec. 29) in violation of our Constitution.

2. It has expanded the meaning of terrorism that now could include any form of advocacy, protest and dissent, among others, if the authorities will interpret their intent as to “cause death or serious physical harm to a person, to endanger a person's life, or to create a serious risk to public safety” (Sec. 4).

3. It has the same punishment of life imprisonment for intent and commission of the act regardless of the stage of execution (Secs. 4 and 6).

4. The burden of proof of innocence is on the one accused. This goes against the basic principle that one is innocent until one is proven guilty. In this case one is guilty until one proves himself/herself innocent.

It is clear to us that the Anti-Terrorism Bill is not targeting the real terrorists but dissenters, political opposition, critics, activists, etc. Democracy essentially includes dissent and critique. To make this unlawful is to kill democracy.

This Bill, if enacted into law, will not put an end to real terrorism. In fact, terrorism defined as causing fear and panic, will in fact be the one that will sow fear and widespread panic and therefore will give rise to another kind of terrorism: STATE TERRORISM.

We call upon those who wish to preserve whatever democracy we still have in the Philippines express their dissent against the passage of this bill into law and support the June 12 protests.

SR. ADELAIDA YGRUBAY, O.S.B.
Prioress

SR. M. CHRISTINE PINTO, O.S.B.
President

June 11, 2020

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CEAP Statement on the Anti-Terrorism Bill



Protesters hold a rally against the new anti-terror law in Quezon City on June 12. MARK SALUDES/LICAS.NEWS

AT a time when all of our member-schools are scrambling and fervently looking for ways to survive the economic crisis brought about by COVID-19, the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), a national association comprising 1,500 Catholic non-stock, non-profit educational

institutions, expresses its serious concern on the ill-timed passage of House Bill 6875 as well as the contentious provisions found therein.

When government ought to have been recalibrating its efforts in uplifting the lives of our countrymen by fast tracking economic recovery bills, it hastily replaced an already existing, albeit problematic, law that combats terrorism.

The CEAP joins the dissent raised by various groups regarding the expansion of the definition of “terrorism” in the proposed law, the harsher penalties on punishable acts which even include life imprisonment without benefit of parole, the composition of the Anti-Terrorism Council as primarily coming from the Executive Branch of government empowered to make judicial determinations on who are the perceived terrorist individuals or groups, the prolonged detention of those found to be violating the provisions of this proposed measure—these are all valid concerns that prompt a re-examination to ensure that the most sacred of freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution are not set aside as empty promises.

While the CEAP recognizes the paramount obligation of the State to combat terrorism, it decries the articulation of those provisions in the bill as they fundamentally conflict with the Catholic tenets of treating each person as created in the image and likeness of God.

As an organization composed of Catholic schools that uphold, among others, the values of integrity and service, the CEAP registers its objection on the inclusion of the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as “support agencies” of the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) in the bill insofar as the provision is unclear on the extent of support that must be given by these government agencies to the ATC.

Will this designation as “support agencies” empower DepED and/or the CHED to obtain confidential information from schools it regulates?

Will it give the ATC (working with the DepED and CHED) unfettered access to campuses, smoking out individuals or organizations suspected of being “fronts” for terrorist organizations?

Will this spell the demise of free and open

discourse in schools insofar as dissent may be pre-judged by state actors as a “terrorist act”?

In solidarity with the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA), the CEAP remains firm in safeguarding the constitutionally guaranteed academic freedom of educational institutions and of faculty against any form of suppression.

We pray that the President heed the cries of our people who are struggling to survive because of the pandemic, and veto this particular version of the bill. Listening to the various concerns raised creates an opportunity to work together in crafting a better legislation that effectively combats terrorism without necessarily trampling upon constitutionally protected rights.

In opus ministerii,

FR. ELMER JOSE G. DIZON
CEAP President

MR. JOSE ALLAN I. ARELLANO
CEAP Executive Director

June 7, 2020

Lightening the burden of the oppressed

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 11:25-30)
July 5, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

ONE of the reasons why our country cannot provide adequate service to the people is the government debt. Since about 1/3 of the yearly total budget is earmarked for servicing the country's debt, or more exactly, to its interest payment, only a paltry sum goes to health, education and other public services. And because, for many years, the Philippines resorts to borrowing from creditors to pay its debts, the country continues to sink deeper in debt. No doubt about it, the government debt, both internal and external, is onerous. It condemns its people to hopeless poverty and misery. And it making debt service a priority of the budget, the government practically ignores the welfare of the people. No wonder, many people have been clamoring for its cancellation—the government debt is a burden that consigns many to a miserable life.

Life can be like the country's debt, onerous, but it is always the poor who carry the weight. This is true not only of today but also of Jesus' time. As we noted two Sundays ago, Jesus, during his public ministry, saw the poor in the eyes of prophet Ezekiel—tired, leaderless, and neglected: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves. Should not shepherds, rather, pasture sheep? You have fed off their milk, worn their wool, and slaughtered their fatlings, but the sheep you have not pastured. You did not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor bind up the injured. You did not bring back the strayed nor seek the lost, but you lorded it over them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered for lack of shepherd and became food for wild animals" (Ezek 34:2b-5a). But if the poor people felt that life has become burdensome, this was not simply due to the political leaders who failed in their responsibilities to the sheep.

It was also because the religious leaders laid heavy burdens on them. In his denunciation of the Pharisees, for example, Jesus said: "They tie up heavy burdens [hard to carry] and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them" (Matt 23:4). The way the

Pharisees and the teachers of the law interpreted the commandments of God has become burdensome to the poor people. The law on the Sabbath is a good example. In their interpretation of the law, the Pharisees had to ask what activities constituted work and therefore were prohibited on the Sabbath—matters which probably were never envisaged by Moses himself. In Matthew, we encounter people known as sinners (Matt 9:10), and in the consensus of present-day scholars, the term refers to people who by their very profession could not, according to the teachers of the law, observe the commandments. The law was intended to give life to those who keep them (Ezek 20:13), but because of wrong interpretation, it became an onus for the poor.

What must the poor do to liberate themselves from the heavy load? At the time of Jesus, the poor people had options. They could follow the Pharisees in their meticulous observance of the law, in the hope that God would ultimately liberate them from all evil. Some did join the social bandits, not only to ease the burden of poverty, but also to get even with the rich. Others later on joined the revolutionary movement—which engulfed the whole nation in the end. Today, several choices present themselves. The poor can go to the street to denounce the various burdens that the government imposed on them and ask that they be scrapped unconditionally. Or, since they cannot lick them, they can join as well the corrupt and the greedy in fleecing the government, with the thought that, after all, justice cannot follow them. Or, one can participate in the materially rewarding occupation of the Abu Sayyaf—banditry and kidnapping. Of course, for many these may seem reasonable, but definitely, these do not have basis in Christianity. The Gospel offers only Jesus to lighten the load: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28).

Jesus is the only one who can refresh us—not the meticulous observance of the law, not the

politicians, not money, not rebellion. For one thing, "he is meek and humble of heart" (Matt 11:29). He can understand the feelings of the poor, because he himself became poor, though he was rich (Phil 2:5-7). He was born to a poor family, had nowhere to lay his head, and his grave was not even his own. As the parables show, he looked at realities through the eyes of the poor. Because he had no mission other than to do the will of his Father, he was meek and humble, like the servant of God (Zech 9:9, First Reading). For another, he is the Wisdom of God. Indeed, Matt 11:28-30 very much echoes the invitation of Wisdom: "Come aside to me, you untutored, and take up lodging in the house of instruction. How long will you be deprived of wisdom's food, how long will you endure such bitter thirst?... Submit your neck to her yoke, that your mind may accept her teaching, for she is close to those who seek her, and the one who is in earnest finds her" (Sirach 51:23-26). He can invite us to take his yoke (Matt 11:29)—obedience to his word and his life, because it is he alone to whom the Father has revealed everything (Matt 11:27).

Amidst problems that the nation faces, people who are supposed to be in the know—what with their trainings abroad and degrees attached to their name—are inclined to think that the Jesus way is neither easy or light—in fact, it is impractical. They like to depend on their own wisdom. But have their solutions given the people a better deal? One is tempted to say that they like their own solutions, because, from a biblical point of view, God's wisdom has been hidden from them (Matt 11:25). But the Lord says: "Stand beside the earliest roads, ask the pathways of old, which is the way to good and walk it, thus you will find rest for your souls." (Jer 6:16). However, only the humble will recognize God's wisdom. Therefore, they alone will take Jesus' yoke—which is easy and light—and learn from him, and certainly, in the end, "find rest for themselves" (Matt 11:28).

Will the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached ever come?

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 13:1-9)
July 12, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

SEEMINGLY, one among Jesus' hearers believed that the word of the Kingdom, which he had been preaching, would ever succeed. This is the point of the parable of the sower, as Jesus told it. To see this point, we have to remove the allegorical interpretations that have been added by Matthew's community to the story, considering that the original parable had only one point. If we are to discover Jesus' intention, then, we have to limit ourselves to the earlier version of the parable (Matt 13:3-9). Although it is traditional to call it the parable of the sower, it is more descriptive of the story to title it as the parable of the seeds, for it is really about the seeds and their respective yield rather than the farmer or sower. Jesus told it in the context of the opposition to his ministry by the Jewish leaders and authorities. Many Jews rejected his preaching. Despite his sending of the apostles, very few believed in him and were converted. Would the proclamation of the word wind up with the establishment of the Kingdom of God that Jesus had been talking about? Many of his hearers, and probably even his disciples, were unconvinced that the kingdom would succeed.

It is in answer to this skepticism that Jesus told this parable. He drew his listeners' attention to what happens when a farmer sows seeds. In Palestine, a farmer usually brings his sack of seeds to the field, where he liberally scatters them before plowing. Naturally, many of these do not reach maturity, because some are picked up by birds, others fall on rocky ground, still others find themselves among thorns. These bring no yield. But this does not

cause him to be discouraged. Despite these failures, the farmer is confident that the seeds that grow on good soil will eventually yield a good harvest. Similarly, the preaching of the Kingdom may be frustrated. Indeed, many of the Jews did not heed Jesus; in fact, some of them brought him to the cross. For all his effort to bring them to conversion, their response proved to be disappointing. But Jesus was confident that with the few people who really heard his word and acted upon it (Matt 7:21), the Kingdom of God would become a reality.

What happened to the seeds—the coming of the Kingdom would be like that. Sometimes, people ask: Jesus came to establish the Kingdom, but after two thousand years, where can we find it? Where can we experience this reign of love and peace, of communion and justice? Have the First World countries shared their wealth with the Third World countries? The parable seems to say that the Kingdom of God cannot come instantly. Even as it develops, it undergoes various reverses. Take, for example, the search for peace. Probably there has never been a century that has not been marked by conflicts and wars among nations. And almost every effort at establishing peace knows its own setbacks. There have been many backward movements in the Mideast process, for example. And yet, we can point that it is only in the twentieth century that we can speak of a community of nations. It is only in this century that we can talk about the global village, of the consciousness that we are all one family. The road to such consciousness has suf-

fered many upsets, of course, but who can argue that it is not a big stride? Surely, the Kingdom of God is in the process of being realized, for all the failures it has suffered. Dictatorships may recur, human rights may be abused, oppressive regimes may be established, but the Kingdom will surely dislodge them!

It is interesting to note, however, that the parable ends by saying that the seed that flourished brought forth a marvelous harvest—some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, others hundred-fold (Matt 13:8). It has been noted that this does not reflect the ordinary experience of a farmer in Palestine, for a normal return for a bushel of seed would any anywhere between seven and a half, and a return of ten bushels could be considered a good one. Thus, the hundred-fold harvest could be a fantastic one! But if this is correct, there would be a further assertion about the Kingdom. Since God alone can bring such a hundred-fold harvest, the marvelous yield is meant to indicate that the dawning of the Kingdom is ultimately God's work! Of course, many scholars would disagree with this interpretation, by noting for example that there is nothing extraordinary about the hundred-fold harvest. Still, this interpretation is still consistent with the Gospel data about the coming of the Kingdom—it does not really depend on man's effort in order to flourish and succeed, even though it is vital to the Kingdom. It is, in the end, a supernatural action. God alone brings about the triumph of the Kingdom—in a manner that no one envisages and in a way that is beyond human control or effort.

The Christian Farmer's Almanac

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 13:24-30)
July 19, 2020

By Msgr. Joseph A. Pellegrino



THE parable of the mustard seed. "And Jesus said, behold the mustard seed. It is the smallest of seeds yet it grows into a large bush."

I want to begin this article with something you are doing right now, but might be taking for granted reading. We all can pick up a newspaper, a magazine, a novel, or whatever and in a few moments be brought into a world beyond our immediate surroundings. We can learn new things; we can develop our own intelligence; we can agree or disagree with someone we have never met and never will meet; we can be transported to the world of imagination, etc all due to our ability to read.

Now how did this start? How did we learn how to read? We started, most of us, with blocks and individual letters. We learned what sounds these letters represented. Then we put the letters together and learned how to spell words. We even learned new words. We put the words together and learned new concepts or reinforced that which we had learned. In very small steps, we went from the letters on the blocks to being able to read the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.

It all began in a small way. It all began with letters. The Kingdom of God is like a child learning his or her letters. Time goes on and Mom, Dad, and teachers work with the child, and the child's ability to read grows so great that the child becomes a professor of English Literature. And so it is with the Kingdom of God. Great-Grandma and Great-Grandpa taught their children their prayers. They brought their children to Church and taught them with their lives to value their relationship with the Lord. And their children became parents and did the same. And their children are the Moms and Dads of our parish. The Church is full of good Christian men and woman, people of all walks of life, even priests, all living the values of the Kingdom of God, the spiritual realities of life.

And now you are doing the same. You are teaching the ABC's of religion to your children. You have faith that the Kingdom of God will spread through them. So, do not wonder if anything is getting through to the children. Do not allow yourself to think that maybe nothing is happening for your children. Trust in God. If a child who learns his letters can become a professor of English Literature, a child who learns the simplest lessons of faith can become a great force of love for the Kingdom of God. Say prayers with your children. Allow God to turn the tiny mustard seed into a great plant.

The parable of the weeds and the wheat. And Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the farmer who sowed wheat, then an enemy came and sowed weeds...." The weeds and the wheat grew together. "Let us get rid of the weeds," said his workers when the weeds and the wheat were still tiny plants. "Better not," said the farmer, "you might lose some of

the wheat too. We will wait until they are ready for harvesting when we're sure we know what is weed and what is wheat. Then we'll get rid of the weeds."

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the School where we send our treasures, our children. They are not finished products when they get there. They have to do a lot of growing. They are still our treasures, and we love them. Perhaps in the school there are other children who may not have experienced basic human values. Perhaps, they have been raised in violent households, or households torn apart by some form of chemical dependency. Perhaps, they have witnessed people hurting others, taking what is not theirs, using bad language, doing terrible things. As a result, these children may have some pretty rough edges. Should the principal of the school throw the children from dysfunctional homes out before they cause serious problems, or should he give them the opportunity to learn basic values from the school and even from their classmates? Yes, children need to be removed from the mainstream if they do something that threatens the welfare of the other children, but they are not going to be removed if they have not offended gravely, because the plants are still young and there may be wheat where we think there is weed.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the life of every man and every woman. There is that in each of us which is wheat. There is that which is weed. Should God destroy us because of the weed in us? Or should he give us time? Perhaps that which is weed in us can be overtaken by that which is wheat. A strong prayer life goes a long way in preventing serious sin. The Divine Farmer isn't ready to give up on the crop. We should not give up on ourselves. God knows that what may appear to be weed is in reality wheat. For example, a man has a drinking problem. His drinking is destroying himself and his family. Through prayer and the determination to change his life and through his own openness to the grace of God, he goes for help. He first becomes a member of AA. Then he is active in helping others. Now for the last fifteen years he is dry. He is still an alcoholic, but his condition has resulted in virtue overcoming vice. Now he helps others. God did not give up on him. He did not give up on himself. What looked like weed, the disease of alcoholism, turned out to be wheat as he brings God's healing to other alcoholics.

The parable of the mustard seed: the little efforts we make for the Kingdom of God have a tremendous impact upon the world. The parable of the weeds and wheat: God has infinite patience. He is not about to give up on his people. We should not give up on others. And we should not give up on ourselves.

The parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the weeds and the wheat. Two simple parables. Two simple stories. Two tremendous sources of encouragement for us.

Amazing Grace.

When the light shines again

By Fr. Shay Cullen

IT was a happy day for Joshua. He graduated from the Preda vocational training program and proudly held a student's driver's license and his graduation certificate while the camera clicked to record the moment and everyone there applauded. It was his day when the light shone for him.

He had completed and passed his driving test at the Preda Home for Boys and completed a course in shielded metal arc welding. He can apply for a job as a basic welder or driver when he gets his license. He was only seven months in the Preda program and his life had dramatically changed in that time.

Joshua was once a child prisoner, locked in a small bare prison cell with graffiti on the walls, a hole in the floor for a toilet and what a dark dangerous smelly place it was. The dark dungeons of Dicken's novels were the only comparison.

He became a fighter, a rebellious child prisoner. He opposed all authority, even the cell boss-man couldn't control him so they beat and kicked him. The world for Joshua was a mean and dangerous place where his survival was threatened every day. They fought over the small food allowance of rice and expired cans of fish. He fought off the bigger youths that tried to rape him. He kicked and gouged and defended himself.

The day came when he was saved

from this hell-hole of misery. He was released from the unjust and unnecessary detention. His only so-called crime was he was homeless and broke curfew. His father died when he was ten years old and his stepfather beat him and cursed him. He ran away and took to the streets; there was no home, no acceptance just rejection. The local officials locked him in the youth detention centre where the Preda social workers found him bruised, angry and rebellious.

With the release order signed by the judge, he came to the Preda home for boys in the countryside without fences, no cells just freedom and friendship. It was not an easy transition. His old survivalist ways dominated. He bullied others and fought for dominance as he believed that was what he was supposed to do in this world. He had learned on the streets and the jail cells that no one cares, no one helps, no one loves him. That changed day by day as he realized that he was cared for, that he was respected, no one bullied him, he joined values formation sessions, education classes and slowly he realized he had landed in a family that cared.

He was respected for the first time in his life and was free to choose to stay and to change and learn. He had emotional release therapy and screamed out his buried pain and hatred for the abuse he suffered.

He joined the sports, the outings, games and picnics. Soon, he was taking vocational training. He was transforming. He tamed himself.

He is now a happy, intelligent matured youth together with twenty classmates who are also growing and changing at the Preda home. Most of them are also taking the vocational training course as part of their diversion program under the Philippine Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (JJWA) or Republic Act 9344 that promotes restorative justice rather than harsh punishment. His graduation day and chance to be reintegrated to his sister's family was when the light shone for him. It was a new day, a bright shining moment when he knew that he was truly accepted respected as a person of value and had true friends and would be helped succeed in life.

Benjie, only 16, has completed many hours of electrical repair training and driving which will be a good chance for him to get a job when he leaves the Preda home and becomes of legal age. He has completed his Alternative Learning System (ALS) education which is a substitute for the years he missed for high school after he was arrested for taking and possessing illegal drugs. He discovered his true self, has human value and dignity at Preda home for boys. Thousands have been helped since 1974 to find recovery, peace and success in life. The light has shone for



Young teenager locked in overcrowded cell with hardened prisoners April 2013. PREDa FOUNDATION

many like Benjie. His life story is a sad one as he tells it.

"My parents are separated; I was left with my grandmother in the slums when I was 10. Lola (grandmother) became old and sickly because we had no money and I begged for food. When I was 14 years old I tried to support her by selling vegetables from the open market but it wasn't enough for survival. We ate the rotten ones and bought pag-pag (uneaten leftovers from restaurants). Then a drug dealer recruited me, offered me cash and food and then drugs. I got hooked myself and I owed him money and worked for him. I was controlled by this gangster drug dealer, there was no way out. He threatened me and would kill Lola if I ran away and refused to deliver his dirty drugs. I was set for a life as a criminal and would likely be dead because of the war against drugs. If I was not saved

by Preda and that lawyer from the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), I would have been killed for sure."

When Preda social workers intervened and the judge agreed to send Benjie to Preda, that was when the light shone for him. He graduated and has a bright future ahead of him. He can make his way in life and will succeed and his children will learn the values of respect and love and dignity.

As many as 1,230 children are confined today in youth detention centers as far as we know. There could be more that we don't know. They are deprived of liberty and behind bars or in cages around the Philippines. The Preda Foundation has campaigned for the release of the children and as of today the number released is 323 children so far. There is hope and we must continue to advocate for the release of the unjustly jailed children.

Liturgical / B2

on a Sunday—e.g., health workers (especially frontliners), OFWs who have no Masses available on Sunday (or are not given a day-off on Sunday by their employers) but have access to one during the week. In this case, a fundamental principle is that the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and other holy days of obligation does not apply when there is a serious inconvenience. Hence, there really is no need to transfer the Sunday liturgy: if one is moved by personal piety to attend Mass some other day of the week to make

up for Sunday, then he/she could do so, without having to attend a Sunday liturgy. Each Mass is as good as another, since each one is the Sacrifice of Calvary.

The ecclesiastical precept to attend Mass on Sunday and other holy days of obligation is not determined by the *kind* of Mass, but by the Mass itself. That is why attending a Funeral Mass—provided such Mass is allowed by the *ordo*—on a Sunday (or its eve) fulfills the Sunday precept of attending Mass. One has to understand the rationale behind

the Sunday Precept: it is to have a day in the week for communing with God, and our Mother the Church has concretized that into attending Mass on the Lord's Day and some other holy days of obligation.

In the case of the so-called *anticipated Mass*, what happens is that according to liturgical norms, Sundays, Feasts and Solemnities include their First Vespers—i.e., the evening of the previous day. This is a remnant of the Jewish tradition of measuring the day from the sunset of the previous day: the day ends

when the sun sets, so after that is already the morrow. In the Catholic tradition, vespers begin after the so-called middle hours (from 9:00AM to 3-6:00PM). Hence, by 6:00PM Saturday, it is liturgically already Sunday and the Sunday liturgy (including the Mass) can already be celebrated. For purposes of facilitating the Sunday Precept, the dioceses have been advancing the start of vespers on Saturday until now in the Philippines any Mass after midday of Saturday already fulfills the Sunday Precept. This

shows the solicitude of the Church for her children, facilitating their fulfillment of their Sunday obligation by attending a Mass (any Mass) after midday of the previous day.

As a preliminary conclusion, therefore, we can say that there seems to be no need for the Local Ordinary to transfer the Sunday liturgy to another day of the week. However, for a purely academic discussion, we have to go back to the fundamental norms we saw in Part I of this article. (*To be concluded.*)

Responsibility / B3

other Sacraments are to be referred without delay to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which 'examines [them] and, if necessary, proceeds to the declaration or imposition of canonical sanctions according to the norm of common or proper law.'

"[180.] Otherwise the Ordinary should proceed according to the norms of the sacred canons, imposing canonical penalties if necessary, and bearing in mind in particular that which is laid down by canon 1326. If the matter is serious, let him inform the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments."

From the above, it is clear that the caring for the liturgy is among the bishop's principal responsibilities. He may work through a diocesan liturgical commission but, as mentioned above in No. 25, the final responsibility falls upon him.

It is true that the bishops' conference has some legislative and administrative authority for the whole country. Redemptionis Sacramentum in Chapter I stipulates the following regarding the conference:

"2. The Conference of Bishops

"[26.] The same holds for those commissions of this kind which have been established by the Conference of Bishops in accordance with the will of the Council, commissions whose members consist of Bishops who are clearly distinguished from their expert helpers. Where the number of members of a Conference of Bishops is not sufficient for the effective establishment of a liturgical commission from among their own number, then a council or group of experts should be named, always under the presidency of a Bishop, which is to fulfill the same role in-

sofar as possible, albeit without the name of 'liturgical commission.'

"[27.] As early as the year 1970, the Apostolic See announced the cessation of all experimentation as regards the celebration of Holy Mass and reiterated the same in 1988. Accordingly, individual Bishops and their Conferences do not have the faculty to permit experimentation with liturgical texts or the other matters that are prescribed in the liturgical books. In order to carry out experimentation of this kind in the future, the permission of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments is required. It must be in writing, and it is to be requested by the Conference of Bishops. In fact, it will not be granted without serious reason. As regards projects of inculturation in liturgical matters, the particular norms that have been established are strictly and comprehensively to be observed.

"[28.] All liturgical norms that a Conference of Bishops will have established for its territory in accordance with the law are to be submitted to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the *recognitio*, without which they lack any binding force."

Thus the bishops' conference and its liturgy or divine worship commission have certain responsibilities for the whole country. For example, the conference must approve all translations of the official books as well as propose new texts. It may propose adaptations of the calendar for the country. It may propose norms regarding the posture adopted by the faithful such as when to kneel or stand. These kinds of norms require the approval of the Holy See.

Other elements may be approved

by the bishops without necessarily requiring that they have the full force of law. For example, in some countries, the bishops' commission on liturgy approves the music to be used for the ordinary parts of the Mass (Gloria, Sanctus, etc.). Some also have an approved national repertoire of liturgical songs which everybody should know even though each bishop can approve other songs. These commissions can also give guidelines on how to apply universal law in the national context.

However, the bishops' conference does not usually get involved in disciplinary matters which are the province of the local bishop with respect to his diocese and, in grave cases, directly between the bishop and the Holy See. With respect to abuses of liturgical law and the action of the Holy See, Redemptionis Sacramentum says:

"REMEDIES

"[169.] Whenever an abuse is committed in the celebration of the sacred Liturgy, it is to be seen as a real falsification of Catholic Liturgy. St. Thomas wrote, 'the vice of falsehood is perpetrated by anyone who offers worship to God on behalf of the Church in a manner contrary to that which is established by the Church with divine authority, and to which the Church is accustomed.'

"[170.] In order that a remedy may be applied to such abuses, 'there is a pressing need for the biblical and liturgical formation of the people of God, both pastors and faithful,' so that the Church's faith and discipline concerning the sacred Liturgy may be accurately presented and understood. Where abuses persist, however, proceedings should be undertaken for safeguarding the spiritual patrimony and rights of the

Church in accordance with the law, employing all legitimate means.

"[171.] Among the various abuses there are some which are objectively *graviora delicta* or otherwise constitute grave matters, as well as others which are nonetheless to be carefully avoided and corrected. Bearing in mind everything that is treated especially in Chapter I of this Instruction, attention should be paid to what follows. [...]

"[174.] Furthermore, those actions that are brought about which are contrary to the other matters treated elsewhere in this Instruction or in the norms established by law are not to be considered of little account, but are to be numbered among the other abuses to be carefully avoided and corrected.

"[175.] The things set forth in this Instruction obviously do not encompass all the violations against the Church and its discipline that are defined in the canons, in the liturgical laws and in other norms of the Church for the sake of the teaching of the Magisterium or sound tradition. Where something wrong has been committed, it is to be corrected according to the norm of law. [...]

"5. The Apostolic See

"[181.] Whenever the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments receives at least a plausible notice of a delict or an abuse concerning the Most Holy Eucharist, it informs the Ordinary so that he may investigate the matter. When the matter turns out to be serious, the Ordinary should send to the same Dicastery as quickly as possible a copy of the acts of the inquiry that has been undertaken, and where necessary, the penalty imposed.

"[182.] In more difficult cases the

Ordinary, for the sake of the good of the universal Church in the care for which he too has a part by virtue of his sacred Ordination, should not fail to handle the matter, having previously taken advice from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. For its part, this Congregation, on the strength of the faculties given to it by the Roman Pontiff, according to the nature of the case, will assist the Ordinary, granting him the necessary dispensations or giving him instructions or prescriptions, which he is to follow diligently.

"6. Complaints Regarding Abuses in Liturgical Matters

"[183.] In an altogether particular manner, let everyone do all that is in their power to ensure that the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist will be protected from any and every irreverence or distortion and that all abuses be thoroughly corrected. This is a most serious duty incumbent upon each and everyone, and all are bound to carry it out without any favoritism.

"[184.] Any Catholic, whether Priest or Deacon or lay member of Christ's faithful, has the right to lodge a complaint regarding a liturgical abuse to the diocesan Bishop or the competent Ordinary equivalent to him in law, or to the Apostolic See on account of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. It is fitting, however, insofar as possible, that the report or complaint be submitted first to the diocesan Bishop. This is naturally to be done in truth and charity."

Of course, all the above procedures will be unnecessary if all those who take part in the liturgy seek to do so for God's glory and according to what has been lawfully established in each country's liturgical books.

Reopening / B4

resorting to an open declaration of martial law.

Political dissent and criticism are very much part of democracy. They ensure the checks-and-balance of powers of the officials of the government, pushes them to act more justly, removes any ambition of any ruling administration to authoritarianism, and helps to shape the course of the people's narrative as a nation. Any attempts to silence or stifle them is a great disservice to the aspirations of our nation to be a "just and humane society"

(Preamble of the 1987 Philippine Constitution).

Now is not the time to further erode our people's confidence in government. We urgently need to address the COVID-19 crisis as a united people.

We have transitioned to a general community quarantine and businesses are open and the working class have been ordered to return to work. Business as usual is the talk of the town with no mass transport, no safeguards for workers and no clear plan for the future.

"Then the LORD said to Moses: Go to Pharaoh and tell him: Thus says the LORD: Let my people go to serve me." (Exo. 7:26)

Meanwhile churches remain under strict rules of 10 persons in a church activity. If we can open businesses and malls where surely mass gatherings and contacts can occur why can we not open churches so that our people may find solace and may partake of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? Our front-liners need most these places of worship to keep their sanity and

draw inspiration to make them stronger in fighting the pandemic.

We understand the necessity of starting up the economy to stave off recession and collapse. We are one with government in this endeavor but we must assert that churches fulfill an essential function in our –spiritual sustenance and upliftment. In the lock down it was the churches who responded and ably provided relief and other forms of assistance to the poor and dehumanized. With sufficient safeguards to be put in place we find no reason to

prevent the faith communities to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and be in communion with our Triune God.

Our people need hope and our faith renews that hope even in these most trying of times. Allow us to pray, allow us to heal and find lasting love in His forgiving and compassionate arms.

FR. CIELITO ALMAZAN, OFM & SR. MARILYN JAVA, RC AMRSP Co-Chairpersons June 4, 2020

CINEMA
Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT **MORAL ASSESSMENT**

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

CINEMA RATING

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

Messiah

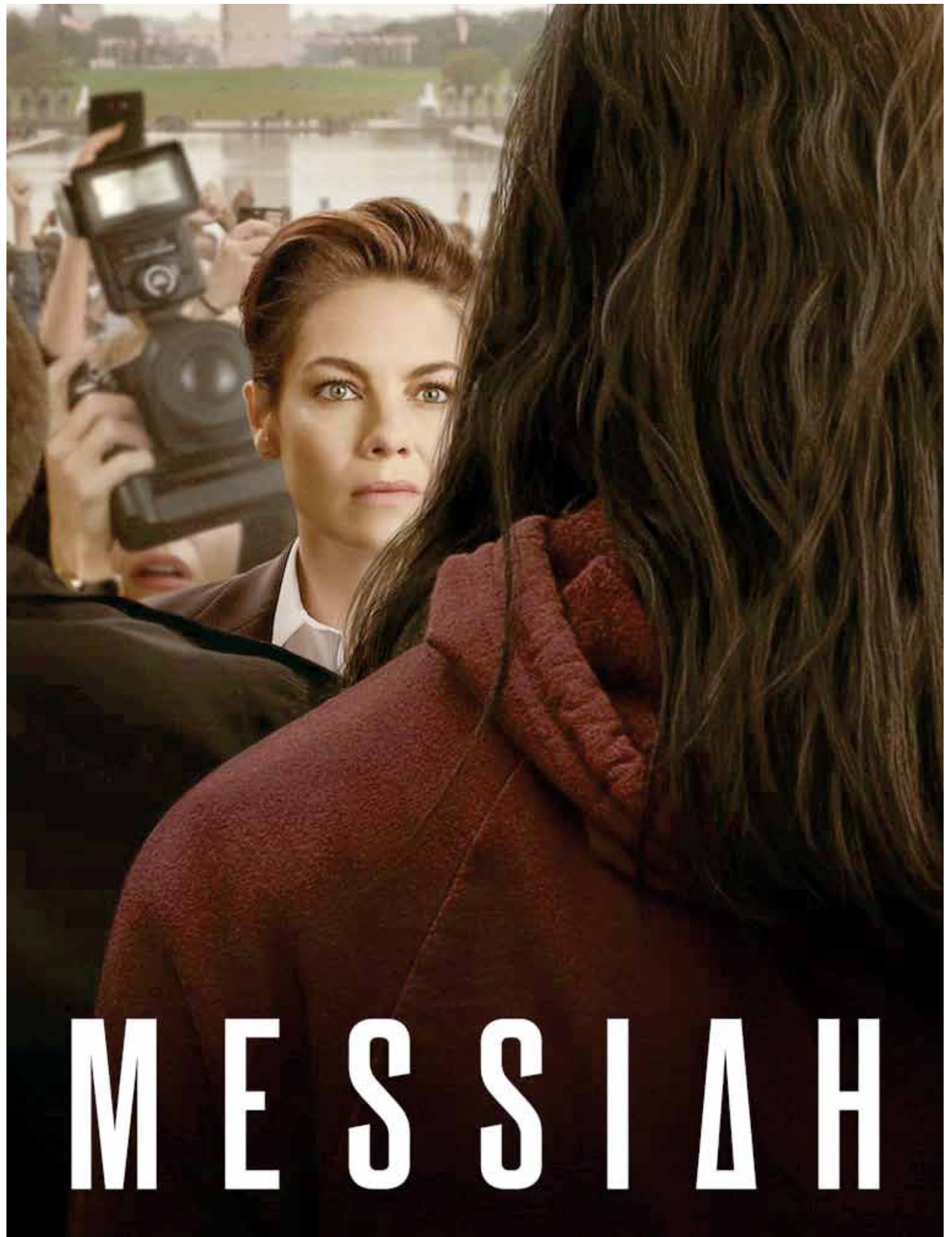
DIRECTOR: Martin Connorseph, Jett Sally, James McTeigue, Kate Woods;
LEAD CAST: Michelle Monaghan, Mehdi Dehdi, John Ortiz, Tomey Sisley
CREATOR: Michael Petroni;
WRITERS: Michael Bond, Amy Louise Johnson, Michael Petroni;
PRODUCERS: Mark Burnett, Roma Downey, Michael Petoni, Andrew Deane;
MUSIC: Johnny Klimek, Gabriel Isaac Mounsey;
CINEMATOGRAPHY: Danny Ruhlmann;
EDITING: Martin Connor, Joseph Jett Sally;
GENRE: Drama, Thriller;
COUNTRY: Syria, USA;
LANGUAGE: English;
DISTRIBUTED BY: Netflix;
RUNNING TIME: 450 minutes (10 Episodes series)

Technical assessment: 3.5
Moral assessment: 3.5
CINEMA rating: V18
Netflix rating: 18+

The story starts with a street preacher (Mehdi Dehbi) assuring Palestinian refugees in Damascus of God’s salvation from ISIS. Just then a sandstorm occurs and covers them from the advancing ISIS Militia. The preacher claims the ISIS has been defeated because of this incident. For the witnesses the incident is enough to establish the preacher’s reputation as Al-Masih (The Messiah), but for Washington intelligence, this is merely coincidental. Soon, a group of Palestinians become Al-Masih’s loyal followers who are led to the borders of Israel in the hope of getting asylum. Al-Masih is imprisoned and interrogated by Aviram (Tomer Sisley) but mysteriously disappears from his cell and reappears in the middle of Dilly, Texas, at the height of a destructive tornado. Just before the tornado struck, the town pastor Felix Iguero (Ortiz), was preparing to burn down his church—seeing his flock’s spiritual aloofness and his wife’s wavering faith in him—when their rebellious daughter, Rebecca (Stefania LaVie Owen), ran away from home. However, as Al-Masih appears at the right time with the missing Rebecca, and Iguero’s church remains the only structure undamaged by the tornado, Felix finds his faith renewed and becomes Al-Masih’s de facto publicist. Meanwhile, Jewish CIA operative Eva Geller (Michelle Monaghan) has growing concerns about Al-Masih and his possible involvement with extremists or political enemies. She follows him

until she crosses paths with Aviram; both are bent on exposing him as a fraud. Felix dedicates his entire life to ensure the growth of Al-Masih’s following. He strikes a deal with his tele-evangelist father-in-law for Al-Masih to guest in his show, but on the night of Al-Masih’s public appearance, Al-Masih fails to show up. Aviram has taken him under custody to be tried in Israel. Their private plane catches fire, crashes in the desert, and kills everyone on board. The last scene shows Aviram brought back to life by Al-Masih, witnessed by a shepherd boy.

How can one retell a story which almost everyone already knows? Or better yet, how can one retell a familiar story that would be relevant outside its time frame? Technically, the series delivers. It provides the good intercuts and pacing. It recreates each moment’s tension and ambiance with a decent balance of production design and camerawork. But, all so-called film critics have found fault in the plot and storytelling of Messiah. They are correct to point out that the series could have been tightened and told as one full length movie. The subplots intersecting with Al-Masih’s journey do not provide answers to the plot’s basic premise: is he the Savior or is he a fraud. Some of the characters’ storylines are not explored enough. Eva, who is a central character, merely serves for exposition instead of pushing the story forward. Mehdi Dehdi’s enigmatic stoicism becomes tiresome



after five episodes. In fact, all characters develop in a plateau, except for Rebecca. We see them exactly as they were from the first time we meet them in episode 1 until episode 10. This probably is the biggest issue against the storytelling. At this point, you will stop caring if Al-Masih is real or not because it is all too clear that the series is not sure either.—PMF

However, setting aside professional critique and looking at Messiah from the Christian point of view, we can appreciate its rich faith references. That we experience the presence of Christ in at least one instant we can consider as a miracle in our lives. And that instant becomes a turning point of our faith and makes us a more committed Christian. That sometimes, the small miracles are dismissed if

we refuse to see that there is a more powerful force beyond us. And in those times, we need an earth-shaking experience—like being brought back to life—to realize there is a God. Messiah looks at the Christ-experience in contemporary times. It interweaves socio-political struggles, media and social media complications and modern-day cynicism with spirituality. It dares to question our motives and asks; do we really believe in something we cannot see? Do we not try to rationalize why the here and now are what really makes sense instead of preparing for life after this world? At this point, you will stop caring if Al-Masih is the Messiah or not because we realize that Christ is experienced in the smallest victories we accomplish and the tiniest graces we receive.

ORATIO IMPERATA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Buhay San Miguel

<p>Kuya, kaunting panahon na lang may ANTI-TERROR LAW na! Paano na ang malayang pamamahayag ng mga MAHIHIRAP?</p>	<p>Sila na ang laging naaapi, sila pa ang walang boses! Tuwing sila sisigaw ng katarungan, sila pa ang mabilis na babansagang "terorista", kasi sila ang madaling "i-terrorize" o takutin. Tuwing sila ay lalaban, sila pa ang biqlang "mawawala" --</p>	<p>Oo nga, ANTI-POOR ang anumang batas laban sa terorismo! Dapat nating unawain na hindi naman magkakaroon ng terorista, kung walang matakaw sa kayamanan o kapangyarihan!</p>	<p>Samakatuwid, sino po ba talaga ang pinoprotektahan ng BILL na iyan ???</p>
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FAITH WATCH
- Your Catholic Channel -

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