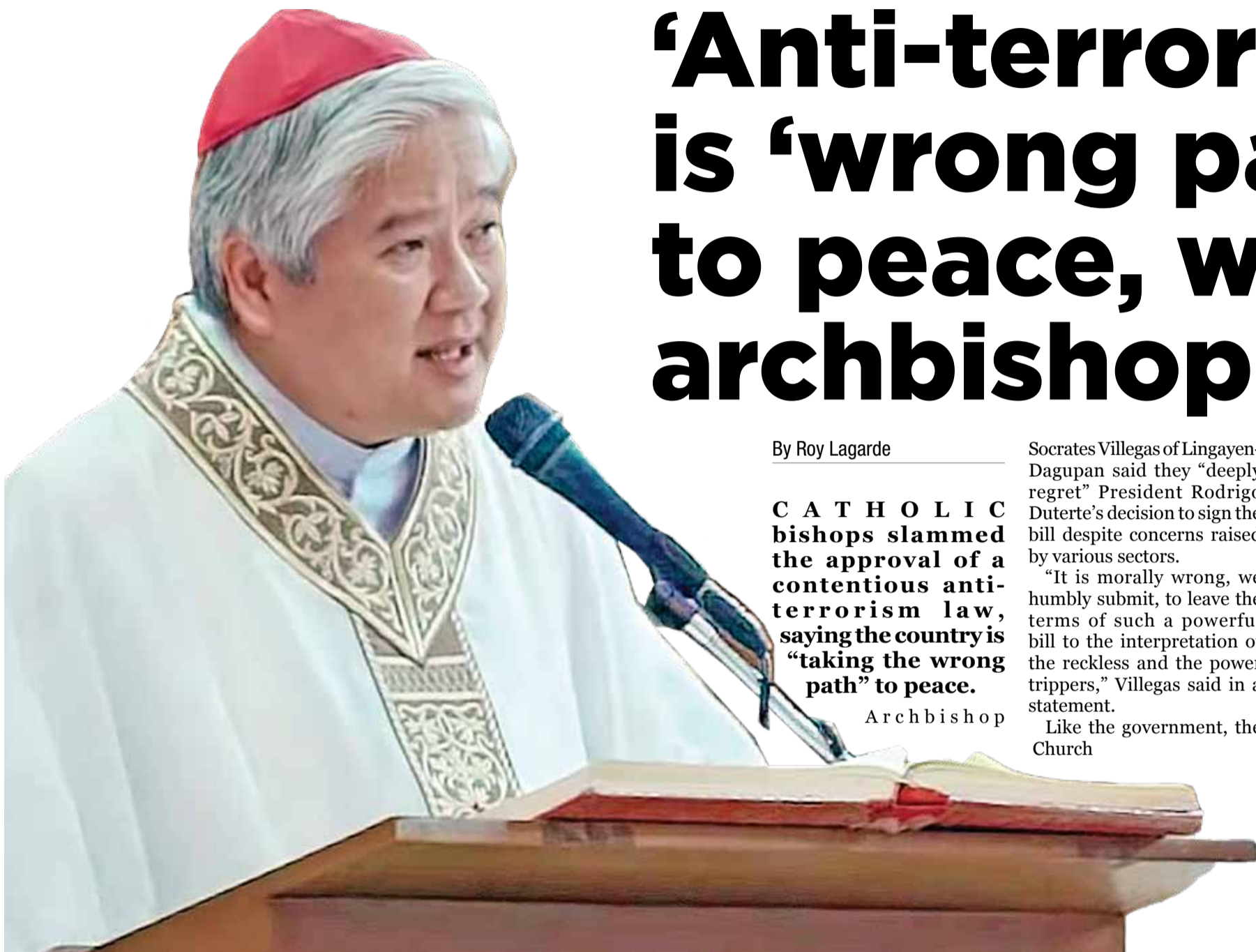


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PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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Archbishop Socrates Villegas delivers his homily during Mass at the St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Dagupan City on May 24, 2020. SCREENSHOT/SABINS STUDIO

‘Anti-terror’ law is ‘wrong path’ to peace, warns archbishop

By Roy Lagarde

CATHOLIC bishops slammed the approval of a contentious anti-terrorism law, saying the country is “taking the wrong path” to peace.

Archbishop

Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan said they “deeply regret” President Rodrigo Duterte’s decision to sign the bill despite concerns raised by various sectors.

“It is morally wrong, we humbly submit, to leave the terms of such a powerful bill to the interpretation of the reckless and the power trippers,” Villegas said in a statement.

Like the government, the Church

denounces terrorism and terrorists, the former head of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines said.

“Unlike our government, however, we do not wish to meet violence and blind rage with heightened violence and legitimated terror,” he said.

“We would rather as one, engage in the difficult but necessary task of building a culture that listens, that leaves none out, that accommodates differences,” Villegas said.

“This same culture of inclusive listening will soon strip extremists of every reason to confine themselves to the margins of society. Peace is the only way to peace,” he added.

Duterte on July 3 signed

Wrong Path / A6

Catholic schools ask gov’t to include employees in SAP cash aid

CATHOLIC schools in Metro Manila are appealing 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. (CBCP News)

New terror measure may do more harm than good, warns Manila clergy



Priests attend Chrim Mass at the Manila Cathedral in March 2018. RCAM-AOC

MANILA’S Roman Catholic Church has warned of the risk of unintended consequences from a proposed anti-terror law that grants authorities even more sweeping power.

The clergy of the Manila archdiocese said the controversial bill “derogates” from some established legal principles that are aimed to protect basic human rights.

“Allowing the passage of a bill that has vague, amorphous and deleterious provisions will only do more harm than good to our people,” they said in a statement issued June 25.

The clergy warned the bill’s “ambiguous and expansive provisions” are prone to abuse and misuse “as history will tell us”.

President Rodrigo Duterte’s signature is the only thing missing before the measure allowing warrantless detention and wiretapping of suspects

becomes a law.

“One’s freedom of expression, rights to privacy, property, ownership and freedom of movement are not anymore guaranteed under this bill,” the clergy said.

Even legitimate dissent or criticisms may be misconstrued as inciting to commit a terror act, the archdiocese said.

“Weaponizing this measure to silence critics and detractors will give this government a free-pass even for its inefficiency, ineptness and abuses,” they added.

The archdiocese’s more than 230 diocesan priests appealed to Duterte to reconsider his support for the measure.

“We humbly urge President Rodrigo Duterte to heed the plea of the different concerned groups calling for the bill’s rejection,” the priests said. (Roy Lagarde / CBCP News)

Death penalty ‘is everything against God’ — priest

A CATHOLIC priest said that death penalty is against God, and called on Christians to take a stand for life “wherever we find it”.

Jesuit Fr. Silvino Borres, president of the Coalition Against Death Penalty (CADP), said that even a criminals have an affirmative right to rehabilitation.

The priest on Wednesday celebrated Mass online with restorative justice advocates to mark the 14th anniversary of the abolition of capital punishment in the Philippines.

“Whenever you call

for the death of another person even just in thoughts, we are already sinning against the Lord who calls everyone to life,” Fr Borres said in his homily.

“Even if He calls for justice for sinners and those who committed crimes, He calls for them to live and be rehabilitated because the Lord does not delight in the death of the wicked,” he said.

He stressed that to call for the death of another person, whether it has legal backing, is unexpected of someone or communities “that are made in the likeness of



Jesuit Fr. Silvino Borres, president of the Coalition Against Death Penalty (CADP).

God”.

Fr. Borres also said the celebration is also significant because death penalty was abolished on

the feast of St. John the Baptist.

“On this feast, we are reminded of our mission

Death Penalty / A6

Religious superiors urge SC to side with common good



Nuns from different religious congregations attend Mass for the feast of the Presentation of the Lord and the World Day of Consecrated Life at the Manila Cathedral, February 2, 2018. FILE PHOTO

THE country’s religious superiors urged the Supreme Court to stand by the common good as the SC battle against the contentious anti-terror law started.

In a statement, the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) welcomed the petitions to void provisions of the controversial law.

“We trust that the good women and men

of the highest court of the land will be guided by the common good of all and by the Philippine Constitution,” the group said.

“We implore them that in these gathering clouds of darkness, let the light of rule of law and ultimately, justice shine ever bright,” it said.

The influential organization of heads of the country’s religious

Superiors / A7

Vatican Briefing

Pope Francis commends UN Security Council for global ceasefire resolution

Pope Francis applauded the United Nations Security Council Sunday for its recent resolution calling for an immediate global ceasefire amid the coronavirus pandemic. "The call for a global and immediate ceasefire, which would allow the peace and security necessary to provide the urgently needed humanitarian assistance, is commendable," Pope Francis said after his Angelus prayer July 5. "I hope that this decision will be implemented effectively and promptly for the good of many people who are suffering. May this Security Council resolution become a courageous first step towards a peaceful future," he said. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

Pope Francis makes donation to WFP as pandemic causes rising hunger

Pope Francis has made a donation to the World Food Programme as the organization works to feed 270 million people this year amid rising hunger caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Coronavirus infection levels have been rising in Latin America and Africa at a moment when food stocks in some parts of the world are already low, leaving more people vulnerable to food insecurity, according to the World Food Programme website. The Vatican announced July 3 that Pope Francis would donate 25,000 euros (\$28,000) as "an expression of his closeness to those affected by the pandemic and to those who are engaged in essential services for the poor and weakest and most vulnerable people in our society." **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

European bishops call for EU support of persecuted Christians in Nigeria

The president of the European bishops' commission has promised persecuted Christians in Nigeria that he will advocate for increased support from the European Union. Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, who leads the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), wrote a letter to the Nigerian bishops stating that the commission will advocate for EU assistance and cooperation with the Nigerian authorities to combat violence and persecution. The cardinal expressed solidarity with Nigerian Christian communities, who, he wrote, are "living a situation of continuous attacks by terrorists, insurgents and militias, that in some cases reaches levels of genuine criminal persecution," according to a European commission statement July 2. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

Benedict XVI's brother Georg Ratzinger has died

Benedict XVI's older brother Georg Ratzinger died Wednesday, just a little more than one week after the pope emeritus' visit. Msgr. Georg Ratzinger died in Bavaria at the age of 96 on July 1. The pope emeritus was able to say a last goodbye to his older brother on June 22 at the end of a four-day trip to Germany to spend time with his ailing brother. Msgr. Ratzinger was born in Bavaria on January 15, 1924 as the first son of Joseph and Maria Ratzinger. He expressed an early talent for music, learning to play the violin and the church organ as a child. He went on to serve as the choir master of the Regensburg Domspatzen, the cathedral choir of Regensburg, from 1964 to 1994. On June 29, 2011, he celebrated his 60th anniversary as a priest in Rome together with his brother. Both men were ordained priests in 1951. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

Pope Francis urges Catholic media to help young tell good from evil

The world needs media that can help young people to distinguish between good and evil, presenting the facts in a "clear and unbiased" way, Pope Francis said Tuesday. In a June 30 message to members of the Catholic Press Association, the pope appealed to Catholic journalists to help break down barriers of misunderstanding between people. "We need media capable of building bridges, defending life and breaking down the walls, visible and invisible, that prevent sincere dialogue and truthful communication between individuals and communities," he wrote. "We need media that can help people, especially the young, to distinguish good from evil, to develop sound judgments based on a clear and unbiased presentation of the facts, and to understand the importance of working for justice, social concord and respect for our common home." **(CNA)**

Pope Francis donates 35 ventilators to developing countries battling coronavirus

The Vatican announced June 26 that Pope Francis has donated 35 ventilators to overwhelmed hospitals in developing countries as the number of coronavirus cases worldwide nears 10 million. The pope donated four ventilators each to Haiti, Venezuela, and Brazil, a country which has suffered more than 50,000 deaths from COVID-19. Ventilators were also distributed to Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Ecuador, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Ukraine, and the Dominican Republic through the local apostolic nunciatures, or Vatican embassies. Pope Francis "expresses his closeness to countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those with more distressed healthcare systems," the Office of Papal Charities reported in a statement June 26. **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: 'There is no true love without the cross'

There is no true love without the cross, Pope Francis said in his Angelus address Sunday. Speaking from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square June 28, the pope reflected on the day's Gospel reading, in which Jesus tells his disciples: "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:28). "This means following Him along the path that He Himself trod, without looking for shortcuts," he said, according to an unofficial translation provided by the Holy See Press Office. "There is no true love without the cross, that is, without a personal price to pay. And many mothers, many fathers who sacrifice many things to their child, and bear true sacrifices, crosses, but because they love them." **(CNA)**

Cardinal Zen: 'No confidence' in HK religious freedom after new security law

CARDINAL Joseph Zen, the bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, has warned that new security laws in the province could lead to a clamp down on religious freedom.

In a series of videos posted Tuesday on the Facebook page "Catholics Concerned about the Hong Kong National Security Law Group," Zen said that he had "no confidence" in religious freedom protections in the new security law.

On May 28, the Chinese legislature approved a resolution imposing "security laws" on Hong Kong. These laws aim to criminalize anything Beijing considers "foreign interference," secessionist activities, or subversion of state power, and will permit Chinese security forces to operate in the city.

Although the full provisions of the law were only released on June 30, last week Cardinal John Tong Hon, Zen's successor as bishop and currently the administrator of the diocese, publicly voiced support for the measures, and said that it was not a threat to religious freedom.

"I personally believe that the National Security Law will have no effect on religious freedom, because Article 32 of the Basic Law guarantees that we have freedom of religion, and we can also openly preach and hold religious ceremonies, and participate in religious activities," Cardinal Tong Hon told the diocesan newspaper last week.



Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, speaks at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome, Nov. 18, 2014. Credit: Bohumil Petrik/CNA

Zen said that he thought it was "wrong" that people were encouraged by the government to speak out in support of the law before the full details were unveiled, but acknowledged that his successor was in a "tricky" situation.

"On the one hand, it will be a lot of trouble if we don't support the government. We never know what they will do to our Church," said Zen. "On the other hand, [Tong] disappointed many within the Church by giving his support."

The full terms of the law were released on the evening of June 30 shortly ahead of July 1, the anniversary of the handover of the area from Great Britain to China, traditionally a day of pro-democracy protest in the city.

Under the new law, a person who is convicted of secession, subversion, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces will receive a minimum of 10 years in prison, with the possibility of a life sentence. The law's broad definition of terrorism includes arson and vandalizing public transportation "with an intent to intimidate the Hong Kong government or Chinese government for political purposes."

"This is not only against the 'one country, two systems' policy, but also the basic law [of Hong Kong]," Zen said of the new measures.

The provision of the law regarding collusion with foreign governments has raised alarm bells among Hong Kong's Catholic population.

Cardinal Tong Hon said last

week that he believed that the diocese's independence from the mainland government and state-sponsored Church, the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, would not be considered to be colluding with a foreign government. The diocese, he said, "has always had a direct relationship with the Vatican; the relationship between the Hong Kong diocese and the Vatican should be regarded as an internal matter."

"After the national security legislation, it should not be regarded as 'collusion with foreign forces,'" he said to the diocesan newspaper.

Zen said that while Tong may be confident the new law would not be used to bring the local Church under mainland control, he had "no confidence" that this would be the case. **(CNA)**

Vatican's communications head urges Catholic journalists to build unity

THE head of the Vatican's communications office told Catholic journalists on Tuesday that Catholic media should focus on promoting unity within the Church, especially amid the global coronavirus pandemic.

"Catholic communication is not only providing information about the Church...it is the capacity of building communion," Paolo Ruffini, the prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communications, said during the June 30 opening session of a virtual conference conducted by the Catholic Press Association.

The virtual conference aims to bring together Catholic journalists and communications professionals, and will feature seminars and workshops conducted June 30 through July 2.

Because Catholics are "united in one body," Ruffini said during his remarks, Catholic communication should be different from the approach of secular media outlets, because Catholic media should focus on "the possibility of redemption," and aim to "keep alive our togetherness."

"Linking is our job. Linking memories. Linking facts. Linking people," Ruffini

said.

The prefect urged journalists to "show witnesses" of the Gospel, and to "build bridges to overcome conflicts." He noted that the pandemic has become for many an isolating experience, noting that "even in the Church we experience the risk of an individualistic approach" that undermines Christian communion.

To overcome that tendency, Ruffini said that as the Church is built upon "the humility of St. Peter," the work of Catholic journalists should also aim for humility, mutual aid, and Christian discipleship.

Speaking on a panel with Ruffini were Natasa Goveka, an official of the Vatican's communications secretariat, and Bishop Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture. Goveka noted initiatives of the Vatican's communications apparatus, while Tighe discussed the efforts at cultural dialogue undertaken by his office.

Panelists were asked about how dioceses can engage in communications efforts amid severe financial cuts in many dioceses. Tighe urged collaboration among dioceses, and investment in

social media initiatives.

"If we have faith, we will find resources," Ruffini added.

More than 250 people tuned into the session, which was offered for free.

Pope Francis sent a message Tuesday to members of the Catholic Press Association, appealing to Catholic journalists to help break down barriers of misunderstanding between people.

"We need media capable of building bridges, defending life and breaking down the walls, visible and invisible, that prevent sincere dialogue and truthful communication between individuals and communities," he wrote.

"We need media that can help people, especially the young, to distinguish good from evil, to develop sound judgments based on a clear and unbiased presentation of the facts, and to understand the importance of working for justice, social concord and respect for our common home."

He continued: "We need men and women of conviction who protect communication from all that would distort it or bend it to other purposes." **(CNA)**

Chinese authorities force contraception on Uyghurs in 'slow genocide'

THE Chinese government is forcing Uyghur women to take contraceptives in an effort to slow the growing population. One expert called the campaign "a slow, painful, creeping genocide" of the religious and ethnic minority.

In a report released on Monday, June 29, AP found numerous Uyghurs have been imprisoned for the offense of having too many children, and women reported that there were frequent pregnancy checks, forced abortions, and forced implantations of IUDs and other contraceptive methods by Communist authorities. The report cites government statistics, state documents, interviews with ex-detainees, family members and a former detention camp instructor.

The report follows previous findings of mass internment, forced labor, sterilizations,

and other wide-spread human rights abuses by the Chinese government against the ethnic and religious minority.

Uyghurs are a mostly Muslim ethnic minority in China living in the northwestern province of Xinjiang.

The news comes as anywhere from 900,000 to 1.8 million Uyghurs are now estimated to be in the system of more than 1,300 detention camps set up by Chinese authorities, ostensibly for "re-education" purposes. Survivors have reported indoctrination, beatings, forced labor, and torture in the camps. China initially denied the camps existed, but was forced to officially admit their existence in 2018.

One expert told the Associated Press that the forced birth control campaign is "genocide, full stop."

"It's not an immediate,

shocking, mass-killing-on-the-spot-type genocide, but it's a slow, painful, creeping genocide," Dr. Joanne Smith Finley, a senior lecturer in Chinese studies at Newcastle University in the United Kingdom told AP.

Finley described the program as "direct means of genetically reducing the Uyghur population."

The birth rate in the Xinjiang province has dropped considerably since the aggressive government-sponsored birth control initiative began, AP reports. Province-wide, the birth rate has dropped 24% in just 2019, and in certain regions of the province, the birth rate has dropped more than 60% between the years 2015 and 2018.

Conversely, the rate of IUD insertion in Xinjiang has increased by similar percentages. In 2014, there

were 200,000 IUDs inserted in the province, a number which grew to 330,000 by 2018. AP reported that this uptick in IUDs was counter to the rest of China, which had seen the contraceptive device fall out of favor among Chinese women.

The report also found that 149 of 484 detained persons in the Xinjiang county of Karakax were detained for having more than the officially permitted amount of children. This, said the AP, was the most commonly cited offense justifying detention.

Prior to the regime of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities were permitted to have two children, or in certain cases three--unlike the Han majority, which was permitted to have one. Those rules were changed in 2015, when Han were permitted to have two children. **(CNA)**

Vatican releases Catholic directory for catechesis in 'dynamic continuity' with Church teaching

THE Vatican published a new directory for catechesis, emphasizing both its continuity with two previous directories and its new content on contemporary issues such as sex and gender and medical advancements.

"The new Directory for Catechesis offers the fundamental theological-pastoral principles and some general orientations which are relevant for the practice of catechesis in our time," Archbishop Rino Fisichella wrote in the introduction to the directory.

The directory was released in Italian June 25. It will be published in the major global languages.

Fisichella is president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, which is responsible for the new edition of the directory, a 300-page book intended as a guide to bishops, priests, religious, and lay Catholics involved in teaching the Catholic faith.

The new directory follows editions published in 1971 and 1997. The 1971 General Catechetical Directory was created in an effort to systematize the teachings of the Second Vatican Council for catechesis.

"This Directory for Catechesis places itself in a dynamic continuity with the two which preceded it,"

Fisichella wrote in the introduction.

According to the archbishop, the guiding criterion for the writing of the new edition was deepening the Church's understanding of the role of catechesis in the area of evangelization.

Catechesis "needs to take on the very characteristics of evangelization," but without substituting it, Fisichella said at a press conference June 25. "In this relationship, the primacy belongs to evangelization not to catechesis."

The directory's introduction states that each directory is in continuity with the Church's teachings, especially the documents of Vatican II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, papal encyclicals, and synods of bishops.

Among the new issues tackled by the 2020 directory are bioethics, sex and gender, care for creation, and the death penalty.

On bioethics, the directory emphasizes the difference between "therapeutic intervention and manipulation," especially when it leads to the risk of practicing eugenics.

The document also affirms God's creation of the human person as "male and female." It notes that while the Church is aware of the personal complexity some people

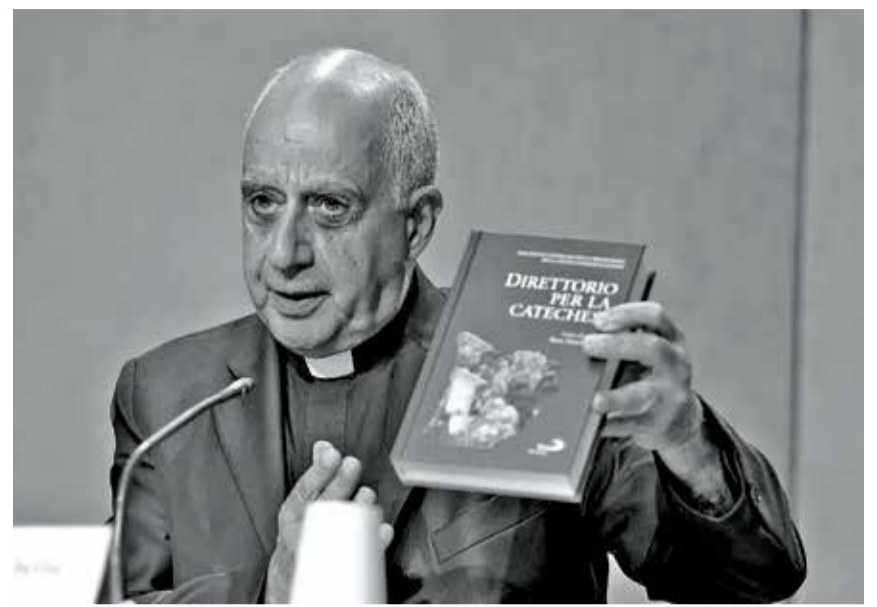
experience in the realm of gender and sexuality, "however, she is aware that, in a perspective of faith, sexuality is not only a physical datum, but is a personal reality, a value entrusted to the responsibility of the person."

In the face of modern challenges in the areas of bioethics and gender, the directory says that catechists should promote education rooted in the faith and Christian morality, all in light of the Magisterium of the Church.

The book provides some fundamental elements for catechists to highlight, which are that "God is the initial and final reference of life, from his conception to natural death; the person is always unity of spirit and body; science is at the service of the person; life must be accepted in any condition, because it is redeemed by the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ."

About the death penalty, the directory emphasizes the "intrinsic and inalienable dignity" of every human person, and references the teaching of recent popes, especially Pope Francis' 2018 change to the Catechism of the Catholic Church which declared the death penalty "inadmissible."

"Catechesis, therefore, will have to make every effort to make the



Archbishop Rino Fisichella presents the new Directory for Catechesis at the Vatican, June 25, 2020. PCPNE

Church's teaching understood and to help to create a new culture," the document states.

On care for the common home, the directory references the need for "ecological conversion" in the face of accelerating and complex ecological problems.

"A catechesis sensitive to the protection of creation promotes a culture of attention paid both to the environment and to the people who live there," it states, adding that part of environmental

responsibility is responsibility and respect for other people by living a life of virtue free of consumerism.

The document also addresses the new challenges of the digital culture and the culture of globalization.

The directory highlighted the need for training in these areas, since both issues "are so interconnected that they determine each other and produce phenomena that highlight a radical change in the existence of people." (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Catholics pray for reconciliation on 70th anniversary of the Korean War

Korean Catholics marked the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War -- a war which never technically ended -- Thursday with Masses offered for reconciliation on the divided Korean peninsula.

"Prayer is the most powerful weapon of the Church struggling for peace," Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung, archbishop of Seoul, said June 25.

"By creating a culture of forgiveness, justice will become more human, and peace will be more permanent," the cardinal said in Seoul's Myeongdong Cathedral.

Nearly three million Korean people died in the Korean War, in which the peninsula lost 10% its overall population from 1950 to 1953. During the conflict, the United States suffered 33,686 deaths in battle, as well as 2,830 non-battle deaths. The Korean peninsula is technically still at war, 66 years after the armistice signed in July of 1953.

Catholics in South Korea



Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung of Seoul. ROY LAGARDE

prayed a novena leading up to the June 25 anniversary, which has been marked by the local Church for decades as an annual "Day of Prayer for the Reconciliation and Unity of the Korean People."

According to Archbishop Kim Hee-joong of Gwangju, Korean Catholics have observed June 25 as a day of prayer for the Korean peninsula since 1965.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, parishes across South Korea were encouraged to offer Masses on the anniversary with added safety restrictions rather than having large

Korean War / A6

In crowded Rohingya refugee camps, social distancing presents challenges

WHILE hand washing and social distancing have been implemented around the globe as tools to fight the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, refugees face challenges in putting these recommendations into practice, said one relief agency worker.

Inmanuel Chayan, a communications officer for Caritas Bangladesh, warned that many Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh lack the luxury of being able to follow public health guidelines to combat the virus.

"The Rohingya community face not only the challenge of living in overcrowded and flimsy shelters with up to ten or more people in one room, but they also use communal latrines and water facilities and space is limited where they receive food distributions," Chayan wrote on the Caritas website June 26. "They cannot maintain the proper distancing or hygiene measures to provide effective prevention against the spread of the coronavirus."

In addition, misinformation

within the refugee camps has hampered efforts to implement preventative measures, he noted.

The Rohingya are a largely Muslim ethnic group who reside in Burma's Rakhine State. In August 2017, the Rohingya faced a sharp increase in state-sponsored violence in Burma, also known as Myanmar.

The Burmese government refused to use the term Rohingya, and considers them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. They have been denied citizenship and numerous other rights since a controversial law was enacted in 1982.

The violence reached levels that led the United Nations to declare the crisis "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

More than 1 million Rohingya fled across the border to Bangladesh. Most are living in refugee camps, many of which are located in a swampy sort of "buffer zone" along the border between the two countries.

Chayan lamented that the Rohingya "are a people

whose lives are dominated by a number of emergency situations: the violent and traumatic uprooting from their homeland in Myanmar, the health emergencies such as dysentery and pox which they face in the camps and the repeated climate emergency they face when cyclones batter Bangladesh."

Now, they face a pandemic which they are not equipped to deal with, he said. The population density in the refugee camps makes it nearly impossible to maintain proper social distancing, and with local hospitals filling up, they are unlikely to receive critical care.

Only a few dozen cases of COVID-19 have been identified in the Rohingya camps over the last month. However, real numbers could be far higher, due to a lack of adequate testing.

Additionally, heavy rainfall during the monsoon season has prompted fears of floods and landslides, adding to the challenges facing the refugees.

Caritas Bangladesh is working in the Rohingya

refugee camps to try to alleviate the suffering there. The agency is offering soap and hygiene kits to families, installing handwashing stations, and offering coronavirus information to the community.

"Caritas Bangladesh trains staff and volunteers, consults the community, establishes listening groups and shows awareness films. We distribute child-friendly flyers to ensure all members of the community are armed with information," Chayan said.

Still, he continued, these challenges will not be solved until the underlying problems facing the Rohingya community are addressed.

"The international community must recognize the rights of the Rohingya community for justice to be done and for anything to change in their lives," he said. "The Rohingya must have their rights to live in their own land freely and with dignity recognized and be safely and peacefully repatriated to Myanmar." (CNA)

Catholic Church in Germany lost a record number of members last year

A RECORD number of Catholics formally left the Church in Germany in 2019, according to official figures released Friday.

The statistics issued June 26 showed that 272,771 people exited the Catholic Church last year, a significant increase on the 2018 figure of 216,078.

In a June 26 statement, Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German bishops' conference, said that he did not wish to "gloss over" the figures.

He said: "Of course, the declines are also due to demographics, but they also show first of all the fact that, despite our concrete pastoral and social actions, we no longer motivate a large number of people for Church life."

"I find the very high number of people leaving the Church particularly burdensome. We regret every departure from the Church and we invite everyone who has left or wants to leave to talk to us. The number of people leaving the Church shows that the alienation between Church members and a life of faith in the Church community has become even stronger."

The Evangelical Church in

Germany (EKD), a body representing 20 Protestant groups, also released its annual statistics June 26. It reported that its membership fell from 21.14 million in 2018 to 20.7 million in 2019, a drop of 440,000.

According to the new figures, the number of Catholics in the country decreased from 23 million in 2018 to 22.6 million in 2019.

Catholics now account for 27.2% of Germany's population of almost 84 million, down from 27.7% in 2018.

The proportion of Catholics attending church services has fallen to its lowest level, with 9.1% attending in 2019, compared to 9.3% in the previous year.

Formal departures from the Catholic Church in Germany are sometimes motivated by a desire to avoid the country's church tax. If an individual is registered as a Catholic then 8-9% of their income tax goes to the Church. The only way they can stop paying the tax is to make an official declaration renouncing their membership. They are no longer allowed to receive the sacraments or a Catholic burial.

Meanwhile, the number of admissions to the Church fell from

2,442 in 2018 to 2,330 in 2019, while readmissions decreased from 6,303 to 5,339 in the same period.

In 2019, church marriages declined by 10%, Confirmations by 7% and First Communions by 3%, according to the website of the Catholic Church in Germany.

The number of baptisms also fell from 167,787 in 2018 to 159,043 in 2019.

In Bätzing's own diocese of Limburg, 9,439 people left the Catholic Church in 2019, 1,459 more than in 2018.

The bishop, who succeeded Cardinal Reinhard Marx as bishops' conference chairman in March, said that the Church should respond not by "chasing after a spirit of the times," but by recognizing the "signs of the times," as called for by the Second Vatican Council.

He said: "This sometimes requires courageous changes in our own ranks. That is why last year we set out on the Synodal Way of the Church in Germany to ask what God wants from us today in this world."

"We will take the figures published today seriously and bring them into the discussions of the Synodal Way."

The "Synodal Way" is a two-



Saint Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin, Germany. PHOTO FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BERLIN FACEBOOK PAGE

year process that brings together lay people and bishops to discuss four major topics: the way power is exercised in the Church; sexual morality; the priesthood; and the role of women.

The German bishops initially said that the process would end with a series of "binding" votes -- raising concerns at the Vatican that the resolutions might challenge the Church's teaching and discipline.

In June 2018, Pope Francis sent a 28-page letter to German Catholics urging them to focus on evangelization in the face of a

"growing erosion and deterioration of faith."

"Every time an ecclesial community has tried to get out of its problems alone, relying solely on its own strengths, methods and intelligence, it has ended up multiplying and nurturing the evils it wanted to overcome," he wrote.

Last September, the Vatican sent a letter to the German bishops declaring that plans for the synod were "not ecclesologically valid."

After a back and forth between the bishops' conference and Vatican officials, the first synodal assembly took place in Frankfurt at the end of January. The second meeting is expected to go ahead, despite the coronavirus crisis, in September.

In his letter to German Catholics, the pope said that participants in the "Synodal Way" faced a particular "temptation."

"At the basis of this temptation, there is the belief that the best response to the many problems and shortcomings that exist, is to reorganize things, change them and 'put them back together' to bring order and make ecclesial life easier by adapting it to the current logic or that of a particular group," he wrote. (CNA)

EDITORIAL

Not the path to peace

ULTIMATELY, the goal of any anti-terrorism initiative is peace. It is not a vehicle to further some political agenda. Neither is it a tool for ideological campaign. Because if such be the case, such efforts will be as heavily devastating as terrorism itself.

The best way towards fighting terrorism, disputable as it may seem, is neither the way of aggression nor of violence. Just as violence begets violence, terrorism begets terrorism. The Christian perspective is hinged on Jesus who said, "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." Peace is the only way to peace.

Curiously enough, the word "terrorism" which may be traced to the "regime de la terreur" that was known in France at the turn of the 18th century may originally be understood as an instrument of the state or regime to consolidate the power of the newly-installed revolutionary government to make sure that it is secured from elements considered subversive.

Terrorism has been harnessed by militant ideologues and even by both authoritarian and liberal states. While the intent is politically or ideologically motivated, it always uses threat, intimidation or violence targeted to individuals or groups beyond its immediate victims. It is commonly understood today as violence used as a form of political communication or a tool to advance a political power. Contemporary governments have even weaponized the law to terrorize its subjects with the end in view of perpetuating power.

The 30 or so petitions against the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 lodged before the Supreme Court by a cross-section of Philippine society including senators, human rights lawyers, journalists, activists, student organizations, religious groups, and even the Bangsamoro, among others, are questioning both its content and intent. Some have pointed out the unconstitutionality of this legislation. Others fear that this law "is not targeting the real terrorists but dissenters, political opposition, critics, activists, etc." Another group says that this law will not put an end to real terrorism but will in fact "sow fear and widespread panic and therefore give rise to another kind of terrorism: State terrorism."

If the Duterte administration is really serious in stemming pockets of terrorism in the country then it should do better than just coming up with a very contentious legislation. Besides, in a time when the economy has flattened to lowest recession in years and life has been turned upside-down, what is an anti-terrorism measure doing?

What the quarantine exposes

IN a sense, we have to be thankful for this quarantine time since it actually can act like a reagent that would expose to us the stuff we are made of and of what and how we are making out of that stuff.

Yes, it can give us a good picture of our real self, the real lay of the land of our life, the actual condition and state of our mind and heart. It can show us where our strengths are, as well as our weaknesses. At least, we would be given some ideas of what to do with them.

Many of us may have been caught completely unprepared for this contingency. In which case, the lesson to learn is to acquire the readiness of the Boy Scouts for any eventuality, especially the emergency ones.

Of course, more than materially prepared, we should be spiritually prepared. Our mind and heart should be properly animated by our Christian faith, hope and charity so that whatever happens, we know that we are always in God's hands and that everything would just work out for the good. (cfr. Rom 8,28)

When we notice that we are more dominated by fears, doubts, worries and anxieties, than by a sense of confidence and calm, then let us rev up our faith and hope. God takes care of everything. Remember Christ telling his disciples many times, "Do not be afraid." These words should always ring out in our ears. We really have no reason to fear, to worry and to be sad.

We may have to spend more time and effort in praying and in truly engaging God in a filial conversation full of trust. Perhaps, this is what is lacking in us. Our life of piety is not that strong and consistent yet. Our relation with God is still very tenuous.

Whatever weaknesses in ourselves that we can notice these days, let us learn to convert them into an occasion to craft the pertinent virtues. Let's develop the appropriate attitudes and practices. Now is the time to put our spiritual house in order!

Maybe it may just be a matter of saying some aspirations to calm down our disturbed emotions. Or it could be to focus more on the many urgent tasks that for sure we will never run out, since these days are quite different from the ones we are used to. Our life these days is quite upended. The challenge is how to make good use of our time, observing the proper priorities.

We may also have to strengthen our will to detach ourselves from certain things that we enjoyed during the old normal, since these would keep us unable to properly, let alone, promptly correspond to the new demands of the times.

The quarantine actually gives us new opportunities for learning. If we are not good in things of the kitchen, perhaps now is the time to learn something, like cooking, baking or washing dishes and doing laundry.

If we have been a pygmy in the new technologies, now would be a good time to explore the many possibilities to level up. If we have been using the basic apps so far, perhaps we can try the newer and more sophisticated and powerful ones.

If we have been limiting our circle of friends to those whom we meet usually in the old normal or to the locals, now is the time to go global. Of course, we have to practice prudence and caution always, which are also virtues that we need to adapt to the new circumstances.

Never forget what Christ told us about the naked reality of our earthly life. We will always have troubles here, but he assured us to stay calm since he has overcome them. (cfr. Jn 16,33) He also told us that we are actually thrown into a world of wolves, but he advised that we be clever like serpents while remaining simple like doves. (cfr. Mt 10,16)

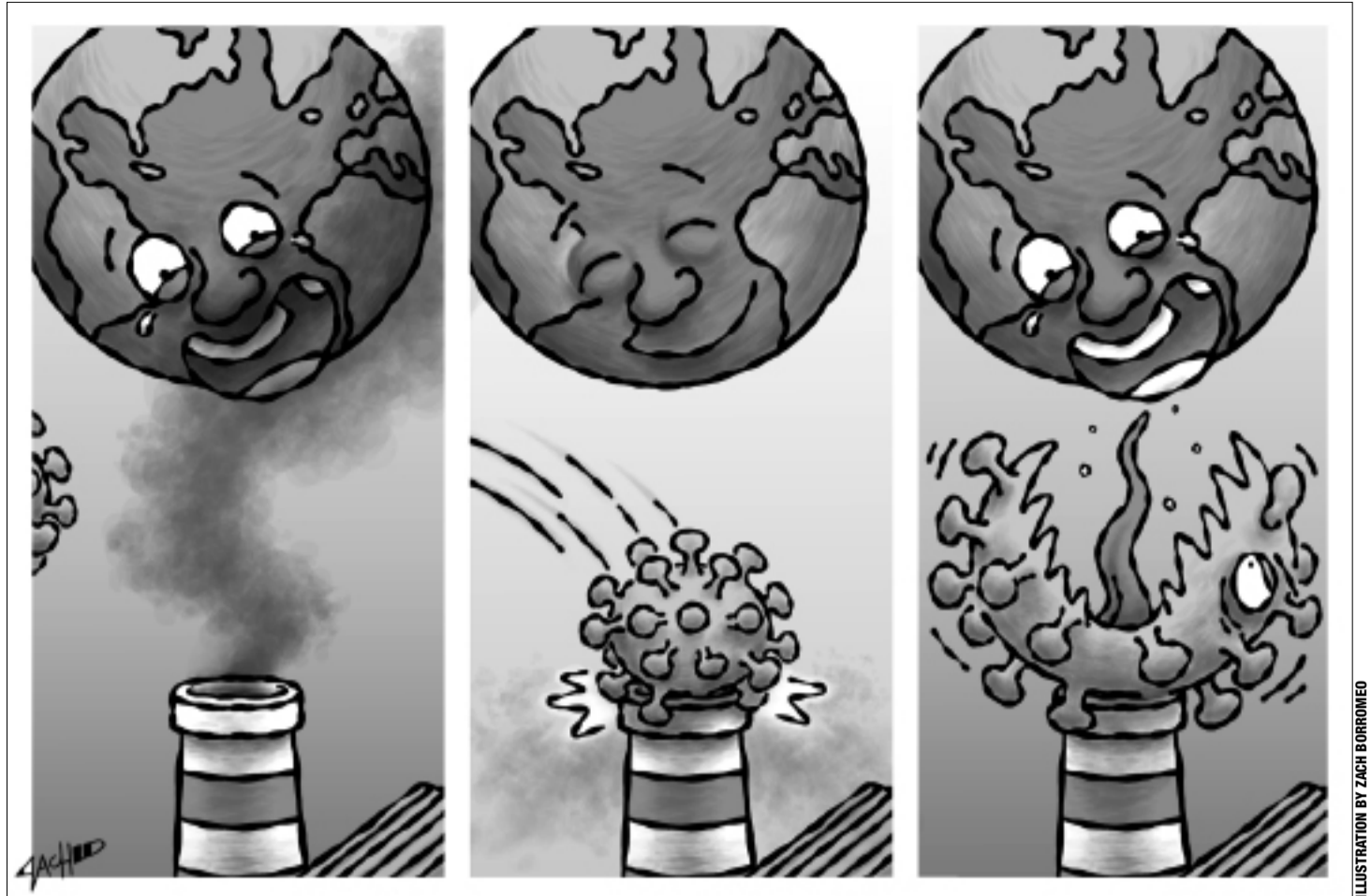


ILLUSTRATION BY ZACH BORROMEO



Living Mission

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

INTERRELIGIOUS Dialogue does not happen between religious systems of belief (e.g. Islam and Christianity). Essentially, dialogue occurs between persons and among communities; dialogue is people-centered and community-oriented. In a word, dialogue is based on the personal "God-experience" of the participants, be they Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu.

In this context, a very helpful guideline for Christians-in-Dialogue can be found in the scripture passage of I Peter 3:15-16: "Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have; but give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience." Indeed, this passage emphasizes both one's love and fidelity to Christ, the source of our hope, as well as a courteous, respectful witnessing of one's faith before others.

When Pope John Paul II visited the Philippines in February 1981, he spoke some challenging words that promote interfaith respect, dialogue, and service. "Christians will, moreover, join hands with all men and women of good will who share a belief in the inestimable dignity of each human person. They will work together to bring about a more just and peaceful society in which the poor will be the first to be served." In a word,

dialogue and service go hand-in-hand!

An inspiring "dialogue" encounter.

We often learn much about dialogue through our experiences. Allow me to tell you a personal story that touched my heart. A few years ago while I was waiting in a Manila office before formal business hours, I found myself in a fascinating conversation with a charming young lady. Although she is presently employed in Manila, her origins are in Jolo, south-western Philippines. In the course of our brief, but friendly chat, she proudly told me how her name "Mary Ann" reflects her family which is part Muslim and part Christian.

She narrated her background: "When my parents were choosing my name, it was my Muslim grandfather who insisted on 'Mary' because of his admiration for Mary (*Maryam*), the mother of Jesus (*Isa*) [Jesus is considered an important prophet in Islam]. Furthermore, my grandfather urged that my second name be 'Ann' in honor of Mary's mother. Thus, while acceding to my parents' decision that I would be baptized a Christian, he believed that my Muslim heritage would not be lost because of the name he had chosen for me." She concluded her story: "I'm very happy that my own name symbolizes who I am—both Christian and Muslim."

Guiding our interfaith dialogue

Nuestra Señora for Christians and Muslims.

Another true story illustrates the reverence that Muslims in southern Mindanao have for Mary. In Zamboanga a Muslim high school student explained to his Jesuit teacher why he had missed a day of class: "Yesterday was the fiesta of the Virgin Mary, *Nuestra Señora del Pilar*. I visited her shrine at Fort Pilar to pray and ask for her help."

Nuestra Señora del Pilar is the principal shrine of Mary in all of Mindanao. It is one of the few Marian shrines that is not located inside a church; on the wall of the city's old Spanish-built fort is a picture of Our Lady appearing to Saint James the Apostle. The shrine's outdoor location makes it accessible to Muslims and Christians alike.

In Zamboanga itself, the Feast of *Pilar* (October 12) is a day when a remarkable spirit of unity and community is manifested. It is observed that some Muslims join the celebration and even light candles as an offering at the shrine. Although there are clear historical and dogmatic divergences between Muslims and Christians, a perceptive Zamboangueno has asked: "Can Mary's shrine be an omen of continued Muslim-Christian respect, cooperation, and fraternity?" This is the true spirit of authentic interreligious dialogue!

Dream on Philippines

ANOTHER raging issue has hit the homeland—the conviction for libel of Maria Ressa of Rappler. The signing of the controversial Anti-Terrorism Bill may not be far behind. Another set of divisive issues that is wracking our people. We cannot seem to have peace and harmony as a country even for a moment.

I am a child of both Edsa 1 and Edsa 2. I too have marched in the streets since the days after the First Quarter Storm in the 70s. Not in the limelight for sure, but yes I was there. There

was a welcome respite as the Lord gifted me with a family and I joined the professional workforce. I have even been privileged to be part of reform minded governments after the two Edsas.

Makes one ask, like the corona virus pandemic, when will this end? Or will this end at all? Will we ever have relative peace in our land? We seem to be in a continuing mode of fighting one another. Can we ever have a time when we will achieve a semblance of a National Team Spirit as Manny Gonzalez writes about in his Kindle book *Crazy Wild*

Idea which I referred to in my previous post? There are other battles we have to fight as one united country, such as the stab to our sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea or even Benham Rise. But it seems we cannot fight as one united country. And that is a formula for failure.

It is easy to be exasperated, as some have. It is easy to lose heart as some have. It is easy to give up as others may have. But quit we must not. We must not give up on what I believe is still there even if it is just a dying ember of our individual or

collective dream of a better Philippines. We have a God who, notwithstanding everything, is in control.

Some years back, Tony Meloto of Gawad Kalinga, ask me to write my thoughts of what I dream the Philippines to be as part of the book he was writing. I do not have now a copy of the article I wrote then. But I still recall sharing that I do not dream of a country filled with skyscrapers nor one with the highest GDP, nor of more millionaires landing in the Forbes list of richest people.

Active Faith / A6

Active Faith

Joe Tale



Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimagala

THAT'S how St. Josemaria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, whose feast is celebrated on June 26, was often dubbed. And that's simply because he popularized the idea that everybody is called to holiness and for most of us, this quest for sanctity is done for the most part in the ordinary circumstances and events in our daily life.

In a way, he brought the high and sacred ideal of personal sanctification with its inseparable duty of doing personal apostolate to the mundane aspect of our life without neglecting, of course, the sacred aspect.

It's like saying that God is not only found inside churches and other holy,

sacred places. He is found everywhere, and for the most part of our day, he is in the little ordinary things.

Thus, at one point, St. Josemaria said, "God is calling you to serve him in and from the ordinary...There is something holy, something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it."

In other words, the dynamic of love, which is the essence of sanctity, need not be reserved for some special occasions. It can be done and lived, and in fact it should be done and lived, in the ordinary and usual events of our day, composed mainly of little,

mundane concerns and affairs.

The saint of the ordinary life

This thrust of his preaching, which sprang from a special vocation he received from God, somehow made a kind of revolution in the world of spirituality. That's because with the way Christianity developed historically and culturally from its beginning—what with all the persecution of the early Christians and the aggressive paganism of the world—spiritual life was associated more with the attitude of the "contemptus mundi" (contempt for the world).

St. Josemaria promoted the idea of passionately loving the world instead, because in the first place the world is a

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CBCP Monitor

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Panaghoy

Bp. Broderick Pabillo

THESE past few weeks, we have been mercilessly punched by adversaries. The Covid infection has been rising in the country. Joblessness continues to hit the people. More and more businesses are closing down or downsizing. The economic situation of the country is bleak.

But added to this, the power of authoritarianism is rising. Maria Ressa was convicted, guilty of cyber libel by the Manila Regional Trial Court on June 15, a decision that is very much contested by lawyers and press people alike. It was a way to curtail press freedom. On July 3, President Duterte signed the Anti-Terrorism Bill into law. Many dub it as TERROR LAW because it is seen by not a few as a way of terrorizing the opposition than really fighting terrorists. Then on July 10, the lower house committee killed the bid for franchise renewal of media outlet ABS-CBN. It is viewed by many as a political vendetta of the

present administration, no matter the consequences – the thousands of people who will lose their jobs precisely in this trying time and the millions of viewers among the poor who will be deprived of an important source of information and entertainment. Parang bugbog na ang tao. Bugbog ng gobyerno sa kanyang kapalpakan sa pagtugon sa corona virus pandemic, at mas lalong nakakagalit, bugbog ng makinarya ng gobyerno na ipakita na siya ay makapangyarihan.

In moments of gloom, I turn to the Bible for guidance and I read Psalm 37. I was admonished by the psalm and at the same time very much consoled. I just quote the first 10 verses and let them speak for themselves.

1 Do not be provoked by evildoers; do not envy those who do wrong.

2 Like grass they wither quickly; like green plants they wilt away.

3 Trust in the LORD and do good that you may dwell in the land and live

secure.

4 Find your delight in the LORD who will give you your heart's desire.

5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will act.

6 And make your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like noonday.

7 Be still before the LORD; wait for him. Do not be provoked by the prosperous, nor by malicious schemers.

8 Refrain from anger; abandon wrath; do not be provoked; it brings only harm.

9 Those who do evil will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD will inherit the earth.

10 Wait a little, and the wicked will be no more; look for them and they will not be there. (Ps. 37:1-10)

The wicked will not last. God will not allow them. They may win some battles and skirmishes but they will lose the war. Let us not be sad nor be provoked at this bad turn of events. Goodness, truth, and justice will prevail!

We shall overcome

Commentary

Fr. Elias Ayuban, Jr., CMF

Who pays the coronavirus bill?

OVER 190 countries have taken fiscal or monetary action to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The US Congress has authorized an additional US\$2.8 trillion in government spending, with further appropriations expected. The fresh US spending, all debt funded, comes on top of a \$1,022 billion pre-existing budget deficit for 2019. The US\$21,216 billion US economy had already been supporting outstanding federal government debt of \$23,224 billion at the start of 2020.

Supplementing government initiatives, the US Federal Reserve has dramatically lowered interest rates and committed an unlimited budget for the purchase of financial assets to shore up their value. It already holds \$5,886 billion in government and mortgage backed securities. Now, it is moving along the risk curve to buy publicly traded equities and low-grade corporate debt.

The government of the world's second largest economy has committed an additional RMB3.6 trillion to support economic activity. The Chinese central bank has flagged a boost to its lending by RMB6.0 trillion as well as offering fresh loan support by way of guarantees and rate reductions.

The UK government is committed to spending another £48.7 billion with an undefined amount in loans to support business activity. The normally fiscally conservative Germans are spending another €427 billion and offering €820 billion in loan supports.

Some of the most historically dogged fiscal conservatives are voicing support for spending and loan commitments beyond the dreams of the most wild-eyed socialists.

Fiscal reactions to the pandemic threat have not been especially well planned. Their breathtaking speed has emphasized getting cash out the door. Nor has the longer-term impact on economic performance and future living standards been widely canvassed.

Out the window has gone the now old-fashioned warning that governments, like families, should live within their means.

Central banks, having acquired their independence since the 1980s, have morphed from behind the scenes lenders of last resort to licensed banks into frontline buyers of financial assets. Now, markets throw a tantrum if central banks are not signaling their support regularly and frequently. Central banks are seemingly obligated to assuage the slightest investor anxiety.

The ambivalence of economists towards debt funding has worked against financial discipline. Governments have sprinted to take advantage of their teaching that not all debt is bad. Don't blame Covid-19. Central governments in advanced economies started 2020 with debt levels already exceeding the dangerously high 100 percent of GDP benchmark.

A simple example can illustrate the reasons for economists' schizophrenic mindset about deficit spending.

Let's assume that a country's GDP of \$100 is growing at 5%, comprising real output growth of 3% and inflation of 2%. You can scale that up with as many zeroes as you like. The results will be the same.

Then comes an exogenous shock of some sort, like a pandemic, which causes the government in this example to debt fund expenditure of \$100. Let's say that the interest payable on the debt, also debt funded, is 7%. If nothing else changes, after 25 years, the original debt and ongoing interest liability will have mounted to \$543, more than a fivefold increase.

Debt will have risen to 168% of the higher GDP with dimming prospects of repayment unless residents cut back on their spending or find new sources of income. GDP would have more than tripled but 11% of the larger GDP would be committed to debt servicing.

The US government can issue bonds denominated in US dollars. Other countries' governments, forced to borrow in US dollars, face currency risks. The debt of US dollar borrowers escalates even faster to the extent the value of their currencies declines as investors grow more fearful of a repayment default.

Governments in this predicament are usually forced into harsh spending cuts to keep a lid on the mounting debt burden. Think here about Greece, Italy and Argentina as

Commentary / A6



Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

MORE than half of the population are now reeling from the bad effects of the pandemic coronavirus 2019. Both businessmen and the working class face the problem of big losses in business and loss of job. Due to financial losses caused by the lockdown, most companies shut down and closed its business, in effect retrenching all its employees, adding more to the number of unemployed. For some business which decided to go on, it resorted to any of the following: reduction of work hours, reduction in salary, skeleton force to report for work, thus, those who stayed home either charge their absence to their leave credits, or no work no pay, or worst, be retrenched. Some companies authorize work from home, but not all can do it due to the confidentiality and sensitivity of the work involved; documents cannot be brought out of the work premises. Those who are required to report to office are faced with the problem of transportation. Some offices provide shuttle services to its employees but not every business can afford it. Thus, on the first day of GCQ, many people reported late and went home late. Physical distancing was ignored; their goal was to get a ride to the office and back home. Some did not wear face mask, or if they wore one, it is either placed under the chin without covering the nose and mouth, or it covers only the mouth.

The jeepney drivers are not yet allowed to ply their route. Buses can carry only 50% of the seating capacity.

Two weeks before, NCR was downgraded from ECQ to modified ECQ; several people went to malls—the security guards and staff were helpless to strictly implement physical distancing and wearing of masks. It is no wonder that after 14 days, when NCR was downgraded to GCQ, many barangays were forced to lock down while some are scheduled to lockdown this week due to the increase in covid positive. It is not just one or two infected persons, it was not lower than 10 persons per barangay. It should be noted that when rapid test was conducted on barangay officials, staff and volunteers, they tested negative, however, when they showed covid symptoms and had swab test, they tested positive. During the modified GCQ, the DOH report 16,634 confirmed cases; two weeks after, confirmed cases reached 24,787 or an increase of 33%. We continuously advocate mass testing to determine covid positive so that they can be immediately isolated to prevent contamination.

While the population is already beleaguered with fear of being infected with coronavirus, both the House of Representatives and the Senate rushed to approve the Anti-Terrorism Bill, adding more fear to the

populace which is already stressed by the effects of pandemic on the mental and physical health, livelihood and economic needs of their family. Why raise the issue of Anti-Terrorism Bill during this pandemic when the government should instead act on the most urgent need of its citizens?

The problems caused by lockdown are more than enough to fill the work schedule of government officials. Almost everyone is against this Bill because it contains provisions which are violation of the constitutional rights of an individual.

Broad definition of terrorism, terrorists and terrorist acts encompasses acts which fall under common crime. Mere suspicion is enough to be tagged a terrorist. (2) Penalty of life imprisonment without the benefit of parole and good conduct time allowance. (3) Wiretapping—On mere suspicion, the law enforcement agents or military personnel may file application with the Court of Appeals for an order to secretly wiretap, intercept, surveillance, etc. with the use of any mode or type of electronic. (4) Production of customer records—law enforcement agents may compel telecommunications service providers and internet service providers to produce all customer information and identification records, call and text data records, other cellular or internet of

any person. (5) The order to conduct wiretapping may be applied ex parte where the presence of the suspect is dispensed with; that the same may be issued on mere suspicion, that is, not supported by concrete evidence is not only a denial of due process of law but a violation of an individual's right to privacy. (6) Substitution of applicant in case of death or disability of the original applicant for extension or renewal; the substitute may not have personal knowledge about the case. (7) Detention for 14 calendar days on mere probable cause and without warrant, and may be extended for another 10 calendar days if necessary to preserve evidence, to prevent the commission of another terrorism, and the investigation is being conducted properly and without delay. The person who has taken custody does not incur any criminal liability for delay in the delivery of detained persons to the proper judicial authorities. The suspect's assets can also be frozen upon order of ATC.

No more Secrecy of Bank Deposit—The Anti Money Laundering Council, upon issuance by the court of a preliminary order to investigate may require the bank to show the suspect's bank records to check in any property or funds may finance terrorism. The assets of the depositor may also be frozen.

The untimely Anti-Terrorism Bill

COVID Communions



Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco

ONCE, a distinguished elderly lady working in a prestigious corporation was asked what she was missing most during the lockdown. Her unexpected response surprised her listeners, "I really miss receiving Jesus sacramentally in the Holy Eucharist!"

With the lockdown relaxing and gradually allowing people to return to some 'old normal routines', many are so eager to once again go to Mass and receive Holy Communion. For many it's like reliving their first Holy Communion! Like eager children, waiting for Santa Claus to leave their Christmas gifts, they couldn't hide their excitement now that their long-awaited desire is going to be finally fulfilled.

The COVID pandemic affected the whole world in an unprecedented manner: a global lockdown! Older generations compared this experience similar to what happened in the last World War. This time, however, the common

enemy is a virus that forced us to be quarantined, monitored, and controlled into a lifestyle radically affecting our social, professional and religious engagements.

In a Catholic country, the lockdown was powerfully felt when the Churches closed, the celebration of major liturgical feasts like Easter was celebrated online, the administration of the sacraments was suspended and public processions were prohibited. The faithfully dutifully complied given the seriousness of the pandemic, but through the growing months of the quarantine they began longing deeply for the sacramental reception of Jesus, their hunger and desire for our Lord grew as they became aware of what they were truly missing.

It is no wonder that many who now have had the opportunity to attend Holy Mass and receive communion would compare it to their first Holy Communion. In fact, since they understand

more as adults, they are able to truly value what receiving Jesus sacramentally is. This is perhaps one of the positive consequences of the pandemic: helping many rediscover and treasure what before was invisible to their eyes and heart.

This also proves that although we can spiritually nourish ourselves by watching an online mass, our souls that had once touched Jesus continues to long for what only Jesus could gift us sacramentally. Thus, Donald Calloway says, "What is the closest possible union you can have with Jesus in this life? The answer is easy: your reception of Jesus in Holy Communion. There is no greater intimacy with Jesus possible in this life than when you receive the Eucharist at Holy Mass. The Blessed Sacrament is the Body, Blood and Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. (Consecration to St. Joseph)"

Fostering desire is one of the most beautiful and fruitful ways to

receive Jesus. Our desire disposes our soul to prepare to receive Him by striving to detach itself from sin, to beautify itself with virtues and polish itself with sacrifice to be constantly grateful for God's infinite gifts through communion. This constant effort of feeding the flame of our desire to receive Jesus will also help us to become better instruments that communicate His love to others around us.

One moving story about desire for Jesus in the Holy Mass is demonstrated by the story of Imelda Lambertini. She was born in Bologna of a very noble family. At the young age of nine she had asked her parents' permission to enter a Dominican Convent. In the convent she was well-loved by the nuns for her deep piety and spiritual life. But because she was only nine, she could not receive Holy Communion since the law did not allow children under twelve to receive it. Imelda grieved because she couldn't help tell the

other nuns: "Tell me, can anyone receive Jesus into his heart and not die?"

After Holy Mass one day, the sisters left the church and noticed Imelda was still inside. As they returned to call her, they witnessed a Eucharistic miracle: a bright white host hovered above Imelda. They called the priest who then took a paten on which the host gently descended. The priest took this as a sign that the girl was indeed ready for communion. He administered Holy Communion to Imelda. Once she received it, she entered into ecstasy and died that very same day. Her first Holy Communion was also to be her last. Imelda was only eleven years old.

May our growing desires to receive Jesus sacramentally lead to the death of pride, greed, lust, and all other vices in us. So that our desires now purified will set others afire with God's love burning in our hearts, minds and works.

Borongan bishop calls for vigilance on anti-terror law



Bishop Crispin Varquez and the clergy of the Diocese of Borongan pose for a group photo after the Chrism Mass at the Nativity of Our Lady Cathedral July 8. BORONGAN CATHEDRAL

A CATHOLIC bishop called on priests to be vigilant against possible abuses in the enforcement of the contentious anti-terrorism law.

Bishop Crispin Varquez of Borongan has added his voice to those concerned about the new law, urging his priests to help protect the basic rights of their flock.

Speaking during the Chrism Mass at the Borongan Cathedral on July 8, he stressed that terrorism is “strongly condemned by the Church.”

“But we have to be vigilant against possible abuses in the implementation of the law,” Bishop Varquez said in his homily.

“We have to safeguard the basic human rights of our people because any form of violation would be contrary to God’s law of loving our neighbors,” he said.

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic that has made the people’s lives even more difficult and more uncertain, he said the new law provides more reason for uncertainty.

Critics of the anti-terror law worry that the vague provisions of the legislation could lead to an abuse in power.

Various groups also asked the Supreme Court to suspend the law, arguing that it threatens human rights.

With the many challenges besetting the nation, Bishop Varquez admitted that the call to exercise their prophetic role remains a “big challenge.”

“As pastors of God’s flock, you should stand ready to protect the innocent and sacrifice ourselves for their earthly well-being as well as for their eternal salvation,” he said.

“With passion, let us continue exercising, doing our priestly, kingly and prophetic roles in the church,” the prelate added.

The annual Chrism Mass is normally held during the Holy Week but the pandemic has forced the country’s dioceses to delay the celebration.

During the liturgy, the priests also renewed their priestly vows and the oils used to administer sacraments were blessed. **(CBCP News)**

Candidly Speaking / A4

creation of God and so it is good in itself before it is corrupted by our sin.

Secondly, St. Josemaria pointed out that it is in the world that God has placed us to test us, to see if through the things of the world we can make the proper choice of loving God rather than of loving our own selves.

We should therefore understand that our mundane and temporal affairs are no obstacle in our relationship with God and with others. In fact, for most people, these matters and affairs are the very occasion, material and motive for developing the love for God and for others, and thus, they also serve as the means for their own sanctification.

While we have to take utmost care in carrying out our sacred duties of praying, offering sacrifices, having recourse to the sacraments, availing of the spiritual means of formation, etc., we should not forget that our ordinary secular duties and responsibilities play an important role in our spiritual life.

It’s in these latter duties

that most people have their usual encounter with Christ. It’s in them that most people have the opportunity to correspond to God’s continuing work of creation and redemption on them.

This was what St. Josemaria highlighted in his preaching, for which he was misunderstood by many people, even by those whom he considered to be “good people.” But in all of those misunderstandings, he said he never lost his charity for everyone.

It was with this heroic integrity and consistency between his word and his life that, I think, enabled him to accomplish many great things in the lives of many people and in the Church itself. He is, in fact, considered as the precursor—or, at least, one of them—of what is now known as the lay spirituality in the Church because of the mission that he carried out with total self-giving.

I believe that St. Josemaria can greatly help many people find sanctity with its duty of personal apostolate in the middle of the world. May the devotion to him grow!

Active Faith / A4

I just dream of a people living in dignity as befit those created in the image and likeness of God, and not in debilitating poverty. I just dream of a people who can equally access food, water, health, education, jobs, housing and other necessities for a peaceful and respectable life, and not mansions or opulence.

I guess that might really be too much to aspire for, but we can dream, can’t we?

I also recall attending the launching of Dream Philippines, a movement also in pursuit of a better country spearheaded by Dr. Jess Estanislao and Alex Lacson of the Institute for Solidarity of Asia.

I’m sure these and other dreams for our country continue to be there, lodged in many Filipino hearts. We must not allow these dreams to be extinguished and die.

Dream on Philippines, let us pray even more, and even when we think we can’t do much, let us do something good for our country in whatever way we can, where ever in the world we may have been planted.

We must continue to hope. For as we sing in CFC, “Though the sorrows may last for the night, His joy comes with the morning.” That is for sure. We can hold on for one more day, or whatever it takes. The Lord’s word is true. We can rely on that.

Bishop seeks probe into deaths of OFWs in Saudi Arabia

A CATHOLIC bishop stressed the need for an investigation into the death of more than 300 Filipinos in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga said a probe is needed to understand what happened and to enable appropriate actions to be taken.

“There should be investigation for the specific causes of death in order to prevent and avoid future loss of life,” Santos, the vice chairman of the bishops’ Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People, said on June 23.

“It is also to correct what is wrong, to

amend some mistakes and to improve the working conditions of our OFWs,” he said.

The bishop made the statement as the Philippine government is set to repatriate the remains of about 246 OFWs who died due to “natural causes”.

Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Adnan Alonto said the number of deaths has reached 353, with 107 due to the coronavirus.

The government earlier said the bodies of Filipinos who succumbed to coronavirus will be buried in the Gulf state.

The prelate said it is proper that the remains of the deceased Filipinos will be brought back home for them to have a proper burial.

“They should be also home, and their loved ones to give their last respects,” Santos said.

“We, Filipinos, have high respect for the dead. We honor the dead. They are sacred to us. It is just and proper to give them proper, dignified burial,” he added.

Santos also asked the government to help the deceased OFWs’ bereaved families. **(CBCP News)**

Nun unfazed of red-tagging by gov’t official

AN 80-year-old Benedictine nun remained unfazed after she was tagged by a government official as a “long-time ally” of a “communist terrorist organization”.

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, a known political and feminist activist, said she is undaunted by the accusation, which she described as “libelous”.

“Actually I know that no venomous lies uttered by anyone can change or make a dent on the real person that I am,” Sr. Mananzan said on June 22.

Undersecretary Lorraine Badoy of the Presidential Communications Operations Office has earlier accused Mananzan as a supporter of communist rebels.

Badoy’s reaction was in response to the nun’s Facebook post on the guilty verdict against Rappler chief executive officer Maria Ressa over a cyber libel case.

The PCCO official is also the spokesperson of the National



Sr. Mary John Mananzan. FILE PHOTO

Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict.

The activist group Movement Against Tyranny (MAT) has demanded an

apology from Badoy for putting the nun’s “life and liberty in peril”.

“We demand a public apology from Badoy

retracting and correcting her condemnable Facebook post,” the MAT said in a statement on June 19. **(CBCP News)**

Wrong Path / A1

into law the Anti-Terrorism Act that grants authorities even more flexibility to abuse power.

Human rights advocates particularly raised concerns with provisions allowing warrantless detention and wiretapping of suspects.

Several church groups also questioned the “broad” definition of terrorism in the law, warning it could be misused indiscriminately against critics and other targets.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga

said the new law “threatens” free speech.

“This anti-terror bill will not give us peace, harmony nor will unite us,” Santos said.

Caritas Philippines, the Church’s social action arm, also deplored Duterte’s “brazen disregard” of the public appeal to defer the signing of the measure until thorough discussion has been done.

“The profound lack of consideration and sensitivity to the more pressing needs of the country by our government

is appalling and utterly alarming,” the Caritas said in a statement.

“Thus we will continue to be vigilant of the government’s actions, denounce any form of human rights violation, state repression, and impunity in cracking down on our democratic exercise,” it said.

Lawmakers, including principal author Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Senate President Vicente Sotto III, defended the measure that will add more teeth to the government’s campaign against terrorists.

Death Penalty / A1

to restore men and women to the likeness of God,” he said.

“Death penalty has no association whatsoever with God. In fact, it is everything that is against God, who is the God of life and love,” he added.

The Philippines abolished capital punishment in 2006 but President Rodrigo Duterte wanted it restored for illegal drugs, heinous crimes, and plunder.

But while death penalty

remains suspended, the priest lamented how the “culture of killing continue to flourish in our midst”.

“Be also mindful that even though, legally speaking there is no state-sanctioned killing, we know that the culture of death is still here among us,” Fr Borres also said.

“And we are called to shed light on every occasion where there is transgression on life,” he said.

Bishop Joel Baylon, chairman of the Church’s Commission on Prison Pastoral Care, stressed that the death penalty “has no place in a Christian and civilized society like ours”.

“While we believe that offenders must be made accountable for their acts or omissions committed against their victims and the community, they should be given proper treatment to

enable them to rehabilitate and change for the better,” Baylon said.

“We believe that our justice system should move beyond punishment towards a justice that promotes healing and rehabilitation.”

“We therefore call on our legislators and policy makers to pass measures that will respect life and the dignity of the human person,” he said. **(CBCP News)**

Korean War / A3

crowds gather at cathedrals.

Since the division of the Korean peninsula along the 38th parallel, the North and South have significantly diverged economically and culturally.

Twenty-five million people live in North Korea, the country with one of the world’s worst human rights records. A United Nations investigation in 2014 produced a 372-page report that documented crimes against humanity, including execution, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, forced abortions, and knowingly causing prolonged starvation.

South Korea, in contrast, has experienced significant economic growth since the Korean War. Its rapid development after the war has become known as the “miracle on the Han River,” in which the economy grew by an annual rate of nearly 9% for three decades.

The Catholic Church in South Korea has also grown by nearly 50% in the past two decades, according to a study by the Korean bishops’ conference. Today there are an estimated 5.8 million Catholics in South Korea.

Before the Korean War, Pyongyang had been referred to as the “Jerusalem

of the East” and was considered a center of Christianity in Northeast Asia. There were about 50,000 Catholics registered in parishes in 1945 in what is now North Korea, according to the Korean bishops’ conference, with more than double that number of Protestant Christians.

Most of the priests who were in North Korea were captured, killed, or disappeared just before the Korean War broke out in 1950, according to the Korean Bishops Conference. The beatification process has begun for 40 monks and sisters of Tokwon Benedictine Abbey who were martyred by the Communists.

In 1988, the “Korean Catholic Association” created by the Communist government registered 800 members. This association is not recognized by the Vatican, but is one of three state-sponsored churches that operate in North Korea under strict supervision of the Communist authorities.

Bishop Peter Lee Ki-heon of Uijeongbu was born in Pyongyang in 1947, and fled to the south with part of his family at the age of four as a result of the Korean War.

Today he leads the Korean bishops’ Committee for the Reconciliation

of the Korean People. Ahead of the anniversary, Bishop Lee urged the government to find a way to expedite inter-Korean exchanges without violating international sanctions, according to the South Korean Yonhap News.

Recently inter-Korean relations have deteriorated, with Pyongyang threatening last week to send troops to the demilitarized zone, which divides the peninsula. On June 6 North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un ordered the demolition of the joint liaison office, which had been created by South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Cardinal Yeom, who is technically apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Pyongyang in North Korea, prayed for leaders to work to find the common good for both countries on the divided Korean peninsula.

“All leaders of the Korean Peninsula and the international community are responsible for the future of our nation,” Yeom said.

“With this in mind, I hope that we will overcome the personal, partisan, and national interests and realize the true good for both North and South Korea,” the cardinal said. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

Covid-19 tones down traditional Peñafrancia festivities

NAGA City— The traditional Peñafrancia festivities will be toned down to the barest minimum in compliance with calls for public safety as the COVID-19 pandemic continue to threaten the country.

Archbishop Rolando Tirona of Caceres said as Bicolanos express gratitude to how the region's beloved icon called Ina provided refuge in trying times and calamities, with the threats from COVID-19 pandemic, they introduced changes in the traditional celebration while at the same time expressing the same fervent devotion and imploring her maternal protection.

Instead of the traditional novena to the Divino Rostro (the Holy Face of Jesus) from Sept. 2-10 and the novena to Our Lady of Peñafrancia from Sept. 11-19, at the Peñafrancia Shrine and Basilica Minore, the practice of the devotion is encouraged in the homes of the faithful. The Novena prayers and guide have been made available through social media and the Archdiocese of Caceres website.

While parishes in the

archdiocese will hold novena Masses, all public Mass should adhere to the necessary health protocols. The traditional Pagsungko ni Ina or visits of the revered image will be made in the parishes but there will be no procession before the month of September.

The widely-attended Fiesta Mass on Sept. 20, the Solemnity of Our Lady of Peñafrancia will be streamed live from the Basilica Minore and parishes are expected to air the livestreaming in their areas for the benefit of their parishioners.

As the feast of Our Lady of Peñafrancia draws millions of pilgrims and devotees in the span of two weeks, Archbishop Tirona called on everyone to attend the novena Masses in their parishes or follow mainstream broadcasts and the internet.

Nobody will also be allowed to kiss and touch images. There will be no imposition of the manto, the mantle or cape of the icon, believed to have healing powers, on sick pilgrims.

Even the well-attended traditional Traslacion and



The traslacion of Our Lady of Peñafrancia in 2019. COURTESY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CACERES

the Fluvial Processions are cancelled this year while the images of the Divino Rostro will remain at the Peñafrancia parish Church while that of Our Lady of Peñafrancia will stay at the Basilica Minore.

The Metropolitan of Caceres said the suffragan

dioceses of Legazpi, Sorsogon, Daet, Virac and Masbate have been requested to hold novena Masses on the same dates so the devotees residing in their areas may also express their devotion without the need to travel to Naga City.

"While we cancel the

traditional Traslacion and Fluvial processions, let us take this as an opportunity for the devotion to become more distinctive and rooted in our families, the domestic Church," said Archbishop Tirona in his circular.

"This year, we are also invited to reflect on the

theme 'Fostering Dialogue and Harmony in the Spirit of Mary's Gentleness and Humility.' The changes in our celebration should inspire us to discover how our faith can lead us to be gentle and humble in receiving the grace of God in the face of this pandemic," he added.

Meanwhile, Naga City Mayor Nelson Legacion said all other civic activities from the annual civic, military parade, competitions and beauty pageants as well as trade fairs will remain cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a joint press conference held at the Peñafrancia basilica on Saturday, Mayor Legacion said he and Archbishop Tirona hope that with the early decision to suspend the traditional activities and practices, people will no longer go on pilgrimage because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Bicolanos' devotion to Our Lady of Peñafrancia began 310 years ago while the celebration of the Feast of the Divino Rostro is in its 138th year. **(Melo Acuña/CBCPNews)**

Coronavirus: Cebu archbishop asks for more discipline, cooperation

CEBU City— Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu is urging people to strictly follow government rules as the city has turned into a coronavirus "hotspot" and remained as the country's lone area with the strictest form of lockdown.

Archbishop Jose Palma said that regulations put in place by authorities to contain the spread of the coronavirus can only be effective if residents strictly observe them.

He appealed to Cebuanos "that we maintain our sense of courtesy and respects" to government authorities.

"I recognize the sincerity and sacrifices of these government servants as they respond with the best intentions

and dedication to their duties, responsibilities and accountabilities to all of us," Palma said.

The archbishop also called for calm and solidarity with those at the frontline in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I wish to gently remind all of us to refrain from hurting one another any further with unkindness because the virus itself has done enough harm to us," Palma said.

"The worst of times is indeed the best of times to show to the rest of the country our sense of personal discipline and our willingness to show our deeply embedded Cebuano spirit of solidarity and tenacity," he added.

President Rodrigo Duterte on Tuesday announced that Cebu City will remain under the enhanced community quarantine until July 15.

Duterte is dismayed that the city is now a "hotspot" for Covid-19 because discipline in observing the Covid-19 precaution measures has loosened.

The city of Cebu has the highest positivity rate for Covid-19 infections in the country with 5,494 recorded cases and 169 deaths.

Metro Manila has also remained under general community quarantine while the rest of the country has now shifted to modified GCQ, the most relaxed quarantine phase. **(CBCPNews)**

Baguio bishop hits 'mass killing' of trees

BAGUIO City— A Catholic bishop has condemned what he called "continuing mass killing" of fully grown trees in Baguio City.

Bishop Victor Bendico of Baguio said the diocese does not sanction such activities because it goes against the Church teachings on the environment.

In a statement issued June 27, he said that the diocese "strongly opposes and considers as unacceptable the continuing mass killing of full grown and healthy trees".

The bishop was reacting to the cutting of 53 pine trees and one Norfolk fir by a real estate developer to pave the

way for a high-rise residential building.

Condominium developer Vista Residences defended its tree-cutting operation, saying it has secured permits from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The bishop, however, said it "affronts and defies" the diocese's vision and mission on the sustenance of the environment.

The "murder" of trees, he added, "contempts and despises" the works of environment advocates such as the late Bishop Carlito Cenzon, who has fought for the preservation of the city's pine trees.



Bishop Victor Bendico of Baguio. PHOTO FROM THE DIOCESE OF BAGUIO

Bendico also joined calls for a moratorium on tree cuttings and construction of big commercial buildings in the city.

"We continue to admonish the faithful to be united as

caring and loving stewards of God's creation to maintain Baguio as the City of Pines and Summer Capital of the Philippines," he said. **(CBCPNews)**

Diocese working to ensure PWDs not left behind in Covid-19 response

DUMAGUETE City— As the threat of coronavirus intensifies, a central Philippine diocese has been working to protect one of those vulnerable groups — the persons with disabilities.

Fr. Christian Benjamin of the Diocese of Dumaguete's Commission on PWDs said the sector has particular support needs in this challenging period.

Since the quarantine period, he said that the diocese has been working to ensure that these needs are reflected in its response to the emergency.

Aside from distributing food packs, the priest also celebrates Mass for the deaf through social media on Sundays and special occasions.

"Most, if not all, are spiritually parched because they have not attended Mass since March," said Fr. Benjamin, who is also serving at San Nicolas De Tolentino Parish in Dauin, Negros Oriental.

With almost a thousand deaf in

the diocese, Fr. Benjamin could only minister to a handful of them at a time. He connects with them online to give them counselling.

The diocese has also created a "save families" group to assist the deaf and blind community and their families.

The group also teaches deaf individuals with urban gardening to help them survive the crisis by planting vegetables for their daily sustenance.

"They need work to help them survive," said Fr. Benjamin, who is one of the two priests in the diocese who knows sign language.

Most of the PWDs in Negros Oriental and the neighboring province of Siquijor, lost their jobs after the government ordered business to temporarily stop operating, the priest said.

In Negros Oriental alone, the Trade Industry department reported at least 87% of local businesses ceased

operations since April because of COVID-19.

Those heavily affected were restaurants, massage parlors, barbershops, and the tourism industry as a whole, where most of the PWDs are working, it said.

"Some who are working at restaurants, hotels and some establishments until now, cannot yet return to work," Fr. Benjamin said.

The priest added that the quarantine has greatly affected the deaf community mentally and spiritually.

"Psychologically, some are in the state of depression," he said.

"The blind community was hardest hit since their only way of living is through their massage clinic," he furthered.

Negros Oriental officials ordered closure of non-essential establishments after it logged the first two Covid-19 cases in the province in February. **(Ryan Christopher J. Sorote/CBCPNews)**

Superiors / A1

congregations also called on the faithful to "stand your ground and be with the poor and downtrodden".

"Truth, justice and peace will prevail," it said.

The AMRSP is a joint

forum of heads of religious congregations, which run most of the country's top universities and institutions.

President Rodrigo Duterte on July 3 signed into law the Anti-Terrorism Act after it

was approved by Congress.

Among other things, the law allows warrantless arrest of people the government deems as terrorists and detain them without charge for 14 days.

The AMRSP said it is "deeply

saddened" by Duterte's signing of the widely-opposed measure which critics fear would "stifle basic rights and freedoms".

"In light of faith, we cannot in conscience accede to a law that may assault human

dignity and human rights," read the group's statement.

"At a time that our people are battling the effects of Covid-19, we find no reason to pass a law that does not serve to alleviate their miserable plight."

"Unemployment, the closure of businesses, the continuing spread of the virus, and the lack of relief for our people are the most pressing concerns at this time," it added. **(CBCPNews)**

Commentary / A5

conspicuous examples of the consequences among more advanced countries.

Let's say, in our example, that the government spends its borrowings solely on productivity enhancing initiatives like new roads, ports to boost exports, public health services to improve life expectancy and education to raise the technical competence of the workforce. Let's assume that these measures boost the GDP growth rate from 5% to 7%.

Also, interest rates have plummeted. Today, the US government can borrow for 10 years at around 0.8%. Almost incredibly, German rates are negative. So, let's drop the assumed debt servicing charge in the example from 7% to 1%.

The economic outcome is radically different with these two changes. GDP is 57% higher. The debt rises to only \$128 or 25% of GDP. Rather than 11% of GDP going in interest payments, only 0.3% is being absorbed in debt servicing. Spending on more productivity enhancing measures, social programs or lowered taxes becomes possible.

Done right, debt-funded government spending could greatly enhance future living standards. But here's the rub. The coronavirus spending splurge is largely bereft of measures to improve long term growth potential. It is focussed, instead, on getting consumers to buy stuff now.

Without more investment, the bill for today's spending will show up in lowered living standards in the future. Education, health and public welfare service delivery will seem to fall mysteriously short of what was expected as anonymous lenders take a growing chunk of income.

The intergenerational sharing of wealth, largely ignored in advanced economies, has received more attention in resource-rich developing countries which have had to plan for the exhaustion of their mineral or petroleum wealth.

Circumstances have forced governments in resource-rich countries to set aside a part of current revenue from the sale of natural resources to underwrite future provision of government services.

Sovereign wealth funds are set up for such a purpose.

A sovereign wealth fund used to manage national savings does not of itself solve the problem. Generally accepted guideposts about what constitutes a fair intergenerational share of well-being are also needed.

Even if debt and savings rules were legislated, opting out of a self-imposed fiscal straight-jacket is tempting when an unanticipated emergency, like a pandemic or a financial crisis, hits.

History has not helped foster fiscal discipline. Warnings over the past 40 or 50 years of impending economic calamity as a result of governments having lived beyond their means have been ignored with little obvious consequence.

The emergence of China as an economic power has especially eased pressures for more conservative budgeting. China's globally significant savings levels have removed an important fiscal constraint on the rest of the world.

Advanced economy budget deficits, funded by Chinese savings, have fuelled spending on Chinese goods. Propping up that nation's employment and income base has, in turn, sustained the pool of savings on which Western countries have come to rely for their deficit funding.

Freely flowing capital and unhindered movement of goods have been at the heart of this benign circle of economic life.

Even before the new coronavirus hit, these mutually beneficial trade and financial arrangements were crumbling. Their restoration, at a minimum, would help ease the burden of the newly imposed debt.

If, on the other hand, capital mobility and trade freedom are scaled back, the enormity of recent policy actions will require governments to come up with new ways to mitigate their effects on future living standards. Governments owe that to those involuntarily footing the Covid-19 bill.

(John A. Robertson is a consulting economist with a background in investment management, corporate strategy and public policy. He writes the weekly "From the Capital" column for London-based Mining Journal, covering the intersection of economic cycles, corporate governance and business strategy—MercatorNet)

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



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

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 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)**

Ozamiz's first archbishop dies



Archbishop Emeritus Jesus Dosado of Ozamiz

RETIRED Archbishop Jesus Dosado of Ozamiz died on June 23, few weeks after celebrating his 54th priesthood anniversary.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines immediately expressed condolences to Archbishop Martin Jumoad, who announced his predecessor's passing at the age of 80.

Jumoad conveyed "deep sorrow" over the death of Dosado, who served the archdiocese for 35 years.

"Please pray for his eternal repose," Jumoad said in a Facebook post.

Ordained a priest for the

Congregation of the Mission on May 28, 1966, Dosado was named auxiliary bishop of Cebu in 1977. In 1979, Pope John Paul II appointed him auxiliary bishop of Cagayan de Oro.

In 1981, he was transferred to the then Diocese of Ozamiz. After two years, Ozamiz was elevated an archdiocese and Dosado was installed as its first archbishop.

Archbishop Dosado was laid to rest following a funeral Mass presided over by his successor, Archbishop Martin Jumoad, at the Ozamiz Cathedral on June 30. **(CBCPNews)**

Pope appoints new archbishop of Cagayan de Oro

POPE Francis has appointed Bishop Jose Cabantan as the next archbishop of Cagayan de Oro.

Cabantan, who currently serves as bishop of Malaybalay, will replace Archbishop Antonio Ledesma, who has retired at the age of 77.

The appointment was made in Rome at 12 noon Tuesday, June 23, or 6pm in the Philippines.

Cabantan said the appointment was unexpected, adding that his "unworthiness" for the post brought him to "rely solely" on God's "love and mercy".

The archbishop-elect said he will soon meet with the clergy of the archdiocese to assess their situation amidst the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is good to listen also to where they are now as an archdiocese; their ministries, direction and above all to listen to where the Spirit leads us in the midst of this pandemic," he said.

Cabantan said he also plans to replicate Malaybalay's diocesan pastoral assemblies, a consultative activity that has been existing for the past 50 years since the time of the late Jesuit Bishop Francisco Claver, the diocese's first shepherd.



Archbishop-elect Jose Cabantan of Cagayan de Oro. BRENDA P. MILAN

"The pastoral life here in Malaybalay is given life through the diocesan pastoral assemblies, priests and religious assemblies, the different ministries, where communion and participation is upheld that help sustain the fire of fulfilling God's mission," he added.

Cabantan, 63, was born in Lagonglong town in Misamis Oriental, and ordained priest at the age of 32 for the Cagayan de Oro archdiocese.

The bishop took a "late vocation" after a few years of working as a licensed chemical engineer.

As priest, he led for several years the archdiocese's social action center before he was named Malaybalay bishop by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010.

The archbishop-elect also holds a degree in Pastoral Ministry from St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Cagayan de Oro and a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Loyola School of Theology in Manila.

In the bishops' conference, Cabantan currently heads the Committee on Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).

Cabantan will be installed as the fifth archbishop of

Cagayan de Oro on August 28, during the feast of St. Augustine of Hippo, the patron saint of the city.

The archdiocese covers the suffragan dioceses of Butuan, Malaybalay, Surigao, and Tandag.

The Vatican has yet to announce Cabantan's successor in the Malaybalay diocese, which has over a million Catholics in 54 parishes.

"We need to pray to the Holy Spirit to send a new shepherd here in the diocese," he said.

(CBCPNews/with reports from Ryan Christopher Sorote)

Kalookan diocese creates mental health 'hopeline'

A CATHOLIC diocese in Metro Manila has created a support helpline for those struggling with anxiety and other emotions due to the coronavirus crisis.

Dubbed as "Covid Hopeline", the Diocese of Kalookan's phone-in counselling program is staffed with mental health experts and priests to help those in emotional distress.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David said that since the early weeks of the lockdown, the diocese has also been holding psycho-spiritual webinars and online

counselling.

"We launched our own hopeline so that we'll be able to help our people in the diocese when they need guidance of a priest or a psychiatrist," Bishop David said over Church-run Radio Veritas.

Three months into the pandemic, the National Center for Mental Health reported an increasing number of Filipinos facing mental health issues such as anxiety during the lockdown.

The prelate said the diocese takes

mental health needs seriously, and ensures availability of support.

"Many health issues arise in people during the pandemic so the Church also needs to be there to address such issues," said Bishop David, who is also the Vice President of the Philippine bishops' conference.

He added that the diocese's social communication ministry has also strengthened its online presence to help provide pastoral accompaniment during the lockdown period. **(CBCPNews)**

Maasin diocese to expand renewable energy use



Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral in Maasin City. DIOCESE OF MAASIN

THE world's first Catholic diocese to go full solar aims to expand its alternative energy set-up within the next few years, its bishop said.

Bishop Prescioso Cantillas of Maasin said the plan is to install more solar panels in the diocese as clean and renewable source of power.

"Hopefully, we will reach a level where we can contribute more significantly to the restoration and preservation of our environment," Bishop Cantillas said.

In a new document released June 18, the Vatican has earlier commended Maasin for becoming the first diocese in the entire Catholic Church to adopt renewable energy in its 42 parishes since 2018.

Titled "Journeying for the care of the common home – five years after Laudato si," the document not only

offers reflections on caring for the common home, it also cites many initiatives and "best practices" from across the Catholic world.

"This news encourages us more to expand the use of renewable energy, solar power, which we have introduced in the diocese," he said.

As the Church pushes for fossil fuel divestment, many dioceses and Catholic institutions support the calls with "practical" initiatives by increasing renewable energy use.

As of September 2019, around 40 of the country's 85 archdioceses and dioceses have already started the process of installing solar panels.

The project is in partnership with WeGen, a next-generation technology company inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si.

Bishop Cantillas pointed out that the diocese has saved more than P100,000 in electricity bills per month because of the solar panels in the cathedral and school buildings alone.

WeGen said the Maasin diocese was not only able to cut their power cost, "but also show the world what pursuit of the care for our common home, as embodied by Pope Francis' Laudato Si, looks like".

The prelate also expressed hope that more dioceses will adopt the use of renewable energy "so that God's creation will be restored even just in a little degree".

"We hope that more dioceses will adopt this alternative power sources to continue Christ's mission of restoring all things back to how the Father has willed it," he said. **(CBCPNews)**



Catholic bishops denounce the government's "pattern of intimidation" as they expressed concern over the controversial anti-terror law. FILE PHOTO

A Pastoral Letter and a Call to Prayer

Sow for yourselves justice, reap in mercy. Break up for yourselves a new field, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he comes and rains justice upon you. - Hosea 10:12

DEAR Fellow Filipinos,

A few days ago, we received a letter from His Eminence, Charles Cardinal Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar and President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. It was an ardent request for prayers for Hongkong, on account of the signing into law of a new National Security Act. He explained in his letter how this new law poses a threat to the basic freedoms and human rights of the people of Hongkong, and how it potentially undermines especially their freedom of expression.

Apparently, the Chinese government assures the people of Hongkong that they have nothing to be afraid of, as long as "they don't get involved in any activity that threatens national security." Why does this sound eerily familiar to us Filipinos? Because we are in a similar situation. And so, while we responded with an assurance to His Eminence, Cardinal Bo, that we would join him in praying for the people of Hongkong, we also asked him to pray for the Philippines and explained why we are as seriously in need of prayers as the people of Hongkong. Like them, we are also alarmed about the recent signing into law of the Anti-Terror Act of 2020.

We are still in disbelief about the manner in which the contentious Anti-Terror Bill was fast-tracked and approved in both Houses of Congress while the whole country's attention was focused on the Covid-19 pandemic. They did not even seem to care that many of the people they represent were against it—lawyers' associations, the academe, the business sector, labor groups, youth organizations, NGO's, political movements, faith-based communities, and even the Bangsamoro government.

The dissenting voices were strong but they remained unheeded. None of the serious concerns that they expressed about this legislative measure seemed to be of any

consequence to them. Alas, the political pressure from above seemed to weigh more heavily on our legislators than the voices from below. It only made more evident the blurring of lines between legislative and the executive branches of our government.

In particular, the legal experts and constitutionalists in our country are seriously concerned that this newly signed law has many elements that are "oppressive and inconsistent with our Constitution." They have pointed out convincingly how this new law poses a "serious threat to the fundamental freedoms of all peaceful Filipinos."

And yet, the people in government and their allies have dismissed these fears as unfounded. The assurance that they give sounds strangely parallel to that which the Chinese government gave to the people of Hongkong: "Activism is not terrorism. You have no reason to be afraid if you are not terrorists." We know full well that it is one thing to be actually involved in a crime and another thing to be merely suspected or accused of committing a crime.

Have we not heard of people active in social advocacies who are accused of being communists? Have we forgotten the bishops, priests and religious who were included among those falsely charged by the Philippine National Police with crimes of sedition and inciting to sedition? Are we not aware of the thousands of people who have been killed in police operations on the basis of mere suspicion of involvement in criminality and illegal drugs? Have we not followed the news about Senator Leila de Lima who continues to languish in jail, also on the basis of mere allegations? Have we not heard of media personalities being harassed by a multitude of criminal charges? Have we not felt the chilling effect of the closure of the country's biggest broadcast network, the ABS-CBN, after being denied renewal of its franchise? Is it not evident to us how this pattern of intimidation creates an atmosphere detrimental to the

freedom of expression in our country?

In the midst of this bleak political landscape, we draw consolation from the groups of lawyers and ordinary citizens that have filed petitions before the Supreme Court, questioning the constitutionality of the newly signed law. Will the highest level of our Judiciary assert its independence, or will they, too, succumb to political pressure?

The return of "warrantless detentions" through this new law cannot but remind us of the initial moves in 1972 that eventually led to the fall of democracy and the rise of a dictatorial regime that terrorized the country for fourteen years. It all began when an elected president also legalized the "ASSOs" (arrest, search and seizure orders). It was from there that we gradually sank into the mire of authoritarian rule. Knowing how, in just the recent past, the law has been used too many times as a weapon to suppress legitimate dissent and opposition, we cannot but share in the apprehensions expressed by the lawyers and ordinary citizens that filed the petition against the said infamous law before the Supreme Court.

While a semblance of democracy is still in place and our democratic institutions somehow continue to function, we are already like the proverbial frog swimming in a pot of slowly boiling water. We draw encouragement from the belief that in various government agencies we still have many people of good will whose hearts are in the right places, and who remain objective and independent minded. We have nothing but admiration for these public servants in all branches of government who do only as conscience dictates and do not allow themselves to be intimidated or prevented by political pressure from performing their constitutionally mandated duties. We can only wish that there would be more of them. They are an important element to the strengthening of our government institutions, and are an essential key to a

stable and functional democratic system.

Allow us then to end this letter by inviting you to pray with us,

"Be with us O Lord our God, as we continue to face the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the recent political developments that have deeply divided our country. You know how desperately we need to be united in order to fight a common unseen enemy that has caused a lot of sufferings and uncertainties, widespread infections, an overwhelmed health care system, loss of jobs, hunger, immense losses in business, and loss of lives.

We pray for our public servants, our people in government, especially those among them who remain upright and continue to be motivated by a genuine sense of duty and love for country. Protect them, Lord, and give them the courage to stand their ground on the side of truth and justice.

May the crisis brought about by the pandemic bring about conversion and a change of heart in all of us. May it teach us to rise above personal and political loyalties and make us redirect all our efforts towards the common good. May we be guided by your Spirit to respond with mercy and compassion for the poor, the disadvantaged and the most vulnerable sectors of our society. For we know that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do for you. AMEN."

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines:

+ PABLO VIRGILIO S. DAVID, D.D.
Bishop of Kalookan
Acting President, CBCP
16 July 2020, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Liturgical law in times of the coronavirus pandemic: Dies Domini and Confessio Sacramentalis (Part3)

By Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD

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

Another question that has cropped up is the possibility of moving the Sunday Precept—i.e., of attending Holy Mass on Sunday and other holy days of obligation—to another day of the week. This actually has two variations: (1) transferring the liturgical celebration of Sunday to another day of the week, in connection with the limitations in Mass attendance occasioned by the Corona pandemic; and (2) rethinking the whole matter of the *Dies Domini* to shift the emphasis from a fixed day of the week (*Dies Domini* or Sunday) to any day of the week to spend with God (*Dies Domino*).

As a preliminary conclusion in Part II of this long article, we affirmed 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 can go back to the fundamental norms we saw in Part I of this article

1) Principle of substantial unity. As we saw, the basis of this principle is three-fold:

1° The liturgy belongs to the public patrimony of the entire Church, and should therefore be subject to the regulation only of the capital offices. Vatican Council II had categorically declared that “no other person, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority” (SC).

2° The liturgy is the principal factor for ecclesial communion. Thus, any arbitrariness in its celebration implies a rupture of this ecclesial communion and must therefore be avoided. Transferring the Sunday liturgy to another day is clearly a rupture of common practice (communion), which should only be done for the sake of a greater good.

3° Lex orandi, lex credendi. The liturgy is closely linked to the deposit of faith. Hence, any laxity in liturgical discipline is at the same time effect and cause of important dogmatic errors. In this case, the Local Ordinary has to consider the possible confusion that such a shift might cause not only in the minds but in the sensibilities of the common faithful—conclusions like “*pare-pareho lang naman pala.*”

2) Principle of centralization.

This reinforces the previous principle (contained in c.838) which declares the Holy See’s competence to order the sacred liturgy of the universal Church, to publish the liturgical books,

to review their translations into the vernacular languages and to see that liturgical ordinances are faithfully observed everywhere, more specifically reserving to the Holy See:

1° All that refers to the validity of the sacraments (c.841).

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

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

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

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

Transferring the Sunday liturgy to another day of the week does not seem to be a matter reserved to the Holy See and is within the competence of the Local Ordinary, subject however—as in all matters of similar import—to the *recognitio* of the Holy See and afterwards its posterior assessment (everything will have to be accounted for in the ad limina visit).

3) Principle of liturgical elasticity. The rituals in force do not impose uniformity, but are at the service of the pastoral function of the liturgy of stimulating and increasing the sense of Christ among the faithful (cf. **IGMR**, n.313). Transferring the Sunday liturgy for the pastoral reasons cited above might be an exaggerated adaptation of the liturgical norms to very specific and even simply peculiar and temporary circumstances, but the Local Ordinary as the shepherd of his flock is perfectly within his competence to make such a disposition. But again, always with the subsequent review of the Holy See.

4) Principle of decentralization. The ecclesiology of Vatican II, which re-emphasized the particular Churches and the dignity of the diocesan Bishops, opened a wide margin for Particular Law in the matter of liturgy. Thus, after establishing the aforementioned principles, c.838 ends with the following disposition: *It pertains to the diocesan bishop in the church entrusted to him, within the limits of his competence, to issue liturgical norms by which all are bound.* (c.838, §4).

In the light of all these, we are led to opine that in fact the Local Ordinary has the competence to transfer the Sunday liturgy to another day of the week, subject to review by the Holy See afterwards.



A priest hears confession inside the San Felipe Neri Parish Church in Mandaluyong City June 19. ERIC PAUL GUANLAO

It is up to the Local Ordinary to weigh the particular situation of the people of God entrusted to him.

In order to address the second question—the possibility of transferring the Sunday obligation to any other day of the week—however, we need to revisit St. John Paul II’s landmark *Motu Proprio Dies Domini* of 31.V.1998. In that document, St. John Paul II outlined several reasons—both historical and theological—why Sunday is the indicated day of the week as the Day of the Lord. We can limit ourselves to quoting several concluding paragraphs of that Apostolic Letter: “is clear therefore why the observance of the Lord’s Day is so close to the Church’s heart, and why in the Church’s discipline it remains a real obligation. Yet more than as a precept, the observance should be seen as a need rising from the depths of Christian life. It is crucially important that all the faithful should be convinced that they cannot live their faith or share fully in the life of the Christian community unless they take part regularly in the Sunday Eucharistic assembly. The Eucharist is the full realization of the worship which humanity owes to God, and it cannot be compared to any other religious experience. A particularly efficacious expression of this is the Sunday gathering of the entire community, obedient to the voice of the Risen Lord who calls the faithful together to give them the light of his word and the nourishment of his Body as the perennial sacramental wellspring of redemption. The grace flowing from this wellspring renews mankind, life and history.” (n.81)

“It is with this strong conviction of faith, and with awareness of the heritage of human values which the observance of Sunday entails, that Christians today must face the enticements of a culture which has accepted the benefits of rest and free time, but which often uses them frivolously and is at times attracted by morally questionable forms of entertainment. Certainly, Christians are no different from other people in enjoying the weekly day of rest; but at the same time they are keenly aware of the uniqueness and originality of Sunday, the day on which they are called to celebrate their salvation and the salvation of all humanity. Sunday is the day of joy and the day of rest precisely because it is “the Lord’s Day”, the day of the Risen Lord.” (n.82)

“Sustaining Christian life as it does, Sunday has the additional value of being a testimony and a proclamation. As a day of prayer, communion and joy, Sunday resounds throughout society, emanating vital energies and reasons for hope. Sunday is the proclamation that time, in which he who is the Risen Lord of history makes his home, is not the grave of our illusions but the cradle of an ever new future, an opportunity given to us to turn the fleeting moments of this life into seeds of eternity. Sunday is an invitation to look ahead; it is the day on which the Christian community cries out to Christ, “*Marana tha: Come, O Lord!*” (1 Cor 16:22).” (n.84)

From the foregoing, it seems quite clear that the mind of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Legislator is that Sunday is a peculiar day,

which holds a preponderance of scriptural, historical, pastoral and theological reasons for its choice as the Day of the Lord.

C. Sacrament of Reconciliation via internet or telephone?

Last but not least, we arrive at the nagging question: Will the Church ever allow confession by phone or internet?

First the Sacramental Theology of the matter. A fundamental requirement of the sacramental structure of any sacrament is that it must be a *visible sign*—i.e., palpable to the senses. The Sacrament of Reconciliation was instituted by Christ in the manner of a judgment: the sign which must be palpable to the senses is the reality of a judgment—i.e., the presence of the judge, the accused and the accuser. In the case of Sacramental Confession, that is the penitent (both accused and accuser) and the priest (who acts as judge *in persona Christi*). That action is what transpires in a Sacramental Confession and it must be palpable to the senses of the parties concerned: priest and penitent.

Hence, even in the case of some confessional boxes for the Confession of penitents with hearing deficiency, the vocal communication between priest and penitent is not through the direct transmission of sound from their mouths to their ears, but rather passing through an electronic device with some amplification: a mouthpiece-amplifier-earphone arrangement. If we add to this the

Liturgical / B7

Deacons and baptisms at Mass

Change of presider is not admissible

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

Q: I would appreciate some clarification in a matter concerning baptism during Mass. I am a deacon in a small parish. I don’t get many baptisms—usually my grandchildren or if someone requests that I baptize their child. I have always believed that baptism during Mass is most appropriate. My current pastor believes that a deacon baptizing during Mass would constitute a change of presiders. I can find nothing to support this view. Can you enlighten me? — R.D., Grand Rapids, Michigan

A: While I am unaware of an official reply on the question of baptisms, there is a private response from the Holy See related to the question of deacons presiding at wedding Masses that can throw light on this theme. This 2007 letter, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, addresses the question from canonical and liturgical grounds, and these are the ones that concern us now.

The Vatican congregation states that a change of presider in the course of the same

celebration is not admissible. Hence, neither a deacon (whether permanent or transitional) nor a priest other than the principal celebrant can preside over the celebration of a sacrament during Mass.

The document also explains why apparent exceptions do not detract from the rule of no change in presiding celebrant. These apparent exceptions—such as a non-concelebrating bishop who presides over some moments of the Mass, or the newly ordained bishop who becomes the principal celebrant—arise from the nature of the bishop’s ministry.

The letter thus concludes that, in the case of marriage, the priest who celebrates the Mass must be the one to preach, receive the vows and impart the nuptial blessing. At the discretion of the pastor, the deacon may preach the homily.

Admittedly, this letter is official but, as a private missive, has no force of law. It does, however, reflect the congregation’s thinking and is based on sound liturgical reasoning.

The same principle of no change in the presiding celebrant would also apply to other

liturgical celebrations unless the rubrics specifically allow for the direct participation of other priests or deacons without, strictly speaking, implying a change in the presiding celebrant.

This is foreseen, for example, in a concelebration in which other priests may recite alone a part of the Eucharistic Prayer. It is also possible to divide some parts of the rite of the anointing of the sick.

Also, the rites of baptism foresee the possibility, when the number of children to be baptized is very large, that the priest celebrant may be assisted by other priests and deacons in some of the rites such as the anointings and the baptism itself. Analogously, the bishop may delegate priests to assist him in confirming large numbers of candidates. None of these practices constitute a change of presider.

Finally, with respect to celebrating baptism during Sunday Mass, the Rite of Baptism of Children does not advocate it as a regular or habitual practice, to wit:

“9. To bring out the paschal character of

baptism, it is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday when the Church commemorates the Lord’s resurrection. On Sunday, baptism may be celebrated even during Mass, so that the entire community may be present and the relationship between baptism and eucharist may be clearly seen, but this should not be done too often. Regulations for the celebration of baptism during the Easter Vigil or at Mass on Sunday will be set out later.”

However, the rite does suggest a clear preference for a communal celebration on a Sunday:

“32. If possible, baptism should take place on Sunday, the day on which the Church celebrates the paschal mystery. It should be conferred in a communal celebration for all the recently born children and in the presence of the faithful, or at least of relatives, friends, and neighbors, who are all to take an active part in the rite.”

Unlike baptism within Mass, a communal celebration such as the above can be presided over by a deacon as ordinary minister. *

Letter to the young ordinandi

DEAR Reverend Deacons Mon and Dante,

Greetings of peace and well-being in these trying times!

I am writing you not so much as your provincial superior as your (older) brother. A few days from now, you will be ordained priests. By then, people will start calling you 'Father'—even those who barely know you. However, you will not cease to be deacons if by the Greek word 'diáconos' we mean 'servant'. Please remain forever 'deacons' (i.e. servants), even more so as priests, for we are called to serve and not to be served (cf. Mt. 20:28).

They will address you as 'Father' not because of who you are, but of who you represent. You signify Christ and, thus, you become an alter Christus (another Christ), unworthy you may be. Always remember that you are called not because you are worthy, but you become worthy because you are called. You will now be a bridge builder, a pontifex, for you will be tasked to bring people closer to God and God closer to His people.

To be able to do that, you must be a close friend of the Triune God because as the Latin saying goes,

"*Nemo dat quod non habet*" or "No one gives what one does not have." Possess God in your heart, radiate His saving grace when you celebrate the sacraments and communicate His abiding love when you proclaim the Word. You do not only have the obligation to carry out these offices; the Christian faithful have also the right to receive them in their fullness (c. 213).

Be mindful that you are not the owner of the sacraments; you are only a humble dispenser and steward, so you should not behave as if you are the boss and proprietor who can decide who will receive the divine grace that the sacraments bring forth and who will not. Never confuse "pastoral reason" with the "reason of the pastor". The former has to do with "*salus animarum*" (i.e. salvation of souls); the latter is a form of clericalism which is the root of many evils, according to Pope Francis.

When you preach, do not simply rely on the spur-of-the-moment inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Also allow the same Spirit to speak to you through the saints and the learned who have studied the Scriptures. Sound exegesis tempered with your

faith-experiences make a good sermon. Lead the people to God through your preaching and not to yourself. You must decrease so that Christ may increase in you (Jn. 3:30).

Never get tired of listening to the Spirit, to your brothers in the community and to the people entrusted to your care, even if the latter think differently. *Audire* (to listen) and *obbedire* (to obey) are mutually inclusive and require each other. We cannot obey if we do not listen and listening serves no purpose if it does not lead us to obedience. Both happen in the context of prayer, but do not only "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17). Above all, be a man of prayer in your actions, words and silence! Take heed of the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words!"

To bring people to God, you should be passionate for them. Our vows of poverty and chastity become more meaningful and life-giving when understood and lived from the optic of love and solidarity with humanity and creation. The vertical dimension of the cross represents your intimacy with the Divine, but it

is not complete. Your priesthood also requires the horizontal dimension which is your communion with the people. Journey with them, even if at times you stumble with them. Visit them in their houses in times of joys, but more so in times of misfortunes. Be a friend to both the rich and the poor, but if you have to choose between the two because your schedule can only allow one, choose the poor. The rich may have other friend-priests. The poor may only have you as their friend and since they cannot repay you, "you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Lk. 14:14).

Do not give up prophecy! (Pope Francis, Letter to consecrated men and women, 2014). The alarming unfolding of events in our country should impel you to make a stand in the light of the teachings of our Mother Church. Do not be a bystander for that is not our vocation. While we listen to everyone, our bias should be in favor of the afflicted because the Lord hears their cry (Ps. 34). To be neutral and silent amidst oppression "favors the tormentor, never the tormented" (Elie Wiesel). But the Gospel should always be our compass and not any ideology,

however appealing. Think and act with the Church: "*sentire cum ecclesia*" for you are Her priest. Walk with her, not ahead, not behind.

Finally, keep the white linen towel (maniturgium) that you will use to clean your hands after the ordaining Bishop anoints them and give that to your mother as a gift. When the Lord will ask her in heaven what merit does she have to enter the Kingdom, then she can say with the white piece of cloth in her hands, "I offered my son to be Your priest".

Devotedly your brother in the heart of our Mother Mary,

Fr. Eli, CMF

(Message of Fr. Elias Ayuban, JCD, the Provincial Superior of the Claretian Missionaries of the Philippine Province, for the upcoming presbyteral ordination of Rev. Mon Edbani, CMF, and Rev. Dante Boringgot, CMF on July 16, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the 171st Foundation Anniversary of the Congregation of Missionaries Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.)

The Lord is with us! (Eucharist our greatest treasure here on earth!)

By Rev. Fr. Roberto Francis Tiquia, STL



CREDIT: UNSPLASH

OF all the things that our Lord gave to us it is the Eucharist that is the greatest. Why? It is because the Eucharist is the very gift of Himself to us fulfilling His promise in Matthew 28:20 when He said I shall be with you till the end of time. Our Lord did not want to be separated from us that is why on the night before HE suffered and died (holy Thursday), He instituted or established the Eucharist as the greatest manifestation of His love for us (cf. Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-17, Luke 22:17-20, 1Cor. 11:23-35) and as a permanent Presence of His very self here on earth under the appearance of bread and wine. Our belief and doctrine tells us that we only perceive with our senses especially with our eyes, the appearance of the species of bread and wine, but in truth and in reality, it is already Jesus truly and really present Body, blood, soul and divinity.

Right after the words of

consecration which the Priest pronounced in the Holy Mass during the liturgy of the Eucharist, "**this is My Body...this is My blood...**" -the Bread and wine becomes Jesus' Body and Blood. The Bread and wine only retains its appearance but it has become our Lord's body and blood. This is indeed a miracle effected by God Himself. This is the mystery of our faith, **Mysterium Fidei**. St. Thomas Aquinas calls the Eucharist the wonder of wonders, the greatest of miracles, *maximum miraculorum*. Incidentally, in the Jewish context and in the language of the Bible, when you say "body" you are referring to the person himself. So when our Lord says to the bread "this is My Body" He is actually saying This is My whole Person or This is Me. In a word the Eucharist is the total Christ or **totus Christus**. Though He went up to heaven during His Ascension to rule heaven with the Father yet HE still stays with us in

His Real and true Presence in the Eucharist or Blessed Sacrament. This HE can do because Christ is God and man at the same time. He has the power to be with us here below and up there in heaven above.

This is the greatest legacy of Christ to us, His very Self in the bread and wine consecrated by the Priest in the Holy Mass. It is the law of friendship that friends must live together. St. Thomas Aquinas affirms that Christ our Lord joins us in our journey here on earth in the Eucharist because He loves us so much with the maximum love. He stays with us to manifest His love, mercy wisdom and power!

Why did our Lord instituted The Eucharist for us?

Love cannot bear separation. Christ loves us so much that it is very painful on His part to part with us. He wants to be with the children of men. He wants to be with us so that He can still be our help, support,

guide, strength and joy in this valley of trials and tears. He knew that left to our own, we would find life difficult and troublesome. His invitation is still true today "Come to Me all you who labor and overburdened and I shall give rest", cf. Mt. 11:29. We can now literally come to Him, as in going to Christ in Person. Where? In every Tabernacle throughout the world that has the Eucharist or the Blessed Sacrament in it.

We don't need a GPS (Global Positioning System) to track or locate our Lord Jesus Christ. When He was on earth more than 2000 years ago, Christ is located only in Israel where He spent His 33 years of existence on earth. But now in the Eucharist, our Lord is in each Tabernacle throughout the Catholic churches in the whole world. What a privileged, what a blessing! Our God, Savior and Redeemer stays with us here on earth where there is the Blessed Sacrament normally placed in the Tabernacle or in a chapel of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration. That white Bread or White Host consecrated in the Holy Mass is Jesus. It is not Something but Someone. The Consecrated Bread is not something but Someone! It is the Lord Jesus truly and really Present in Person. This is our faith, the One Identical is the Word, born of the Virgin, Who suffered and died and Who now rules heaven is the same Jesus truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Eucharist takes away many of life's bitterness

Life has many twists and turns. We normally experience here on earth a lot of worries and anxieties. Man's life is a drudgery. One cannot escape it. There will always be troubles and setbacks. This is man's common experiences. But with the Lord in the Eucharist in our midst, many of life's bitterness are taken away according to St. Peter Julian Eymard. We have Jesus present with us! He is the Emmanuel, the God Who is with us! Cf. Mt. 1:23. We know we can always go to Jesus in the Eucharist and there He will always encourage and console us when we experience betrayal, persecution or injustices. He can always commiserate with us. He knows our condition. He will be there to assuage our pains and strengthen our drooping spirits. That is why it is best that we spent ample time with Jesus in the Eucharist. He requests at least an Hour each day cf. Mt. 26:40.

Being with Him for at least an hour will make us recover and recapture our own selves which becomes shredded and torn apart because of the problems, brokenness and trials we encounter in our life. As Christians we have to contend with the three enemies of our souls namely, the Devil, worldliness and our very selves. With the Lord truly

present in the Eucharist we become formidable and strong against all our spiritual enemies. We have Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, if God is with us and for us who can be against us? Cf. Rom. 8:31

Audience with the King of Kings

Unlike Presidents, Kings and other dignitaries or Royalties, we can have readily access with our Lord Jesus Christ. You need not any protocol, you don't even have to schedule your audience with HIM. There is no go between. You can go to Christ anytime in the Adoration chapel or in the Church where there is a Tabernacle and there Presto! You can meet Him and have a heart to heart communication with our Savior. Jesus in the Eucharist according to St. John Paul II is the very heart of the Church. Indeed without Him in the Tabernacle our churches simply become meeting places. In His presence we can pour out our hearts content. We can tell Him all our worries and anxieties and He is ever willing to give us blessings and graces. St. Alphonsus de Ligouri said that Our Lord's hands are open to distribute graces and blessings to anyone who would visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament, unfortunately, very few are willing to visit our Lord in the Sacrament of Love, the Eucharist.

Saints on adoration

St. Teresa of Calcutta once said: "In every holy hour of adoration we do, we please the Heart of Jesus that it is recorded in Heaven and retold for all eternity." That is how the Lord will be grateful to us according to the foundress of Missionaries of Charity. Blessed Dina Belanger, a Canadian mystic and nun said that a holy hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament is so important to Jesus that a multitude of souls go to Heaven, who otherwise, would have gone to Hell. And that is why Our Lord lovingly appeal to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque: "I have a burning desire to be visited by men in the Blessed Sacrament." Jesus thirsts for Eucharistic lovers. He wants us to come and visit Him daily. St. Faustina Kowalska of the Divine Mercy likewise said that by holy hour of adoration we procure not only mercy for our souls but for others as well. Blessed Alexandrian da Costa, considered as the fourth seer of Fatima because of her strong adherents to Our Lady's message, affirms the power of Eucharistic love and devotion. Once our Lord Jesus told her: "It is the Lovers of the Holy Eucharist who will hold back the arms of Divine Justice, that the world may not be destroyed, that greater punishment may not befall."

May the Blessed Virgin Mary lead us to Jesus in His Real Presence in the Eucharist!

‘Together while apart’

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Catholic Media Conference Sponsored by the Catholic Press Association
June 30, 2020

TO the Members of the Catholic Press Association

This year, for the first time in its history, the Catholic Press Association is hosting a virtual Catholic Media Conference, due to the current health situation. Before all else, I would like to express my closeness to those who have been affected by the virus and to those who, even at the risk of their lives, have worked and continue to work in assisting our brothers and sisters in need.

The theme you have chosen for this year’s Conference—Together While Apart—

eloquently expresses the sense of togetherness that emerged, paradoxically, from the experience of social distancing imposed by the pandemic. In my Message for last year’s World Communications Day, I reflected on how communication enables us to be, as Saint Paul says, “members of one another” (cf. Eph 4:25), called to live in communion within an ever expanding network of relationships. Because of the pandemic, all of us have come to appreciate this truth more fully. Indeed, the experience of these past months has shown how essential is the mission of the communications media for bringing people together, shortening distances, providing necessary information, and opening minds and hearts to truth.

It was precisely this realization that led to the establishment of the first Catholic newspapers in your country and the constant encouragement given them by the Church’s pastors. We see this in the case of the Charleston Catholic Miscellany, launched in 1822 by Bishop John England and followed by so many other newspapers and journals. Today, as much as ever, our communities count on newspapers, radio, TV and social media to share,

to communicate, to inform and to unite.

E pluribus unum—the ideal of unity amid diversity, reflected in the motto of the United States, must also inspire the service you offer to the common good. How urgently is this needed today, in an age marked by conflicts and polarization from which the Catholic community itself is not immune. We need media capable of building bridges, defending life and breaking down the walls, visible and invisible, that prevent sincere dialogue and truthful communication between individuals and communities. We need media that can help people, especially the young, to distinguish good from evil, to develop sound judgments based on a clear and unbiased presentation of the facts, and to understand the importance of working for justice, social concord and respect for our common home. We need men and women of conviction who protect communication from all that would distort it or bend it to other purposes.

I ask you, then, to be united and a sign of unity among yourselves. Media can be large or small, but in the Church these are not the categories that count. In the Church we have all been baptized in the one Spirit and made members of the one body (cf. 1 Cor 12:13). As in every body, it is often the members who are smallest who, in the end, are those most necessary. So it is with the body of Christ. Each of us, wherever we find ourselves, is called to contribute, through our profession of truth in love, to the Church’s growth to full maturity in Christ (cf. Eph 4:15).

Communication, we know, is not merely a matter of professional competence. A true communicator dedicates himself or herself completely to the welfare of the others, at every level, from the



Fr. Racho Ibrahim of Radio Jangwani, Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya. The Catholic radio station is one of Vatican Radio’s partners in Africa. VATICAN NEWS

life of each individual to the life of the entire human family. We cannot truly communicate unless we become personally involved, unless we can personally attest to the truth of the message we convey. All communication has its ultimate source in the life of the triune God, who shares with us the richness of his divine life and calls us in turn to communicate that treasure to others by our unity in the service of his truth.

Dear friends, I cordially invoke upon you and the work of your Conference an outpouring of the Holy Spirit’s gifts of wisdom, understanding and good counsel. Only the gaze of the Spirit allows us not to close our eyes to those who

suffer and to seek the true good of all. Only with that gaze can we effectively work to overcome the diseases of racism, injustice and indifference that disfigure the face of our common family. Through your dedication and daily work, may you help others to contemplate situations and people with the eyes of the Spirit. Where our world all too readily speaks with adjectives and adverbs, may Christian communicators speak with nouns that acknowledge and advance the quiet claims of truth and promote human dignity. Where the world sees conflicts and divisions, may you look to the suffering and the poor, and give voice to the plea of our brothers and sisters in need of

mercy and understanding.

Yesterday the Church celebrated the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul. May the spirit of communion with the Bishop of Rome, which has always been a hallmark of the Catholic press in your countries, keep all of you united in faith and resistant to fleeting cultural fads that lack the fragrance of evangelical truth. Let us continue to pray together for reconciliation and peace in our world. I assure you of my support and my prayers for you and your families. And I ask you, please, to remember me in your own prayers.

From the Vatican, 30 June 2020
FRANCISCUS

Catechesis on prayer—8. *The prayer of David*

General Audience of Pope Francis from the Library of the Apostolic Palace, 24 June 2020



Pope Francis at the weekly General Audience June 24. VATICAN NEWS

DEAR Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

On our itinerary of catechesis on prayer, today we meet King David. Favored by God even from his youth, he is chosen for a unique mission that plays a central role in the history of the People of God and of our own faith. In the Gospels, Jesus is called “son of David” a number of times; in fact, like him, He was born in Bethlehem. According to the promises, the Messiah would come from the descendants of David: a King completely after God’s heart, in perfect obedience to the Father, whose action faithfully realizes His plan of salvation (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2579).

David’s story begins on the hills surrounding Bethlehem, where he grazes the flock of his father, Jesse. He is still a boy, the last of many brothers. So much so that when the prophet Samuel, by God’s order,

goes in search of the new king, it seems almost as if his father has forgotten about his youngest son (cf. *1 Sam* 16:1-13). He worked in the open air: we can think of him as a friend of the wind, of the sounds of nature, of the rays of the sun. He has only one companion to comfort his soul: his harp; and during those long days spent in solitude, he loves to play and to sing to his God. He also played with the slingshot.

Therefore David is, first and foremost, a shepherd: a man who takes care of animals, who defends them from oncoming danger, who provides for their sustenance. When, by God’s will, David will have to care for his people, the actions he will take will not be very different from these. This is why the image of the shepherd frequently occurs in the Bible. Even Jesus defines himself as “the good shepherd”, whose behaviour is different than

that of the mercenary; he offers his life on behalf of the sheep; he guides them; he knows each of them by name (cf. *Jn* 10:11-18).

David learned a lot from his previous job. So, when the prophet Nathan reproaches him for his very serious sin (cf. *2 Sam* 12:1-15), David understands right away that he has been a bad shepherd, that he has despoiled another man of his only sheep which he loved, that he is no longer a humble servant, but a man crazy for power, a poacher who loots and preys on others.

A second characteristic trait present in David’s vocation is his poet’s soul. From this small observation, we can deduce that David was not a vulgar man, as is often the case with individuals who are forced to live for long periods isolated from society. He is, instead, a sensitive person who loves music and song. His harp

would accompany him always: sometimes to raise a hymn of joy to God (cf. *2 Sam* 6:16), other times to express a lament, or to confess his own sin (cf. *Ps* 51:3).

The world that presents itself before his eyes is not a silent scene: as things unraveled before his gaze he observed a greater mystery. That is exactly where prayer arises: from the conviction that life is not something that takes us by surprise, but an astonishing mystery that inspires poetry, music, gratitude, praise, even lament and supplication in us. When a person lacks that poetic dimension, let’s say, when he lacks poetry, his or her soul limps. Thus, tradition casts David as the great artist behind the composition of the Psalms. Many of them, at the beginning, often bear an explicit reference to the king of Israel, and to some of the more or less noble events of his life.

David, therefore, has a dream: that of being a good shepherd. Sometimes he will live up to this task, other times less so; what is important, however, in the context of the history of salvation, is that he is a prophecy of another King, whom he merely announces and prefigures.

Let us look at David; let us think about David. Holy and sinful, persecuted and persecutor, victim and manslayer, which is a contradiction. David was all of this, together. And we too have recorded events in our lives that are often opposed to each other; in the drama of life, all people often sin by inconsistency. There is a single golden thread running through David’s life, that gives unity to everything that happens: his prayer. That is the voice that is never extinguished. David the saint prays: David the sinner prays; David the persecuted prays; David the persecutor prays. Even David the manslayer prays. This is the golden thread that runs through his life. A man of prayer. That is the voice that is never silenced: whether it

assumes tones of jubilation or those of lament, it is always the same prayer; only the melody changes. In so doing, David teaches us to let everything enter into dialogue with God: joy as well as guilt, love as well as suffering, friendship as much as sickness. Everything can become a word spoken to the “You” who always listens to us.

David, who knew solitude, was in reality never alone! In the end, this is the power of prayer in all those who make room for it in their lives. Prayer gives you nobility, and David is noble because he prays; he repents and his nobility returns thanks to prayer. Prayer gives us nobility. It is capable of securing our relationship with God who is the true Companion on the journey of every man and woman, amid life’s thousand adversities, good or bad: but always prayer. Thank you, Lord. I am afraid, Lord. Help me, Lord. Forgive me, Lord. David’s trust is so great that, when he was persecuted and had to flee, he did not let anyone defend him: “If my God humiliates me thus, he knows what he is doing”, because the nobility of prayer leaves us in God’s hands. Those hands wounded by love: the only sure hands we have.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media. Upon you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of the Lord. May God bless you!

I hope that the summer season may be a time of serenity and a good occasion to contemplate God in the masterpiece of his creation.

I address my thoughts to the elderly, to young people, to the sick and to newlyweds. Today is the Feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist. Let us learn, from the one who was the precursor to Jesus, the capacity to bear witness to the Gospel with courage, beyond our own differences, preserving the

We are taking the wrong path



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

WITH the clergy of Lingayen Dagupan, we deeply regret the decision of the President to sign the Anti-Terror Bill into law over and above the vehement objections of well-meaning citizens.

It is morally wrong, we humbly submit, to leave the terms of such powerful bill to the interpretation of the reckless and the power trippers. Violence can never undo violence. The Church has long taught that only the praxis of true Christian love has the power to break the cycle of violence.

With our government, we decry terror. With our government we denounce terrorists.

Unlike our government, however, we do not wish to meet violence and blind rage with heightened violence and legitimated terror.

We would rather as one, engage in the difficult but necessary task of building a culture that listens, that leaves none out, that accommodates differences.

This same culture of inclusive listening will soon strip extremists of every reason to confine themselves to the margins of society. Peace is the only way to peace.

Dagupan City, July 3, 2020

+SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen Dagupan

AMRSP solidarity statement for Sr. Mary John Mananzan

THE Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines decries the red-tagging of Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB, a former chairperson of the women religious superiors. In a public post, Undersecretary Lorraine Badoy, one of the spokespersons of the National Task Force to End the Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) accused Sr. Mary John of being a long-term ally of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front. She further stated that Sr. Mary John of aiding and abetting these organizations.

These baseless accusations against a long-time social activist, feminist, human rights defender and theologian place her safety and well-being in danger. It is these reckless and malicious posts from a government functionary that can trigger online and offline attacks by those who wish to paint our world in black and white.

Sr. Mary John, OSB as Co-Chairperson of the AMRSP in 2013 was the founding chairperson of the Task Force for the Orientation of Church Personnel, one of our Mission Partners. In more than six decades of unrelenting and dedicated service to the cause of the poor and oppressed she has followed, as a true disciple, the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sr. Mary John, OSB may have taken avant-garde positions on issues of church and society but in no way was it meant to aid and abet the enemies of the State. It is a faithful commitment to prophetic



Sr. Mary John Mananzan. FILE PHOTO

witnessing that animates her words and actions.

We in the Association take this latest attack on a fellow religious very seriously. We extend our solidarity and unwavering support to Sr.

Mary John Mananzan, OSB and all who have been accused, harassed, imprisoned by the enemies of truth, justice and peace.

We are one body and blood of our Lord Savior. We shall continue to

follow in His path. We shall remain ever faithful:

He has shown you, O mankind, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk

humbly with your God? – Micah 6:8

FR. CIELITO R. ALMAZAN, OFM
SR. MARILYN A. JAVA, RC
AMRSP Co-Chairpersons
July 1, 2020

AMRP statement on the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Law

THE Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines is deeply saddened by the signing of the Anti-Terror Law which takes effect 15 days from now.

In a previous statement we have joined the voices of concern and opposition to this draconian measure that we firmly believe will stifle basic rights and freedoms.

In light of faith, we cannot in conscience accede to a law that may assault human dignity and human rights. At a time that our

people are battling the effects of Covid-19 we find no reason to pass a law that does not serve to alleviate their miserable plight. Unemployment, the closure of businesses, the continuing spread of the virus, and the lack of relief for our people are the most-pressing concerns at this time.

We welcome the move of lawyers, religious and other civic leaders in filing an urgent petition in the Supreme Court.

We pray that the Supreme Court grants the

petition for a Temporary Restraining Order. We trust that the good women and men of the highest court of the land will be guided by the common good of all and by the Philippine Constitution. We implore them that in these gathering clouds of darkness, let the light of rule of law and ultimately, justice shine ever bright.

We ask all women and men of goodwill, fellow religious and all who cherish our rights and freedoms: Stand Your Ground and Be with

the Poor and Downtrodden!

Truth, justice and peace will prevail.

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." – 2 Corinthians 4:8

FR. CIELITO R. ALMAZAN, OFM
SR. MARILYN A. JAVA, RC
AMRSP Co-Chairpersons
July 6, 2020

CBCP ONLINE RADIO is now on



As Christians, what's our all-consuming passion in life?

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 13:44-52) | July 26, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

FOR Matthew, of value so supreme that the Christian community must prefer it above all else is the Kingdom of God. But what is this Kingdom that should be the focus of our Christian life? There are various ways of describing it, but as we noted a few times before, if we wish to come to a knowledge of it, the shortest way is to understanding the meaning of the Lord's Prayer. After all, it is a prayer for its coming. According to the "Our Father," the kingdom is a community in which all women and men composing it live in fraternal love and unity under the fatherhood of God. Instead of pursuing their own plans, they do the will of God in the same way that it is done in heaven. In this community, all human hunger—for truth, for food, for love, for knowledge, etc.—is satisfied. It is a community of forgiveness and love, freed from all forms of evil. Since this is the only reality that can fulfill and satisfy our longings, today's Gospel compares it with a hidden treasure or a fine pearl. As nothing can compare the happiness it will bring once we become part of it, or once it becomes our possession, the parable exhorts us to find it.

While that is how the Gospel parables view the Kingdom of God, not all Christians have that perception, or even if all do, many certainly are not convinced of it in practice. Although it is the most valuable reality, people seem to give a different weight to its value. If newspapers' headlines are any indication of what seems to be of supreme importance to most people, it is certainly the filthy lucre. Some time ago, so much fuss was made of US Ambassador's statement that corruption was widespread in government, but, even to date, that is not far from the truth. As Emmanuel de Dios, "Corruption and Fall," Between Fires: Fifteen Perspectives on the Estrada

Crisis, has noted, it is lamented but also countenanced as a fact of life. And at the bottom of it all is wealth acquisition. Says Egmidio Dacanay in an article in Kilosbayan: "For over half a century now, we have witnessed generations of politicians making service in government a vehicle for personal material aggrandizement at the expense of the vast majority who are denied their just share from the bounty of the land, remaining ill equipped to fend for their rights and becoming tools (by ignorance or extreme need) of their own exploitation. A culture of avarice has evolved in our land. Acquisition of wealth by foul means is accepted with apparent tolerance." In other words, money is the most valuable thing, and many people really ran after it, believing that having plenty of it will assure them comfort, contentment and happiness.

If many people consider money as the most important value in life, and not the kingdom of God, it is because God's reign is hidden from them, like a buried treasure. It is shrouded from their minds and eyes: "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9). Precisely because the kingdom, even though the highest good, is concealed from them, these people are content with lesser things, and for want of anything better, consider money and wealth the best. In order to recognize the incomparable value of the kingdom, one needs wisdom from above. The 1st Reading gives us an example of a man who was given such wisdom—Solomon. Said the king: "Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong. For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?" (1 Kgs 3:9). Because of his wisdom, Solomon saw what

was most precious: "The law of your mouth is to me more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces.... For I love your command more than gold, however fine" (Responsorial Psalm). Only with this kind of wisdom will the Christian be able to know that the most important is not a wealthy, successful and comfortable life, but the community that Jesus wanted us to establish—the Kingdom of God.

Of course, the man who receives such wisdom is necessarily a spiritual man. As St Paul puts it: "The natural man does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God. For him, that is absurdity. He cannot come to know such teaching because it must be appraised in a spiritual way. The spiritual man, on the other hand, can appraise everything, though he himself can be appraised by no one. For, who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:14-16). Understandably enough, people like St Francis of Assisi abandoned wealth and inheritance in favor of a life of poverty. They are able to recognize the folly of wealth, though many mortals could kill if only to amass it. One who has acquired the wisdom and mind of Christ counts as rubbish anything but the Kingdom of God. What St Paul said of his life in the Jewish law equally applies to wealth and other possessions that many of us, who are not yet spiritual men, and therefore who lack wisdom, continue to cherish: "But those things I used to consider gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. I have come to rate all as loss in the light of the surpassing knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. For his sake I have forfeited everything. I have counted all else as rubbish, so that Christ may be my wealth" (Phil 3:7-8). *

Contraceptives, population, poverty and unjust economic order

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 14:13-21) | August 2, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

NOTHING probably more indicates the wide economic gulf between the rich and the poor than the food they eat, in both quality and quantity. In the United States, the problem is whether it is healthier to eat beef or not. It is the American food—TV commercials say—and it is the food most Americans eat virtually every day. But as notes Richard Corliss, in "Should We All Be Vegetarians?" it is for many an obscene cuisine. More and more Americans have started going vegetarian, believing that it would help them live longer and healthier lives. But, ironically, in other parts of the globe, a choice between beef and vegetables is a luxury, nay, a dream. Reuters, for instance, reported sometime ago that widespread food shortages and rampant AIDS have put nearly 13M southern Africans on the very edge of survival. The region's crisis—the worst since the 1992 drought—was brought about by a combination of severe draught, floods, economic decline and government mismanagement. According to Reuters, the residual debilitating effect of past conflicts and the region's extremely high AIDS infection rate that has killed many farmers and left millions of orphans, aggravated the famine.

The reality of hungry millions recalls the Gospel today. According to Matthew, when Jesus disembarked and saw a vast throng in a deserted place, "his heart was moved with pity" (Matt 14:14). Obviously, the miracle story on the multiplication of the loaves is about the compassion of Jesus on the about 5,000 men, not including the women and children, who in following him have experienced hunger. This story is quite relevant. For one thing, this serves as a corrective to the idea that limits the mission of Jesus to the spiritual realm. For some people, the Church should have nothing to do with the material problems of humanity; her province is only the Bible and the altar. For another, it shows us that Jesus was in touch with the problems of society, and that he tried to meet what was needed by the hungry crowd—food. What is implied here goes beyond the exercise

of one of the corporal works of mercy. Rather, it has reference to the unjust social structure in which millions of people are condemned to hunger and poverty. That countless people go to bed without food because they are deprived of it politically, socially, and economically—this is a moral evil that cries to heaven for an answer. In the Old Testament, when Israel was journeying in the desert, God gave them flesh to eat in the evening and fill of bread in the morning. So the people would not go hungry, he provided them with quail and manna in the desert of Sin (Exod 16:7-8.13-14).

Hunger, then, is a social problem that seeks solution. How is this solved? Today, in view of the controversy spawned by the RH Bill in Philippine Congress, some columnists and editorialists write that the single obstacle to progress is the Roman Catholic Church for its refusal to countenance measures to curb population growth. Beneath this observation is, of course, the perception that the problem is basically that too numerous are the mouths to feed. This easily calls to mind the perception of Jesus' disciples in the Gospel. Seeing the thousands of hungry folks, the disciples suggested to Jesus to dismiss the crowd so they could go to the villages and buy some food for themselves (Matt 14:15). Today, a number of experts propagate a Malthusian outlook, anticipating the collapse of civilization if population growth remains unchecked. Too many women and men divide among themselves the small pie. Since it is their teaching that hunger and poverty result from population growth, they flood us with condoms, pills, and all kinds of anti-life gadgets. The fewer the family members, the more comfortable life is.

The Gospel, however, does not see the problem this way. While an unchecked population increase is to be recognized as a problem, a more fundamental one is the unjust sharing of the world's goods—resources, knowledge, power, technology—which drives people to poverty and hunger. Far from being a problem of dismissing the crowd, Jesus saw the problem as one of breaking and sharing the bread available. Thus, he took the five loaves, broke them,

and gave them to the disciples to distribute (Matt 14:19). Because the loaves were broken and shared, a big miracle happened—all those present, thousands of men, women and children, ate their fill, and when the fragments were gathered up, these filled twelve baskets (Matt 14:20-21). What are we to say in connection with this miracle story? We say that the basic problem today is not so much the growth of the population, but that only a small percentage of it—those in the West—have the greater share of the world's goods, while the many have to content themselves with what falls from the rich countries' table.

Indeed, rich nations, rather than share their technical know-how, resources, technology and other goods, would even take advantage of the poor. They would, for example, not countenance balanced trade relations. John Paul II, in his *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, emphasizing that imperialism is the cause of deteriorating poverty, points out that rich countries use mechanisms to get the wealth of poorer nations: "One must denounce the existence of economic, financial, and social mechanisms which, although they are manipulated by people, often function almost automatically, thus accentuating the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest. These mechanisms, which are maneuvered directly or indirectly by the more developed countries, by their very functioning favor the interests of the people manipulating them. But in the end, they suffocate or condition the economies of the less developed countries" (n 16).

It has been noted by many scholars that the Gospel today has Eucharistic overtones. One, of course, does not have quarrel with that interpretation. The fact that the wording in v 19 ("He took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them, and gave the loaves to the disciples") recalls the words of Institution is an indication of its Eucharistic allusion. But if this means anything, it is that a correct understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist must take into account the problem of hunger. *

The unique preciousness of God's Kingdom

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 13:44-52)
Fil. Mission Sunday | July 26, 2020

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB



IF we count our blessings, we will hardly be able to make an exhaustive list. **The Lord has been tremendously generous with each of us**, even with those whom we consider handicapped, unlucky, forsaken . . .

On our part, we are prepared to work hard, make big sacrifices and even renounce a portion of what we already have, in order to acquire what we consider more valuable and deserving.

But in this pursuit, we are always in danger of losing out, or being deceived by appearances. . . . **Many of us have an inadequate sense of values.** Our priorities are sometimes mistaken. We invest our energies and even stake our whole lives on things that "moth and rust corrode, or thieves break in and steal" (*Mt 6:19*).

We need real wisdom. Not just the wisdom "to distinguish right from wrong, which was the object of Solomon's prayer (*see 1 Kgs 3:9*), but the wisdom necessary to prioritize values and give the highest ones the priority they deserve. **We need** not just the wisdom of Solomon, but also and **especially the "wisdom of God,"** the one possessed in full by Jesus. **We need the wisdom that leads us to give absolute priority to "God's Kingship**

and His righteousness" (*Mt 6:33*).

Of all the values on earth, **being part of the "Kingdom of God" is among the top few that we should try to acquire or preserve at all costs, for on this depends the attainment of our final destiny.** Jesus made the "coming of the Kingdom" the second request in the prayer he taught his disciples. (*See Mt 5:9-13.*) And he exhorted them: **"Seek first God's kingship over you"** (*Mt 6:33*).

Making the Kingdom our priority will inevitably entail letting go of other values, or giving them less importance. Such a prioritization will be obvious especially when we have to choose between different "good things." Choosing "God's Kingship and His righteousness" will always be the best thing to do, even when this means sacrificing other realities that we hold dear.

The Kingdom must always be our top priority. The quest for it is the enterprise on which we should invest all our resources because, in the end, this is the only venture that will really succeed. **The Kingdom is the only "strong currency" which will never suffer inflation and which will never be devalued.**

Bread for all hungry hearts

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 14:13-21)
Parish Priest's Sunday | August 2, 2020

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

WE, Christians, believe in a God who is love. (*See 1 Jn 4:8.*) He's **a God who cares.** He cares for our material needs and teaches us life-giving truths. (*See Is 55:1-3.*) He is a God who enjoys being with people, **a God who "gets involved"** and takes our well-being to heart.

His involvement is not that of an "outsider" who occasionally peeps in, out of curiosity, or to comply with a formality. . . . His involvement is so sincere and "personal" that He Himself has become a human being—**Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, the preacher, the miracle worker – the God-Man.**

In becoming one of us, **he has shared in what we are and have** (or lack), **in order that all human beings may share in what he is and has.** Jesus carries out this long, wonderful process of our "transformation" and sharing by degrees, taking account of our "slowness" and weakness. His heart is moved to pity at the sight of our illnesses (*see Mt 14:14*), at the awareness of our needs. . . . That is why he cures our

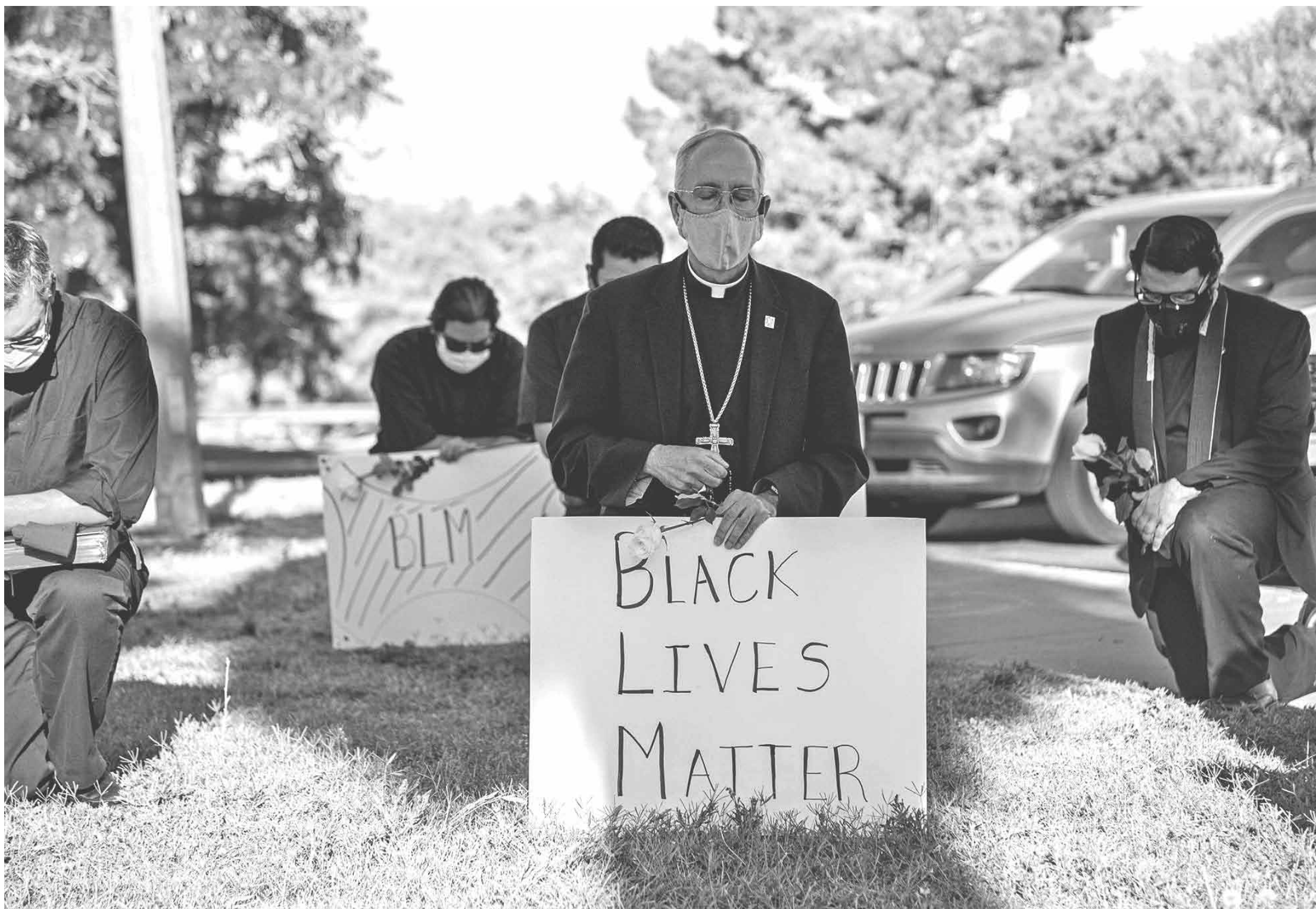
numberless ailments and satisfies all our hungers.

He does that with **immense tactfulness**, valuing the contribution which even poor people can afford to make. He accepted the simple offering of a few loaves of bread and two fish—something absolutely disproportioned to the needs of the multitude. And with such "littleness," he worked a wonder God alone could bring about: all had their fill, with plenty to spare. (*See Mt 14:20.*)

That miracle was a prophecy. One night, just a few hours before he was crushed by the unbearable weight of our sinfulness, Jesus would remember the great "hungers" of the human heart, and he would work a far greater wonder: he would make himself food and drink for his disciples—the disciples of all times. **He would become EUCHARIST for us and all believers.** And he would teach his disciples how to perpetuate this wonder, enjoining them to repeat what he did, generation after generation, as the greatest sign that he is the **God-with-us, the God-who-cares-for-us.**

History is made as social issues challenge politics

By Fr. Shay Cullen



Bishop Mark Seitz takes the knee at a Black Lives Matter rally in El Paso, Texas, on June 1, 2020. DIOCESE OF EL PASO

SOMETHING has happened that is really changing the world besides the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is changing our lifestyles, our economy and medical practices. But a greater social movement is underway as seen in numerous demonstrations around the world. It is a protest against the dominating force of the small elite of ruling oligarchies that dominate a country's economy and political system that oppresses and kills its citizens with impunity.

It is not the politicians who are now setting the agenda but the masses of protesting people as in the United States who have a democratic space to do so. Although the rulers try to squash, limit and eradicate people power by force and erase that democratic right and space in some places, it breaks out anew elsewhere. In Hong Kong, we witness the freedom to protest eradicated as the Chinese draconian National Security Law, rushed through by the Communist Party, is implemented as an anti-terrorist law to crush free speech and give life-sentences to protestors.

This is the end of Hong Kong as it has been since British rule when there was greater freedom and democratic space until now. The One Country, Two Systems arrangement has been shattered. Taiwan is taking note for sure. Despite lifting almost a billion Chinese people from dire poverty through a capitalist-communism

system and becoming almost the number one world economic power in only fifty years, the Chinese historical opportunity to be a truly great nation in world history is long gone, too. China's amazing economic achievement is a tainted and diminished reality in world history by violations of human and political rights and island grabbing in the South China Sea. The Communist Party has, instead of winning glory, earned the ire of nations and less respect and prestige. Today while one social movement in Hong Kong is squashed, other social movements in the United States and other countries are gathering pace and becoming changers of history.

The "Black Lives Matter" movement is challenging police brutality and indiscriminate killing of African-Americans. They are demanding the equality and respect that is owed and rightfully belongs to all people and especially to people of color. Even there, the ruling elite of the right led by Donald Trump are trying to squash the democratic space for many years. In Washington, Trump used tear gas, flash bombs and police force to disperse peaceful demonstrators in front of the White House, clearing a way for him to walk to a church and hold up a Bible for a photo opportunity. In Ferguson, Mississippi on 13 August 2014, police shot dead Michael Brown and there was a uprising by African-Americans.

Their demonstration released a flood of anger and repressed feelings at the police oppression and deprivation of social justice. The police, predominantly white, were militarized and national guards with armored cars turned their machine guns on the people in a show of intimidation and force. The blatant public killing of unarmed African-American man George Floyd, 46, in Minneapolis, Minnesota last 25 May 2020 showed that racist oppression and repressed anger was still there. Three police officers came to arrest George Floyd for allegedly passing a counterfeit 20-dollar bill. One of the police, Derek Chauvin, cruelly pressed his knee into the neck of George Floyd while he cried, "I can't breathe" for almost nine minutes. The murder was captured on cell phone video and the victim died soon after. The video went viral and ignited again a repeat of the Ferguson uprising but this time it spread to almost 100 cities across the United States denouncing institutionalized racism and police brutality. The "Black Lives Matter" protest is still ongoing and has spread around the world as oppressed and exploited indigenous people and people of color join the global protest and demand social justice and human rights.

President Donald Trump has been heavily criticized for twitting a video in support of a white supremacist shouting "White power!" from a golf cart. The movement, consisting of black and

white protesters, can be summed up as a mass protest against that one phase, "white power." It is now international, native Americans, African-Americans, indigenous people and people of color in Canada, Brazil, France, the UK and many other countries are marching.

There is outrage and a mighty force of people power rising up to challenge the status quo and the oppressive dominant attitudes of the white supremacist and the hatred and racism expressed on social media such as Facebook. Facebook is now challenged by the business community that is withholding advertising from Facebook until it changes its support for hate speech. It is doing so.

What we have to understand is that racism is not just a few white supremacist people lording it over the African-American or brown or Asian people and considering them as inferior. It is a "political and social power" issue. South Africa was ruled by white supremacist leaders for a century until Nelson Mandela came to lead a national protest. The US Congress and Senate is a majority of white politicians.

The American white supremacist ruling elites were shocked and deeply angered by the election of Barack Obama, the first African-American to be president of the United States. Then, in retaliation it seemed, they got Trump elected. Trump, a white supremacist and racist himself did everything to

destroy the Obama legacy and achievements and criminalize the protesters today.

The Movement began more than 300 years ago when Africans were enslaved and shipped to the Americas. At its very worst, racism is the mentality of powerful people in a nation that consider the poor, those of different skin color and the indigenous peoples to be almost sub-human and that killing them is a public service as some police and military around the world do like in the United States, France, Syria, Brazil and elsewhere. The police killers in the United States and military who kill with impunity have no empathy, compassion and respect for others. They have animal-like "killer instinct." They act on emotion, not reason. So it is they that are less fully human than their victims.

Removing statues that glorify the racists and slavers, banning the confederate flag, changing the name on racist skin bleaching creams, boycotting Facebook, bringing in new laws on policing are just symbols of change. While social justice, equality and respect for all people has to be an immediate goal, long term change to eradicate racism has to be in the hearts and minds of the people. It starts in the classroom, where education is the key and a next generation needs to know, practice and live by the values of community equality and mutual respect, true social and civil justice and love of neighbor.

Liturgical / B2

reality of the permanent grill and guard to identity—which precludes any visual contact between the two—it is easy to understand that the sensible sign is reduced to what is auditory. The fundamental requirement for validity is that priest and penitent sense their mutual presence and immediate communication—i.e., that the individual penitent (accuser and accused) is in fact speaking to the individual priest (judge). What should be precluded is some manipulation of the communication between the two parties—through some technical means.

Purely as an exercise—a *gedanken* (thought) experiment

as the Germans would say—can the phone or internet guarantee the absolute fidelity of the communication between priest and penitent, excluding any possibility of manipulation in the process? It is not difficult to conceive of an arrangement that would make this possible, thereby assuring the validity of the sacramental sign. However, there is one difficulty, the danger of which has led Church authority to preclude this option all these years: the possibility of breaking the sacramental seal: phones can be hacked (and legally even by the service provider), and more so the internet. That is like allowing Confession to take place with an eavesdropper. That is

why the Supreme Authority of the Church has not allowed confession by phone or by internet. If one were to do that—and the priest were to absolve him/her—it might be valid, but it would definitely be *illicit*, such that both priest and penitent would be guilty of profanation of the Sacrament and possibly even of breaking the sacramental seal, which is punishable by *automatic excommunication* of the priest, the remission of which is reserved to the Holy See (cf. c.1388, §1), and a just penalty (not excluding excommunication) for all others involved—e.g., the penitent and the possible hacker (cf. c.1388, §2).

Prayer / B4

harmony and friendship that are the foundations of credibility of any proclamation of faith.

My blessing to all!

Summary of the Holy Father's words:

Dear Brothers and Sisters: In our continuing catechesis on prayer, we now consider the prayer of David. Called by God to become King of Israel, David was deeply formed by his early experiences as a shepherd, which he would draw upon in leading his people. The young David was also a lover of music and poetry, and it was from his lyrical appreciation for the wonder of God's creation that his prayer was born. We see this reflected in the many

psalms traditionally attributed to his authorship. David—as pastor and king—prefigures Jesus the Good Shepherd and universal King, whose prayerful relationship with his heavenly Father sustained his whole life. David, for his part, was both saint and sinner, full of contradictions, yet in his vocation of leadership he was constant in prayerful dialogue with God. Our lives too are often marked by contradictory forces and incoherent impulses, but if, like David, we persevere in prayer—whatever our own vocation and the difficulties we may face—we will come to know the closeness of the Lord and be able to share this joy with others.

CINEMA
Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

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

CINEMA RATING

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

The Two Popes

DIRECTOR: Fernando Meirelles
LEAD CAST: Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Pryce, Juan Minujin
SCREENPLAY: Anthony McCarten
CINEMATOGRAPHY: César Charlone
PRODUCER: Dan Lin, Jonathan Elrich, Tracey Seaward
PRODUCTION COMPANY: Netflix
EDITING: Fernando Stutz
MUSIC: Bryce Dessner **DISTRIBUTOR:** Netflix
GENRE: Biographical Drama
COUNTRY: United Kingdom, United States, Italy, Argentina
LANGUAGE: English, Spanish, Italian
RUNNING TIME: 125 minutes

Technical assessment: 4
 Moral assessment: 3
 CINEMA rating: V 18
 NETFLIX rating: R16

Marketed as being “inspired by true events” *The Two Popes* presents the story of Pope Francis (a.k.a. Jorge Bergoglio) from the time he attempts to submit his letter of resignation as Archbishop of Buenos Aires up to the time he is elected Pope. The film opens with Pope Francis trying to book a flight by phone which the booking agent rejects as a joke. For what pope would do that by himself? Only Pope Francis, who has come to be known as a “different” pope — an image that the film projects in its 125-minute run through intercuts and flashbacks from when the layman Bergoglio was discerning his priestly vocation and through other turning points in his life. *The Two Popes* highlights the election of Cardinal Bergoglio to the papacy, and ends with actual footage from the real-life Pope Francis’ travels abroad and his visit to his predecessor Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in the latter’s retirement home.

Where the art of filmmaking is concerned, *The Two Popes* deserves a crown of laurels for its technical excellence. Adapted from Anthony McCarten’s play, *The Pope*, the film has as its main protagonist the Roman Catholic Church’s 266th pope, Francis, played with zeal and soul by Jonathan Pryce (High Sparrow in *Game of Thrones*). Chosen as foil to Francis is Pope Benedict XVI, a character made alive by Anthony Hopkins as only Anthony Hopkins could. These two seasoned actors nailed it, both at verbal jousting and non-verbal communication. But it’s not just the spot-on acting that makes *The Two Popes* worth watching.

The clever use of VFX coupled with cinematographic mastery — particularly in the (authentic looking) Sistine Chapel and the Vatican interiors — gives the viewer a ringside seat to the intimate exchanges between Cardinal Bergoglio and Pope Benedict XVI, and to the closed-door, cardinals-only conclave during the papal election. Carefully measured close-ups, meticulously timed and tempered, create articulate frames that dispense with speech. Sharp editing makes for a seamless juxtaposition of shots — in vibrant color or in monochrome, of the present day or from way back when.

The title “*The Two Popes*” is actually a misnomer, for only during the last 15 minutes of the film does Jorge Bergoglio become a pope; prior to that he is — albeit a cardinal — still the Archbishop of Buenos Aires. It helps to remember this fact in order to evaluate the movie in the proper perspective. In addition — it can’t be said often enough — the primary player here is

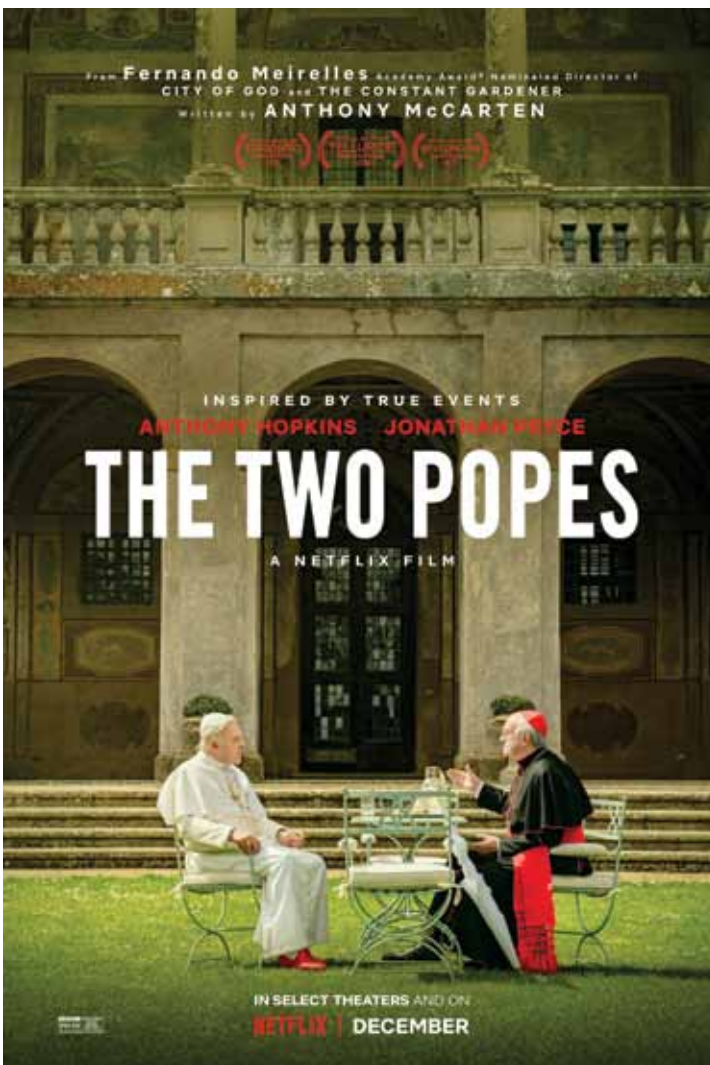
Francis; this is his story, not his and Benedict’s. (Even in the film awards circle, Pryce is nominated for Best Actor, while Hopkins is for Best Actor in a Supporting Role). An attention to detail may reveal to the discerning viewer the film’s consistent bias towards Francis. Brazilian director Meirelles is certainly adept at manipulating details to send subliminal messages here. Music is used to heighten the contrast between Bergoglio and Benedict: jazz, Besame Mucho, tango, *Dancing Queen* to denote fire in the veins of the Argentinian papabile, and classical music, a lullaby, and a pre-war Berlin cabaret song made famous by one Zarah Leander for the old fogey German pope who thinks Abbey Road (Sound Studios) is a church, and the Beatles song *Eleanor Rigby* is a “who” and not a “what.”

Further, after Benedict’s renouncement of the papacy, and as the chopper lifts him off the Vatican grounds, the Beatles song “*Blackbird*” is played in the background — a meaningful detail alluding to Benedict the shackled ruler: “*Blackbird* singing in the dead of night, take these broken wings and learn to fly. All your life, you were only waiting for this moment to arise... Take these sunken eyes and learn to see. All your life you were only waiting for this moment to be free...” There’s one other detail besides music which adds to Benedict’s aural identity: his monotonous tracker prodding him at the oddest moments, “Don’t stop now. Keep moving, keep moving.” Yes, we get it — it’s saying Benedict is a lead-footed pontiff in a stagnant Church.

The superior role of Francis in the film is also subtly asserted through body language, perhaps in the name of artistic license. In the confession scene (also used in the movie’s promotional posters), Archbishop Bergoglio grants absolution to Pope Benedict while standing up. In body language, the man standing while the other is sitting down with his head bowed wants to say “I am stronger and more powerful than you.” (Any self-respecting Catholic knows that the confessor is seated when he does this at the confessional box — personifying a merciful Father to the kneeling penitent).

In another scene, the pope is playing the piano and offers wine to Bergoglio; the latter stands up to fetch the wine and — the camera zooms in on his hand patting the pope’s shoulder. What is that close-up for but to show who the boss is between the two? Body language experts say the person who touches is the leader, the dominant one, while the one who is touched, the follower. The

Buhay San Miguel



same message is slyly sent when Bergoglio insists on teaching Benedict a dance move or two in full view of the (shocked) papal aides and the Swiss guard. Bergoglio takes the lead again, assuming the male partner’s position, while the half-willing pope sways awkwardly along to a tune replaying in his mind — his favorite Berlin cabaret song by Zarah Leander. (FYI: In the film, the supposed Smetana lullaby and the Berlin cabaret song the pope plays on the piano are in reality Anthony Hopkins’ original compositions, but Benedict’s supposed unforgettable favorite, Zarah Leander, is not fiction. Leander was a sultry, legendary Swedish singer/actress with a colorful career and was an active collaborator of the Nazis during the Third Reich. The question is — why link cabaret, Leander, and Nazi to Benedict? Do the math).

The Two Popes is so perfectly crafted that certain viewers mistake it for the real thing. Here is where CINEMA flashes the yellow light. Countless times we have heard people say after seeing it, “So that’s what happened!” Because two venerable actors dressed up as Princes of the Church lend credibility, even dignity, to the fictitious dialogue, it behooves CINEMA to subject the film to scrutiny and to present this full length review. *The Two Popes* appears so convincing it could confuse the audience. The unquestioning viewer might even believe it is a documentary, thus Catholic film critics take care to point out that there are “serious errors” in the film. (To know which is fact and/or fiction in the film, please check out the links provided at the end of this article).

Being dialogue-driven, *The Two Popes* easily succeeds at engaging the viewer with thought provoking lines that spice up the God talk. At various interviews with media, director Meirelles said “I wanted to make their conversations interesting and entertaining, otherwise it’s just two old men talking... very boring.” To fabricate the conversations between the “two old men” author McCarten reportedly

exerted efforts to read up on some writings (letters, homilies) of the two pontiffs. The finished product, at best, bears the fruit of the filmmakers’ imagination and interpretation of events, projecting Francis and Benedict, therefore, through the filtered lenses of an author who admits to being a lapsed Catholic and a director who is an avowed agnostic. Both Meirelles and McCarten are (in their own words) “admirers of Pope Francis”, but judging from the words they put in the archbishop’s mouth here, it is only Francis the media darling that they are rooting for, the pope whose words are often misconstrued, misquoted, and taken out of context by so-called influencers who take advantage of misperceptions to push their agenda. In fact, in making Bergoglio talk and behave as he does here — with a sassiness that borders on disrespect — the film is being unfair to the real-life Bergoglio.

And what of Pope Benedict XVI? If during his papacy he was criticized, after this film he might be condemned by the misinformed majority — a sad case of trial by cinema, indeed. Benedict is depicted as pathetically rigid, authoritarian, out of step with modernity, desirous of the pomp and power of the papacy, an intellectual whose pastoral ideas belong in a museum. Although Benedict displays agility at their theological swordplays, it is Bergoglio who is the aggressor. If their exchange in the garden of Castel Gandolfo were a boxing match, Bergoglio would pummel his opponent with a litany of issues he believes the Church has spinelessly addressed: divorce, birth control, homosexuality, priestly celibacy, sexual abuse among the clergy, and forgiveness of erring priests as a mockery. Benedict would absorb the blows with reason and calm, until he has had enough, and then delivers a swift uppercut: “You say you no longer wish to be a cardinal archbishop. I ask you, are you sure you still want to be a priest?” Bergoglio is stunned speechless. Benedict presses on:

“I don’t agree with anything

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.

you say!” and walks away, leaving the tango-loving archbishop immobilized and lost in the deafening chirping of the cicadas. This is the only moment in the film when Bergoglio is knocked down, and Benedict is given his 20 seconds of glory.

Meirelles claims his intention is not to dwell on a Good Pope vs. Bad Pope theme. “What I like is this idea of two guys who (at first) didn’t like each other but had to learn to listen,” he says. “That was tolerance. Nowadays we don’t like to hear people with whom we disagree; we prefer to kill them.” His good intentions notwithstanding, the final outcome still throws the two men into a gilt cockpit — not as the gamblers but as the cocks clawing at each other over the prized St. Peter’s chair. Benedict and Francis here are but caricatures in a narrative too simplistic to do the Church any good. In fact, *The Two Popes* may actually register as a veiled reproof of the Catholic Church, done through the mouths of the fictitious Vicars of Christ. It harps on issues: those raised by Bergoglio in the garden are

an elaboration of a caption the film superimposes on a documentary clip of Pope John Paul II’s funeral — “Pope John Paul II’s papacy marked an end to liberalization and a return to harsh condemnation of homosexuality, abortion, contraception, and the ordination of women and married men.” It projects cardinals as mere politicians: during the conclave, they lobby and campaign as if to elect a town mayor. It pictures popes as being spiritually bankrupt: Francis is obsessed with his idea of change and Benedict cannot hear the voice of God.

The filmmakers found our popes fascinating and got “inspired” enough to spin a tale around them — but they used the pontiffs as mere canvases on which to project their ideological fantasies. When ambitious artists with skillful hands attempt to paint a likeness of the Church without seeing the Holy Spirit working in her, the portrait turns out distorted. *The Two Popes* may be a filmmaking masterpiece, but what happens in it — so to speak — only happens in the movies.