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Pope Francis blesses a smattering of faithful — mostly residents of Italy — from his window in the newly reopened St. Peter's Square after nearly three months of closure due to the coronavirus outbreak, at the Vatican, May 31, 2020. **VATICAN MEDIA**

Bishops urge public to unite against 'anti-terrorism' bill

By Roy Lagarde

CATHOLIC leaders called on the public to unite against the passage of a new anti-terrorism measure, which critics say could be abused by authorities to silence dissent and free speech.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos has warned that no one is exempted from its "vague" and "dangerous" provisions, even church people.

"It is high time that citizens and members of civil society organizations set aside their differences to combat the passage of this bill," Alminaza said.

"Now more than ever, we need the power of dissenting voices in the current state of political and public health in our country," he said.

While the fight against terrorism is legitimate and necessary, he

stressed that the respect and defense of human rights must be of "paramount consideration".

"We maintain that the proposed law is open to abuse by despotic governments to visit terror against critics and the people in general," according to Alminaza.

"This government is criminalizing dissent, further suppressing criticism, while at the same time evading accountability, in the guise of combating terrorism," he said.

The House of Representatives passed the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 on June 3 after President Rodrigo Duterte certified the bill as urgent.

The legislation allows the government to wiretap suspects, arrest them without warrants and detain them for 14 days, among other provisions.

If passed into law, the bill would repeal the Human Security Act of 2007 wherein law enforcers can be fined P500,000 for each day they

Unite / A6



Church people from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) call for the junking of the Anti-Terrorism Bill during a protest in Quezon City on June 2. **MARK SALUDES/LICAS.NEWS**

CBCP cancels plenary assembly for first time in history

FOR the first time, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has cancelled its plenary assembly that was planned for next month in Manila.

The decision was announced by the CBCP Secretariat on June 5, citing as reason "the present health condition caused by the Covid-19 pandemic".

The government has earlier banned mass gatherings due to the coronavirus crisis.

Fr. Marvin Mejia, CBCP Secretary General, said that the bishops' annual retreat, which usually precedes the July assembly, will be also moved to January next year.

The assembly, one of the two annual gatherings of the bishops, was scheduled to be held at the Pius XII Center on July 11 to 13.

Held twice a year, the plenary assembly is considered the highest

decision-making body of the CBCP. When they are not in session, the Permanent Council acts for and in behalf of the conference.

The beginnings of the CBCP may be traced back to as early as 1945 when the conference was still known as the Catholic Welfare Organization (CWO).

In line with the Vatican II developments, the CWO became the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines in January 1968.

Technically, this is the first time that the bishops' plenary assembly was cancelled since the CBCP was formally established.

But while it was CWO, some assemblies were cancelled because the bishops were in Rome for the Vatican II meetings in the early 1960s. **(CBCP News)**

Church to give cash aid to OFWs displaced by pandemic



Fr. Resty Ogsimer, Executive Secretary of the bishops' Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People. **CBCPNEWS**

Government allows 50% church capacity in MGCQ areas

THE government has eased its restrictions in places of worship under modified general community quarantine.

Department of Justice Secretary Menardo Guevara affirmed his earlier statement that churches in MGCQ areas can hold services at 50 percent capacity.

He said that the rule was adopted on June 3 by the Inter-Agency Task Force

for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases in its amended omnibus guidelines.

"Religious services in MGCQ areas are allowed up to a maximum of 50% of the total seating capacity or venue," Guevara said.

He stressed that the decision is "subject to the government's minimum health standards and any

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

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

Initially, according to him, about a thousand OFWs

will receive the financial assistance by June.

He said that land-based OFWs will receive at least P5,000, while sea-based OFWs will receive a cash voucher worth P4,000.

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

The short term project, he said, is a collaborative work of several dioceses, religious

Aid / A7

Online child abuses more 'venomous' than coronavirus — Church official



Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga, Vice Chairman of the CBCP Episcopal Commission for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. **FILE PHOTO**

A CATHOLIC Church official has called for concerted effort to fight online child sexual exploitation amid reports that the coronavirus lockdowns may be worsening the abuses.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga said everyone should be vigilant to prevent children from being "unwilling victims".

"We should condemn the viruses of human trafficking

Abuses / A7

Vatican Briefing

Pope Francis: We cannot remain silent as planet is plundered

Pope Francis said June 5 that people should not remain silent as biodiversity is threatened by destruction and exploitation, in a message marking World Environment Day. "Caring for ecosystems demands a look to the future, one that is not concerned only with the immediate moment or that seeks a quick and easy profit, but rather one that is concerned for life and that seeks its preservation for the benefit of all," Pope Francis said in a letter to the host of the 2020 World Environment Day. "We cannot remain silent ... when we realize the very high costs of the destruction and exploitation of the ecosystem. This is not a time to continue looking the other way, indifferent to the signs that our planet is being plundered and violated by greed for profit, very often in the name of progress," he said. (CNA)

Pope Francis prays for the soul of George Floyd and for peace and justice in US

Pope Francis said Wednesday that he is praying for the soul of George Floyd and all victims of racism, adding that nothing is gained by violence. "Dear brothers and sisters in the United States, I have witnessed with great concern the disturbing social unrest in your nation in these past days, following the tragic death of Mr George Floyd," Pope Francis said in a video broadcast June 3. "We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life. At the same time, we have to recognize that the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost," the pope said. (Courtney Mares/CNA)

Pope Francis blesses global rosary relay for priests

Pope Francis has given his apostolic blessing to a worldwide rosary relay for priests. In a message to the Worldpriest Rosary Relay for the Sanctification of Priests 2020, dated April 25, the pope expressed his support for the event which takes place June 19. Participating shrines pray a mystery of the rosary at a designated half hour in thanksgiving for the priesthood and to seek Mary's protection for priests. They pray in relay across time zones until the globe has been encircled in prayer. In 2009, Mulhall oversaw the launch of the Global Rosary Relay, which takes place annually on the feast of the Sacred Heart. (CNA)

Pope Francis issues law to combat corruption in Vatican financial transactions

Pope Francis on June 1 promulgated a new law intended to prevent corruption and control spending in Vatican City State and Holy See financial transactions. The law, "Norms on the transparency, control and competition of public contracts of the Holy See and of the Vatican City State," gives new procedures for awarding public contracts which aim to increase oversight and accountability, and ensure the Vatican and Holy See work only with vetted financial partners. The new regulations also bring the Vatican into line with international anti-corruption laws. In the motu proprio, signed May 19, Pope Francis said "the promotion of a concurrent and fair contribution of economic professionals, combined with transparency and control of contract award procedures, will allow a better management of the resources that the Holy See administers to achieve the ends of the Church..." (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Pope Francis asks consecrated virgins to be 'women of mercy'

Pope Francis sent a letter Monday to women living the vocation of consecrated virginity, exhorting them to be close to suffering people, and to lead them to Christ. "Be women of mercy, experts in humanity," the pope said in his June 1 message to consecrated virgins around the world. "Let everything that is happening all around us disturb you: do not close your eyes to it and do not flee from it," he continued. "Be present and sensitive to pain and suffering. Persevere in proclaiming the Gospel, which promises fullness of life for all." A consecrated virgin is a never-married woman who dedicates her perpetual virginity to God and is set aside as a sacred person who belongs to Christ in the Catholic Church. There are more than 5,000 consecrated virgins worldwide, according to estimates by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Pope Francis urges Christians to be united as 'witnesses to mercy'

Pope Francis said Sunday that he prays that Christians will be "more deeply united as witnesses of mercy" in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. The pope made the comment in a video message May 31, broadcast during an online Pentecost Sunday service hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, head of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The pope said: "Let us ask the Spirit for the gift of unity, for only if we live as brothers and sisters can we spread the spirit of fraternity. We cannot ask others to be united if we ourselves take different paths. So let us pray for one another; let us each feel responsible for the other." (CNA)

Pope Francis praises sacrifices of Rome's clergy amid pandemic

Pope Francis has praised Rome's priests for remaining close to their flocks as the coronavirus pandemic ravaged Italy. In a 3,000-word letter dated May 31 and marking Pentecost Sunday, the pope expressed his deep appreciation for the sacrifices made by clergy during the crisis. "As a priestly community we were not strangers to this reality and we did not look at it from the window; drenched in the storm that raged, you made an effort to be present and accompany your communities: you saw the wolf coming and did not flee or abandon the flock," he said, according to an unofficial translation of the letter provided by the Holy See press office. (CNA)

American priest heading for beatification died amid a global pandemic

VATICAN— Fr. Michael McGivney, an American priest soon to be beatified, died amid a 19th-century pandemic which may have been caused by a coronavirus.

Fr. McGivney founded the largest world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization, the Knights of Columbus, in 1882. Today the order formed in his parish basement in New Haven, Connecticut, has grown to more than two million members donating millions to charity each year.

McGivney was serving as a parish priest amid the pandemic of 1889-1890, according to a press release issued by the Knights of Columbus May 27.

Biologists using gene-sequencing methods have attributed the pandemic to a type of coronavirus, according to a Bloomberg report. This virus, which first appeared in Russia, killed a total of 1 million people worldwide, including 13,000 in the United States.

McGivney became seriously ill with pneumonia and died on Aug. 14, 1890, at age 38.

Pope Francis approved a miracle attributed to McGivney's intercession on May 26, paving the way for the American priest's beatification.

Born in Waterbury, Connecticut, in 1852, McGivney was the first of 13 children born to Irish immigrants Patrick and Mary McGivney. Six of his siblings died in infancy or early childhood. His father was a molder in a Waterbury brass mill, where the young



A studio photo of Fr. Michael J. McGivney, by John Tierney. COURTESY OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

McGivney himself worked for a brief time as a child to help support his family.

From an early age, however, he sensed a calling to the priesthood (two of his brothers also became priests). He was ordained in Baltimore's Cathedral of the Assumption by Cardinal James Gibbons on Dec. 22, 1877, and took up his first assignment, as curate at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, the city's first parish.

In New Haven, McGivney faced anti-Catholic prejudice. A New York Times headline in 1879 -- "How an Aristocratic Avenue was Blemished by a Roman Church Edifice" -- deplored the construction of a new stone church after the original building was destroyed by fire.

In addition to his parish duties, he ministered to a 21-year-old man who was on death row for killing a police officer while drunk, visiting him daily up until his execution. On the day he was due to be hanged, James Smith comforted the priest, saying: "Father, your saintly ministrations have enabled me to meet death without a tremor. Do not fear for me. I must not break down now."

McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus at St. Mary's in 1882 as a way to provide financial protection to families who suffered the death of a breadwinner -- a challenge McGivney himself faced in his youth when his father died in 1873. The priest also hoped the organization would dissuade Catholics

from turning to secret societies in times of need.

The Knights were named after the explorer Christopher Columbus. The order's original principles were "unity" and "charity," with "fraternity" and "patriotism" added later.

Fr. O'Donnell, a contemporary in Waterbury, remembered McGivney as "genial, approachable, of kindly disposition, cheerful under reverses, profoundly sympathetic with those upon whom had fallen the heavy hand of affliction, a man of strict probity and sterling integrity in his business transactions."

"He was charitable to a fault, if I may so speak. The poor found in him a Good Samaritan," O'Donnell said in 1900. (CNA)

US fertility rates fall again, and coronavirus could make it worse

UNITED STATES— The birth rate in the US fell to a record low last year, with the fewest babies being born in 35 years. Experts are predicting the trend to continue, and warn the coronavirus could cause an even sharper decline in future years.

Statistics released May 19 by the Centers for Disease Control National Center for Health Statistics show that, in 2019, 3.75 million children were born—a drop of 1% from 2018. The figures also show a 2% drop in overall fertility, with only 58.2 births registered for every 1,000 women between the ages of 15-44. This is the lowest rate since records began in 1909.

The overall fertility rate now stands at 1.7, well below the 2.1 needed for population replacement.

Birthrates have been in steady decline for more than a decade following a peak before the 2008 financial crisis. The 2019 statistics show falling fertility across all age groups except one, women in their 40s.

Dr. Catherine Pakaluk, Assistant Professor of Social Research and Economic thought at the Catholic University of America, told CNA that

the data confirms the ongoing trend seen over the last decade, and that the current coronavirus pandemic is likely to further depress fertility.

"The downward trend in birth rates observed in the last several years is not a flash in the pan," she told CNA. "Unfortunately, the economic devastation ushered in by COVID-19 is likely to make late 2020 worse, and 2021 worse still."

Many have speculated that months of lockdowns and stay-at-home orders could result in a mini "baby boom," and that 2020 figures might show a spike in births towards the end of the year. But, Pakaluk warned, this optimism could prove to be unfounded.

"You'll hear lots of people joke about couples on lockdown with nothing better to do than 'make a baby'. But that's just wishful thinking."

"Plenty of evidence says that unemployment is one of the best predictors of negative fertility shocks. With new jobless claims approaching a staggering 40 million, there are many couples, sadly, who will choose not to have a baby that they already conceived

-abortion- and certainly many more who will postpone a baby they were hoping to have this year or next," she said.

"For some fraction of those, that postponement will end up being permanent. Expect 2020, but especially 2021, to be far worse than what we see here."

Several trends continued in the data, suggesting that long term fertility rates will continue to drop. Teenage pregnancies have been in sharp decline for decades, with births among women under 20 dropping a further 5%, and declining by 73% overall since a peak in 1991.

Birthrates among Hispanic women also continued to drop, registering 20% fewer births than 2008 projections anticipated. Hispanic women account for nearly 25% of U.S. births.

Experts have long warned about the wider societal and economic problems associated with declining birth rates, especially below the population replacement rate. Programs like social welfare and subsidized medical care rely on growing populations which can contribute to the care of aging generations. (CNA)

Facebook oversight panel prompts questions about free speech, abortion advocacy

DENVER— Facebook says it is responding to long-standing questions about content moderation and censorship by appointing an independent oversight board to help set policy.

American pro-life advocates have voiced concern about protections for their free speech, and at least one member of the oversight board has links to a group that halted a pro-life billboard campaign in Kenya.

"Facebook is a place where many people exchange ideas and share their lives," Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, said May 18. "The policies of Facebook should mirror broader society, in which speech that does not incite violence is embraced. It's ironic that pro-life speech is ever censored considering that we advocate against the violence of abortion and for

women and their pre-born children."

In Hawkins' view, there is a bias in favor of abortion on most platforms.

Hawkins said that "pro-life and pro-faith people must be included" on the Facebook oversight board. These people are most often affected by speech codes, she said, citing Students for Life's experiences on college and university campuses.

"Allowing only people who support abortion to fact-check will create a flawed system that will inherently lead to pro-abortion positions, which is especially troubling as both sides have very strong opinions and the science needs to be discussed," she said.

In 2019 the pro-life investigative group Live Action objected to penalties on its Facebook social media reach after a third-party fact-

checker labeled a post "false" for saying that "abortion is never medically necessary." The third party, Facebook fact-checking partner Science Feedback contended that removal of ectopic pregnancies are medically necessary and should be considered abortions. Live Action said that removing a Fallopian tube or a portion of it is not an abortion because it does not aim at the death of the child—an explanation echoing Catholic ethics' treatment of ectopic pregnancy.

Live Action also objected that the doctors who authored the fact-check also performed abortions, and one served as a board member of the pro-abortion group NARAL.

Appeals of such judgements could soon go to a Facebook oversight board, which will have the power to overrule content moderation decisions

by the social media giant. The board could also help Facebook set policy for its website and for Instagram, which it also owns. Facebook has over 2.6 billion monthly users, and some 1.7 billion daily users, Yahoo Finance reports.

Among its issues will be hate speech, harassment, safety, and privacy. Board co-chairs said the process would be transparent and accessible.

Facebook set up a \$130 million independent trust to manage the oversight board, and then named four co-chairs. These co-chairs then worked with Facebook to name the 16 other initial board members, announcing them May 6. This selection process will continue until the board reaches 40 members, at which time the board will lead the process itself. (CNA)

Pope asks Mary to intercede for end to pandemic during rosary with world's shrines

VATICAN— Pope Francis asked the Virgin Mary to intercede for an end to “this terrible pandemic” as he recited the rosary with Marian shrines worldwide via videolink May 30.

The pope was joined Saturday by 50 shrines in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa as he implored God’s help amid the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed more than 365,000 lives so far.

During the rosary, the pope was seated before the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens. The grotto’s altar is the original altar from the Grotto at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in France.

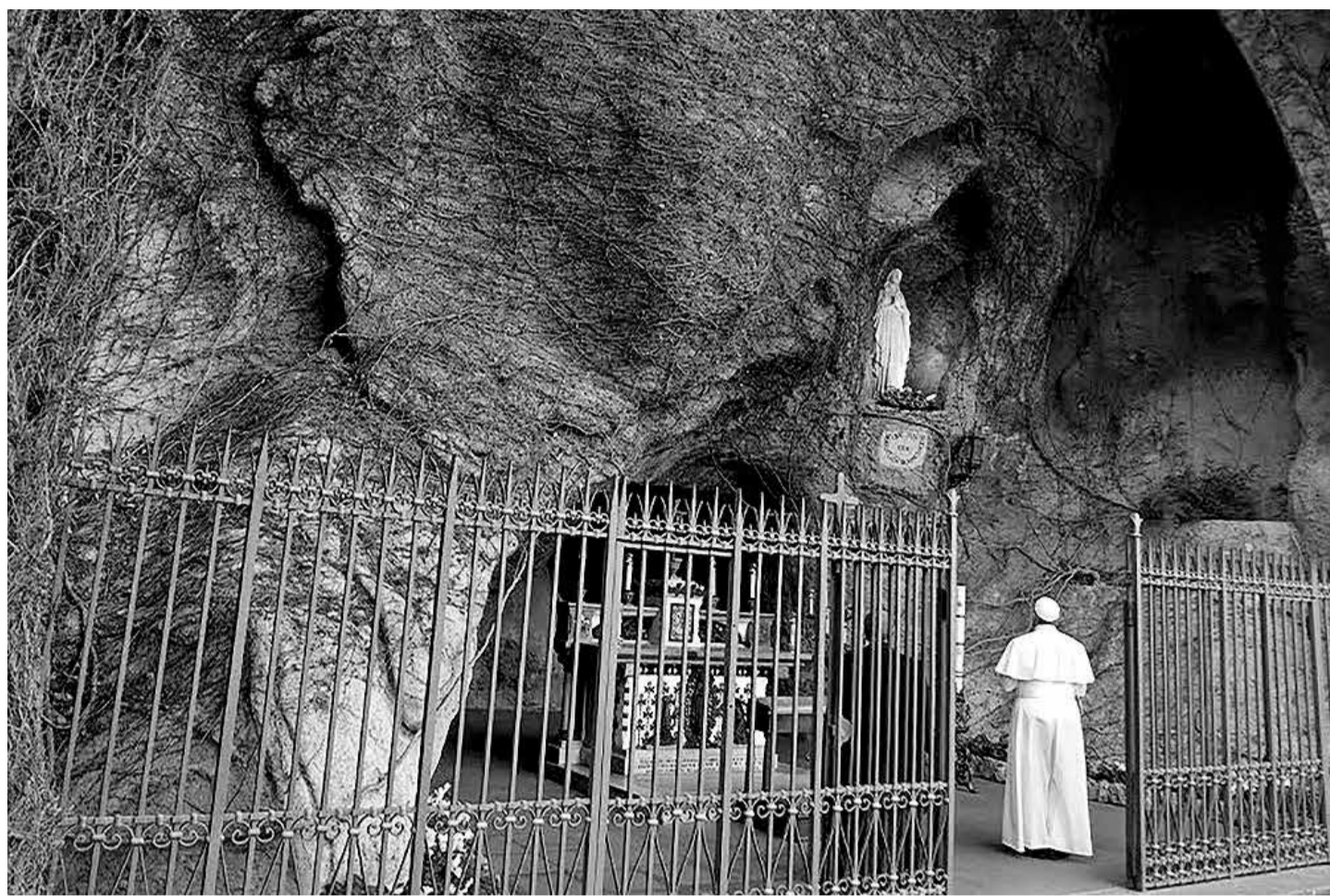
Sitting behind Pope Francis were rows of people wearing medical masks spaced apart to avoid spreading the virus.

At the conclusion of the rosary, the pope rose to pray, saying: “O Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes to us in this pandemic of coronavirus, and comfort those who are lost and weeping for their dearly departed, sometimes buried in a way that hurts the soul.”

“Support those who are distressed for the sick people to whom, to prevent contagion, they cannot stay near. Instill confidence in those who are anxious about the uncertain future and the consequences for the economy and work.”

“Mother of God and our Mother, implore for us from God, Father of mercy, that this hard trial ends and that a horizon of hope and peace returns.”

Flanked by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, he continued: “As at Cana, come to your Son



Pope Francis prays at the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens May 30, 2020. VATICAN MEDIA

Jesus, asking him to comfort the families of the sick and victims and to open their hearts to trust. Protect the doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, volunteers who in this time of emergency are in the front line and put their lives at risk to save other lives.”

“Accompany their fatigue and give them strength, goodness and health. Be close to those who night and day care for the sick, to priests and consecrated persons who, with pastoral solicitude and evangelical commitment, seek to help and support everyone.”

The pope prayed for scientists and world leaders, and that money spent on weapons would be given

instead to those studying how to avoid future catastrophes.

He implored Mary to help the world grow in solidarity, firmness in faith, and perseverance in service and prayer.

“O Mary, comforter of the afflicted, embrace all your troubled children and ask that the Merciful Father intervene with his omnipotent hand to free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life may take its daily course in serenity,” he prayed.

“We entrust ourselves to You, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, O merciful, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.”

The Argentine pope then greeted those gathered at

shrines in Latin America via videolink.

Speaking in Spanish, he said: “To all of you, the shrines of Latin America -- I see Guadalupe and so many others -- who are connected with us, united in prayer. In my mother tongue, I greet you. Thank you for being close to all of us. May our Mother of Guadalupe accompany us.”

As those gathered sang the Ave Maria of Fatima, the pope prayed silently beneath the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, which was illuminated inside the grotto, before departing.

The rosary event was promoted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, with

the theme “Devoted with one accord to prayer, together with Mary,” inspired by the Acts of the Apostles 1:14.

The Pontifical Council has been responsible for Catholic shrines since 2017.

In an interview with EWTN Vatican ahead of the event, Archbishop Rino Fisichella said: “I think we have discovered two main things during this special moment. First of all the importance of the media for the new evangelization and the importance of media for the prayer.”

Shrines joining the pope from the Americas included the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., Saint-Joseph du Mont-Royal

in Canada, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá in Colombia, Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil and Our Lady of Luján in Argentina.

The majority of shrines were located in Italy, including Loreto, Pompei, and Pietrelcina, the birthplace of Padre Pio. Other participating shrines in Europe included: Lourdes, France; Fatima, Portugal; Częstochowa, Poland; and Walsingham, England.

The pope was joined from Israel by the Basilica of the Annunciation, and from Africa by the shrines of Elele in Nigeria and Notre-Dame de la Paix in Ivory Coast.

The rosary was recited in the Vatican Gardens by men and women affected by the coronavirus crisis. They included a doctor, a nurse, a hospital chaplain, and a woman who had lost her mother to COVID-19.

In a May 30 interview with the Italian version of Vatican News, Archbishop Fisichella noted that a baby born during the pandemic would also be present at the event with his family.

He said: “Last but not least, I like to remember that there will also be Jacopo, a child just one month old, whom we have chosen with his parents, because he was born during this dramatic period.”

“Jacopo is the one who gives hope, he is the one who makes us understand that life continues and will always go on, because man is made for life, he is made to live.”

There have been more than 5.9 million confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus worldwide as of May 30, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. (CNA)

More than 600 Nigerian Christians killed in 2020, new report says

NIGERIA— Christians in Nigeria faced escalating persecution and a mounting death toll in the first four months of 2020, a new report has said.

In a report issued on 15 May, the International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law (Intersociety) said that 620 Nigerian Christians have been killed since the beginning of the year, and mapped a campaign of destruction and arson carried out against churches in the African nation.

The society, a non-profit founded in 2008 in Nigeria, works to promote civil liberties, the rule of law, criminal justice reform, and good governance. Its report said that “Nigeria’s main Islamic Jihadists: Militant Fulani Herdsmen and Boko Haram/ISWAP have intensified their anti-Christian violence in the old Middle Belt and Northeast regions.”

“The atrocities against Christians have gone unchecked,” the report said, “with the country’s security forces and concerned political actors looking the other way or colluding with the Jihadists.”

Intersociety said that, despite making up nearly half of the country’s population, some 32,000 Christians have been killed in Islamist attacks since 2009.

Christians in Nigeria have been the victims of an escalating series of attacks, including kidnappings for ransom, since the beginning of the year.

In January this year, four seminarians were abducted by gunman from Good Shepherd Seminary. Ten

days after the abduction, one of the four seminarians was found on the side of a road, alive but seriously injured. On Jan. 31, an official at the seminary announced that another two seminarians had been released, but that the fourth, Michael Nnadi remained missing and was presumed still in captivity.

It was subsequently announced that Nnadi had been killed.

In an interview from prison earlier this month, the leader of the gang which abducted Nnadi took credit for his killing, telling local media that the 18-year-old seminarian “continued preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ,” and “told [his killer] to his face to change his evil ways or perish.”

In March, Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Abuja, Nigeria, called on President Muhammadu Buhari to address the violence and kidnappings in a homily during Mass with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria.

“We need to have access to our leaders; president, vice president. We need to work together to eradicate poverty, killings, bad governance and all sorts of challenges facing us as a nation,” Kaigama said.

In an Ash Wednesday letter to Nigerian Catholics, Archbishop Augustine Obiora Akubeze of Benin City called for Catholics to wear black in solidarity with victims and pray, in response to “repeated” executions of Christians by Boko Haram and “incessant” kidnappings “linked to the same groups.”

Other Christian villages have been attacked, farms set

Nigerians / A6

Churches in China must preach ‘patriotism’ to reopen after coronavirus

CHINA— State-sponsored Catholic authorities in parts of China have issued regulations on the reopening of churches during the coronavirus pandemic. The new rules include a requirement that churches must preach on “patriotism” in order to reopen.

In the eastern province of Zhejiang, the state-affiliated Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the province’s Chinese Catholic educational administration committee issued a statement on May 29 regarding the resumption of Mass the following week.

The statement requires that only “religious places that meet the conditions of epidemic prevention” would be allowed to celebrate Mass starting on June 2. Among these conditions was the requirement to add “patriotism” to the celebration of the liturgy.

Local Chinese Catholics, speaking to UCA News, called the new measures inappropriate.

“The first requirement in the notice is to teach a good lesson on patriotism. It is wrong. As members of the universal Catholic Church, we cannot accept and glorify what communists consider patriotic education,” said Fr. Liu from the province of Hebei to UCA.

A Catholic from Wenzhou named Jacob Chung characterized the move as additional government interference “in the internal affairs of religion.”

The CCP seeks to “suppress and transform” the Catholic Church in China to better



Chinese pilgrims attend the General Audience in St. Peter's Square, Oct. 12, 2016. DANIEL IBANEZ/CNA

promote communist values, he added.

China has been slowly re-opening institutions in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, including religious services. Regulations differ by province, and some parishes are required to check the temperatures of worshippers before they are allowed into the building.

In Sichuan, those seeking to go to church must get the permission of a government official.

The new rules come as the Chinese government takes increasingly strong measures to promote “sinicization” in the practice of religion.

In 2019, the Xinhua News Agency reported that a member of the Politburo Standing Committee had overseen a meeting that discussed the creation of a translation of scripture that is in line with the Chinese communist party.

The meeting reportedly included “religious people

from the grassroots level” and scholars. Their goal was to create “accurate and authoritative interpretations of classical doctrines to keep pace with the times.”

To accomplish this goal, passages that have been ruled to violate the “core socialist values” of the CCP would be removed from texts like the Bible and the Quran.

The CCP seeks to “create a new version of Christianity shorn of its transcendent visions and values,” Xi Lian, a professor at the Duke University Divinity School, told the Wall Street Journal.

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

The Chinese government is in the midst of implementing a five-year “sinicization plan” for Islam, a religion that has faced increased persecution in the country with at least 800,000 Uyghur Muslims held in internment camps.

Catholic acceptance of the “sinicization” program has been a much-discussed topic following the formalization of last year’s agreement between the Vatican and China that regularized the country’s government-appointed bishops with the Holy See.

Previously, bishops affiliated with the “Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association” were consecrated illicitly and out of communion with Rome.

In 2019, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, said that “inculturation,” a Catholic missionary practice, and “sinicization” can be “complementary” and “can open avenues for dialogue.”

“Inculturation is an essential condition for a sound proclamation of the Gospel which, in order to bear fruit, requires, on the one hand, safeguarding its authentic purity and integrity and, on the other, presenting it according to the particular experience of each people and culture,” he said.

“These two terms, ‘inculturation’ and ‘sinicization,’ refer to each other without confusion and without opposition.”

The full terms of the Vatican-China agreement have not been released. (CNA)

EDITORIAL

What adds up?

IT simply does not add up neither by simple rhyme nor by intricate reason that the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 should be certified urgent and taken in haste amidst the worsening impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its fatal consequences—such as the tailspin of the country's economy, the displacement of workers, especially the OFWs, the havoc that it busted on the educational system, especially the impending demise of hundreds of private schools, to name but a few.

Even before the pandemic, the government's urgency of an anti-terrorism bill would still be out of the way in the hierarchy of development values and people's felt priorities. There were gaping socio-economic wounds that needed more attention than political interests. The overarching problems of the country were debated during political campaigns in 2016, and Duterte always came up with his swift militaristic solution, to the satisfaction of the voters who were already weary since post-martial-law years looking for change. He got the vote, but the litany of promised changes will still have to be won, if ever.

The government's handling of the pandemic crisis has put into question not only its perceived populist preference but more so its competence. Disputable as it may seem, but the IATF has not foreseen the devastating consequences of its ECQ and GCQ strategies that in over three months it has unnecessarily crippled industries and bankrupt entrepreneurs, laid off and displaced millions of ordinary workers and nailed to the floor the very backbone of the country's economy, which, by comparison, did not happen in, say, Vietnam, Taiwan, New Zealand and Australia.

The end of this crisis is still nowhere in sight. Despite its strict quarantine measures, the IATF still can't pinpoint to date where the country is in the infection curve. Mass testing, which came very late in mid-April should have been done earlier than the mass quarantines that was strictly enforced for the whole of Luzon in mid-March. A possible vaccine may neutralize the virus perhaps in a year or so, but the much-touted multi-billion rescue package will neither give a dent in years to a much debilitated economy nor the recovery of about 4.9 million Filipinos who lost their jobs.

Even if, for the sake of argument, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 is really needed, it still will not add up because its provisions are targeted miles away from real terrorists. One does not need a well-bred brain to understand that this terrorism measure is aimed towards government critics, dissent, and the safety safeguards of democracy. Some provisions are even unconstitutional.

So what adds up? Nothing substantially really, except perhaps to save the necks of the politically powerful.

Punditry gone awry

PUNDITRY, of course, has its legitimate value and purpose in our life. It facilitates our knowledge of things in areas that are quite unfamiliar to us, since they are not our fields of specialization and yet they also are relevant to us. It clarifies things for us, and helps us in forming our own opinions, decisions and choices. It actually is a great service to society.

In politics, for example, which is important to our collective life and where developments can occur in warp speed, punditry can be very helpful since we can avail of expert opinions from those who are closely following and studying its twists and turns. We need to be careful in distinguishing between a good and enlightening punditry, on the one hand, and a rotten one, on the other hand, that is full of rigid biases and prejudices. Especially in the most delicate field of politics, we should be able to keenly distinguish between the two, since every pundit will always try his best to be very attractive, to sound very objective and fair, when in fact they are the opposite.

Politics' need for evangelization, humanization and Christianization should be more keenly felt since it involves the whole society in a very direct way. Even if politics only has a temporal purpose, it definitely has spiritual and moral dimensions that need to be taken care of.

In the American political scene punditry has really gone awry. The pundits are sharply divided and polarized to such an extent that each party thinks he exclusively holds what is objective and fair for everyone and the other side has none whatsoever. They are quick to find fault at each other. Bashing, sowing intrigues, resorting to all sorts of fallacies and red herrings now seem to be the main focus of their work. They can even go so low as to get into insults, mockeries and all kinds of "ad hominem" arguments. And all this is being supported by big and powerful communication outfits!

Even those pundits whose views are more reasonable, are not exempt from some irregular practices. Of course, they can always rationalize that if those in the opposite side resort to below-the-belt tactics, why shouldn't they? As some conventional wisdom would put it, all is fair in love and war.

But that should not be the case. Difficult, if not impossible, as it seems, we just have to make political punditry human and Christian. It should not be field for a free-for-all approach. It's true that in this life, we are told to learn how to be wise, shrewd and clever like serpents. But such traits should always be accompanied if not inspired by the simplicity and innocence of doves. (cf. Mt 10,16)

Pundits should realize more deeply that to do their job really well they have to have a strong spiritual life, a life of close relationship with God. Only then can they do their punditry in truth and charity. It's when they rely only on some ideologies that they actually downgrade the quality of their job and mission in society.

To be truly good pundits, not only should they be good technically. More important is that they be truly good persons and children of God!



Living Mission

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

THE Philippine Bishops (CBCP) have asked Catholics to look deeply into the Church's teaching on interreligious dialogue as an important theme in preparation for 2021, the fifth centenary of the arrival of Christianity. Most Catholics are unaware that the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) produced one entire document on approaches to other faith traditions, *Nostra Aetate* (NA).

Nostra Aetate ("in our time") transformed the Church's view and relationship with other religions, asserting: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and life, those precepts and teachings ... [which] often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all people" (NA 2).

"The Church, therefore, exhorts her children, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, ... they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these people" (NA 2).

Exploring interreligious dialogue.

A popular expression to capture all

the attitudes and initiatives among the various religions is termed "interreligious dialogue" or "interfaith dialogue." All these efforts to build fraternal relationships and foster communication are anchored in people's faith. Though their religions differ in many aspects, it is still proper to call these people "believers," since their lives and values are "God-centered."

Interfaith dialogue moves beyond discussion ("dialogue") about religious beliefs and practices. Dialogue means entering another's experience of God; it demands a growth in faith and a conversion to a deeper religious encounter with one's God. Thus, dialogue is always "faith-based," and from this perspective people will more readily collaborate to address social questions, authentic human development, and the freedom of religious practice.

Revealing statistics. In the Philippines today when one hears about "interreligious" or "interfaith" dialogue, one almost automatically thinks of Muslim-Christian relations (though there are other faith groups, such as Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs, in the country). Muslims form the second

largest religion; best estimates assert that 5-6% of Filipinos are Muslims. Traditionally, Muslims were mostly confined to the southern part of the country; however, this has significantly changed due to migration; today there is a Muslim presence in almost all cities and towns.

Global statistics reveal that worldwide there are more Muslims than Catholics; approximate percentages of the world religious population are: Catholics (16.10%), Muslims (22.32%), Christians [total] (31.50%). This is the multi-religious context of the contemporary world!

Vatican II and Islam. One may ask what the Council said about Islam. "Upon the Muslims too, the Church looks with esteem" (*Nostra Aetate* [NA] 3). Yes, "the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge humanity" (*Lumen Gentium* 16).

The Council notes that the Muslims "adore one God, living and enduring,"

Living Mission / A5

Black skies over Beijing

BEGINNING at 3 PM, last May 21, as the Chinese Communist Party leaders gathered for their annual meeting in Beijing, an unpredicted weather phenomenon struck: the sky turned black, there was thunder and lightning, heavy rain, followed later by hail. Weather forecast was a pleasant spring day, thus when the day suddenly "turned into night," surprised city folk took out their cell phones to record the bizarre event.

Next day, raw video clips of the strange occurrence went viral, punctuated by exclamations of

bewilderment and disbelief. A life-long resident of Beijing was quoted by Epoch Times thus: "It is an alarm from God... thunder rolling, heavy gale blowing, the sky was very dark. I have never seen this in my life."

To validate the reports, I searched the most reputable news sources in mainstream media, but found nothing about it whether in regular or breaking news—not even reactions from any of the 5,000 delegates who were attending the meeting. Have the big reports been following the Beijing meeting indoors that they missed the marvel outside? Meanwhile, the

And That's The Truth

Teresa R. Tunay, OCDS



videos multiplied and have continued to elicit comments from netizens, alluding to divine justice, seeing the event as a sign of the anger of God or of Allah.

My knee jerk reaction upon seeing one video was, "Omigod, it's like Good Friday in Beijing! China, you'd better listen up!" And then, "Oh, maybe there was an eclipse, or some volcano erupted and the ashfall blocked the sunlight..." Seeking some logic behind it all, I searched the net again—this time for weather forecasts that may have been overlooked—hoping to find some scientific explanation

of the weird happening, but my search yielded nothing.

I therefore searched my memory instead—about plagues in the Bible, the best known of which have found graphic depictions in movies like *The Ten Commandments*. (If there is one thing this Covid quarantine has done to so many of us it is to remind us to turn to Scriptures when no one else can answer our questions.) Seeing still another video and the article accompanying it which says that the Beijing meeting is reportedly passing, among other things, new laws against Christians in China, I see why

And That's the Truth / A3



Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimagala

WE have to be prepared for the ending of this stay-home dispensation. Hopefully it will be soon. We just cannot be held in lockdown mode indefinitely. One day, we just have to go out and try to do the usual business as normally as possible.

Definitely, things will not be the same. There may be new circumstances that will only have a short life-span. We just have to bear them and try to make the most out of them. But we also have to be ready to contend with those that may last till death.

The important thing is that we should not allow ourselves to be dominated by gloom, sadness, feeling of frustration and discouragement just because things would not be the same as they were before the pandemic.

We just have to learn to move on, doing whatever is necessary to adapt to the new things that will surely come about. No need to waste time to lament over lost opportunities, quashed dreams and ambitions. To be sure, life still has a lot more to offer us, and it's up to us to face the new challenges that actually offer us new opportunities.

Thus, we have to learn to be resilient, knowing how to re-invent ourselves to tackle more effectively these new challenges and opportunities. Let's remember that if one door closes, another one opens. Let's recover our zest for life. And if need be, let us just grin and bear it, never allowing our smile and sense of humor to disappear.

Let's remember that God is always in

control, and that with him everything works always for the good, including things that can cause us great pain and suffering. Thus, the first thing to recover and to keep strong and vibrant should be our spiritual life, our life of faith, hope and charity, our piety, our prayer and spirit of sacrifice.

We already have all the means to protect ourselves, defend and conquer the bad spirit that can insinuate itself into our life. We have God's word, we have the sacraments, we have the edifying life-testimonies of saints and many other holy men and women, including those who are still alive.

It's really up to us to choose which way we want to take in facing a new

Candidly Speaking / A5

CBCP Monitor

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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Collection Box

Fr. Jerome R. Secillano, MPA

THE community quarantine is slowly easing up but some sectors are still not happy with the IATF's recommendation as it left some vital institutions to remain "under control" in the General Community Quarantine (GCQ) protocols.

People who have been deprived of physical participation in the celebration of the holy eucharist or the Mass are disappointed because it has been almost three months since they were barred from doing so.

Masses, of course, continue to be celebrated but without the presence of the faithful. The digital platform proved to be of great help in bringing the holy eucharist at the doorsteps of Catholic families but many feel that this is still not enough and that the actual participation and reception of holy communion are still the most effective ways to receive Christ specially in this time of crisis.

What made it more disappointing for many Catholics is the IATF's decision to allow shopping malls to operate despite knowing fully well that these are frequented by people at any time of the day compared to churches whose services are scheduled and regimented.

Despite assurances from the Catholic church that it is more than ready to implement health protocols to ensure the safety of parishioners, the IATF remained unmoved and decided to still not allow religious services to be publicly celebrated. The least it could allow is to limit the attendees to a maximum of five (5) in the Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) and ten (10) in the General Community Quarantine (GCQ).

This moved Bishop Broderick Pabillo, the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Manila, to go public and lambast the decision as "unreasonable" for it is after all tantamount to still not allowing the people to join the Eucharistic celebrations.

Reeling perhaps from the public rebuke of the good Bishop, the National Task Force (NTF) against Covid-19 decided to reach-out to Bishop Pabillo and invited him to a meeting on May

18. The Bishop told me to attend in his behalf with two other priests from the Archdiocese of Manila.

A Technical Working Group (TWG) was created composed of the AFP, PNP, DILG, DOH, TESDA, DOLE and the Religious Sector from the Archdiocese of Manila.

During the meeting held at the AFP Commissioned Officers Clubhouse at Camp Aguinaldo, I specifically suggested, at the behest of Bp. Pabillo, to consider religious services as essential needs; to allow ALL religious services in MECQ, and veering away from the IATF's decision about the number of attendees, I insisted on physical distancing as the basis for accommodating church-goers during the mass. The 50% calculation of allowed attendees by the IATF is quite complicated because we could not agree on where it should be based. Is it on the actual size of the church or the pews?

Surprisingly, the members of the TWG adopted the suggestions giving rise to our optimism that anytime from May 18, Catholics will finally be able to physically attend our church services.

To further underscore the Archdiocese of Manila's commitment to bring back the public celebration of liturgies in churches, we submitted to the TWG the Guidelines for Religious Services which elicited guffaws from some members as it is stricter in scope and strategy. The DOH representative commented that PPEs are really for hospital use and that priests may not wear them as it is enough that they only wear face masks and practice physical distancing while performing their ministry.

Despite all these though, the IATF is still not convinced that people will be safe in the church.

In a text message, the Secretary of the Department of Justice told Bp. Pabillo that the IATF had a vigorous discussion about religious services yesterday afternoon (Friday, May 29) but the body could not arrive at a favorable decision and decided to discuss it further on Monday, June 1 in their regular meeting. If there is any consolation, the SOJ also said that since NCR is now under GCQ, parishes can now open but should only

The saga of religious services in the time of COVID-19

accommodate ten (10) attendees for their scheduled masses not including mass servers.

It would have been a fitting gift to the church had the IATF allowed the public celebration of the Eucharist this coming Sunday as it is the Solemnity of Pentecost, the "birthday" of the Church.

When the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and the first believers, they constitutively mark the birth of the early Christian community whose faith is centered on Jesus (Acts 2:1-31). It was a well-spring of faith and people coming from different places and who spoke different languages were gathered in worship and prayer professing their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

How beautiful it would have been if our celebration tomorrow is allowed with the maximum participation of the faithful. It would have been a sight to behold having people go out of their houses and gather in one roof to express their confidence and faith in Jesus believing that this crisis will soon be over because of Him, who is our savior.

The IATF doesn't see religious services as essential to the people. The decision reflects how we value material things more than the spiritual. Jesus has a reminder for that, "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his life in the end" (Mark 8:36).

The Church has already prepared for the so-called "new normal". It has adapted its way of doing things according to prevailing circumstances. The presence of technology proved to be an advantage in its mission. For all the innovations and creativity though, the experience of being a "church" much like that of the first Pentecost is crucial. We need to experience that physical oneness once again. We should not be contented with the virtual unity that was necessitated because of COVID-19.

Anyway, we have at our disposal some practical strategies to ward-off the virus. Spiritual instruments are available to us too. Why don't we take full advantage of them? Still afraid? And Jesus said, "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid" (Mt. 14:27).



By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

Requiem for Michelle Silvertino

MICHELLE, I never met you. But your story pierced my soul. It should pierce our souls as a nation. For it is a story of so many of our poor. We romanticize, even make the likes of you the cynosure of attention when it is time for election but largely forget you the rest of the time including in our most civilized conversation.

Even the media took notice of you only after you died. They said you were a maid as if it explained why you could only afford to sleep on a footbridge while you waited for a bus ride home to your province. Alas, the ride never came. Instead the Grim Reaper set in.

Cops first tried to help you but got scared. You allegedly had Covid-19 symptoms: high fever, coughing. They said you said you were fine. But were you not forced to hide the truth? That you didn't want to be pitied. Or be traumatized by other peoples' fears, cruel insensitivity and inhumanity...

In the end, like other victims of this pandemic, you died alone, bereft of your loved ones' embrace and your people's compassion.

Forgive us, Michelle. Forgive us for failing to see in you a sister, a friend, a neighbor. Forgive us for not being who we say we are to you and to so many others. Now that your passing has fueled a long-simmering blame-game, help us pray that we honor you with a coming-to-our-senses national healing.

Let our prayers be joined by yours because perhaps we need your prayers more than you need ours. Of this I am sure: The Heavenly One has welcomed you into his home. You joined him in his Passion; You now share in his Exaltation! We pray that you rest in his peace and joy, trusting that somewhere in the green meadows of heaven your forgiveness merits your remembering to pray for us. For even now we keep on forgetting: OUR OWN POOR PEOPLE'S LIVES MATTER!

Candidly Speaking / A4

chapter in our collective life after this horrible pandemic. Of course, we need to study things very well. We have to learn to listen to all parties with different and even conflicting views, then weigh the various possibilities and options they offer us.

There will always be some kind of general guidelines that all of us should follow. But in the end, what we choose should be something that is adapted to our personal situation.

And while we have to make our own decisions, always taking some unavoidable and calculated risks along the way, let's always assume a sportsman's attitude. We should do our best to play the game of life to win, but we should not forget that in spite of everything, there is always the possibility of a loss or a defeat.

Living Mission / A4

merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to all. They strive to submit wholeheartedly even to His inscrutable decrees, just as did Abraham, which whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself" (NA 3).

Vatican II continues: "Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet.

So win or lose, up or down, we should just move on, knowing what is absolutely essential in our life that can always be attained by us, no matter what happens in our life. If we have the proper spirit, we know, as mentioned above, that everything will always work for the good in him who is with God.

Thus, the ultimate secret, the most reliable key to the real success of our life, is to be with God. Let's remember that he was the one who started everything in us, and he will also be the one to complete and perfect things. Ours is simply to go along with him in good times and bad, in our successes and in our failures.

This truth of our faith should never be lost as we enter a new, post-Covid19 phase in our life.

They also honor Mary, his Virgin Mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment... Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting" (NA 3). Indeed, through dialogue Vatican II was seeking to build bridges of harmony and peace!



Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

AFTER two months of ECQ and one half month of Modified ECQ, Metro Manila goes to GCQ or General Community Quarantine on June 01. Almost everyone shouted "Suicide!" "Mass Testing not yet done!" We acknowledge the need to boost the economy after 2½ months. However, we should not ignore the DOH report that as of May 29 there are 1,046 new confirmed cases, the highest so far, or a total of 16,634 confirmed cases; pending confirmation of 8k covid-positive tests. It is really a choice between economy or the health and lives of the people. Everyone is afraid to get out of their home yet

when new confirmed cases are still soaring.

The apprehension of going to GCQ is not only the expected surge in confirmed cases but also the problems that go with it.

Going to work in the office – As much as many would like to return to work to earn money and buy foods for the family, they foresee the problem of going to and from the office. With the limited transportation, the working sector would be lucky to get to office on time, and get home early. There is also the possible fare increase since only 50% of the vehicle would be occupied to enforce one-meter physical distancing of

passengers. Some employer may shuttle the workers to and from their home, but not all employers can afford it.

Work from Home – Not all kinds of work can be done at home. There are work that require the workers to do it in the workplace. Likewise, for those who can do the work at home, would the employer allow volumes of sensitive and confidential documents to be brought out of the office and be safe and secured at the employees' home?

Limited Transportation – Even before the coronavirus pandemic, there is already the problem of transportation. To enforce

physical distancing of passengers, there will be long line to take a ride. Will physical distancing in the queue be observed?

How would the employees be paid – The GCQ requires skeleton force in the workplace. To avoid retrenchment, the employers may require shifting of few hours of work per week. How would the employees be paid? Will they get salary as if they work full time? Will the salary be reduced due to shortened work hours? Will the workers be paid during lockdown? Will they get full salary? or reduced salary? or "No Work, No Pay"? Much

Duc in Altum / A7

Too soon for GCQ?

Culture of confinement

Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco



WITH the experience of almost three months of confinement, most of us would have adjusted to a 'new normal' way of life: constantly masking, distancing and sanitizing ourselves as our primary line of defense against COVID-19. Our experience of anxiety, uncertainty and fear has been somewhat replaced with restlessness, "rantiness" and resignation. But as always, we have managed to adjust and even come out as improved versions of ourselves in countless ways.

Even before the present pandemic, however, humanity has already experienced countless trials. These ushered man beyond the thresholds of his normal capacity and come out, perhaps not always alive, but as a testimony of how 'external pressures' can forge our nature's raw material into something spiritually uplifting.

I'm not speaking of plagues or

diseases, but of circumstances that have been the result of the abuse of human freedom and the very rejection of the innate dignity in every man and woman of being God's image and likeness.

These have come in the form of racial wars, religious persecutions and in our times the vicious ideological philosophies threatening to neutralize the family and marriage. These continue to plague the world and society, and it seems –even with COVID– carry on with greater force.

But there were also instances when without any external threats that individuals choose to confine themselves freely. It is through such choices that they are able to free themselves from the unseen enemies of the soul, that constantly endanger man from attaining his true end, Heaven.

What follows is the example of some individuals, selected without any

special criteria or theme, who became 'victors' rather than victims of war and persecution. The others, are examples of self-confinement via the religious life.

• Esther "Etty" Hillesum (15 January 1914 – 30 November 1943). A Dutch author who was deported and killed in Auschwitz. It was during imprisonment that she discovered a new and greater form of freedom. While in the camp of Westerbork, she writes: "Those two months behind barbed wire have been the two richest and most intense months of my life, in which my highest values were so deeply confirmed." ("Etty Hillesum," n.d., para. 8)

• Anne Frank (12 June 1929 – February or March 1945). Well known for her Diary, this little Dutch girl was confined behind a bookcase that concealed some rooms. From July

Whatever / A7

Manila parishes to create health care ministry

WHILE gearing up for the “new normal,” Manila’s Roman Catholic Church is pushing for the creation of health ministry in all its parishes.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo, the archdiocese’s administrator, said that such ministry is important as parishes prepare for the resumption of church services with people in attendance.

He said the archdiocese’s primary concern is how to open up its religious services “in a safe way” amid the coronavirus pandemic.

“Let each parish create a ministry of health to extend services in the parish,” Pabillo said in his latest

pastoral instruction released on Monday.

His statement also came after the government placed Metro Manila under general community quarantine (GCQ) but the holding of religious services remain restricted.

Only 10 people are allowed to attend religious gatherings in GCQ areas, according to the latest guidelines issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

He said those working in the ministry may be tasked to extend services to the elderly as they will

as, among others, identify the parishioners who want to receive communion outside the church.

The ministry, according to him, may also be assigned to screen churchgoers by the use of thermal scanners and to attend to those who may later on be found to have illness.

“Little by little, each parish and each church organization have to undergo planning on how to do their activities and programs in this new situation,” said Pabillo.

“This is part of our stewardship of the gift of health—our health and the health of those around us,” he said. **(CBCP News)**

Church labor group calls for resumption of jeep operations, cash aid distribution



A CHURCH labor group has called to allow the operation of jeepney drivers who are left without income for months due to public transportation restrictions during the community quarantine.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of the Church People-Workers Solidarity (CWS) said that thousands of jeepney drivers were left with no sources of livelihood since

the lockdown.

“Even before the pandemic, jeepney drivers and their families were already in difficult economic situations. And now, the situation even worsens,” he said.

He stressed that the resumption of jeepney operations will not only revive their livelihood but will also provide transport service to Covid-19 frontliners and workers.

The San Carlos bishop also appealed for the immediate release of cash aid to jeepney drivers.

According to him, many of the drivers are still waiting for the government’s cash aid for more than two months now.

In allowing jeepney drivers back to work, the prelate stressed the importance of mass testing “to ensure their safety and the commuting

public”.

He also called for the release of six jeepney drivers who were arrested during a protest calling for the release of cash assistance in Caloocan City on June 2.

“We also appeal to our brothers and sisters in the community to give cash or in kind support to our drivers and their families,” Alminaza said. **(CBCP News)**

Nigerian / A3

ablaze, vehicles carrying Christians attacked, men and women have been killed and kidnapped, and women have been taken as sex slaves and tortured—a “pattern,” he said, of targeting Christians.

On Feb. 27, U.S. Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback told CNA that

the situation in Nigeria was deteriorating.

“There’s a lot of people getting killed in Nigeria, and we’re afraid it is going to spread a great deal in that region,” he told CNA. “It is one that’s really popped up on my radar screens -- in the last couple of years, but particularly

this past year.”

“I think we’ve got to prod the [Nigerian President Muhammadu] Buhari government more. They can do more,” he said. “They’re not bringing these people to justice that are killing religious adherents. They don’t seem to have the sense of urgency to act.” **(CNA)**



Plants are placed on church pews to ensure physical distancing amid the Covid-19 pandemic at the St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Pacdal, Baguio City. **COURTESY PF FR. ROSITO PEDRO, JR.**

Bishop cautions against ‘distance learning’



Bishop Roberto Mallari of San Jose. **MARK SALUDES/LICAS NEWS**

Bishop Roberto Mallari of San Jose expressed concern over the move to substitute “face-to-face” classes with online and “distance learning.”

The prelate said online classes lack the personal encounter that contributes to the formation of the person and of the student.

Bishop Mallari, who heads the Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education, said online classes will also highlight social and economic differences.

“Online study enables us to see that there is a big digital divide,” he said.

“Many of our young students do not have any access to [the internet] especially those in the rural areas,” added the prelate.

The Department of Education has announced the distribution of printed self-learning modules for students who do not have access to online learning platforms.

Education officials said parents should have a “more active role” in their children’s learning process as the country enters into a “new

normal” due to the pandemic.

President Rodrigo Duterte said he will not allow the opening of classes unless he is sure the students are safe from the new coronavirus disease.

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers has called on the government to postpone its planned school opening unless distance learning will be fully accessible to learners, especially the poor.

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, meanwhile, encouraged parents and teachers to prepare for the opening of classes.

“As stewards of Catholic schools, I am appealing to all of you to pray, plan, and prepare,” said Father Nolan Que, an official of the association.

The priest urged Catholic schools in the capital to “plan the institutional continuity of our schools.”

“Adjust the framework according to your school’s current situation as necessary,” he said. **(LicasNews)**

Unite / A1

wrongfully detain a suspect.

Legislators removed such safeguards and replaced it with a harsher law.

Impact on church mission

The prelate claimed that because the bill expands the existing and already “broad” definition of terrorism, any form of protest or criticism may be considered a “terroristic act”.

He warned that even the Church’s exercise of the prophetic mission may be affected “and one can be accused of such ‘crime’ without due process”.

“The proposed amendments sully the very Constitution that guaranteed a democracy and every citizen’s right to free speech and redress,” the bishop added.

“We believe that these provisions further violate the right to due process, contribute to the shrinking of democratic spaces, and promote a culture of abuse of power among authorities,” he said.

Track record

An influential group of church leaders also voiced concern on the bill, citing the Duterte administration’s supposed abysmal track record in handling dissent.

The Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) said the bill’s definition of terrorism is “very vague” and prone to “abuse and misuse”.

“This bill can be abused to stifle dissent and curtail rights to free speech, to organize and form associations, to peaceably assemble in redress of grievances,” read the AMRSP statement.

The group also faulted the administration for prioritizing the anti-terror measure while the Philippines is in the midst of a pandemic.

All the while, they said that Filipinos are still asking for mass testing, economic relief, and a comprehensive plan to address the health crisis but lawmakers

“traversed the path of the wicked and ruthless”.

“Terrorism is not our immediate concern. Marawi’s rehabilitation and the continued displacement of communities should be our priority. People’s health, safety and well-being should be first in our agenda,” the religious leaders said.

“These are the urgent concerns that we as a people need to address. These are the challenges that government can address by channeling resources for its resolution,” they added.

Tyranny, totalitarianism

The Church’s social action arm is urging the public to oppose the new anti-terrorism legislation, warning that it could “further reinforce tyranny and totalitarianism”.

Caritas Philippines raised the alarm over the bill for fear that it could be used to suppress free speech and harass those who express dissent.

“We cannot let this happen. This is not only intolerable, this is inhuman, unjust and unlawful,” said Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, Caritas Philippines’ national director.

Bagaforo, who is also the bishop of Kidapawan in southern Philippines, urged Filipinos not to allow the government to curtail their democratic rights.

“The anti-terror bill violates the rights of our people and makes a mockery of our Constitution,” he said.

An ecumenical peace organization also raised concern that the anti-terror bill will further exacerbate red-tagging and human rights violations in the country.

The Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) is also concerned that the legislation will affect the peace negotiations between the government and the communist rebels.

“At times like these, the anti-terrorism bill will not serve to end the conflicts of our land,” the group said in a statement.

Angelicum School Iloilo stays open, says board of trustees



Angelicum School Iloilo. COURTESY OF RAMON SANCHEZ

ILOILO City— The Angelicum School in Jaro, Iloilo will stay open, according to the school's board of trustees.

The board, in a "corrective statement" on Friday, May 29, said it had overruled and recalled the notice of closure issued by the school director, Fr. Maximo Gatela, O.P. dated May 27.

The statement was signed by the head of the Filipino Dominicans, Fr. Napoleon Sipalay, O.P.

"The Board of Trustees, as well as the Provincial Council of the Dominican Province of

the Philippines, didn't approve any cessation of operation," the statement read.

Gatela has also resigned as director of Angelicum School Iloilo.

"The Board of Trustees accepted the resignation of Fr. Maximo Gatela, O.P., as Director of Angelicum School, Inc., Jaro, Iloilo City," the statement read.

Founded in 1978 by Fr. Rogelio Alarcon, O.P., first prior provincial of the Filipino Dominicans, Angelicum School Iloilo occupies the Lizares Mansion in Jaro district. **(PressONE)**

Aid / A1

orders and the Vatican's migrants and refugees section.

Ogsimer also said that they are also eyeing to provide microfinance aid to OFWs as part of their long-term programs.

He added that the church is also looking at providing community-

based support system for returning OFWs and their families.

"We are looking at church communities adopting an OFW family to assure them that there is a support community that will accompany them in these times of crisis," he said. **(CBCP News)**

MGCQ / A1

additional protocols imposed by your respective congregations."

The DOJ chief made the statement in a message to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines on Wednesday evening, through Bishop Mylo Hubert Vergara of Pasig.

Bishop Vergara represented the CBCP during the recent meetings between the government's policy-making body in its Covid-19 response and the religious sector.

Some bishops have earlier raised concerns over the limited

participation of individuals in religious gatherings.

But the IATF kept the 10-people limit on religious gatherings in GCQ areas like Metro Manila due to large number of coronavirus cases.

Other regions under GCQ include Pangasinan, Davao City, Zamboanga City and several cities and provinces in Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, and Central Visayas.

Meanwhile, a more relaxed modified GCQ is in place in the rest of the country. **(CBCP News)**

Abuses / A1

and online sexual exploitation, do what is necessary to eradicate this worst endemic traffickers and sexual offenders," he said.

According to him, online child abuse is "a more dangerous and extremely deadly" virus lurking around aside from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bishop Santos described human traffickers and sexual offenders as "the worst and venomous virus on earth".

"They prey on our young people that are restricted to their homes due to coronavirus lockdowns. They take advantage of the situation, with our youth who are preoccupied with the Internet at home," he said.

"These predators are heartless, motivated by insatiable greed and addiction to their craving of flesh trades," the prelate added.

A new study released by the

Washington-based International Justice Mission noted the sharp increase of internet-based child sexual exploitation in the country in recent years.

The study showed that within three years the Internet Protocol (IP) addresses used for online sexual exploitation rose to 81,723 in 2016 from about 23,333 in 2014.

Bishop Santos has urged the public to report any incidence of online sexual exploitation "and bear witness to these evil deeds".

"It is only then we can make sure that our youth, our children, are not only socially distant from those human viruses of trafficking and exploitation but we must contain these perpetrators," said the prelate.

"We must exhaust all legal means to investigate, prosecute and punish them," he also said. **(CBCP News)**

And That's the Truth / A4

many netizens view the weather phenomenon as a sign or warning that God is about to punish China.

For it is indeed true that the government's crackdown on religion, notably Christianity, has escalated over the past months: pastors and priests are jailed (some of whom are never heard from again), churches are damaged or demolished, crosses are removed, religious images are bashed, bible-themed murals inside the churches are defaced, etc. Early this month, the police renewed their attacks on "jiating" churches (private homes where underground Christian church services are held), arresting members during worship. Can anyone blame them for seeing the black skies over Beijing as a portent of death for Communist China? Beijing has been a monumental baddie and bully, after all, so why wonder if one of these days the punishment may be meted out? The chastisement may have already begun, with the covid pandemic—the truth about which only God knows.

It is tempting to dwell on omens and portents and punishment of others (especially if "others" refers to an evil neighbor) but perhaps it would be a more fruitful exercise to examine our own perception of things. How do we take our present stifling situation that makes us prisoners in our own homes—we cradle Catholics in a country where religious freedom is taken for granted, we spoiled brats who think boredom is an inalienable right and therefore believe that quarantine is a punishment. If it is indeed God's punishment, who are we then to tell God how or when to punish us? If we believe the punishment comes from God, shouldn't we also believe that the punishment is an expression of God's love for us? By punishing us He is reminding us to turn from our wicked ways and to desire to return to Him. God never punishes us to get back at us—He only wants to get us back to His side. And that's the truth.

Bishop reaches out to Muslims on Eid'l Fitr

OZAMIZ City—A Mindanao-based Catholic bishop greeted Filipino Muslims as they celebrate Eid'l Fitr on Sunday, stressing the need for solidarity with the poor during the coronavirus crisis.

Archbishop Martin Jumoad of Ozamiz said the situation calls for kindness and generosity to others, especially those who are suffering.

"One that we should do, not only Muslims but Christians as well, is to be generous to those in need particularly on this pandemic," said Jumoad, who is also a Permanent Council member of the bishop's conference.

The prelate also urged Christians and Muslims to work together to promote mutual respect.

"Congratulations to our Muslim

brothers and sisters as you celebrate Eid Al Fitr," he said. "You persevered the fasting and that I salute you."

"May this celebration serve as a way for us to respect one another," Jumoad said.

Eid'l Fitr celebrates the end of Ramadan, the holy month when Muslims go fasting in the daylight hours and devote greater time to their faith.

This year's celebration comes as the world wrestles the pandemic that has affected 13,777 people and killed 863 in the Philippines alone as of May 23.

Muslims in the Philippines make up about 5 percent of the total population, but a much larger proportion in Mindanao region— around 20 percent today. **(CBCPNews)**



Archbishop Martin Jumoad of Ozamiz. COURTESY OF BRENDA MILAN

Bishop welcomes royal pardon for 16 Pinoys

BALANGA City— A Catholic bishop has lauded the royal decree issued by King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, pardoning and releasing 16 Filipino inmates.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga described the release as "very compassionate and

goodwill gestures" of Al Khalifa.

"He has given them new life. His pardon is great help and assurance of healing especially in this time of pandemic," he said.

Santos, who is also the Vice Chairman of the bishops' Commission on

Migrants and Itinerant People, said they are "very grateful" to Bahrain officials "who made this valuable assistance and merciful pardon possible".

"At the same time, we pray and hope that this inspiring example would lead all of us to value our works, our relationships

and lives for the best and as blessings to others," he added.

The Philippine government on Sunday, May 31, announced the granting of royal pardon to 16 Filipinos, including two who were pardoned on the occasion of Eid'l Fitr. **(CBCPNews)**

Whatever / A5

1942 the Franks started hiding in this secret place until they were discovered and deported to Auschwitz in 1944. It was during these two years that Annelies Marie wrote her memories that later on would be one of the most widely read books in history.

- Victor Frankl (26 March 1905 – 2 September 1997). An Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who survived the Holocaust. While imprisoned in Theresienstadt, Victor saw deeper into his ordeal and even helped many of his co-prisoners to find meaning within the inhuman walls of prison. His experience and reflections would lead to his best-selling work, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

- François Xavier Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận (April 1928 – 16 September 2002). Ordained to the priesthood at 25 1953. In 1967 he became the Bishop of Nha Trang. In 1975, six days after being appointed as Coadjutor Archbishop of Saigon, he was detained by

the communist. Imprisoned for thirteen years, nine in solitary confinement. Released (under house arrest) in November 1988 and in 1991 exiled to Rome. His memories are found in his book *The Road of Hope*, which describes his enduring testimony faith, hope and forgiveness. On May 4, 2017, Pope Francis declared him Venerable, an important step towards sainthood.

- Thérèse of Lisieux (2 January 1873 – 30 September 1897). An all-time favorite saint who at the early age of fifteen entered the Carmelite community of Lisieux. She only spent nine years and eighteen months in Carmel where she died at the age of twenty-four from tuberculosis. In this brief period, she opened for the Church and countless souls her "little way" which would be forever a spiritual oasis found in her diary, *The Story of a Soul*.

- Thomas Merton (January 31, 1915 – December 10, 1968). Prior to

joining the Trappist monks Merton had lived a full life searching for the purpose of his life. Later on, he found the answer with his conversion to Catholicism in 1938. In 1941 he joined Cistercians of the Strict Observance in the Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky. It would take some time before Merton would fully adjust to this new calling. Prayer, reflection and study would later on produce his most influential work: *The Seven Storey Mountain*. This would make countless World War II veterans flock to monasteries across the U.S.

Whether under imposed and self-imposed confinement, these individuals revealed what the human spirit is cable of achieving and contributing to humanity. Thus, we must also ask ourselves if our own confinement is oriented towards the greater and deeper aspirations, sown by God in our hearts, which are meant to be discovered and nurtured during our COVID confinement.

Duc in Altum / A5

as our heart goes with the workers, we should also understand the situation of the employers whose business was at a standstill during lockdown. No money comes in, where would they get the money to pay their workers? Big companies may afford it, but not small entrepreneurs.

Absence of mass testing – Despite compliance with health protocols like proper wearing of mask, washing of hands, use of alcohol, thermal scanning, disinfecting the workplace after work hours, is there an assurance that the workplace will not be the source of covid-19 widespread contagion? Going back to work by asymptomatic persons may cause infection of co-workers especially those with co-morbidity, the immuno-compromised, the vulnerable.

The worst thing that a person can do in his lifetime is take advantage of a pandemic to fill his pockets. The Social Amelioration Benefits is the worst corruption that happened during the pandemic. It is supposed to be given to individuals who were badly affected by the lockdown – the

tricycle and jeepney drivers, the poor and the middle income earners, the senior citizens, physically disabled (PWDs), solo parents and the like. How did the DSWD come up with the list of beneficiaries? What are the criteria of a beneficiary? Some senior citizens, PWDs, solo parents, middle-income earners were not in the list, they were disqualified by DSWD. My fellow church volunteers during this pandemic were shocked to find in the DSWD list of beneficiaries the names of groceries and store owners, meat stall owners, optical shop owners, those in the upper bracket of the economic ladder. Some of them may have returned the money but how come the DSWD included them in the list when they do not fall in any of the categories of SAP beneficiaries? Everyone says "the beneficiaries are the friends of DSWD and Barangay officials and whom they know". When asked, our Barangay Officials said they do not have anything to do with the list, the DSWD prepared it. There you go. The DSWD has lots of explaining to do. Some beneficiaries used the money to "tong-its"

gambling and buying liquors.

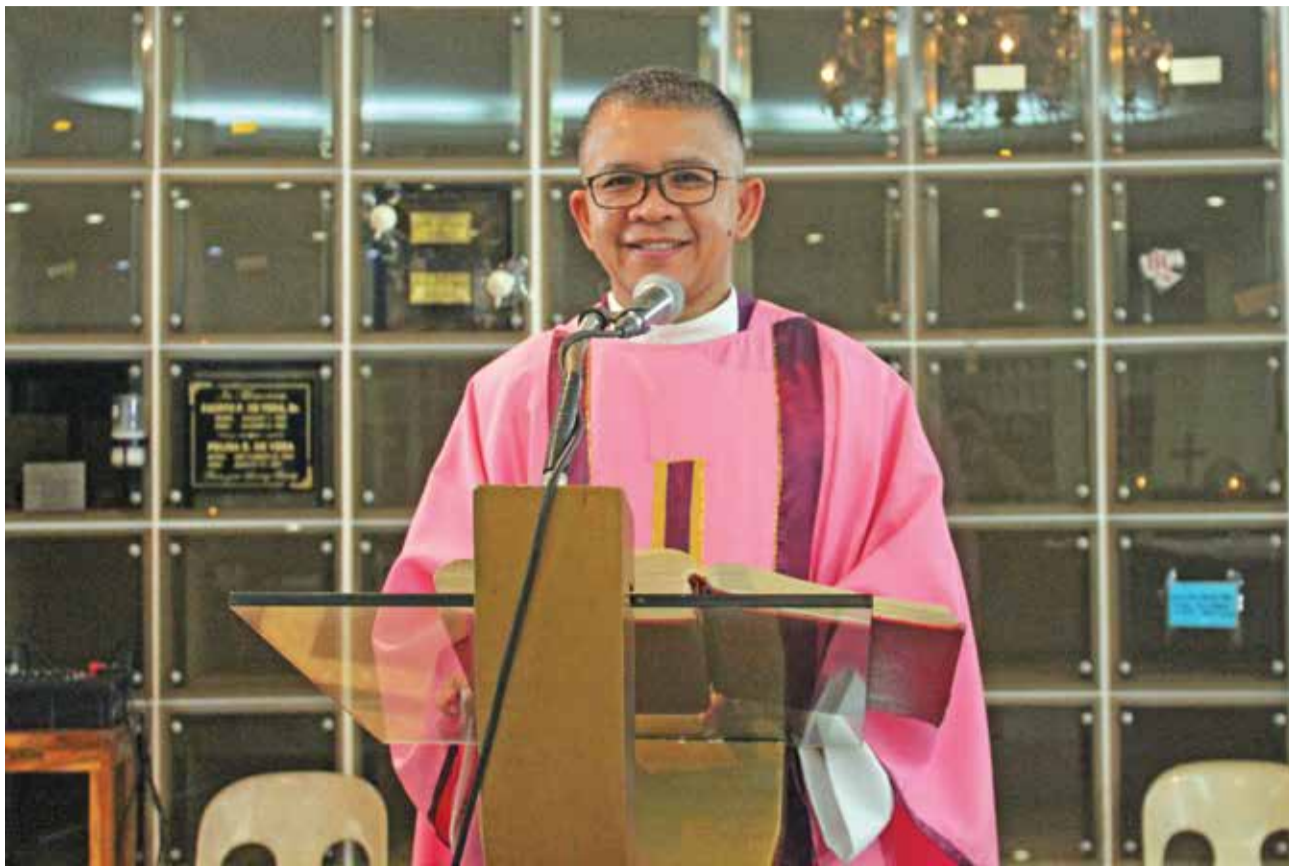
The Congressmen who approved the Bayanihan Heal as One Law should have appropriated a big chunk of the budget to the purchase of PPEs, hazmat suits and test kits instead of the SAP. The medical practitioners are in dire need of those PPEs, many of them died due to lack of it. Had test kits been purchased and mass testing done, the 2½ months of lockdown would have flattened the curve, the covid-positive isolated, and stem the contagion.

Another source of corruption is the purchase of PPEs or Personal Protective Equipment, hazmat suits and medical supplies like N95 masks, surgical masks, gloves, etc. They are badly needed by the frontliners in the hospitals who died (more or less 31 as of this time and were experts in their respective field of medicines) due to contamination and lack of PPEs. The rule in the medical field is "No PPEs, No service". The doctors and healthworkers and volunteers who are in the frontline of this pandemic are risking their lives to save others. They need to be protected and

shielded from covid-19 and their covid patients. I was so shocked when I learned that our government hospitals procured substandard PPEs. The doctors and nurses said "mabuti na ang substandards kaysa wala" (Substandard PPEs are good enough compared to nothing). Why did the government purchase substandard items for their frontliners knowing that they would not be protected when they are supposed to save the lives of their patients? I was glad when Pres. Duterte required his officials to purchase high end PPEs, even if they are expensive, so that the medical workers are protected from contamination.

Happy Birthday in Heaven to my mother Gloria who passed on 5 years ago at age 97. May she find happiness in the house of the Lord, together with our father Benito, Sr. and our still-born sister Deborah. Happy Birthday also to my brother Benito "Nito" Santiago, Jr. and to Bishop Francis De Leon of Antipolo and former Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Kalookan. Lord, please continue to bless them!

New Zamboanga auxiliary bishop to be ordained Aug. 24



Auxiliary Bishop-elect Moises Cuevas. CBCPNEWS

The Archdiocese of Zamboanga's new auxiliary bishop will be welcomed to his new ministry at a special ceremony.

Bishop-elect Moises Cuevas will be consecrated at the city's Metropolitan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at 9:00 a.m. on August 24.

The ordination will be led by Archbishop Romulo de la Cruz of Zamboanga with Archbishop Martin Jumoad of Ozamiz and Bishop Julius Tonel of Ipil as co-consecrators.

At 46, Cuevas is currently the youngest prelate in the Philippines and the fourth auxiliary bishop of the southern Philippine archdiocese.

Zamboanga is among the cities under the general community quarantine (GCQ) due to the coronavirus crisis and where religious services are subject to stricter restrictions than others.

Unless the city will be placed under modified GQC by August, only 10 people can attend the ordination.

The same situation happened during the episcopal ordination of Jolo Bishop Charlie Inzon with only 10 people in attendance at the Cotabato cathedral last May 21.

Government protocols allow a maximum of ten people in religious gatherings in areas under GCQ and 50 percent capacity in areas under MGCQ.

"I'm anticipating these scenarios because of the situation," Cuevas said. "And it's okay because people need to stay at

home for their safety."

"But I've been preparing spiritually. After all, that's what is important really," he said.

Pope Francis appointed Cuevas, who is until now the cathedral's parish priest, as auxiliary bishop of Zamboanga on March 19.

In his new role, he will assist De la Cruz in meeting the pastoral and administrative needs of the archdiocese with about a million population, around 70 percent of which are Catholics. (CBCPNews)

QC parish finds strength in BECs amid pandemic

THE impact of the coronavirus outbreak in a 'heavily affected' Catholic parish might have been worse but for the help of small Christian communities.

Fr. Luciano Felloni of the Diocese of Novaliches' Kristong Hari Parish said that the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) are proving their worth during the pandemic.

At a time when they are running short of people for frontline jobs, he said that the BECs made their relief works easy and organized.

"The strength of a parish is really in the BECs," Felloni said in virtual media forum on May 20.

The Argentinian priest said that BECs are important in the effectiveness of parishes "because

they are in touch with the daily realities".

He said that parish was also tapped by the Quezon City government to help in identifying the beneficiaries for its relief operations.

"They saw that the Church is organized so it served as a bridge for the distribution of assistance and coordination with the government," Felloni said.

The parish on Commonwealth avenue covers communities from the urban poor sector, and where there are reported cases of Covid-19.

Felloni said the parish is also maximizing its capacity to reach out to its flock not just in terms of religious services but also in

accommodating help through social media.

In recent weeks alone, the parish was able to collect about P2.5 million from its online fundraising campaign.

"These are small amounts but when gathered together, it's a big help," he said.

While BECs are important in responsiveness to the pandemic, Felloni said that the Church should also be "creative enough" to adopt with the situation by using all the available means.

"We really have to maximize our capacity and a parish without a BEC will be much affected in times of challenges," Felloni said. (CBCPNews)

Another Filipino priest dies to Covid-19



Monsignor Romualdo "Boy" Sosing, a native of Northern Samar, dies from coronavirus in New York on May 24. COURTESY OF FR. MATT BROWNE

The first Filipino parish priest on New York's Long Island has died after weeks of battling coronavirus.

Monsignor Romualdo "Boy" Sosing, a native of Northern Samar, died at a hospital on Sunday evening in NY, May 24, or Monday morning in the Philippines. He was 67.

The priest was second term as pastor of the Holy Name of Mary Parish in Valley Stream when he contracted the virus early May.

"It is with great sadness that 6:15 tonight, Msgr. Sosing, surrounded by his family, had passed and is now at peace," the parish said in a Facebook post.

The Holy Name of Mary School also expressed condolences for the priest who served the parish since 2011.

"Monsignor Rom was a man of great faith, who believed in the power of prayer, especially the rosary," said Mrs. Pam Sanders, HNMS principal. "He was a kind and

gentle man, and he will be greatly missed," she added.

Ordained priest for the Diocese of Catarman in 1977, Msgr. Sosing served the Diocese of Rockville Centre since 2004.

Previously, he served as administrator of St. Luke's Church, Brentwood, and associate pastor of Notre Dame, New Hyde Park and St. Dominic, Oyster Bay.

Msgr. Sosing became a US citizen in 2013.

A Filipino missionary

based in Spain had also succumbed to Covid-19 on May 1.

Augustinian Fr. Gilbert Luis Centina III, an award-winning author and poet, died in León city in northwest Spain. He was 72.

In the Philippines, the first priest to die from the disease was recorded in the Davao region.

Fr. Arnel Celis of the Diocese of Tagum died on April 27, and the first Covid-19 death in Tagum City. (CBCPNews)

Countdown to 500th anniversary of PH 'First Easter Mass' starts in Maasin diocese



Bishop Prescioso Cantillas celebrates Mass at the Maasin cathedral during the launching of the 300-day countdown to the 500th anniversary of the First Easter Mass on Limasawa Island in Southern Leyte June 4. DIOCESE OF MAASIN

A Catholic diocese in central Philippines has started the 300-day countdown to the quinquennial celebration of the "First Easter Mass" in the Philippines.

The celebration was highlighted with a Mass at the Maasin Cathedral presided over by Bishop Prescioso Cantillas on Thursday, June 4.

With the theme "We pray as one, we heal as one," the launching also paid tribute to Covid-19 frontliners and prayed for the healing of the affected communities.

"We want to be healed as one, but first we need to pray as one, and the highest expression with our union with God is our union with Him through the Eucharist," Cantillas said in his homily.

The prelate also emphasized that the people should be "one in prayer" so that healing starts.

Some priests, local officials, and a few parishioners attended the event that only allowed a limited number of people in compliance

with the Covid-19 precautionary measures.

The event also launched the celebration's theme song and unveiled the countdown billboard.

After the liturgical service, Cantillas led a procession of the Blessed Sacrament around the city.

Fr. Johnrey Sibi, chairman of the Commission on the 500 years of the First Mass in Limasawa, said that special events will also mark the 200 days and 100 days leading up to the grand celebration on March 31, 2021.

Limasawa is an island at the tip of Southern Leyte province where the first Easter Mass was held in 1521 when Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his men landed.

Spanish friar Pedro de Valderrama was said to be the only priest of the Magellan expedition and was tasked to celebrate Mass on the shores of Limasawa. (Rey Martin Reoma/CBCPNews)

Amnesty confers La Salle brother top human rights award



Br. Armin Luistro, FSC. FILE PHOTO

AN international rights watchdog has conferred a Filipino Catholic missionary its highest award for human rights defenders.

Amnesty International (AI) Philippines' second Ignite Awards honored La Salle Br. Armin Luistro in the individual category, while the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) received the same award for organizations.

Other awardees included Lorenzo Miguel Relente for Young Outstanding Human Rights Defender award and Michael David Tan for the Art that Matters for Literature category.

The organization's "most distinguished human rights defender" award aim to recognize the work of human rights defenders in changing the lives of people through policy advocacy, mobilization, activism and art.

"They truly ignite the human rights cause, speaking up against injustices and exposing inequalities on behalf of those who, otherwise, will not be heard," said Butch Olano, AI Philippines Section Director.

He stressed that it is especially difficult now for human rights prime movers to take action amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We note that we are in extraordinary times but the same human rights defenders are

speaking out against repression during this crisis," Olano said.

AI also lauded the "spirit of activism and exceptional courage" the awards' recipients continue to show while faced with an unprecedented public health emergency.

The organization emphasizes that taking action to safeguard human rights "has become more important especially now more than ever".

This year's winners were announced on May 28, coinciding Amnesty International's 59th anniversary.

Luistro has over 33 years of experience in both the private and public sectors.

From 2010 to 2016, he served as secretary of the Education department. Prior to this, he was at the helm of De La Salle University in Manila, serving as its president from 2004 to 2010.

Luistro is also the former president of the Philippine Business for Social Progress, the country's largest business-led non-governmental organization.

In July 2019, he was among those charged of sedition by the country's police, described by many as an intimidation against government critics. The case was later dismissed by the Justice department for lack of evidence. (CBCPNews)



Pope Francis celebrates Pentecost Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Basilica May 31, 2020. VATICAN MEDIA

'Come, Holy Spirit ... make us builders of unity'

Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Solemnity of Pentecost
Vatican Basilica, 31 May 2020

"THERE are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor 12:4), as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians. He continues: "There are different forms of service, but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (vv. 5-6). Diversity and unity: Saint Paul puts together two words that seem contradictory. He wants to tell us that the Holy Spirit is the *one* who brings together the *many*; and that the Church was born this way: we are all different, yet united by the same Holy Spirit.

Let us go back to the origin of the Church, to the day of Pentecost. Let us look at the Apostles: some of them were fishermen, simple people accustomed to living by the work of their hands, but there were also others, like Matthew, who was an educated tax collector. They were from different backgrounds and social contexts, and they had Hebrew and Greek names. In terms of character, some were meek and others were excitable; they all had different ideas and sensibilities. They were all different. Jesus did not change them; he did not make them into a set of pre-packaged models. No. He left their differences and now he unites them by anointing them with the Holy Spirit. With the *anointing* comes their *union—union* in diversity. At Pentecost, the Apostles understand the unifying power of the Spirit. They see it with their own eyes when everyone, though speaking in different languages, comes together as one people: the people of God, shaped by the Spirit, who weaves unity from diversity and bestows harmony because in the Spirit there is harmony. He himself is harmony.

Let us now focus on ourselves, the Church of today. We can ask ourselves: "What is it that unites us, what is the basis of our unity?" We too have our differences, for example: of opinions, choices, sensibilities. But the temptation is always fiercely to defend our ideas, believing them to be good for everybody and agreeing only with those who think as we do. This is a bad temptation that brings division. But this is a faith created in our own image; it is not what the Spirit wants. We might think that what unite us are our beliefs and our morality. But there is much more: our principle of unity is the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that first of all we are *God's beloved children*; all equal, in this respect, and all different. The Spirit comes to us, in our differences and difficulties, to tell us that we have one Lord—Jesus—and one Father, and that for this reason we are brothers and sisters! Let us begin anew from here; let us look at the Church with the eyes of the Spirit and not as the world does. The world sees us only as on the right or left, with one ideology or the other; the Spirit sees us as sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus. The world sees conservatives and progressives; the Spirit sees children of God. A worldly gaze sees structures to be made more efficient; a spiritual gaze sees brothers and sisters pleading for mercy. The Spirit loves us and knows everyone's place in the grand scheme of things: for him, we are not bits of confetti blown about by the wind, rather we are irreplaceable fragments in his mosaic.

If we go back to the day of Pentecost, we discover that the first task of the Church is *proclamation*. Yet we also see that the Apostles

devised no strategy; when they were locked in there, in the Upper Room, they were not strategizing, no, they were not drafting any pastoral plan. They could have divided people into groups according to their roots, speaking first to those close by and then to those far away, in an orderly manner... They could have also waited a while before beginning their preaching in order to understand more deeply the teachings of Jesus, so as to avoid risks... No. The Spirit does not want the memory of the Master to be cultivated in small groups locked in upper rooms where it is easy to "nest". This is a terrible disease that can also infect the Church: making her into a nest instead of a community, a family or a Mother. The Spirit himself opens doors and pushes us to press beyond what has already been said and done, beyond the precincts of a timid and wary faith. In the world, unless there is tight organization and a clear strategy, things fall apart. In the Church, however, the Spirit guarantees unity to those who proclaim the message. The Apostles set off: unprepared, yet putting their lives on the line. One thing kept them going: *the desire to give what they received*. The opening part of the First Letter of Saint John is beautiful: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you" (cf. 1:3).

Here we come to understand what the secret of unity is, the secret of the Spirit. The secret of unity in the Church, the secret of the Spirit is *gift*. For the Spirit himself is gift: he lives by giving himself and in this way he keeps us together, making us sharers in the same gift. It is important to believe that God is gift, that he acts not by taking away, but by giving. Why is this important?

Because our way of being believers depends on how we understand God. If we have in mind a God who takes away and who imposes himself, we too will want to take away and impose ourselves: occupying spaces, demanding recognition, seeking power. But if we have in our hearts a God who is gift, everything changes. If we realize that what we are is his gift, free and unmerited, then we too will want to make our lives a gift. By loving humbly, serving freely and joyfully, we will offer to the world the true image of God. The Spirit, *the living memory of the Church*, reminds us that we are born from a gift and that we grow by giving; not by holding on but by giving of ourselves.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us look within and ask ourselves what prevents us from giving ourselves. There are, so to speak, three main enemies of the gift, always lurking at the door of our hearts: narcissism, victimhood and pessimism. *Narcissism* makes us idolize ourselves, to be concerned only with what is good for us. The narcissist thinks: "Life is good if I profit from it". So he or she ends up saying: "Why should I give myself to others?". In this time of pandemic, how wrong narcissism is: the tendency to think only of our own needs, to be indifferent to those of others, and not to admit our own frailties and mistakes. But the second enemy, *victimhood*, is equally dangerous. Victims complain every day about their neighbor: "No one understands me, no one helps me, no one loves me, everyone has it in for me!". How many times have we not heard these complaints! The victim's heart is closed, as he or she asks, "Why aren't others

concerned about me?". In the crisis we are experiencing, how ugly victimhood is! Thinking that no one understands us and experiences what we experience. This is victimhood. Finally, there is *pessimism*. Here the unending complaint is: "Nothing is going well, society, politics, the Church...". The pessimist gets angry with the world, but sits back and does nothing, thinking: "What good is giving? That is useless". At this moment, in the great effort of beginning anew, how damaging is pessimism, the tendency to see everything in the worst light and to keep saying that nothing will return as before! When someone thinks this way, the one thing that certainly does not return is hope. In these three – the narcissist idol of the mirror, the mirror-god; the complaint-god: "I feel human only when I complain"; and the negativity-god: "everything is dark, the future is bleak" – we experience a *famine of hope* and we need to appreciate the gift of life, the gift that each of us is. We need the Holy Spirit, the gift of God who heals us of narcissism, victimhood and pessimism. He heals us from the mirror, complaints and darkness.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray to him: Holy Spirit, memory of God, revive in us the memory of the gift received. Free us from the paralysis of selfishness and awaken in us the desire to serve, to do good. Even worse than this crisis is the tragedy of squandering it by closing in on ourselves. Come, Holy Spirit: you are harmony; make us builders of unity. You always give yourself; grant us the courage to go out of ourselves, to love and help each other, in order to become one family. Amen.

The *corona* wedding

Marriage in times of general community quarantine (Part 2)

By Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD

Before proceeding to the actual celebration of the Corona Wedding, let us address a possible objection to the canonical investigation of the parties through mobile platforms—e.g., Viber, Personal Messenger, Zoom or Facetime. Some parish priests claim—with very good pastoral reasons—that a face-to-face interview would be much better, since such physical immediacy would enable them to better determine the dispositions and aptness of the parties for marriage. Indeed there is a reason why this has been the age-old praxis of the Church. However, the limitations imposed by the ECQ, GCQ and even MGCQ would make such a face-to-face interview highly difficult to attain and, where possible, may be less revealing of the dispositions of the parties as regards the projected marriage.

In effect, with the mandate to wear a mask for such a face-to-face interview, it becomes highly questionable that the facial expressions of the parties would be more revealing than an equivalent interview (without masks) via mobile platform.

The canonical form of marriage

The Canonical Form of marriage as set down by the present Code of Canon Law consists of the following:

a. Minimum persons required: 5 persons

1) Both prospective spouses—present either in person or by legitimate proxy (c.1104, §1). The option of being represented in one's marriage through proxy is unique to Canon Law, given its understanding that what constitutes marriage is legitimate consent of the contracting parties, which can be expressed by legitimate proxy.

Here is another area for a certain latitude by the Local Ordinary. In effect, if the consent of a party can be expressed through legitimate proxy (a physical person), what more if such consent is expressed by the contractant himself by an authentic means of communication presented by modern technology—e.g., a videoconferencing platform. As long as there is guarantee of simultaneity—i.e., absolute absence of possible manipulation of the videoconference—this offers even more guarantee of authenticity than a proxy with legitimate mandate, because a legitimate proxy can still express a consent contrary to that of the contractant, while a live videoconference cannot.

2) In the presence of a qualified

witness—the Local Ordinary, the parish priest of either of the contractants, or a priest or deacon delegated by either of the two (c.1108, §1). It is the job of the qualified witness to ask the contractants and receive from them their consent, in the name of the Church. It is what in Civil Law is referred to as the solemnizing officer. In fact, ordinarily, such qualified witness for the canonical marriage is also the solemnizing officer for the civil marriage that takes place simultaneously.

3) Two other witnesses—whose names shall be recorded in the parish Marriage Registry and noted also in the Baptismal Registry of the parishes where the contractants were respectively baptized.

Note that these two witnesses can be the parents of the contractants themselves (two of the four parents). Hence, the total number of persons involved in a canonical marriage can be a minimum of five—exactly the limit originally set for religious gatherings under GCQ. To the extent that government allows more persons for religious gatherings, then more can be involved in the entourage. But the Corona Wedding can be as small as five persons.

4) Extraordinary Form of Canonical Marriage. Canon Law foresees that in the case of mixed marriage—i.e., between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian—if there is a serious difficulty to observe the above-mentioned form, the Local Ordinary of the Catholic party can dispense from such a form in individual cases, but after consulting the Ordinary of the place where the marriage is to be celebrated and with due regard, for validity, for some public form of celebration (such that it can be juridically verifiable). The conference of bishops is to issue norms by which such a dispensation may be granted in an orderly manner (c.1127, §2).

b. Place for the wedding: Choose a place under MGCQ

Can.1115 states that: Marriage are to be celebrated in the parish where either of the contractants has a domicile, quasi-domicile or a month-long residence, but may be celebrated elsewhere with the permission of the proper ordinary or parish priest of either of the contractants.

Even if the first part of this provision is usually not followed—since most marriages are celebrated in the parish of choice of the couple (usually dictated by the



A couple ties the knot at the Manila Cathedral on April 30 despite the coronavirus lockdown. ROMAIN GARRY LAZARO

venue of choice)—its canonical importance cannot be disregarded. Its importance lies in the ff:

1) The proper parish priest—of either contractant—has the primary responsibility to conduct the canonical investigation of the aptness of the contractants for marriage (i.e., absence of any impediment), especially as regards the freedom to marry. Hence, it is his responsibility, primarily, to allow or disallow a marriage to proceed.

2) Corollary to the previous number, if the wedding is celebrated with another sacred minister—whether in the same place or in another—it is important that such minister has the proper delegation from the proper pastor or local ordinary. Without this delegation, the marriage would be invalid.

Here is another source of latitude for the Corona Wedding: if the proper parish of the contractants is still under severe limitations due to the Corona pandemic—ECQ or GCQ—the couple has the option to get married in another place where such restrictions are not anymore in force. For example, a couple in the NCR might opt to have their wedding in a place outside the NCR, which allows more leeway as to the size of their entourage.

c. Venue for the wedding: The possibility of a garden

wedding

Can.1118, §1 stipulates that Marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian is to be celebrated in a parish church; but with the permission of the Local Ordinary or the proper parish priest of the Catholic party, it can be celebrated in another church or oratory.

The same canon in §2, however, gives another option: The Local Ordinary can permit marriage to be celebrated in some other suitable place.

Here indeed is another area for latitude given GCQ and MGCQ restrictions: If Catholic churches are still limited to 5-10 people, or if elderly relatives were to be prevented from attending a gathering in a more confined space (like a church), perhaps an open space—like a garden in the house of either contractant—may be an acceptable alternative, with permission of the Local Ordinary.

Note further that such permission of the Local Ordinary may be easier to secure if the celebration were limited to the marriage rite—i.e., not a Ritual Mass, which is the ordinary case. The more stringent requirements for the Eucharistic Celebration might be put aside if only the marriage rite were to be celebrated.

Summary

Summarizing what we have

discussed above, the following are the options for a Corona Wedding:

1. **A teleconference wedding:** The most straightforward is to hold the wedding in the church of choice, with limited participants: the couple, the sacred minister, two witnesses (relatives of the couple or their closest friends). In order to allow the other “guests” to participate, they can be connected online through any of the teleconferencing platforms—e.g., Zoom. A giant monitor can be placed in the sanctuary to project the screen of the Zoom Meeting, with each guest using his own PC, tablet or smartphone to connect to the actual wedding, while the actual wedding is caught by one or two smartphones connected to the Zoom Meeting. This is the simplest set-up, which admits of better webcams and other sound equipment.

2. **A garden wedding:** Making use of a more open space to satisfy the social-distancing protocols of GCQ and MGCQ, a garden wedding can be arranged, also to allow elderly relatives to participate right at home. This will need the permission of the Local Ordinary.

3. **A venue in MGCQ:** Another simple solution would be to choose a venue in another area which is in a more lax quarantine. In areas under Modified General Community Quarantine, 50% capacity of the churches will be allowed. Hence, the original elaborate wedding plans might then be possible.

Online Masses

cannot be celebrated on a virtual platform

(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: With the pandemic that the world is experiencing, I am curious about an aspect of the online Mass. Is it valid, for example, to celebrate the Mass through a video conference platform, and the readers are at the other side of the screen not physically present where the Mass is being celebrated? — A.P., Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines

A: Before answering this question, I would first like to outline some positive benefits of celebrating online Masses in places where public Masses are currently not available.

These Masses offer the faithful an occasion of growing in grace by hearing God's word proclaimed, by being nurtured by preaching, and by uniting themselves, in a manner analogous to spiritual communion, with the prayers and actions of the priest who celebrates the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

However, and here we must be very clear, just as making a spiritual communion is a good thing but is decidedly not the same as receiving Christ's body and blood, following an online Mass is a good thing but it is not participating at Mass.

Only those who are physically present at the Mass participate fully.



A priest celebrates Mass at the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of Nuestra Señora de Aranzazu in San Mateo, Rizal during the coronavirus lockdown, May 17, 2020. PHOTO FROM THE ARANZAZU SHRINE

On April 17 Pope Francis, in his own online Mass, reminded us that online Masses and spiritual communions do not represent the Church:

“This is the Church in a difficult

situation that the Lord is allowing, but the ideal of the Church is always with the people and with the sacraments — always.”

From this, it also follows that Mass cannot be celebrated on a

virtual platform, and all parts of the Mass must be celebrated at the same location and at the same time.

Therefore, it would not be correct to have readers or singers entering from other places and substituting

those physically present at the celebration.

There have even been some, thankfully rare, attempts at online concelebrations with priests intervening from different places. While the Mass celebrated by each priest would be valid, they would also be illicit as each priest omitted a part of the Eucharistic prayer and other parts of the Mass. This would constitute a grave abuse.

Since following the online Mass is primarily a spiritual activity, and not actually participating in the Mass, those who are doing so could independently engage in activities that enhance that experience.

For example, if a family was watching the Holy Father's morning Mass in Italian, one of the members could do the readings in the local tongue. If they wished, they could also sing a hymn as a means of spiritual communion.

These are all temporary measures due to the present crisis. As public Masses are gradually restored, online Masses will necessarily diminish, and the transmission of Mass by all forms of media to benefit the household will return to the norms established by the local bishop or, as the case may be, the bishops' conference.

Understanding the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020

“The government should not make as an excuse the upholding of national security while undermining human rights and civil liberties. To do so makes the government terrorist against its own constituents.”

By Rev. Jerome R. Secillano, MPA

THE controversial Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (SB No. 1083) was approved by the Senate on final reading last February 26, while its counterpart bill in the Lower House was approved on June 4, a day before Congress takes its break on June 5.

The haste it is approved is buoyed by President Duterte's move to make it urgent. It is expected to be enacted into law once Congress resumes after the June 5 break. But as it appears, Congress is dispensing with the usual Bicameral session and immediately decided to submit the measure for the signature of the President as a last step before turning it into a law.

Critics of the measure call it a “tool for repression” while its proponents see it as a “shield for Filipino citizens from atrocious attacks” and “prevents the country from being a haven for extremists”.

For purposes of information subject to your prudent judgment, here are some contentious provisions of HB No. 6875, AN ACT TO PREVENT, PROHIBIT AND PENALIZE TERRORISM, THEREBY REPEALING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9372, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “HUMAN SECURITY ACT OF 2007”. This version of the Lower House completely adopts the Senate version.

Be it known that some of the bill's provisions have a semblance of regularity and legality, hence, not anymore included in this paper.

SEC. 4. (a) Engages in acts intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to any person, or endangers a person's life.

This section talks about how terrorism is committed. It looks like a definition for a common crime, thereby, making the scope of commission vague, amorphous and open for abuse or misinterpretation. In essence, anybody can be suspected for a terrorist by simply endangering the life of another. But, how does one endanger another? It's the State that decides whether one's act poses a danger to others. The arrested public-school teacher who “threatened” to have President Duterte assassinated would have been charged under this act. But, threatening to have some Catholic Bishops beheaded would merely be hyperbole in the eyes of the government. The risk of “double standard” in applying this definition is not only imagined but is in fact the norm under this government.

SEC. 5. Threat to Commit Terrorism – Any person who shall threaten to commit any of the acts mentioned in Section 4 hereof shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment of twelve (12) years.

The dangerous part of this provision is not the penalty of twelve (12) years but on how to interpret the word “threaten”. The onus of accusation rests on the State and it can whimsically interpret a criticism or unfavorable comments against the government or anybody in the government as threatening to commit a terrorist act specially if uttered by a fierce critic of the establishment. It negates, in the process, our right to free speech.

SEC. 9. Inciting to Commit Terrorism – Any person who, without taking a direct part in the commission of terrorism, shall incite others to the execution of any of the acts specified in Section 4 hereof by means of speeches, proclamations, writings, emblems, banners or other representations tending to the same end, shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment of twelve (12) years.

While a critical speech or writing may simply be a criticism of the establishment and clearly without the intent to incite terrorism, there is no preventing the State from construing it as an incitement to commit terrorism especially if it comes from a fierce critic of the government. This is a warning to those who don't have anything



Church people from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) call for the junking of the Anti-Terrorism Bill during a protest in Quezon City on June 2. MARK SALUDES/LICAS.NEWS

good to say about the government to keep their mouth shut. Clearly, this is against a citizen's right to free expression.

SEC. 16. Surveillance of Suspects and Interception and Recording of Communications.

One's right to privacy is sidestepped for the sake of national security. Armed with an order from the Court of Appeals, a law enforcement agent or military personnel may secretly wiretap, overhear and listen to, intercept, screen, read, surveil, record or collect, with the use of any mode, form, kind or type of electronic, mechanical or other equipment or device or technology now known or may hereafter be known to science or with the use of any other suitable ways and means for the above purposes, any private communications, conversation, discussions, data, information, messages in whatever form, kind or nature, spoken or written words of

(c) Any person charged with or suspected of committing any of the crimes defined and penalized under the provisions of this act.

But who can be a suspect? A suspect is supposed to be determined prior to being spied upon, but since the bill doesn't provide any accountability for spying before determining the suspect, it is likely that military or law enforcement agents may spy on an individual and declare him/her a suspect as a by-product of spying. This exposes the fiercest critics of the government. They are easy targets for spying. Critics, as we all know, are always the “usual suspects” when something goes wrong in the government.

Compelling all telecommunication and internet providers to furnish government agents with all data and information about a “suspect” including his/her communication history is a sure-fire formula for abuse. Though the bill makes this act legitimate by securing an order from the Court of Appeals, this simply becomes a case of weaponizing the law against suspected individuals or groups. The government can easily collect dossiers against critics or dissenters. This aims to weaken legitimate dissent against an inefficient government.

SEC. 25. Designation of Terrorist Individual, Groups of Persons, Organizations or Associations – The ATC may designate an individual, group of persons, organization, or association, whether domestic or foreign, upon

finding of probable cause that the individual, groups of persons, organization, or association commit, or attempt to commit, or conspire in the commission of the acts defined and penalized under Section 4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11 and 12 of this Act. The designation shall be without prejudice to the proscription of terrorist organizations, associations, or groups of persons under Section 26 of this Act.

The established and valid legal principle in determining probable cause is for a prosecutor or a proper court to determine it after undergoing the usual legal processes. The ATC appears to have been accorded with both executive and judicial powers with the way this section is formulated. This again gives the ATC tremendous powers to run after perceived “enemies of the State” rendering the latter with lesser legal options to protect themselves from abuse and harassment.

The last sentence of this section is misleading and shall be dealt with and explained in the next section of this paper.

SEC. 26. Proscription of Terrorist Organizations, Association, or Group of Persons – Any group of persons, organization, or association, which commits any of the acts defined and penalized under Sections 4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11 and 12 of this Act, or organized for the purpose of engaging in terrorism shall, upon application of the DOJ before the authorizing division of the Court of Appeals with due notice and opportunity to be heard given to the group of persons, organization or association, be declared as terrorist and outlawed group of persons, organization or association by the said Court.

The application shall be filed with an urgent prayer for the issuance of a preliminary order of proscription. No application for proscription shall be filed without the authority of the ATC upon the recommendation of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA).

The framers of this bill wanted to give readers the impression of regularity and legality in the process of declaring individuals or groups as terrorists. We have to bear in mind, however, that “Proscription” is different from “Probable Cause”.

Probable cause refers to a reasonable or sufficient reason based upon known facts to believe that a crime has been committed.

After determining the existence of a probable cause, the next legal step is for a suspect to stand trial before the court.

Proscription, on the other hand, is a decree of condemnation or an act declaring something or someone as outlawed, hence, prohibited from engaging in certain acts.

Very clearly, the role of the Court of Appeals in this section is simply to declare a proscription against identified suspects and not to determine the probable cause.

The intent, therefore, of the last sentence in Sec. 25, is merely to assure the public that it is not the ATC that shall declare who is a terrorist for it is the Court of Appeals that shall do so. Having said that, it is, therefore, irregular to give the ATC the task of determining the probable cause for the simple reason that such task is reserved to a prosecutor or a proper court.

The provision granting suspects the right to be heard merely gives the process a semblance of regularity, but the real issue here is not being heard or not. It is the determination of the probable cause which is apparently given to the ATC but which legally, only a prosecutor or a proper judicial authority can do.

SEC. 29. Detention Without Judicial Warrant of Arrest

As a rule, before a person may be arrested, courts must first issue a warrant of arrest; otherwise, an arrest will be considered as illegal. However, awaiting the issuance of a warrant of arrest sometimes renders ineffective the arrest of the perpetrators of criminal offenses. Thus, our laws enumerate permissible instances authorizing arrest of persons without any warrant issued by our courts.

Section 5, Rule 113 of the Revised Rules on Criminal Procedure provides that “a peace officer or a private person may, without a warrant, arrest a person:

(a) When, in his presence, the person to be arrested has committed, is actually committing, or is attempting to commit an offense (*in flagrante delicto*);

(b) When an offense has just been committed, and he has probable cause to believe based on personal knowledge of facts or circumstances that the person to be arrested has committed it (*in hot pursuit*).

(c) When the person to be arrested is an escapee.

With due consideration of the abovementioned legal doctrines, red flags under this section of the Bill are found:

- A person cannot be arrested without a warrant if based merely on suspicion of committing any of the acts defined and penalized under

this bill.

- A suspect may be arrested but only with the issuance of a warrant of arrest by a proper court and not by a mere order from the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC).

- Allowing fourteen (14) days of detention without a proper charge derogates from or violates Article 125 of the Revised Penal Code which merely allows twelve (12) hours of detention, for crimes or offenses punishable by light penalties, or their equivalent; eighteen (18) hours, for crimes or offenses punishable by correctional penalties, or their equivalent; and thirty-six (36) hours, for crimes or offenses punishable by afflictive or capital penalties, or their equivalent.

SEC. 35. Anti-Money Laundering Council Authority to Investigate, Inquire into and Examine Bank Deposits – For purposes of this Section and notwithstanding the provisions of RA No. 145, otherwise known as the “The Law on Secrecy of Bank Deposits” as amended; RA No. 6426, otherwise known as the “Foreign Currency Deposit Act of the Philippines”, as amended and other laws, the AMLC is hereby authorized to inquire into or examine deposits and investments with any banking institution or non-bank financial institution and their subsidiaries and affiliates without a court order.

The propensity of this government to undermine safeguards to our rights is evident in this provision. This is clearly against the right to ownership and the right to privacy. Check and balances are thrown-out, individual privacy and secrecy are not protected, while the power of the government is further expanded and strengthened in the guise of preserving our national security.

SEC. 46. Functions of the Council (n) Investigate motu proprio or upon complaint any report of abuse, malicious application or improper implementation by any person of the provisions of this Act.

This is called a “sweetener” provision in the bill. Proponents want people to believe that abuses with regard to this measure will be dealt with accordingly. However, there have been unbridled abuses in our country that remained unsolved or not attended at all. This should lead us to think whether the government is really bent on protecting the welfare of its citizens or advancing its own interests.

SEC. 56. Repealing Clause –

The Church's mission in the time of the pandemic and beyond

Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSSR, STD

WE live in a period of uncertainty. We cannot predict the future. We can only take into consideration various scenarios—especially the worst-case and the best-case. What is certain is that many people all over the world are severely affected by the pandemic and we are facing a more catastrophic crisis—climate change. So how can the Church carry out her mission at present and in the decades to come? This is what every local Church and religious communities should answer based on their particular context. What follows are some general ideas and suggestions that might be helpful and can be taken into consideration. What is important is to think strategically, always assessing developments and trends—the external threats/opportunities and the internal strengths/weaknesses—being creative and coming up with fresh ideas and bold action. The Church can only survive and thrive when she is able to adapt to the changing situation.

Immediate and continuing task: Caring for a wounded world

Caring for the victims of the pandemic and the consequent economic crisis is a priority for the Church in collaboration with civil society and government institutions. The Church must mobilize its resources in supporting relief and humanitarian efforts.

This requires supporting those in the frontlines – the medical workers who are engaged in caring for the sick and the dying. In concrete this will take the form of providing accommodation, food, transportation during lockdowns and quarantines.

This also means providing psycho-spiritual care for the bereaved and front-liners who may be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This can take the form of on-line counselling.

Since the poor are the most vulnerable especially under lock-down and beyond, the Church (especially at the parish and grassroots level) should respond to their basic needs both material and spiritual. The most immediate is providing food assistance and encouragement.

To avoid dependency and passivity everyone must actively be involved in the process of addressing their needs and problems. This can only be sustained through the spirit of communion—of sharing and participation.

Digital information/communication technology/social media should be used for this purpose—in identifying those in need, inviting volunteers and contributions, distribution centers, networks and delivery, etc.

New forms of communion and solidarity

The continuing threat of pandemic requires physical distancing—this will be the new normal. There will be restrictions on large gathering/assemblies. International and domestic travel will be limited. The trend is towards doing things locally—including economic production.

More time will be spent at home. Most of the face-to-face encounter takes place at home and in the community. The new mantra: work at home if you can, go to the office or workplace only if it is really necessary. The same is happening in education. There will be more on-line learning and home-schooling. This will be the opportunity for promoting the family and household as the domestic church. Parents will spend more time with their children. This is the time to experience the loving communion and sharing within the family.

However, the family should not be isolated from other families. They need to link up with other families and individuals within the immediate neighborhood and local community. Forming or revitalizing a network of small communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), cells or family groupings becomes necessary. The parish must become truly a communion of BECs. The model of the Church as described in Acts (2:42-46, 4:32-35) must be experienced once again. The sense of belonging, sharing and the spirit of stewardship must be inculcated as the communitarian dimension is emphasized. This is the antidote to isolation and individualism.

The communion and solidarity of the parishes with the dioceses and wider levels (national, regional, universal) will take on a new form. This is also the case among religious institutes and communities.

In promoting communion and solidarity we should be aware that we are living in the digital era. We stay connected with one another. We can develop or join virtual communities and ecclesial movements that have local, national and global reach through the digital information and communication technology and social media. Online meetings and assemblies are now possible. With the development of more advanced and cheap technologies all these can be possible even in areas that are remote and distant.

Communion always includes participation in mission. This means synodality—journeying together. Synodality involves participation in the decision-making process—in governance.



Local stranded individuals take shelter at the National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Baclaran, Paranaque City while waiting for buses to bring them home to their provinces, June 11, 2020. BACLARAN CHURCH

It also means participation in mission—the prophetic-evangelizing mission, the priestly mission, and the kingly-servant mission. This synodality—communion and participation in mission—must be realized not only at the universal level but at the local level—at the diocese, down to the parish, Basic Ecclesial Communities and the Christian families.

In a world that is becoming decentralized and fragmented, those in pastoral leadership must employ new ways of exercising leadership and governance. The new digital technology and social media make it possible for regular and direct communication and consultation instantly overcoming physical distance. Leaders and members can be more interconnected. Church leaders should not be isolated but should continually be in touch with each other and the people they serve. Online meetings and assemblies are possible. The clergy should continue to communicate to the faithful and listen to them. A more participative style of leadership is possible avoiding a top-down model. This can be done at all levels—at the local, national, regional, universal level. Strategic thinking and acting is required—of seeing the big picture and the long view.

Evangelization and Christian education in the pandemic and the ecological crises

How can the Good News and the Christian message be proclaimed in the time of the pandemic and the ecological crises?

The central message: God's love for the world—for humanity and all living creatures. We are called to be in communion with the Triune God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and with one another and the rest of creation. We are all interconnected. We all have the responsibility to love, share, care for each one and for all things. We are called to conversion—this means rooting out selfishness, greed, hatred and violence. This requires responding to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth and promote justice, peace and integral ecology. We are also called to live a simple and sustainable lifestyle. The social teachings of the Church as well as the papal documents (e.g. *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si*) should be studied and propagated.

Christian formation and education should emphasize servant-leadership, participative ethos, creativity rather than submissiveness. Evangelization requires being prophetic – to speak out against social evils and proclaim the coming of a new world, a new reality. The local Church has to monitor, denounce and resist human rights violations and abuses—including totalitarian state control that diminishes freedom in the guise of containing the pandemic.

Since physical distancing is the new normal and large gathering is restricted, we have to use digital information and communication technology/social media for evangelization, catechesis and education. This means online evangelization seminars and catechesis (webinars). Bible-study/bible-sharing groups can meet online. Mass media communication should go digital and linked with social media. Each diocese and parish must develop their capabilities and come up with quality video-material that can be shared through social media in line with their respective evangelization and catechetical programs.

Face-to-face interaction should still be used but in a smaller scale observing physical distancing and appropriate safety measures. BEC/family-groupings can be the setting for evangelization and catechesis as well as Gospel-sharing. All these require a dialogical

process as well as emphasizing story-telling.

Even with less face-to-face encounter, spiritual counselling and direction can be carried out using digital technology and social media (WhatsApp, FB Messenger, Zoom, etc).

Theologians should address the theological questions arising from the pandemic and the ecological crisis. They can share the fruits of their reflection online and engage in dialogue with other theologians, Church leaders and the faithful. They can also give on-line lectures or webinars.

Worship and liturgy

Due to physical distancing, large gathering for liturgies and worship will not be possible for quite some time. Dioceses and parishes will have to think of how regular Sunday Masses in parish churches can be celebrated with these restrictions. It could mean limiting attendance for each Mass and adding more scheduled Masses. It could also mean celebrating small group Masses—BEC/neighborhood/family groupings, etc. This type of can be celebrated once every two or more months for each small group—depending on the availability of priests and the size of the parish. A Mass for a particular a family/small-groupings/cells can be broadcasted live so that other groups who are not physical present can still virtually participate and make spiritual communion.

Family liturgy/worship should be developed and promoted. The Christian family as domestic church is a worshipping and praying community. Following the Jewish practice, family-centered rituals around the table can be adopted. Family rosary, bible-service and sharing can also be practiced by each household.

Celebration of Sunday “priest-less liturgies” or liturgies in the absence of the priest with or without communion services should be promoted in BECs, cells and family groupings for communities that cannot have regular Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. These are usually led by lay liturgical leaders. The proliferation of permanent deacons to serve these communities should be considered especially for those who are already exercising leadership in these small communities. This can be the context for the ongoing study and consideration about the possibility of including women in the diaconal ministry by the commission created by Pope Francis.

We have to emphasize the Vatican II teaching on the priesthood of the faithful. This means not only active participation in the liturgy but also living a life of prayer and self-sacrifice, and active charity. We have to accept that there are situations when it is not possible to participate regularly in Sunday Eucharist. We must de-emphasize the mentality that it is mortal sin to miss Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation which unnecessarily create a sense of guilt and anxiety for those unable to do so due to unavoidable circumstances. There is more to sharing in Christ's priesthood than attending Mass.

While the Mass is the summit and fount of Christian life, its daily/weekly celebration is not the only expression of the priestly character of the Christian community. The real presence of Christ is not exclusively manifested in the Eucharist but also in other community prayer and worship when the faithful gather in Jesus' name and in the Word that is proclaimed and shared. What matters most is not the frequency of the celebration of the Eucharist but how it is celebrated with a community that truly lives a life of communion with Christ and with one another in their day to day life.

The role of the ordained minister is to lead and enable active participation of the lay

faithful in the Church's priestly mission. But we have to avoid clericalism that posits that only the ordained minister alone can make the Church a truly priestly/worshipping community and that the Eucharist is the only form of prayer and worship. The Church will continue to survive without frequent/regular Sunday Mass in communities due to the shortage of priests or restrictions imposed by circumstance (e.g. pandemic, persecutions, etc.). A life of holiness among the members as well as the capacity for self-sacrifice and martyrdom that accompany participation in communal liturgy characterize the fullness of priesthood of the faithful.

Social action

The Church continues her mission as a servant community in a situation where the majority suffer due to the effects of the pandemic and the creeping ecological crisis. How this is to be carried out concretely depends on the local situation where the Church is situated. The See-Judge-Act method is recommended. Concrete action should flow from analysis of the situation (the specific problems and issues that the local Church/community is facing), and the moral judgment.

The priority continues to be the promotion of integral development—working for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. In face of economic recession or depression, each local Church should address the problem of increasing poverty, unemployment and lack of food security which can lead to hunger and even starvation. Many will be driven to indebtedness.

Since government efforts to address these problems may not be enough, the Church in collaboration with civil society organizations has to promote sustainable development and initiate or support poverty-alleviation programs. Credit unions/cooperatives as well as micro-finance programs should be introduced or promoted to avoid loan-sharks.

During the pandemic “Kindness Centers” with feeding programs and food banks have proliferated in many parishes. This should be multiplied and expanded. This is difficult to sustain in most parishes with dwindling incomes and resources. Parishioners should be encouraged to share their time, talent and treasure. Besides giving food, what is more important is to promote local food production such as gardening and communal farms. Families and communities should be taught to engage in natural/organic farming or sustainable agriculture and link up with consumers through social media and e-commerce which bypass middle-men. Parishes and Basic Ecclesial Communities within dioceses with livelihood projects and income-generating programs can engage in alternative trade, organizing networks of production and marketing.

With the radical restructuring of the world economic order that is becoming de-globalized, a more localized and self-sufficient economic system is emerging. This is the effect of the decentralization and localization of supply chains in the aftermath of the pandemic crisis as well as the acceleration of the 4th industrial revolution with the proliferation of digital-based manufacturing, 3-D printing, robotics, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, etc. The trend is towards local manufacturing and production for domestic consumption rather than for exports. New skills and competencies will be required with new enterprises and jobs generated.

The social action program of the Church should be geared towards promoting and

All who take the sword will perish by the sword

(Matthew 26:52)

Pastoral Guidance on the Anti-Terror Bill



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

DEAR brothers and sisters in the Church of Lingayen Dagupan:

As a pastor, I too am dismayed by what terrorists have done throughout the world and in the Philippines. After Catholic clergy and laity have been victims, as have other Christian faithful, many of them slain in very brutal ways. There is no way a bishop like me can abet, support or approve of such barbarity.

When I make of public record then my reservations about the Anti-Terrorism Bill that has been submitted for presidential approval, I do so with the most strenuous objection to deeds of terrorism, and to its projects. Terrorism can never be the way of God. It cannot make any claim to be holy.

However, I am seriously disturbed that many provisions of the bill, in a desire to nip terrorism in the bud, also transgress fundamentally

guaranteed liberties. The right to be arrested and detained only upon a court-issued warrant is merely one of the issues I have among others. The vast powers conferred on the Anti-Terrorism Council, as proposed, are frightening in their breadth and scope.

More troublesome however is the vagueness of the provisions defining terrorism and defining the crime of terrorism. While I appreciate the fact that actions such as rallies, labor strikes and protests and other similar actions are not included in the penal scope of the law, still distinction are not so easy to make in practice. It is a sad experience we have that over-zealous police officers and over-enthusiastic prosecutors can always make out a case even where there is none.

I respectfully urge government then not to rush to the approval and enforcement of the law. I beg

for a thorough re-study of the law, with as wide a base of consultation as possible, while keeping to international standards. While it may be true that provisions of our bill were culled from provisions of similar laws in other jurisdictions, this is no guarantee that they pass the bar of moral scrutiny.

We can and should resist terrorism — and at the same time take care that the State itself does not use terror on the citizens to banish terror from our country.

Then Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” (Mt.26:52)

From the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist, Dagupan City, June 11, 2020, Eve of Philippine Independence Day,

+ SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan

Safe, sign of God’s mercy, and setting good examples

OUR dear senior churchgoers,

I am writing to you as you stay home and watch our Holy Mass through live streaming. This is one of the things considered to be your “new normal.” As mandated by the Inter Agency Task Force on Covid-19 Pandemic, senior citizens are not allowed to go out of the house to attend mass gatherings, including other religious services.

Only the doors of our Churches are closed. Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist continue, with the participants limited to ten people and between the ages of twenty and sixty years old.

I know how and what you feel. You want to be physically present, to attend and to commune; not just to watch virtually nor from a distance. We know well from our catechesis that the Holy Eucharist is present, alive, and communal. But here we are, separated by the dangerous and devastating Coronavirus.

Yet we have to follow what the IATF tells us to do. Why do we have to follow the directives of staying at home and not go out even to attend the Holy Mass? For me, there are three important reasons to reflect on. What are these?

Safety for all

Showcase of God’s Mercy

Setting a good example

One, it is for the safety of all. To stay at home is to make us safe from being contaminated or get someone contaminated. Coronavirus is our enemy that we cannot see. It thrives and hides in the crowd. We all have become the unknowing and unwilling prey of this virus. Coronavirus does not choose who to infect. It is not selective. *Lahat ay kanyang lalapitan, kakapitan, at hahawahan.* No one is exempted and excluded. And we, the senior citizens, are the most prone and vulnerable to this.

So, we have to be safe. Stay away from the crowd and avoid congested places. It is safer to stay and remain at home. It is our safety, our refuge, and our line of defense from this Covid-19.

Yes, it can be boring to stay at home but it’s better to be safe than sorry and have regrets afterwards. Isn’t it a blessing to have a home and be at home? Isn’t it the most gratifying experience to spend time at home with those who are dear and near to our hearts?

When boredom sets in, take recourse to family storytelling of your struggles and successes, of your ups and downs, of your best efforts and blessings. At home, do something together to discover and foster each other’s talents such as: baking, painting, or making designs. Introduce to your children your childhood games such as dama, chess, and sungka.

To stay at home is not only for our safety but much more for others safety too. It is our service to others in saving them from being contaminated. We are sparing them from possible sickness from Coronavirus.

Stay at home is best described on the billboard along EDSA which says “*#walang iwanan, #walang hawahan.*”

Two, it is a visible sign, a showcase of God’s mercy. God understands our situation and accepts our predicaments. He sympathizes with us. He always does something for our own good and safety.

With God’s mercy, He excuses us from attending the Sunday Holy Masses. The third Commandment impels us to “Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you will labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath for Yahweh your God.” (Exodus 20:8-10). Yes, we must attend the Holy Mass on Sundays but with

the prevailing danger of sickness and death from Covid-19, our Almighty God, in His goodness and love, abstains us from fulfilling our Sunday obligations.

To our God, what matters is our safety. He wants us to live soundly and healthy. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons says: “the glory of God is man fully alive.” So, it is God’s desire that we live to the fullest of our capability. Our main concern here is that we take good care of ourselves and of others in order to survive. We have to save ourselves. And one of the surest and easiest means is to stay at home.

In this troubling time of Covid-19 pandemic, mass gatherings are prohibited. Holy Mass live streaming suffices our Sunday obligations. Our home is now our domestic church. God is with us and resides in our household. We are in communion with God, along with our family members, in the confinement of our homes.

God always provides ways and means for us. Currently, He is using the Holy Mass live streaming to reach us, be near us and in spiritual communion with Him. God is never distant from us. He has turned our home into His dwelling place and makes Himself as part and member of our household.

Think about it, isn’t it God’s mercy that He leads us now to speak to Him and share about Him with our family members? Isn’t that God’s way of demonstrating His love that our houses are now open as His altar, as His Upper Room?

To stay at home is to see God in our home and in our family. It is also to share and serve Him within our family members.

Lastly, stay at home is setting a good example not only to our children but especially to the grandchildren. We do not only give orders but likewise, we follow them. We set rules and observe them as well. We, too, are obedient. We submit ourselves and give due respect. We are humble to accept and follow what we are asked to do.

Our children care for us. They worry about us and will see to it that we are safe and well-protected. They advise what is best and most safe for us. During this Covid-19 pandemic, let us listen to them and those who are in authority who urge us to stay home for it is very beneficial to us. When we heed their call, we show how much we value their concern, how much we trust them, and how much we hope and rely on them.

Our dearest senior churchgoers, patience is your most lived virtue. You have been patient as you reared and nursed us in our early childhood. Day in and day out, without any complaints, you untiringly watched over us, prepared our meals, and waited on us. You patiently listened, taught, and accepted us again and again. Now with this stay at home, your patience is being asked from you.

Let us be patient once more. With God’s power and manifesting glory, this Covid-19 pandemic will surely come to pass. God will grant the necessary cure. He will help us. Our almighty God will bring us healing. We will wake up and realize that all is well. We will see our Churches are opened again. We can come and celebrate the Holy Mass together. And truly, our Holy Mass is eucharistia, that is, thanksgiving.

We are thankful to God in the Holy Eucharist that through Him and with Him, we are safe. We surpass. We survive. We are alive.

+RUPERTO CRUZ SANTOS, DD
Bishop of Balanga
Chairman, CBCP Episcopal Commission on Pontificio Collegio Filipino

Activism is not terrorism

Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. (Isaiah 56: 1)



Bishop Jose Collin Bagaforo of Kidapawan, national director of Caritas Philippines. FILE PHOTO

NASSA/Caritas Philippines is the humanitarian, development and advocacy arm of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). We stand to adhere, defend and protect the rights and welfare of the Filipino people, especially the poorest and the most vulnerable. We uphold, recognize and put forward the rights of nature and all ecosystems.

As such, we provide constant opposition to government actions when we see them unfit and unjust especially to indigenous peoples, peasants, fisher folks, women, children and all the other marginalized sectors, like the government-backed Kaliwa Dam construction.

We demand for transparency and accountability from our civil servants, especially in cases when the use of public funds and facilities, and the delivery of services are questionable, like in the case of the Typhoon Yolanda rehabilitation and the Marawi reconstruction.

We pressure politicians, the police and government leaders when deliberate inaction and disregard of due process happen like the immobilized agrarian reform program. We organize communities, and stress for active participation in decision and policy-making, like pushing for the legislation of Right to Food and Rights of Nature.

We give decisive views and analyses of government actions, especially when we see them detrimental and threaten the very values of freedom, respect, justice and compassion,

like the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

If what we do constitutes terror acts, then what else is not? If every dissent and opposition can be considered terrorism, who else will be free? If all the powerful in government can label anyone a terrorist, what else can they not do?

Activism is not terrorism.

We cannot let this happen. This not only intolerable, this is inhuman, unjust and unlawful. Thus we urge everyone to register opposition against the bill which to our firm belief will further re-enforce tyranny and totalitarianism.

We at NASSA/Caritas Philippines condemn in the strongest terms, the blatant maneuvering of the legislative processes and the rule of law to suppress legitimate dissent, and to criminalize or to arbitrarily brand as terrorists those who are perceived to be opposing the administration. We denounce the obvious circumvention of the democratic processes just to obey and please the self-interests of the legislators and the autocratic rule of the president.

We enjoin all nation-loving Filipinos not to allow our government officials, especially from the executive and legislative departments, to prioritize giving solutions to the pandemic crisis, and never to curtail the democratic rights of the Filipinos. The anti-terror bill violates the rights of our people and makes a mockery of our Constitution.

It is our prayer that once the constitutionality of this bill is brought to the attention of the Supreme Court, our honorable justices will exhibit sense of fairness, impartiality and trustworthiness. They must live up to their being the last pillars of democracy and rule of law in our country.

J u n k T h e T e r r o r B i l l N o w
#FilipinosDeserveBetter

+JOSE COLIN M. BAGAFORO
National Director, NASSA/Caritas Philippines
Chairman, Episcopal Commission on Social Action Justice and Peace

CBCP-BEC Statement on the Anti-Terrorism Bill

WE, the members of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines – Committee on Basic Ecclesial Communities (CBCP-BEC), serve as an ecclesial body that coordinates the BECs or neighbourhood-based faith communities in the Parishes all over the country. Majority of our members are poor and marginalized living among and with the indigenous peoples, believers of other faiths, and even members of other churches. In solidarity, we endeavour to promote and build up God’s Kingdom of justice and love, peace and total human development in today’s society.

After reflecting on the nature, scope and intent of the Anti-Terrorism Bill, and studying its ramifications in the light of BECs’ life context, we express our disagreement towards this Bill. To begin with, it is a deflection or deviation from the life-issues of our people.

1. Deflection from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our grassroots communities are the ones most affected by the pandemic. Fear is present everywhere. Fear that the spread of the virus might escalate. Fear on the uncertainties that the “new normal” holds for them. The trauma inflicted by the pandemic on the poor and the marginalized is immense and they do not need another law to add to that nor repress



Bishop Jose Cabantan celebrates Mass at the San Isidro Cathedral in Malaybalay City, April 12, 2020. DIOCESE OF MALAYBALAY

their dissatisfaction of what they are going through.

2. Deflection from the priority of economic survival. Our grassroots communities are the most vulnerable to the worsening poverty of the country. They are the ones directly hit by the “No work, No pay” policies. Many of them lost their jobs, or if not, finding it difficult to return to their previous employment due to lack of transportation, company’s reduction of workers or work hours. Fresh graduates are uncertain of employment. Joblessness is shackling every home and community. Government efforts must focus on prioritizing the economic recovery of its people and not

Poking fun at colored people

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year A (John 3:16-18)
June 7, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

“GOD so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). With these words, John makes it clear that the purpose of Jesus’ coming is to give us eternal life, which is John’s term for salvation. Elsewhere, however, John describes the purpose of Jesus’ incarnation and death in terms of gathering people: “Jesus would die for the nation—and not for this nation only, but to gather into one all the dispersed children of God” (John 11:52). If salvation is about gathering people into one community that experiences the life of God, then we can say that it is Jesus who, by his coming, communicates this divine life to the community. No wonder then that elsewhere in the New Testament, we are told that this life that comes from God first of all flows to Christ who in turn shares it with the community: “In Christ the fullness of deity resides in bodily form. Yours is a share of this fullness in him” (Col 2:9). A similar teaching can be found in the letter addressed to the Christians in Ephesus: “May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith and may charity be the root and foundation of your life. Thus you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ’s love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself” (Eph 3:18-19).

Salvation or eternal life is therefore achieved when Christians share Jesus’s life of love that has its origin in the Father. Because they share in the life of the Father and Jesus, Christians therefore become one with the Father and his Son and with

other Christians who receive this divine life. Understandably enough, the same letter describes Christians as “one new man” (Eph 2:15). Consequently, there cannot be division in the Christian community. Precisely because God, by sending Jesus to communicate his life to us, shows himself as the Father of the community, all of us who share his life have become brothers and sisters. Whatever and whoever we are, we form one family where there is no division: “Each one of you is a son of God, because of your faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with him. There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). The early Christians saw the implication of this teaching. Luke tells us, for example, that in the early Church, the Christians were one in heart and in mind. No one claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common (Acts 4:32). In other words, the Christian community is a place where people are accepted and welcomed.

The basis for accepting and welcoming every Christian to the community is simply the fact that he is a Christian—he partakes of God’s divine life. Consequently, in a Christian community, there cannot be any discrimination on any basis—be it sex, power, merits, wealth, culture or race. Earlier, we noted that discrimination of colored people is wrong on the ground of its superficiality and its effect on others. But a meditation on the Gospel provides us with a deeper basis: we have become one with Christ. All of us share in the status of being God’s children. Therefore, no one

can claim superiority over others. In the words of the Latin American bishops, “we are all fundamentally equal, and members of the same race, though we live our lives amid the diversity of sexes, languages, cultures, and forms of religiosity. By virtue of our common vocation, we have one single destiny” (Puebla 334). No doubt this statement is based on the Constitution of the Church: “Although by Christ’s will some are established as teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastors for others, there remains, nevertheless, a true equality with regard to the dignity and the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Church” (Lumen gentium, 32). This why is our racist streak—poking fun, for example, at colored entertainers and at our colored neighbors—is wrong, and nothing could make it right.

If we stressed this implication of the Gospel today, it is with the purpose of showing that the doctrine of the Trinity need not be taken as an esoteric teaching that has no connection with the everyday life of the Christian. In the past, we looked at God in himself, and we tried to explain the Trinity in terms of Greek categories that are difficult to comprehend unless one has a background of Greek philosophy and culture. Here, however, we simply tried to present how the Trinity is experienced in our lives, and we found that, among others, our faith in God as Father and in his Son makes us realize that it is wrong to discriminate people on any basis, precisely because of their fundamental equality that is guaranteed by God’s sending his Son to the world so that it may be saved.

The fear of the Lord

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matthew 10:26-33)
June 21, 2020

By Msgr. Joseph A. Pellegrino



IT was the beginning of the sixth century before Christ, about the year 590. The Kingdom of Judah and its capital Jerusalem were terrified. The Babylonians were on the march. They had conquered the Assyrians. Tarsus and Damascus to the North had fallen. All of Mesopotamia, the nations between the Tigris and Euphrates had fallen. Now Jerusalem was threatened. How could the tiny Kingdom of Judah withstand such a huge enemy? What should the King do? He looked to his counselors. They told him to consider treaties with their pagan neighbors. This would mean trusting in the pagans rather than trusting in God. The King looked to God. There was a prophet in Jerusalem whom he respected, the prophet Jeremiah. The king saw him as someone who knew the truth and was not afraid to proclaim the truth. Jeremiah told the King that the Babylonians were agents of God about to punish the Jewish people for adopting pagan ways. The King needed to lead the people in trusting in God rather than in the pagans.

That is why the King’s counselors hated Jeremiah. Today’s first reading, from one of the sections of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah referred to as the Confession of Jeremiah, relates how the King’s counselors were looking for ways by which they could denounce him to the King, condemn him, even have him killed. Jeremiah is tested. Should he go along with the counselors and preserve his life? Should he get out of Jerusalem with its deadly politics? Or should he give witness to God and chance persecution from those gathered around the King. He decided to fear God rather than be afraid of men.

Fear God. That is a biblical concept that is often misunderstood. It does not mean that we should be afraid of God. It means that we should respect God, reverence God, and be more concerned with fulfilling the Law of God than with the way others might respond to us.

In the Gospel reading for this Sunday Jesus says, “Do not let others intimidate you.” He tells us to keep our priorities straight. He tells us that we should not even be afraid of people who could kill us. “Do not fear those who deprive the body of life but cannot destroy the soul.” In one of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament, Jesus says, “Are not two sparrows sold for next to nothing? Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father’s consent. As for you, every hair of your head has been counted; so do not be afraid of anything. You are worth more than an entire flock of sparrows.”

The Lord also says in that passage, “Fear Him who can throw body and soul into Gehenna.” This is not a popular concept in our society. We emphasize God’s compassion and mercy, and this is good, but we tend to refuse to acknowledge His justice. In our own minds, we transform God into an imaginary figure that will not respond to our rejection of His life and laws. For example, a man commits adultery, leaves his wife and children, and then says, “God understands.” Well maybe the god of his imagination might understand, but the real God was present when marriage vows were made to Him and to his wife. God sees the turmoil the selfish man thrust upon a good wife and their beautiful children. God’s mercy is

always available, but if the man, or if any of us refuse to acknowledge our sins and seek forgiveness, we are committing the deadly sin of presumption, and, in effect, denigrating God to a creature of our imagination.

But if we live with a reverence and respect for the Lord, the biblical Fear of the Lord, if we do all we can to be God-fearing, then we do not have to be afraid of anything. When we live with a reverence and respect for the Lord, then all those concerns that the media delights in frightening us with will diminish. Will the corona virus destroy half the population of the world similar to how the Black Plague destroyed half the population of Europe? We certainly pray that it will not, but we also know that live or die what matters is that we belong to the Lord. Will the world end this year? Everything else seems to be going wrong in 2020, so maybe, but probably not. The end of the world does not matter as long as we are united to God. Will World War III erupt when we least expect? Maybe, probably not. Nevertheless, it does not matter as long as we are united to God. Will Hurricane Mojo devastate the west coast of Florida destroying our homes? Maybe, probably not. But it does not matter as long as we are united to God. Will people attack us for being Christian? Absolutely. In fact there are many people in sections of Africa and India that are being attacked for being Christian every day. Will we be disparaged because we are against abortion, against capital punishment, against euthanasia, against taking children from their parents? We certainly will be attacked for promoting the totality of respect life, but disparagement does not matter as long as we are united to God.

We have nothing to fear as long as we fear the Lord. We are a lot more important to our Loving Father than a flock of sparrows; yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without our heavenly Father’s concern. How much more does God value those creatures who are made in His image and likeness? We are worth infinitely more than many sparrows.

The devil has three terrible lies with which he assails us, sometimes directly, sometimes subtly. The first of the devil’s lies is: You are not good enough. To that God answers, “I have made you good enough. I became one of you. I died for you; so I could raise you up with me to eternal life.” The second lie of the devil is: You are alone. God answers, “I am with you always. I know you. I know every hair on your head. I know what you are going through. Together we can conquer all challenges, all fear.” The third lie of the devil is one which all liars try to convince others of, that lie is simply: the other person is lying. In the case of the devil, his third great lie is that God has deceived us. He used this to great effect in the biblical sages’ story about original sin. The devil told Adam and Eve that God was deceiving them to keep them from being like God. In our modern times, some people question that there might be other ways to live than that presented by the Church. To the accusation that God lies, God answers, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

“Fear the Lord and do not be afraid of anything,” the Lord says. You are worth more than many sparrows.

The Eucharist, greed and the poor in our midst

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Year A (John 6:51-58)
June 14, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

GREED is the exact opposite of what today’s feast of *Corpus et Sanguis Christi* implies—which is sharing so others might live. But that is going ahead of what should be noted first. Today’s Gospel is the second part of Jesus’ discourse on the bread of life (John 6:35-58). Whereas in the first part (vv 35-50), the nourishing heavenly bread is the teaching of Jesus, in this second one (vv 51-58), it is the Eucharist. Though both parts speak of giving life, they differ in that, while in the first part eternal life is given through belief, in the second it comes from feeding on the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus. Thus, this section has a Eucharistic theme, and exclusive so. Raymond Brown notes two impressive indications that the Eucharist is in mind. First, the narrative stresses the eating of Jesus’ flesh and the drinking of his blood—which cannot be taken as a metaphor or symbolically. Rather, if Jesus’ words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood are to have any favorable meaning, they must refer to the Eucharist, reproducing the words of institution in the Synoptics. Second, what Jesus says in v 51 (“The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world”) resembles the Lucan form of the words of institution (“This is my body which is given for you”), and most likely preserves the Johannine form of the words of institution. Thus, for John, eternal life is given to those who communicate the body and blood of Jesus.

The objection at the beginning of this section, “how can he give us his flesh to eat” (v 52) probably reflects the Jewish criticism of the Johannine Christian community ritual, since Jews were forbidden to eat meat with blood (Lev 17:10-11). But as the whole section indicates, the eating of his body and drinking of his blood have nothing to do with



cannibalism. Rather, they are about sacramental communion. After giving up himself in the sacrifice on the cross, he will give himself in the sacrament. And considering that in the Old Testament, “the body and blood” expresses human life, the Evangelist most likely implies that in the Eucharist the communicant receives the whole living Jesus. In other words, Jesus is totally present in the eucharistic bread and wine that the believer receives. In the sacramental communion, Jesus shares his very life with the communicating believer: “The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remain in me and I in him” (v 56). No wonder, Paul declares to the Christians in Corinth, “Is not the cup of blessing we bless, a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break, a sharing in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16). For John, however, there is first of all a mutual indwelling in the Eucharist: Jesus remains in the Christian, and the Christian remains in Jesus. Moreover, just as the life of the Son and the Father is one (cf John 14:10), so the man who receives the Eucharist shares the very life of God himself.

However, to receive the Eucharist is not only to be involved in the very life of God himself. If one shares in

the life of the Son and the Father, he is joined to the whole body of believers. It is in this sense that Paul, in the second reading, speaks of the sharing in the body of Christ. “Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of one loaf” (1 Cor 10:17). In receiving the Eucharist, Christians are joined to Christ and to one another. They are established as one community in which Christ is a communal possession. Consequently, Christians who receive the Eucharist cannot be greedy or engaged in monopoly, still less take what do not belong to them. To the contrary, by the very act of sharing in it, they commit themselves to share their life and possession with other members in the Christian community. The rich, for example, cannot continue receiving the life of God without sharing their wealth with the poor, for that would be anomalous.

In light of this, a Christian cannot but make a crusade for the writing off of foreign debts by poor countries; indeed, in the light of the meaning of the Eucharist, wealthy nations and institutions must right the wrong in the international economic order in which the poor get poorer, and the rich get richer.

Child abuse over the internet

By Fr. Shay Cullen

THEY are the two latest arrivals at the Preda Foundation's beautiful home for exploited children set in the countryside surrounded by wooded hills beside a small stream. The children are Pedro, 12, and Angelica, 7, victims of online sexual abuse perpetrated by the uncle with the knowledge of their parents. They are now rescued and are happily playing with toys and recovering from the abuse.

They were rescued from an abusive uncle who sexually abused them. He made a video whereby he put his cell phone into his briefs and blindfolded the children and told them to look for it. He videotaped the sexual abuse that followed and uploaded it on YouTube. He was detected and the Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC) of Region 4A tracked him down and arrested him.

A week previously, three more child victims of cyber sexual abuse were rescued also through the intervention of the International Justice Mission (IJM) together with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the PNP-WCPC. The children were brought by government social workers to the Preda home. The government has no more capacity for the victims and has no commitment to financially support them at the Preda home. They had been sexually abused by their own step-mother in online exposure to Australian pedophiles over the Philippine internet service providers either PLDT/Smart or Globe when arrested. These companies are violating Philippine law by not blocking child pornography and allowing live streaming of child

sexual abuse. Soon, there may be international sanctions against them if they don't obey Philippine and international laws to protect children online.

The Philippines is a global hot spot of child sexual abuse online. It is growing more severe with the Coronavirus lock-down and restricted international travel. Many more foreign pedophiles are seeking sexual gratification by having children abused live online while they watch. Parents and relatives are the perpetrators and the ISPs that enable it.

The frequency and number of reported incidents of online sexual child abuse has exploded. The US-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which operates the CyberTipline Report (CTR), has a hotline for cases of online exploitation of children and has recorded 279,166 reports from March 1 to May 24, 2020, according to the Philippine Department of Justice. The number is greater by 264.63 percent or by 202,605 incidents in comparison to the figures recorded at this time last 2019. Then there were 76,561 reports of on-line sexual abuse of small children. This a shocking and disgusting figure of this heinous crime. The NCMEC is a US private non-government agency funded by the US government.

Another study led by the International Justice Mission (IJM) shows that Philippine internet-based child sexual abuse had tripled in the past three years. The study showed that the number of Philippine IP accounts that were used for child sexual exploitation online increased from about 23,333

in 2014 to the whopping total of 81,723 by 2017. So over a three year period, the increase in the number of Internet IP addresses used that shared images and acts of sexual abuse of children increased from 43 per 10,000 IP addresses to 149 per 10,000 IP addresses—a massive and shocking increase in the child sexual abuse of Filipino children.

This evil inclination of the pedophiles and their enablers that is damaging thousands of children shows a serious failure of irresponsible government officials to implement existing laws to protect the nation's children. The enablers that make it possible are the internet server providers such as PLDT/Smart and Globe Telecommunications. Soon, a new player DITO Telecommunity, will be a provider of access to the internet.

The ever vigilant and straight-talking man of action, President Rodrigo Duterte, intolerant of child sexual abuse, must use all his presidential power to protect the children and get the National Telecommunication Commission, headed by Commissioner Gamaliel A. Cordoba and Deputy Commissioner Delilah F. Delesto to explain why the Electronic and Internet Service Providers such as PLDT/Smart and Globe have not installed detection software to block the uploading and downloading of child pornography and online live-streaming of the sexual abuse of children as provided by law.

The NTC was so quick to issue a "Cease and Desist Order" against ABS-CBN for no fault other than the non-renewal of its franchise but how much more important is the protection of little children, some



three-year olds from online sexual abuse about which the NTC appears to do nothing, favoring PLDT and Globe? These powerful Internet Servers PLDT headed by Manuel V. Pangilinan and Globe headed by Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala must answer for the child abuse that is happening over their internet servers. Have they "captured" the regulators at the NTC and have an arrangement NOT to implement the clear provisions of the law? Would they lose the revenue of more than 82,000 or even 100,000 paying customers perhaps?

Republic Act 9557, under Section 9, says: "The duties of Internet Server Providers (ISP) to monitor the content passing through their servers, notify the police of illegal content and provide the authorities the particulars of users who gained or attempted to gain access to an Internet address which contains any form of child pornography. All ISPs shall install available

technology, program or software to ensure access to or transmittal of any form of child pornography will be blocked or filtered." (See the complete law at www.preda.org). The Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, Republic Act No. 10175 bans cybersex and child pornography, among other things.

What appears to be collusion between government agencies and the telecommunications companies enables 24/7 the access to horrific images of children being tortured, raped and abused. The pernicious and evil abuse of online streaming of children being sexually abused must be stopped by the NTC and the ISPs. Can President Duterte be the one man that can do it? Who are the worst criminals? They who do it? They who order and pay for it? Or those in the NTC and ISPs who enable it to happen? All three must be held to account and face the sanctions of the just laws.

Understanding / B3

RA No. 9372, otherwise known as the "Human Security Act of 2007", is hereby repealed. All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules or regulations or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 is not called a "draconian bill" for no apparent reason. This provision is what makes this bill really dangerous. All hopes of adhering to democratic principles

like protecting human rights and upholding civil liberties are put at risk. With warrantless arrest, illegal detention, and spying as key components of this bill, all laws that supposed to uphold our rights are abrogated in the guise of protecting the interest of the nation.

Conclusion

Proponents of this bill believed that criticisms against the measure are unfounded. They said that the issues raised are merely "trust"

issues. Hence, they insist on the presumption of regularity in the implementation or enforcement of this measure once enacted into law. Clearly, they are downplaying the legitimacy and seriousness of these concerns.

This study shows in no uncertain terms that because of its amorphous provisions, the implementation of this measure is best left to the discretion of implementers. This arbitrariness gives room for abuse leaving suspected individuals or groups helpless and hapless

under the combined powers of the institutions from within the government.

The bill also contains provisions that are contrary to laws that aim to protect our civil liberties like freedom of speech, right to privacy, right of ownership, right to property, protection against illegal detention, etc.

While we believe and agree that the State and its citizens should be protected from any form of harm or terror, we shall do so within the bounds of existing democratic

principles and processes. The government should not make as an excuse the upholding of national security while undermining human rights and civil liberties. To do so makes the government terrorist against its own constituents.

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

Mission / B4

supporting the growth of cooperatives and of medium/small scale/cottage industries which are community-based or at the grassroots (parish and BEC levels). It should also focus on skills training, capability building and local capitalization. It should address the problem of unemployment and labor displacement due to the economic crisis as well as disruptive technologies brought about by the 4th industrial revolution. A program for enterprise building and job-placement can be initiated. There are parishes with pious wealthy members who are engaged in business or industries that can be tapped. The principles and best practices of the Economy of Communion (initiated by the Focolare movement) can be adopted and further developed. It should be

an economy motivated not primarily by profit but by sharing with the needy and promoting a culture of giving while ensuring business to grow in a free market economy. It should be an economy based on solidarity and the principle of stewardship, living in practice the ecclesiology of communion and in particular the communion of goods where the members are of one heart and mind and no one in need (cf. Acts 4:32-35). It should emphasize sustainability and respect for the environment. This requires the advice and technical assistance of grassroots-oriented technocrats and entrepreneurs as well schools of business and management in Catholic Universities.

We should continue to promote integral ecology according to the spirit of Laudato Si. As a response

to ecological crisis, emphasis should be given to the reduction of carbon foot-prints. This involves participation in the Greening movement, tree-planting, micro-gardening (family-community levels), adoption and promotion of alternative sources of energy (solar, wind), waste-management, biking, walking, etc. We should promote a healthy and simple lifestyle which besides reducing carbon footprints can strengthen the immune system against diseases and viruses (plant-based diet, caloric restrictions, intermittent fasting).

While acting locally we need to link-up with each other at various levels – national, regional, global. The Vatican Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Development in collaboration with Global Catholic Climate Movement

(GCCM) as well as the Sowing Hope for the Planet Campaign are promoting a roll out plan for the years to come as a concrete response to Laudato Si.

To carry out our mission of promoting justice, peace and integrity of creation we need to make full use of digital technology and social media. This is a means for letting us see what is happening all around us—the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, the effects of the pandemic and the ecological crisis, the injustices and inequality, the violence. This allows us to analyze, reflect and make judgment on what is happening from the perspective of the Christian faith and the Church's moral and social teaching. This enables us to share our stories—of what we are doing

and should be doing—and support each other and express solidarity as we act together to transform and heal the world.

Final thoughts

Through the centuries the Church has found herself facing numerous crisis worse than we have now. This is not the time to be afraid and to panic. Our Lord Jesus Christ has promised us that He is always with us and will not abandon us. The Spirit-filled Christian Community has survived and thrived even in the worst situation and continued to fulfil her mission. What matters most is to believe and trust in the Triune God, to be filled with hope and give hope to others, and to be filled with love and express this concretely to others as we strive to heal this world.

Statement / B5

on this Anti-Terrorism Bill which is not an answer to the country's economic malaise.

3. Deflection from the continuing struggle of the Indigenous Peoples and pressing ecological concerns. Indigenous Peoples and those helping them are most vulnerable to red-tagging. What the IP's need are laws that will truly respond to their unduly neglected socio-cultural concerns like land problems, human rights violations, etc., that continue to cause them social unrest and poverty, and not laws that will further degrade them nor opportunities to use and abuse them. Furthermore, we are in the climate emergency situation which highly exposes everyone, especially the poor, to tragic and fearful calamities. There is an intimate connection between the emergence of the COVID-19 and the worsening of unhealthy ecosystem. Hence, the government must seriously address these ecological concerns as one of the post-pandemic measures to avoid another pandemic, rather

than the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

4. Deflection from our treasured values as Filipinos. The current pandemic has highlighted again and again our core values of "bayanihan, pananagutan, pagmamalasakit, pagtitiwala at pananalig sa Diyos". Aside from the government's "ayuda" programs. Both big and small corporations, NGOs, families, and even simple individuals did their share in responding to the crying needs of the victims of the pandemic. The government must find ways to reinforce these efforts in order to build up a post-pandemic nation instead of the Anti-Terrorism Bill which instills suspicion and fear to the poor and the marginalized who are very prone to abuses of those in power especially that this Bill contains several questionable provisions.

Furthermore, we do not accept the Anti-Terrorism Bill due to the following technical provisions that are reprehensible and can be detrimental to our lives as grassroots communities and rights

as citizens of this country:

1. **Defining "Terrorism."** Though the Bill expressly exclude "advocacy, protest, dissent, stoppage of work, industrial or mass action, and other similar exercises of civil and political rights", the rest of the document does not clearly define what "terrorism" is.

2. **Surveillance.** Any military personnel or law enforcement agent can wiretap and "overhear and listen to, intercept, screen, read" any "communications, discussions, data, information, messages" from any available technology for any "suspected terrorist". With the development in technology, these are easily accessible. In itself, this is a clear violation of a person's right to privacy.

3. **Detention.** The Anti-Terror Council (ATC) can order arrest by mere finding of "probable cause" without a warrant of arrest from a legitimate Court. The suspect's assets can also be frozen upon order of ATC. One can be arrested without

charges up to 14 days, and can still be extended to 10 more days, as the law enforcers continue to build up the case.

4. **Respect for Human Rights.** With the danger of weaponizing the law against critics and other vulnerable population like the drug addicts and poor farmers and lumad, all the above loopholes in the Act can easily be instrumentalized by people in power for their own interests and benefits. In fact, this Act awakens the memory of the BEC leaders and members whose rights were violated, some of them disappeared and some were killed, during that repressive rule of the dictatorship in the past.

We, in the CBCP-BEC, commit ourselves to the ongoing education of our members to human rights and civic responsibilities. We encourage our members to fearlessly report human rights abuses, relentlessly protect the victims especially those in grassroots communities, and untiringly help those victims

seeking legal aid. We also urge our members to continue to be vigilant and critical against any move that suppresses our human rights or tramples underfoot our dignity as human persons and children of God

We continue to hope that our government officials will listen to the growing voices of the poor and marginalized and the concerned citizens – their constituents and true bosses – who gave them the privilege and power to craft and enact laws based on right reason and good intention for the benefit of all and not just the selected few. We also pray that they prioritize those things that are truly needed for the nation's recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and not those that please the hunger for power of those in office.

+JOSE A. CABANTAN, D.D.
CBCP-BEC Chairperson

REV. MSGR. MANUEL G. GABRIEL
CBCP-BEC Executive Secretary

CINEMA
Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT MORAL ASSESSMENT

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

CINEMA RATING

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

Dangerous Lies

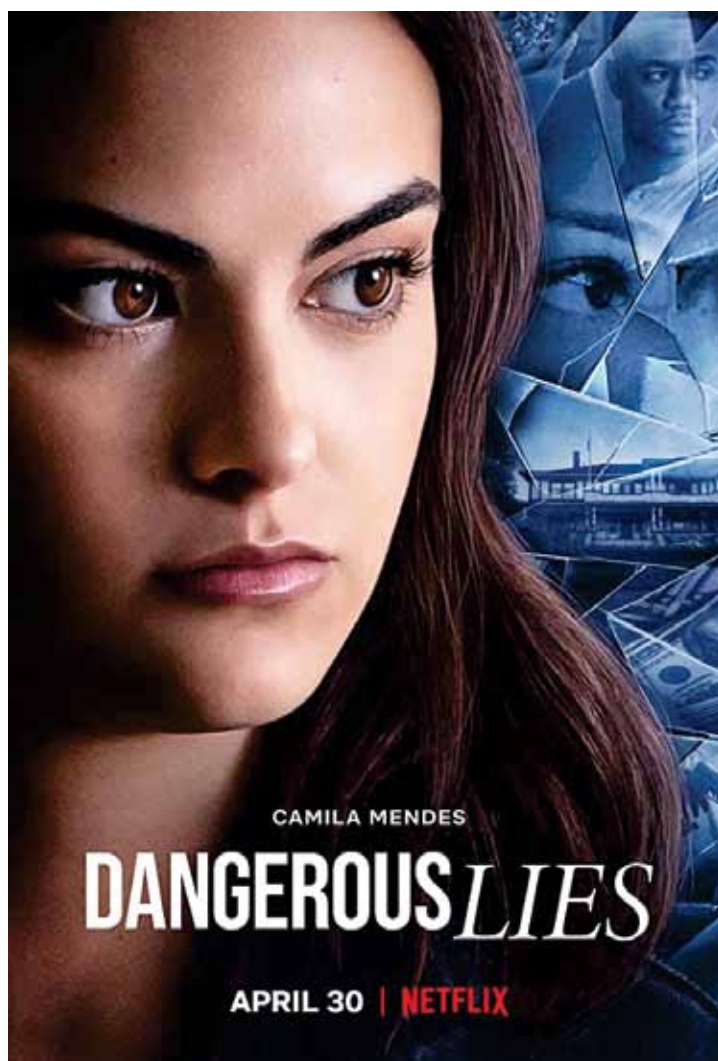
DIRECTOR: Michael Scott
CAST: Camila Mendes, Jessie Usher, Elliott Gould, Sasha Alexander, Jamie Chung, Cam Gigande
SCREENWRITER: David Golden
PRODUCER: Margaret Huddleston, Stephanie Slack
GENRE: Crime thriller
EDITOR: Alison Grace
MUSICAL DIRECTOR: James Jandrisch
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Ronald Richard
DISTRIBUTOR: Netflix L
LOCATION: USA
RUNNING TIME: 96 mins

Technical assessment: 3
Moral assessment: 3.5
CINEMA rating: V13
NETFLIX rating: 16+

Financially challenged young married couple Katie Franklin (Camille Mendes) and Adam Kettner (Jessie Usher) work as caregiver and gardener respectively for the rich and kind old man Leonard Wellesley (Elliot Gould). Katie and Leonard become good friends and treat each other as relatives. When Leonard learns from Katie about their financial problem, he becomes very concerned. Unfortunately, Leonard mysteriously dies a day after he gave Katie her pay cheque for an amount way bigger than her salary. With no known family and without a will, the controversial death is subjected to investigation questioning the ulterior motive of the couple particularly that of Adam as theorized by

police investigator Detective Chesler (Sasha Alexander). The case becomes more complicated by the surprise appearance of Julia Byron-Kim (Jamie Chung) who introduces herself as Leonard's lawyer to execute the "will" designating Katie as sole heir of his wealth.

Dangerous Lies has a well-developed plot with a successful build-up of characters that somehow makes the ending predictable — but not quite. The dramatic premise of the main characters' financial problems is fittingly established. The "dangerous lies" in the story are nuanced in the tensions created by opposites: Katie as diligent, responsible and ethical, in contrast to the self-interested and grasping character



of Adam. Adding to the confusion is the couple's passionate love for each other. The director did a good job in the suspense treatment of the film, making the lead characters appear as the potential villain themselves. This helps in engaging the viewers until the conclusion of the film. Lighting is appropriate and contributes in the effective delivery of some scenes particularly the darkness and brightness inside Leonard's house. If you will just forget about some loose ends in the narrative, you will see that Dangerous Lies delivered without special visual effects, sophisticated technology in the investigation, or choreographed gun battles — it succeeded as a psychological thriller rife with deceit and manipulation.

There is grace in consistently living out strong moral values to the point that against your conscience even the closest person in your life (like your beloved husband) cannot influence you. This has been the scenario in the character played by Mendes. Nowadays when some "practical" people would choose material wealth over compassion for a human being, a person with innate kindness will still choose to be compassionate and not take advantage of a windfall despite the specter of unpaid bills. In any relationship like marriage it is important to stay open, honest, and true to one's promise. In the end the upright gets rewarded with peace of mind and more, while the greedy and unscrupulous ones get their just deserts.

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.

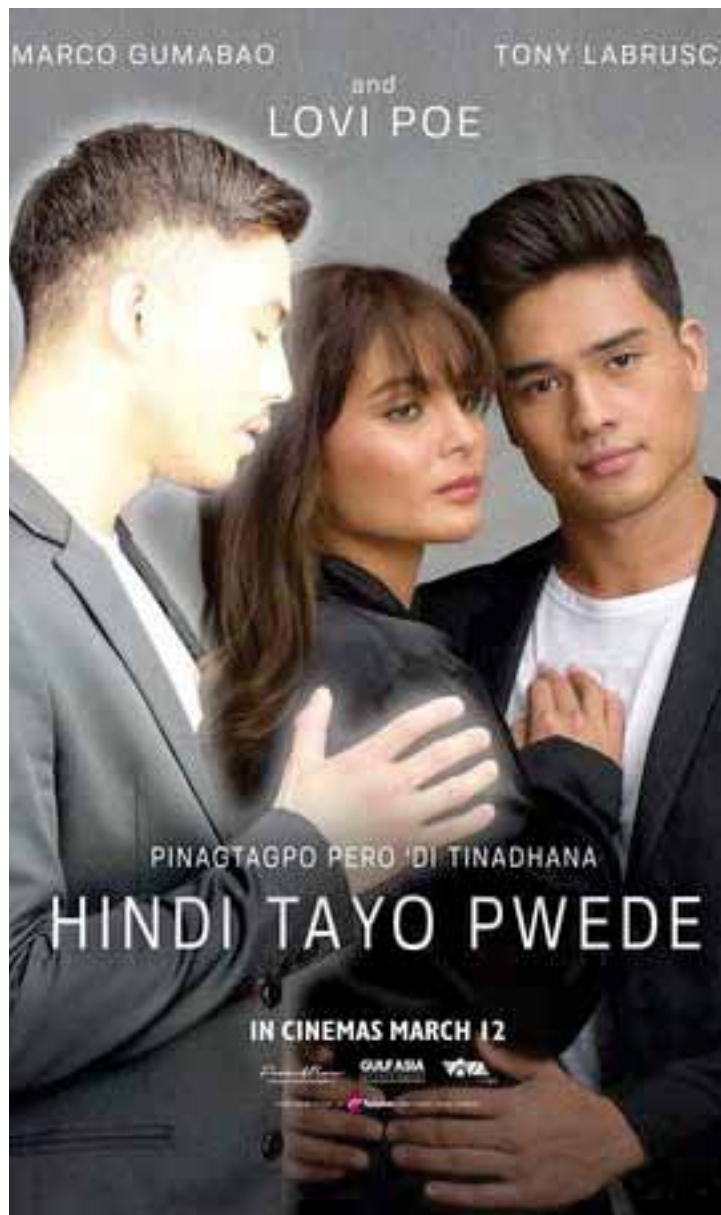
We pray for those afflicted
May they be restored to health soon.

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.

Hindi tayo pwede



DIRECTOR: Joel Lamangan
LEAD CAST: Lovi Poe, Tony Labrusca, Marco Gumabao, Candy Pangilinan, Andrea del Rosario, Cai Cortez, Phoemela Baranda, Christopher Roxas, Julian Trono, Nicole Omillo, Josef Elizalde, Mayton Eugenio, Angela Tinimbang, Vangie Labalan, Lui Manansala
SCREENWRITER: Ricky Lee
PRODUCER: Vic del Rosario Jr.
EDITOR: Vanessa De Leon
MUSICAL DIRECTOR: Von de Guzman
GENRE: sexy romance drama
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Jay Abello, Lee Meily
DISTRIBUTOR: Viva Films
LOCATION: Philippines
RUNNING TIME: 98 minutes

Technical assessment: 3
Moral assessment: 2
CINEMA rating: V 18
MTRCB rating: PG

Buhay San Miguel



FAITH WATCH
- Your Catholic Channel -
<https://www.youtube.com/faithwatch>

Isinasalaysay ni Gabs (Lovi Poe) ang kahalagahan ng pagmu-move on, o pagpapatuloy ng kanyang buhay sa kabila ng masaklap na nakaraan. Ang pinaghuhugutan nito ay ang pagkamatay sa aksidente ng boyfriend niyang si Gabriel (Tony Labrusca), at ang kasalukuyang namumukadkad na relasyon ni Gabs sa kanyang best friend na si Dennis (Marco Gumabao). Ang balakid sa pagmu-move on ni Gabs ay ang sinisinta niyang si Gabriel, na bagama't yumao na ay buhay na buhay pa rin para sa kanya — buhay na laman na dinadaluyan ng dugo, nakikita, nakakausap, nahahawakan at nayayakap. Sapooster pa lang ay makikita na agad na ang pelikula ay isang love triangle, at ang isa sa mga tauhan

ay multo, kaya ayon nga sa pamagat, hindi sila puwede. Maayos naman ang plot, at ginamitan ito ng mga flashbacks para maliwanagan ang mga pangyayari. Ang problema lang sa ganitong mga istoryang may karakter na multo ay: nakakalito ito minsan, at pati nga direktor (Lamangan), scriptwriter (Lee), at editor (de Leon) ay nakakalimot na din. Kapag sila lamang dalawa (Gabs at multo ni Gabriel), parang hindi namatay si Gabriel — tuloy ang ligaya, ika nga — pero kapag may kasamang ibang tao, lagus-lagusan ang totoong tao sa katawan ni Gabriel, walang ibang nakakakita o nakakaalam na nandoon siya. Katibayan na ang isang multo ay hindi laman kungdi ispirit. Pero bakit may isang eksena na ang multong si Gabriel

ang nagbukas ng pintuan ng kotse para sa sarili niya. Helow? Wala bang ibang tao sa paligid na nakapansin na bumukas mag-isa ang pintuan ng kotse? Sobrang swerte naman ng multong yan. Naroon na rin lang tayo sa paksa ng pagmu-move on, talakayin na natin. Dapat, sa halip na "Hindi Tayo Puwede", ay "Hindi Tayo Makasulong" ang naging pamagat ng pelikula. Pagka't iyon ang nangingibabaw na konseptong pinagbabasihan ng kwento: ang paniniwala na "hindi makatawid sa kabilang buhay" ang kaluluwa ng patay nang si Gabriel. Sa madaling salita, hindi pa rin siya maka-move on, hindi maiwan si Gabs dito sa lupa. Sa daigdig ng Hindi Tayo Puwede, ano ang ipinakitang dahilan kung bakit hindi

maiwan ni Gabs at Gabriel ang pag-iibigang natuldukan ng kamatayan? Base sa ganda ng pagkakagawa ng bed scenes ng dalawa, tila makamundong pag-ibig ang dahilan. At base din sa husay ng pagkakagawa sa bed scenes ni Gabs at Dennis, ganoon din ang uri ng pag-ibig na nakadadarang sa dalawa. Paalala ng CINEMA: ang pagiging artistic ng mga eksena ng pagtatalik ng mga hindi mag-asawa ay maaaring maging kaakit-akit sa mga kabataan at makaimpluwensiya sa kanilang tularan ito. Alalahanin ang turo ng Simbahang Katolika: ang pagtatalik ay sagrado, tanda ng pag-ibig na namamagitan sa isang babae at isang lalaki, at nagkakaroon lamang ng tamang kahulugan sa loob ng sakramento ng kasal.



THE CROSS

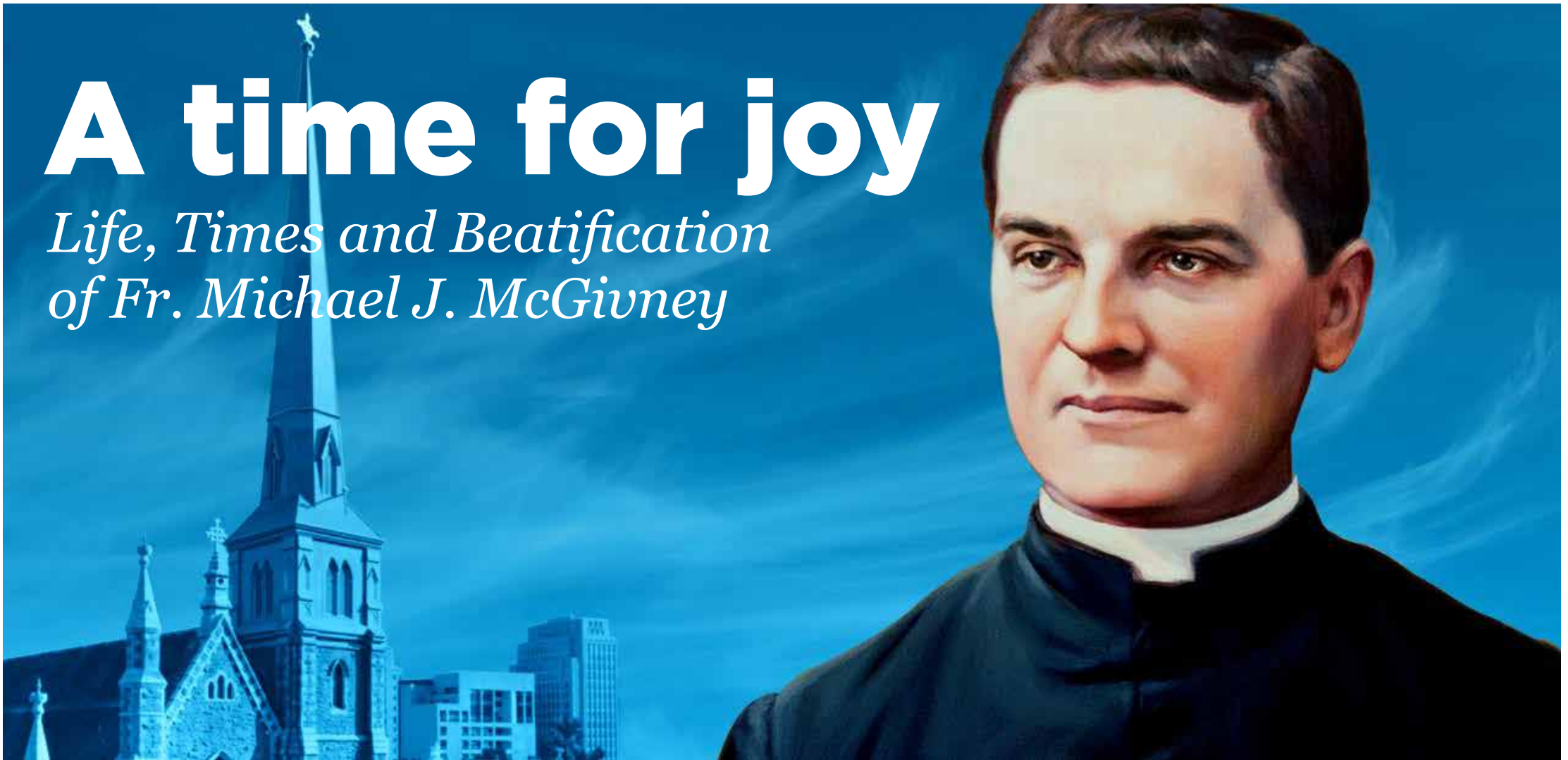
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KofC Family... Our Concern

CBCP Monitor Vol. 24, No. 11

May 25 - June 7, 2020



A time for joy

Life, Times and Beatification of Fr. Michael J. McGivney

“He cared for the faith and well-being of those on the margins....Then he died of a pandemic...possibly caused by a coronavirus... The timing of his beatification is providential because his connection to the pandemic gives us someone to intercede for us....” --- Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus

ECCLESIASTES 3:4 of the Holy Scriptures instructively proclaims that there is in the world, at the time God chooses, a “time for joy,” even a “time for dancing.” There is joy when one’s heart is full of gladness because of an uplifting human or spiritual experience.

For the Knights of Columbus, theirs is the joy, real and authentic, because of the decree issued by the Congregation for the Causes

of Saints, approved by Pope Francis, for the beatification of their founder, Fr. Michael J. McGivney. One more miracle attributable to his intercession and he will be on his way to the pantheon of saints. From Venerable to Blessed to Saint!

Beatification (from Latin *beatus*, “blessed,” and *facere* “to make”) is a recognition by the Catholic Church that a dead person can intercede on behalf of individuals to pray in his or her name.¹ Canonization on the other hand, is a Papal declaration that the Catholic faithful may venerate a particular deceased member of the Church.²

1 Samuel 2:30 tells us that “He who honors me, I will honor.” Surely, God is honoring Fr. Michael J. McGivney through beatification. Why is God

honoring Fr. Michael J. McGivney?

Answer. Fr. Michael J. McGivney’s roots and wings, his humble beginnings and his selfless service to the poor, tell all, speak eloquently about his being a man for others, a man of God.

The story of the life and times of Fr. Michael J. McGivney started in Connecticut, USA. Born to Irish immigrant parents in 1882, eldest of 13 children, he strove hard to become a priest. He studied in two seminaries in Canada (one in Quebec and the other in Montreal) until he finished at St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland.

From his personal experience, Fr. Michael J. McGivney recognized the heart-wrenching impact on immigrant families of the untimely death of the breadwinner, the father.

Which is why on March 29, 1882, he founded the Knights of Columbus in New Haven, Connecticut with a group of 16 men, principally as a mutual aid society, to provide financial assistance to widows and orphans, later on evolving as a fraternal society. Today, the small band of 16 Catholic men has grown exponentially to about two million Catholic gentlemen living in Asia, North America, Latin America and Northern Europe, united by the four foundational principles of charity, fraternity, unity and patriotism.

Was Fr. Michael J. McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus in 1882, composed solely of laypersons, a visionary or one ahead of his time? Yes. By involving and connecting the Knights of Columbus as early as 1882 in the life

and work of the Church (worship and prayer, family life, community service to the poor and disadvantaged), Fr. Michael of McGivney helped plant the seeds of “apostolate of the laity” or “hour of the laity.” This kind of apostolate that challenges laypersons to be what Pope Francis calls as “missionary disciples” was officially recognized by Vatican II on November 18, 1965 when it issued the “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” a document that encourages and guides lay Catholics in their Christian service.

Finally, at a time when the term “frontliners” is associated with heroism in the pandemic world today, Fr. Michael J. McGivney would best qualify as a frontliner in 1890. For during the pandemic in the U.S.A. that year, when one million people

died worldwide, Fr. Michael J. McGivney zealously attended to the needs of the patients, got infected and died on August 14, 1890. Supreme Knight Carl Anderson hails Fr. Michael J. McGivney a model of the “Good Samaritan” who could also be seen as “pandemic patron”.

All told, Fr. Michael J. McGivney, by the grace of God, was a colossus of a man: pro-poor, pro-disadvantaged, pro-family and pro-God. In his short but purposeful 38-years of existence, he frontlined to bring goodness and godliness in the lives of many.

V I V A T J E S U S !
(RV Sarmiento)

¹ Beatification, wikipedia en.m.wikipedia.org

² Canonization, wikipedia en.m.wikipedia.org

Knights of Columbus founder Father Michael McGivney moves closer to Sainthood

CARL A. ANDERSON
SUPREME KNIGHT

TEL: 203-752-4350
FAX: 203-752-4110

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
1 COLUMBUS PLAZA
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06510-3326

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Carl A. Anderson
Supreme Knight

DATE: May 27, 2020

It is with singular joy that I write to share news that, at Roman Noon today, the Holy See announced the formal recognition of a miracle attributed to our founder, Venerable Father Michael McGivney.

With this announcement, a Mass of Beatification will soon be scheduled.

This joyful news is the culmination of many years of determined effort. I ask for your continued and increased prayers as we prepare for the day when our founder will be known as Blessed Michael McGivney.

The Vatican announcement can be found below:

Decrees of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

On May 26, 2020, the Holy Father Francis received in audience His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. During the audience, the Supreme Pontiff authorized the same Congregation to promulgate the Decrees regarding:

[...]

- the miracle, attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Michael McGivney, Diocesan Priest, Founder of the Order of the Knights of Columbus; born on August 12, 1852 in Waterbury (United States of America) and died in Thomaston (United States of America) on August 14, 1890;

Venerable Michael McGivney was the founder of the Knights of Columbus, now the world's largest Catholic fraternal organization. After studies in Canada and the United States, he was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop James Gibbons in Baltimore. He founded the Knights of Columbus as a mutual aid society, geared especially to working men and their families. He was known for his tireless work among his parishioners. He died at the early age of 38 from pneumonia.

Priest launched international lay movement, died in 19th century pandemic

ROME – The Vatican today (May 27) announced that Pope Francis Pope Francis approved the promulgation of a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of the founder of the Knights of Columbus, Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney, a Connecticut priest who served his flock during the pandemic of 1890, before himself becoming ill and dying of pneumonia.

The pope’s action means that Father McGivney can be declared “Blessed,” the step just prior to sainthood. An additional miracle attributed to Father McGivney’s intercession will be required for his canonization as a saint.

McGivney is best known for founding the Knights of Columbus in 1882. Nearly a century before the Second Vatican Council, his prescient vision empowered the laity to serve Church and neighbor in a new way. Today, the Knights of Columbus is one of the

largest Catholic organizations in the world with 2 million members in North and Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe.

The miracle recognized as coming through Father McGivney’s intercession involved an unborn child in the United States who in 2015 was healed in utero of a life-threatening condition after prayers by his family to Father McGivney.

A date will soon be set for the beatification Mass, which will take place in Connecticut. It will include the reading of an apostolic letter from the Holy Father and the bestowing of the title “Blessed” on Father McGivney.

Earlier this year, in an address to the Knights of Columbus Board of Directors, Pope Francis said the organization has been faithful “to the vision of your founder, Venerable Michael McGivney, who was inspired by the principles of Christian charity and fraternity to assist those most in need.”

“Father McGivney has inspired generations of Catholic men to roll up their sleeves and put their faith into action,” Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson said. “He was decades ahead of his time in giving the laity an important

role within the Church. Today, his spirit continues to shape the extraordinary charitable work of Knights as they continue to serve those on the margins of society as he served widows and orphans in the 1880s. Father McGivney also remains an important role model for parish priests around the world and left us a transformative legacy of effective cooperation between the laity and clergy.”

Born of Irish immigrant parents in 1852 in Waterbury, Connecticut, Father McGivney was a central figure in the dramatic growth of the Church in the United States in the late 19th century. Ordained in Baltimore in 1877, he ministered to a heavily Irish-American and immigrant community in the then-Diocese of Hartford. At a time of anti-Catholic sentiment, he worked tirelessly to keep his flock close to the faith in part by finding practical solutions to their many problems – spiritual and temporal alike. With a group of the leading Catholic men of New Haven, he founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882 at St. Mary’s Church to provide spiritual support for Catholic men and financial resources for families that had suffered the loss

Bonifacio B. Martinez

President's Message



We heal with Him

OUR faith and stability in coping up are being challenged anew by this crisis brought about by COVID-19 pandemic. We do not know who is affected at a glance given that there are asymptomatic ones freely roaming around. Thus, the government's first mandate is to limit our movement by staying home and following health protocols to make sure everyone is safe. However our circumstances are not all the same, while we are at the comfort of our homes, most of us especially the daily wage earners are risking their lives to earn. We can list all of its negative effects and that list will be close to being endless. Risks here and there, mental health issues slowly making its way, future uncertainty, and it goes on.

In times where we cannot see our opponent, we have a Savior who is bigger and mightier than any situation we are facing and will face in the future. Thus, I pray for guidance, enlightenment, compassion for our government officials for them to come up with a solution that is not only beneficial to some but most especially will cover those who are in need. After all, we are one and we should be united to successfully combat this pandemic.

In every crisis may we ponder on what important lessons we learned from every shortcomings and circumstance we have gone through. May we truly realize the essence of compassion, obedience, and the sense of oneness in these trying times.

I always believe that no matter how hard our situation is, as of the moment—with Him, nothing is impossible. What we need is to keep our hearts and intentions pure at all times. I am faithfully praying for this pandemic to be over. So, we all can return to our normal daily lives, taking into our hearts, minds, and actions the things we have learned. May we become better and renewed persons not only thinking about our benefits but for the greater good in the long run.

Vivat Jesus!

Arsenio Isidro G. Yap

A Brother's Insight



Crisis Part II

FROM March 15, 2020 to April 30, 2020 the entire Metro Manila was put in a lockdown otherwise known as Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). The purpose of which is to contain the spread of Covid 19, a deadly Pandemic Disease which originated from Wuhan, China. This was extended to May 15, 2020.

Covid 19 spread very quickly to different parts of the world and soon infected millions of people and likewise killed millions. The lockdown can be likened to a house arrest wherein nobody as in nobody should ever leave their home without any valid reason except frontliners and those working in industries vital in the fight against the corona virus.

Everybody was caught flatfooted and nobody seems to know what to do and how to react with the situation. Governments, Doctors and Scientists alike all-over the world could not immediately give a protocol on how to deal with the said pandemic. The best thing to do is to impose a lockdown. It's a bitter pill to swallow but it's the best thing to do in the absence of a vaccine.

The concept of a lockdown is very simple. You stay at home for a 14 day self-quarantine period to avoid being infected. The reason is the virus incubation period is 14 days. Hence, after 14 days, you should be cleared of the disease in case you got infected one way or the other.

Why a 45 day lockdown was imposed and extended for another 15 days? Because the government's Department of Health (DOH) could not cope up with the demands of the people to be tested for the disease. The DOH failed to procure enough testing kits and even if it was able to, did not have enough testing facilities. On top of all these, the government was perceived to be too slow in procuring the necessary testing equipment and kits.

There was a mad scramble for medical devices, primarily surgical face masks or any face mask that could protect and prevent the spread of the virus. Alcohol and other disinfectants ran dry in the stores. People were on their own to protect themselves. The scarcity of supplies led people to panic and buy too much for their own needs. Doctors and nurses are having extreme difficulty of "buying" their own protective gears such as PPEs, N-95 face masks, gloves and face shields.

When the ECQ was extended from April 30 to May 15, people got anxious and even concluded that it would be extended 15 days at a time. The extension gave the people the impression that the government is still unable to test all the people who have the symptoms of the disease. It still does not have enough testing kits.

Brother's Insight / C3

Jose C. Reyes, Jr.

Chairman's Update

Let us pray the rosary daily!

ONE of the messages of Our Lady of Fatima was to pray the rosary every day. Many of us now, being in the month of May and amidst a pandemic due to COVID 19, are praying the rosary daily and as a whole family. As the month of May ends and the quarantine prescribed by the Department of Health is gradually being lifted in many areas of the country, some, if not the majority, will already have stopped praying the rosary. Praying together is not easy to organize now that people are already starting to go back to work. They might not have time and energy to say the rosary at the end of the day. "Sayang ang magandang nasimulan na araw-araw na pagdadalang ng rosaryo bilang isang pamilya nuong may lock down. Sana maipagpatuloy natin ang ating nasimulang pagrosaryo araw-araw."

Karlo Serviento

Pondering the Words

Do you love me?

THE month of May as dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary as the beautiful flower in the heavenly garden has just ended. Devout Catholics now enter into another month of devotion: June - associated with our deep love for the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus which solemn feast we celebrate nineteen days after Pentecost, in this year, on June 19. Truly, the relation of Jesus and Mary is inseparable.

Love is always the center of the gospel narratives as Jesus, our Lord, the word incarnate is from love and is love Himself. These trying times as we face the terrible pandemic, being obedient to the measures of the government, we seem to be like the disciples in the upper room with Mary, quarantined within our own homes praying and waiting for the grace that the world be renewed, healed and strengthened as we wait

for the new Pentecost when the Holy Spirit will come once again to refresh our body, soul, spirit and the community.

Have you seen yourself as an apostle during this quarantine?

Different from last year's celebration of the Passiontide, we have now made a semi-reenactment of how is it to be an apostle during the crucifixion of the Lord. During those days, they locked themselves inside the upper room for the fear of being persecuted. We too are also fearful from the virus. The virus seems to be the roman soldiers, whom unnoticeably, can take our own lives.

On the other hand, one apostle remained at the foot of the cross, it is John. One of the famous accounts in his gospel is when Jesus has entrusted him His mother to be his own and on the other hand, the Lord entrusted

him to His mother being her own. Reading carefully the words of Christ it states (Jn. 19:26-27), "...Woman, here is your son' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home." We know it is John, the disciple whom the Lord loves. But going back, his name was not mentioned in the words of entrustment. Why? Because Jesus sees us all at the foot of His cross with His mother. It is not only John and Mary present, we too are there. We are also addressed by those words. We too are entrusted to Mary, she is also entrusted to us in return for the fact that we are also God's beloved.

Social communications once a ministry set aside by some is now the main course of our spiritual nourishment as it sustained us through their online Masses, novenas, rosary and the like. With

the use of the social media, our celebration of the Holy Eucharist continues even in these hard times. Only private masses are allowed, hence, the Church being a church of mercy and compassion gives us all the recourse on how to be one with them. There may be social distancing but never will there be graces distancing. The doors of the churches have been closed but the palms of the church remains open. Priests, as shepherds of the flock, have made the sacraments and blessings available to the faithful. Live TV Masses were held. Some priests and ministers walked around their vicinity and gave communion to the people. Motorcades of the Blessed Sacrament and the saints were done. General absolutions were given. Even the Holy Father gave an Extraordinary Urbi et Orbi (to the city and to the world)

Pondering the Words / C3

Atty. Luis Voltaire D. Formilleza

By the Reading Lamp

I Pray...

WRITING for a Catholic newspaper, I have been advised early on to refrain from writing anything political. Maybe it is to reinforce the line tightly held by the secularist and the religious which separates the church from matters of state. Or maybe perhaps, it's just anathema to the nature of our humble Association to highlight mundane differences which may impede growth and sow distrusts, rather than ensuring that all stakeholders in the organizational structure find comfort in the existence of a common ground that would enable us all to fulfill our corporate raison d'être. Hence, we agree to disagree and highlight similarities rather than differences. It's not more of depriving one to speak (or write) but more of making sure that no one is offended.

But recent month's events tested the viability of this kept peace, as we move forward to slowly adapting and gaining back whatever normalcy is left from our previous lives pre-Covid19. During these times, rightly or wrongly, the distinction between church and state is blurred out, as all of us, regardless of spiritual beliefs and truths, fight a common enemy and struggle to achieve a single purpose- survival.

And so, I will choose to remain within

what is permissible in my attempt at throwing shade. Please indulge me if you will, in an attempt at being satirical and spiritual at the same time for the sake of keeping insanity at bay- I pray:

"I thank God and praise him for keeping me my family, my friends and loved ones safe and healthy. Nothing is more precious these days than the gift of being able to breathe (literally) without any pain or any difficulty. I pray for the sick and the suffering that they may receive God's mercy and blessings. I pray for our courageous front liners, since you are indeed our real modern day heroes. May they be kept safe. I pray for our scientists and researchers so that they may be able to succeed in this race against time for a cure. I pray, that the people in governments get their acts together for the interest of the people who placed them in power. May those who are in better places be able to check their privileges. I likewise pray for businessmen and employers that they may be able to survive the economic crisis that is inevitable. May they be able to look after the interest of their employees in the best possible way that they can. May they gain wisdom in governing their respective yards. I pray

for all the workers (employed and self-employed) that they find fortitude and strength in the more crucial days ahead. May they be able to likewise service their employers and clients in the best of their abilities. May they be able to find sufficient means for a roof top of their heads and food on their table. I pray that the youth, likewise realize their potential in these trying times for they are indeed the undeniable hope of our motherland. I pray that I may be able to play outside again without fear. I pray for meals and drinks with friends. I pray for excursions. I pray that we can all once again enjoy nature and the other wonder gifts of mother earth. I pray that those accountable for aggravating our crisis meet their karma. I pray for correct and accurate data from experts so that I can keep some peace of mind. I pray to be able to go shopping again. I pray that I may be able to read a book in a coffee shop. I pray for buffets. I pray for lavish walks in parks. I pray for long museum tours. I pray for every family, mothers and fathers out there. May we all be strengthened in hope, prayer and love. I pray that your prayers and the desires our hearts of hearts be granted. I silently pray all of these by my reading lamp. In Jesus' name. Amen."



Sainthood / C1

of their breadwinner.

The fledgling group soon became a major force in the areas of evangelization, charity, racial integration, and the defense of religious freedom.

Father McGivney spent his entire priesthood in parish ministry and died of pneumonia on August 14, 1890— two days after his 38th birthday — after falling ill amid a pandemic. Recent scientific evidence indicates

that that pandemic — like the current one — may have been caused by a coronavirus.

Known by his contemporaries for his devotion to the faith and his embodiment of the characteristics of the "Good Samaritan," his cause for sainthood was opened in the Archdiocese of Hartford in 1997. St. John Paul II — who was pope at that time — lauded Father McGivney's principles, stating in 2003,

"In fidelity to the vision of Father McGivney, may you continue to seek new ways of being a leaven of the Gospel in the world and a spiritual force for the renewal of the Church in holiness, unity and truth."

In March 2008, he was declared a Venerable Servant of God by Pope Benedict XVI, who during his visit to St. Patrick's Cathedral cited the "remarkable accomplishment of that

exemplary American priest, the Venerable Michael McGivney, whose vision and zeal led to the establishment of the Knights of Columbus."

Two recent books also tell the story of Father McGivney and his legacy: Parish Priest (2006), his biography; and the The Knights of Columbus: An Illustrated History (2020).

More information is also available at www.FatherMcGivney.org (**JCullen**)



THE CROSS

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Weathering the Storm

The Knights of Columbus remains financially strong and committed to serving Catholic families



by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson

A RECENT COLUMN in The Wall Street Journal observed, "Today, every occupant of every C-suite is trying to figure out what they're willing to throw overboard as the economic storm spawned by the pandemic is swamping their

ships. Businesses that were planning to help save the world are now simply saving themselves." The May 6 column, titled "Sustainability was Corporate America's Buzzword. This Crisis Changes That," further noted, "Entities from one-cell organisms to multinational conglomerates shut down everything except what they need to survive."

No wonder people are worried. Today, many "C-suites" are in crisis, and many executives are reaching for drastic solutions.

Not so with the Knights of Columbus. Sustainability was never just a buzzword with us.

Consider the April 6 report released by Standard and Poor's, titled "Ranking North American Life Insurance Companies, Strongest to Weakest." S&P reviewed its ratings of hundreds of life insurance companies in North America to determine how well positioned they are to withstand the economic

impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

S&P ranked only six companies in the top category, and the Knights of Columbus is one of them.

This level of financial strength does not magically appear overnight. It is the result of consistent and sustained corporate governance to do what is best for our brother Knights and their families in a prudent and professional way. It involves decades of determined effort to maintain both a superior level of capital adequacy and a low risk exposure as the best protection against financial storms.

We continue to have more than \$100 billion of insurance in force protecting the financial future of our Catholic families. That is an awesome responsibility, and it is guided by our commitment to provide "insurance by brother Knights for brother Knights." Again, our goal

is not corporate profit but what is best for our brother Knights and their families.

Pope Francis has urged Catholics to take up what he calls "an ethics of fraternity." Such ethics have been our guiding light for more than a century.

As I have said many times, there were already insurance companies in Connecticut in Father McGivney's day. He could easily have referred his parishioners to these companies. But our founder didn't want business as usual; he wanted something different and something distinctly Catholic — a Catholic fraternity that would transform men into a committed brotherhood.

That is what Father McGivney founded, and that is what we continue today; you might say that we are very traditional. At the same time, we have made many changes, especially during the last several years, to make our

insurance program stronger, more competitive and better positioned to withstand today's challenges.

We have undertaken a major restructuring and enhancement of our information technology department, reorganized and strengthened our insurance field force of more than 1,100 general and field agents, and have brought greater efficiency and productivity to our business processing departments and customer service.

Given the Supreme Council's proximity to the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak in New York City, we took action before most companies to protect the health of our employees and the continuity of our operations by adopting a remote work plan. That transition went forward in an exemplary manner — as did the work of our insurance agents as they, too, transitioned to a new operating model demanded

by social distancing.

At the same time, we developed IT and procedural solutions to hold virtual state conventions and online exemplifications of our new ceremonial. We also implemented an emergency church loan program for Catholic dioceses facing financial crisis and a multimillion-dollar food assistance program through our Leave No Neighbor Behind initiative.

No one can predict what the future may bring. As the days ahead will call for fortitude and continued vigilance, we will remain true to the principles that have served our Order so well in past.

But above all, we have confidence in the providential care of the Lord of history, just as we have recourse to Our Lady, that gentle and glorious "Star of the Sea," who for over two millennia has guided so many safely home.

Vivat Jesus!

The Gentle Warrior

By James B. Reuter, SJ

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WAR YEARS

"DA DEE DEE" was close enough to the sound of the name to make all the internees scream. The "cawas" were the great metal containers in which the kitchen crew boiled the rice.

When the Jesuits were singing the Christmas carols, during Midnight Mass at Christmas time, 1944, the tenors cracked on the high notes. The lead tenor was Joe Kavanagh, a Scholastic. He had a beautiful voice, but he also had beri-beri. Half of his face was paralyzed. When he sang, only half of his face moved. The other tenors were weak from hunger. Kavanagh cracked on the solos, all of the tenors cracked on the high notes. There is nothing so miserable as a beautiful tenor voice cracking on a Christmas carol.

After the Mass, some of the singers said, for the first time: "You know.... maybe we will not get out of here. Maybe this is the end." One second tenor said: "If ever we do get out, I won't care if I become the Rector of the biggest Jesuit house on the Atlantic seaboard, or the last, lowest and least in Tuguegarao, if I have three things. Only three things." This was his spiritual vision, when face to face with death. He said: "Those three things are: breakfast....dinner....and supper!"

George Willmann shook his head, and said: "No, son. There are things more important than food. Man does not live on bread alone.... we will survive this thing! We will survive!"

Early in January of 1945 hysteria swept through the prison camp. An internee ran through barracks after barracks, at three o'clock in the morning, shouting at the top of his voice: "Our Japanese guards have left the camp! The guards have left the camp! There are no more guards! They're gone!"

And the guards were gone. They disappeared in the night. This did not mean freedom, exactly. The Japanese military who were stationed on Mount Makiling, in great numbers, came down to inspect the camp. It was true that our guards were gone. The Japanese Officers from Mount Makiling could not understand this. They posted guards of their own — from the troops on Mount Makiling — all around the camp. They said to the Central Committee: "No one may leave this camp! No one!"

But at least there were no Japanese guards inside the camp! Barracks Three was empty. The internees had the whole area, inside the barbed wire, to themselves! It was a delirious week of freedom. Internees broke into the Japanese bodega, and carried out all the rice. For eight days everyone had enough to eat. The wood crew did not go out into the hills anymore, to cut wood for the kitchen. The internees began to chop up the wooden benches, for firewood.

George was distressed at this. He said: "We should not destroy the benches!

They are valuable! We will need them!" But the internees, drunk with freedom, said: "No! It's all over! The guards are gone! We're free!" And they cut up the wooden benches for firewood.

Then, in the middle of the night, after the eighth day of freedom, one of the Central Committee came through the Jesuit barracks, saying quietly: "The guards are back! The guards are back! No one goes out. The guards are back!"

And it was true. The guards came back. They withdrew because they received a report that the Americans were attacking Manila. They thought that this meant ground troops. But the attack was only from the air. The Japanese guards were reprimanded in Manila, and sent back to their posts at Los Baños. They were inside the camp, close to the internees, stationed at every crucial point.

Death struck more frequently after that. The graves became even shallower.... Two feet.... Just enough to cover the coffin with dirt.

Some of the older internees just gave up. They did not want to try anymore. They lost the will to live. It was despondency, deep depression, despair.

First the hysteria of freedom — after three years of captivity.... And then the terrible let down when the guards came back... It was too much.... Whenever an internee said: "I don't want to live anymore" — that was the end.

But George would not give up. He said, doggedly: "We will survive this thing! We will survive!"

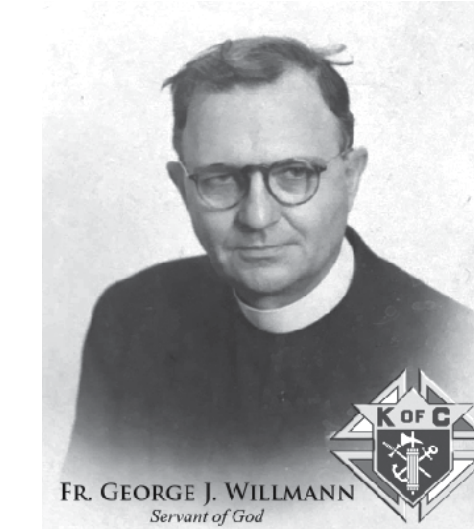
3. Liberation

The planes roared over the camp at seven in the morning. All of the Jesuits were still inside their barracks, because at seven they were to line up in the little dirt street in front of the barracks, to be counted and identified by the Japanese. But the bell for this counting had not rung yet.

Standing at the barracks door, looking at the planes, George saw a white, billowing parachute open just under one of the planes. Then another, and another, and another. "What is it?" a priest asked him. George said: "I don't know. The Japanese must be practicing. I guess it's some kind of war game."

But, as the parachutes opened, rifle fire began from the low hills outside the camp! Bullets were whistling through the barracks. The Jesuits lay flat on the bamboo floor, because the bullets were ripping through the sawali walls — in one side of the barracks and out the other — about four feet above the ground.

George began to worry about Sister Ruth. The barracks of the Sisters — Barracks 20 — was between Barracks 19 and the rifle fire coming from the hills, so it must be worse in the quarters of the Sisters! George crept to the passage leading to the wash room. The big pot was there, in which the rice came to Barracks 19. It was empty. George took the pot lid, and — holding it like a Roman shield — ran across the intervening space



to Barracks 20.

He found the Sisters lying flat on the bamboo floor. He found Ruth. She was face down on the bamboos, but shaking with laughter. He said: "What's the matter? Why are you laughing?" Lying together on the floor, she told him. "That Sister...that old sister.... she never stops talking! And just now she was talking, as usual, and a bullet shot the coffee cup right out of her hand! She stood there for a minute and said: 'That was the best cup in the barracks', and then lay down, with the rest of us. She was quiet, for the first time in months! Then she leaned toward me and asked: 'What was I saying?'" Ruth could not stop laughing. It struck her as incredibly funny. She said to George: "Whatever this is, it must be something big! She lost her train of thought!"

Japanese soldiers ran into the barracks of the Sisters and began firing out of their windows, firing at the hills. George guessed that the Japanese were firing at the guerrilleros. It could not be anyone else. The Japanese were stepping on the nuns, to get to the windows.

Through the open doorway, George could see new figures approaching the barracks. They were wearing coal-skuttle helmets, like the helmets of the Germans in World War I. The Japanese were allies of the Germans, so George guessed that these might be Germans, imported to train them. But these men in the coal-skuttle helmets, some of them, had no shirts — and their bodies were yellow! George guessed that they might be Koreans. There were many Koreans in the Japanese Army.

Two of the Japanese, firing from the window, were wounded. They withdrew, bleeding. The other Japanese withdrew, still firing. One of the figures in the coal-skuttle helmets came sliding along the wall, outside the barracks, and looked in. He was an American! George knew this, at once. A little nun bounced up from the bamboo floor, threw her arms around the American soldier, and kissed him! The boy blushed, took off his helmet in the middle of the battle, and said: "Gee! This is the nicest battle I ever been in!"

(To be continued next issue)

Pondering the Words / C2

Blessing when the Apostolic Penitentiary loosened its requirements for the Plenary Indulgence to be imparted. (Urbi et Orbi Blessing is given only during solemn occasions: the proclamation of the newly elected pope, Christmas Day and Easter Sunday.)

Is it allowed? Yes. Churches may be closed but the doors of our faith remains open and will remain to reach us now as we need it most. The church extends its arms to us in all the peripheries that our spiritual thirst be quenched. We are God's beloved.

As we celebrate this holy month of the Most Sacred

Heart of Jesus, having this quarantine, let us look upon ourselves. Have we patterned our hearts to that of the Wounded Healer? Are we ready to be called "His beloved" or are we roman soldiers continuing to persecute the church? What will be our response as we are called to entrust our lives with Mary as our mother? Will fear be our response or obedience to the will of the Father?

We are God's beloved from the time being and until we reach the everlasting bliss in the kingdom of God when Jesus himself will ask us face to face, "Do you love me?"

Brother's Insight / C2

But the government needs to balance things out. Economy cannot grind to a halt as it could be more damaging than the virus itself. Though reluctant, the government eased the ECQ and modified it from May 16-31. The MECQ allowed some businesses to open as badly needed revenues both by the government in the form of taxes and the private sector not only for survival but to support the needs of their employees. I think it was more of a gamble rather than a scientific approach in easing the lockdown.

The government is upping the ante on its gamble as it announced that beginning June 1, Metro Manila will be placed in General Community Quarantine (GCQ). This could mean more businesses to open

with some public transport. More people would be allowed to work and go about their business.

Whether the government's gamble pays off or not remains to be seen. I hope that the government's decision to place Metro Manila in GCQ is correct and was based on a scientific study rather than on gut feel alone. That the spread of the virus is very much under control with sufficient testing kits and with faster test results. I pray for our people's health and to be totally free of this horrendous disease. I also pray that we could easily adjust and adapt to the new norm not only to protect ourselves but also not to infect others in case we are carriers of the disease. Let us all be safety conscious at all times for the sake of our family.

KC Updates



The Knights of Columbus Visayas Jurisdiction headed by Worthy Visayas State Deputy Bro. Teofrido B. Lagria during their outreach activity amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic entitled "Leave No Neighbor Behind"



The Our Lady of Fatima Council no. 7443 in Cagayan de Oro of the Knights of Columbus Mindanao Jurisdiction headed by the Past District Deputy Fidel Marlon Bongay and the Grand Knight Cresileo Q. Macas while preparing for the distribution of food packs for their less fortunate fellow Brother Knights and members of their community amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

A courageous step to taking care of life and what matters

HAVE you ever thought about preparing for retirement? Have you seen a product in the market that fits your financial needs when you turn 60? How about ensuring that your income is protected if you work up to age 60, or even 70? Let us help you solve your problem!

This month of June, we are featuring a product that allows you to hit two goals at the same time – that is to protect your income and to prepare you for retirement. As the name implies, Valiant Retire allows us to take a courageous step in preparing for a very important life stage – retirement – while taking care of possible income losses in case of death of a loved one within the coverage period. Evidently here in the Philippines, many people failed to protect their income and prepare for retirement when they were most capable of doing so. Now, we hope everyone to be different. Protect your income. Get ready for your retirement.

Get yourself a Valiant Retire Benefit Certificate from KCFAPI and maintain a worry-free life!

Valiant Retire is a benefit certificate plan with death benefits and guaranteed endowments that is payable for 10 years. It is available for everyone from 1 to 50 years old. It can be your first life insurance benefit certificate or a supplement to your existing whole life, term or other endowment plans depending on your goal or objective.

Let us present to you the benefits that you may find valuable from the product: **LIVING BENEFITS**

Who would not like a product that will allow you to receive cash on fixed scheduled dates, let's say every 5 years? This will allow you to enjoy your money while still having life insurance benefits to protect your family. With Valiant Retire, you will receive 25% of your Face Value at age 60, another 25% of the Face Value at age

65, and the remaining 50% of the Face Value will be received at age 70. This means that when the BC Holder reaches age 60, he will start receiving endowments every 5 years up to age 70.

It also has accumulated cash participation whose dividends may be added to the cash value of the benefit certificate to earn more interests.

FAMILY BENEFITS

Many families worry about not being prepared for the death of the head of the family or whom we call the breadwinner. If this happens, the lifestyle of the family will be so much affected because of income losses. And, that is also one of the things that this product would like to address.

Valiant Retire also offers Family Benefit. This product feature provides the beneficiary an amount upon the death of the insured individual. For Valiant Retire, the beneficiary will receive 100% of the Face Value if the death of the insured occurs

before age 60.

If the death occurs between ages 60 and 65, the beneficiary will receive 75% of the Face Value. This is because the BC Holder has already received 25% of the Face Value as a Living Benefit when he reached age 60.

Moreover, if the death occurs between ages 65 and 70, the beneficiary will receive 50% of the face Value because the BC Holder has already received 25% of the Face Value at age 60 and another 25% of the Face Value at age 65.

The insurance coverage automatically terminates at age 70.

With all the benefits that this product could offer, how can not one be delighted to get insured with this life insurance plan? If you want to have a benefit certificate that will not only give you life insurance coverage but will also ensure you of a well-prepared retirement, Valiant Retire is the right plan for you! **(JDJavier)**



KCFAPI Sales Team: Gearing up for the new normal

IT has been 3 months since the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was implemented in the National Capital Region which later on covered all regions nationwide. During that time, only the family member with a quarantine pass issued by the government was allowed to go out to buy food and other essentials. Work was suspended for many companies. Businesses and transportation stopped. And many lost their income. Indeed, it was a tough time. Only companies and institutions vital to the survival of the citizenry were allowed to operate.

On June 1, the ECQ was finally lifted and was replaced by the more relaxed General Community Quarantine (GCQ). Some companies started to operate again and about 50% of the nation's workforce was back to face life's reality of having to work again. Little by little, the society is hoping to bounce back.

Out of creativity, resourcefulness and resilience, people found ways to survive and temporarily replace their lost means of income. Some sold goodies, packed home-cooked food, survival essentials and other items online. Professional speakers conducted webinars and online training sessions. Artists showcased their masterpieces online. Theater enthusiasts made their recorded stage plays and musicals available online for a specific number of hours for people to witness. Everyone found a way to contribute to help each other fight worries and anxieties amid the pandemic.

Resilience is indeed one Filipino trait that is very obvious in each one of us.

KCFAPI SALES TEAM ON EMBRACING THE NEW NORMAL

The Sales Team of KCFAPI, composed of around 1,800 Area Managers, Unit Managers, and Fraternal Counselors, was not spared from the difficulties and challenges caused by the pandemic. Operations were paralyzed as face-to-face contact was strictly prohibited by the government and everyone was asked to stay home.

But we did not falter. The Sales Team of KCFAPI found ways to make use of the time spent at home and make it productive - maybe not by selling life insurance but by learning more to become more effective Fraternal Counselors. The Fraternal Benefits Group, through its Sales Training Team, initiated online learning sessions that aimed to help the Sales Team cope with the uncertainties brought by the ongoing health crisis. Through this initiative, the sales team had a way to acquire new learnings about life insurance and life in general. We created and launched a Facebook Group exclusive for all Fraternal Counselors and Fraternal Benefits Managers where they can watch uploaded training videos and other learning materials discussing what's necessary in the business of life insurance. Some of the topics discussed are: Types of Life Insurance, Field Underwriters and Underwriting Factors, Importance of Life Insurance, Non-Medical Privilege and Routine Medical Underwriting Requirements, and Anti-selection. These topics are vital to learn to be efficient Fraternal Counselors.

To make the video training materials more useful to the Sales Team of KCFAPI, FBG Sales Training Team released an edition of videos that tackled the proper way to fill-out the BC Application Form. It is a series of videos that discusses the step-by-step process of accomplishing the application form – from Personal Information down to

Insurance Information, Health Declarations and Declarations and Agreements. The team wanted to provide the Fraternal Counselors accessible training materials that they may use at their own pace and at their own time.

Further, we launched a 2-month training program for the Sales Team that covers the months of June and July – the Wednesday Open Clinic and Friday Special Training.

WEDNESDAY OPEN CLINIC

This 3-hour weekly training sessions aim to provide basic training modules to all accredited Fraternal Counselors. Because of the health crisis we are facing, we realized the need to allow the Fraternal Counselors to refresh and bounce back from a long period of community quarantine. We identified modules from the basic Fraternal Service Training Program and the Sales Cycle Training Program, compressed the modules, and assigned each topic every week for 8 weeks. We also inserted new topics that are relevant to the business of life insurance. Some of the topics include Fundamentals of Life Insurance, KCFAPI Products Orientation, Underwriting Guidelines and how to accomplish BC Application Forms, and Temporary Receipts and Collection Reports and BC Relation concerns.

From the Sales Cycle Training Program, we included Prospecting and Setting-up an Appointment, Presentation Skills and Overcoming Objections, and Closing the Deal and After Sales Service. Hopefully, we are able to provide what the Sales Team of KCFAPI needs to get back on track!

FRIDAY SPECIAL TRAINING

This training program includes a set of more advance training modules necessary in the development process of a Fraternal Counselor. The objective of this program is to level-up the knowledge and skills of the Sales Team in dealing with prospects and existing clients. This will also broaden their opportunities in terms of offering a more complex and rewarding solution to client needs. The topics that will be discussed in this program include Financial Planning, Building Your Business, Basics of Investment and Basics of Estate Planning. These training modules will surely jumpstart our Fraternal Counselors to reach higher goals and help more Brother Knights and their families.

Prior to the launching of these training programs, we gathered the Fraternal Counselors and Fraternal Benefits Managers online for a session on how to utilize technology for training and what they can do in the business while following the government mandated community quarantine. We identified activities that they may continue to do online and over the phone like prospecting, setting-up an appointment, online needs based analysis, presentation of solution and accomplishing of the BC Application Form.

The preparation phase was not easy but we all willingly went through it. Teaching the Sales Team installation and account creation process was also a challenge due to availability of gadgets and internet connectivity but everyone was willing to learn and they all accepted the new challenge. With all the commitment and support from the Fraternal Counselors and Fraternal Benefits Managers, we were able to somehow make sure that everyone was ready to face and embrace the new normal.

And now, we are all set to take off! **(JDJavier)**

Online Payment GUIDELINES

ONLINE PAYMENT GUIDELINES FOR Bank of Philippine Islands (BPI)

- STEP 01** Open your BPI account using BPI mobile app, and select the Transfer Money tab
- STEP 02** Select the source account under Transfer from Indicate the amount to be paid. *Note: Daily limit of P50,000*
- STEP 03** Click Transfer to 3rd Party Enter the KCFAPI BPI account 0131-043-791 under Transfer to
- STEP 04** Indicate the BC Number and the Name of BC Holder under Notes Example: BC 1234567 Juan Dela Cruz
- STEP 05** Double check the details entered. Click Confirm if correct. Once the fund transfer is successfully completed, forward the screen shot or email confirmation to fmass@kofc.org.ph

Online Payment GUIDELINES

ONLINE PAYMENT GUIDELINES FOR METROBANK

- STEP 01** Log in your Metrobank account using Metrobank mobile app, and click the account to be used (Current and Savings) Select the type of transaction (Transfer to Mobile Account)
- STEP 02** Indicate the KCFAPI Metrobank Account Number 632-3632-109858 and the amount to be paid (Note: Subject to daily limit)
- STEP 03** Click Next and verify correctness of details typed. Indicate under "Remarks" the Benefit Certificate Number (BC no.) and BC Name Example: BC 1234567 Juan Dela Cruz
- STEP 04** Click "Submit" once correctness of details is established. Enter the OTP sent to your mobile number Once the transfer is successfully completed forward the screenshot or email confirmation to fmass@kofc.org.ph

Payment FACILITIES

PAYMENT GUIDELINES FOR PALAWAN PAWNSHOP

QUICK GUIDE PALAWAN PAWNSHOP REMITTANCE FOR BENEFIT CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

QUICK GUIDE PALAWAN PAWNSHOP REMITTANCE FOR FRATERNAL COUNSELORS