

# CBCP Monitor

AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 27, 2020, VOL. 24, NOS. 18 & 19

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

CBCP\_MONITOR@AREOPAGUSCOMMUNICATIONS.COM

## Church pushes back 500 Years of Christianity celebration

By Roy Lagarde

**THE quinquennial celebration of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines will be extended for another year due to the pandemic, a church official said.**

The scheduled culmination of the celebration in April 2021 will now be the launch of a yearlong celebration that will end in April 2022.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, acting president of bishops' conference, said the decision to move the dates of the historic event was due to the health crisis.

"Due to the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it was necessary to change the schedule of our celebration of the 500 years of Christianity," David said. "So it is now going to be a whole year celebration until 2022," he added.

The bishops agreed that the kick-off will be on April 17, an Easter Sunday, to commemorate the First Easter Sunday Mass in the country.

The National Historical Commission of the Philippines has earlier affirmed that the site for the historic Mass was held on Limasawa Island in Southern Leyte on March



Catholic bishops arrive for a Mass at the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral on Jan. 27, 2018. PHOTO BY ROY LAGARDE

31, 1521.

On Sept. 12, the Diocese of Maasin began a 200-day countdown to the 500th anniversary of the 1521 Eucharistic celebration on their island.

The Church will also commemorate the First Baptism on April 14, 2021, an event that will be spearheaded by the Archdiocese of Cebu.

Originally set in April 2021, the bishops also moved the International Mission Congress (IMC) and the 2nd National Mission Congress to April 2022.

Bishop David said that the National Retreat for the

Clergy set on Aug. 4 to 6, 2021 has been cancelled.

Instead of a retreat, the bishops' Commission on the Clergy decided to organize a series of conferences on the Church's history in the Philippines.

"Each (CBCP) Commission will also have adjustments of their plans due to the crisis that we are going through," he said.

The Church is currently observing the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and Indigenous Peoples, which is part of a 9-year preparation for the 2021 Jubilee.

The preparation kicked off in 2013, with each year dedicated to a specific theme related to the faith and new evangelization.

The final year of the celebration in 2021 is devoted to the commemoration of the "Missio ad Gentes," or mission to the nations.

In September 2019, the bishops released the official theme and logo for the fifth centenary of Christianity in the Philippines, dubbed "500YOC".

"Gifted to Give," taken from Matthew's Gospel (10:8), is the theme of the celebration.

## Pope names US archbishop as new nuncio to the Philippines



Pope Francis and Archbishop Charles John Brown in the Vatican in December, 2018. VATICAN MEDIA

POPE Francis on Sept. 28 has chosen Archbishop Charles John Brown to be his next ambassador to the Philippines.

The 60-year-old American diplomat will move to Manila from Albania, where he has served as apostolic nuncio since 2017.

Archbishop Brown will succeed Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, who is now the Vatican's Permanent Observer to the United Nations in New York.

The country has been without a nuncio after Archbishop Caccia ended his tour of duty in the Philippines in December 2019.

The appointment comes as the country will mark next year the 500 years of Christian faith's arrival in the country.

The country's bishops have welcomed the appointment of Archbishop Brown as the pope's new

envoy to Asia's most predominantly Christian nation.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo, the apostolic administrator of Manila, assured Brown of the archdiocese's support on his new mission.

"We are happy to welcome him and we pray that he will have fruitful work here in the country," Pabillo told Radio Veritas.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga said Brown's appointment is "a welcome relief and comfort for us in this troubling time" of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We welcome our new Apostolic Nuncio with our obedience. We give our cooperation and avail ourselves for services," he said.

For his part, Bishop Roberto Gaa of Novaliches noted the significance of the nuncio for the church in the

Nuncio / A7

## Forget not lessons from martial law — bishops

CHURCH leaders have urged people not to forget the lessons of martial law and never let its "horrors" happen again.

Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga made this call as the nation marked the 48th anniversary of the military rule by late strongman Ferdinand Marcos on Sept. 21.

"We have to learn from martial law and live its lessons, and should never let it happen again," Santos said. "We have to value, defend and promote our freedom."

Bishop Broderick Pabillo of the Manila archdiocese echoed Santos' call, saying that many Filipinos have not learned their lessons from martial law.

"I think we have not learned our lessons. People are not vigilant and are not courageous enough to speak out," Pabillo said. "They allow themselves to be bullied."

Retired Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon recalled that as priest and head of social action in the Surigao diocese, he was among those who suffered the "horrors" of martial law.



"I personally experienced harassment and danger during this period... However, many Filipinos seem to have a short memory of the horrors of Martial Law," he said.

Santos also lamented that there are politicians who opt to replicate the

atrocities that happened during the dark times of the dictatorship.

"There are political leaders, who are self-serving, using their position to enrich, and to prolong their power," said Santos. (CBCP News)

## Pope to Philippine Catholic schools: Form authentic witnesses to Christ

POPE Francis called on Philippine Catholic educators to hone their students not just to become outstanding learners but also as authentic witnesses of faith.

The pope said that Catholic education must not only teach critical thinking, but also encourages "formation in Christian doctrine and morality".

Doing so, he said, would lead to formation of men and women "who are ready to take society's heavier responsibilities and to witness to the true faith to

the world".

The pope's words were contained in his message for this year's Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) Congress.

The annual event, albeit held virtually this time because of the coronavirus crisis, opened on September 21 and will continue until September 25.

Fr. Elmer Dizon, CEAP President, stressed that as the pandemic continues, they will remain vigilant in responding to issues detrimental to their

ministry.

Amidst the current challenges, he said that continued efforts are exerted so that Catholic schools "become catalysts of change".

"This is who we are. This is what God wants us to be," Fr. Dizon said.

For his part, Bishop Roberto Mallari of the Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education said that the educational sector is one of the most challenged today.

He said every school has to come up with learning

modalities to address the needs of the students.

But the CEAP, the prelate said, "will not cower in fear but rather will stand firm in being steward not only to the learners but also to other schools".

"CEAP will be here to serve as wind beneath the wind of member schools as they struggle for survival amidst the pandemic," Bishop Mallari said.

CEAP is an association of more than 1,500 Catholic schools nationwide. (CBCP News)

## Gov't orders closure of cemeteries from Oct. 29 to Nov. 4



Filipinos visit relatives' graves at the Parañaque Public Cemetery on Nov. 1, 2019. PHOTO BY MICHAEL DALOGDOG

ALL cemeteries and columbaria in the Philippines will be closed from Oct. 29 to Nov. 4 as a precautionary measure against coronavirus, Malacañang said on Sept. 18.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said the decision was made to avoid crowding during All Saints and All Souls Day.

"The rationale is to prevent gatherings that we are used to during Undas," Roque said in a press briefing.

He instead encouraged the public to visit their departed loved ones on or after the said dates.

He clarified that cemeteries will be opened but only with a limited capacity of 30 percent

during the period before Oct. 29 and after Nov. 4.

"This means we can visit before and after the cemeteries are closed but the capacity is 30 percent," Roque said.

The Archdiocese of Manila has earlier urged the faithful to schedule the blessing of the tombs of their dear departed ahead of the annual observance of All Saints and All Souls Day.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo, apostolic administrator of the archdiocese, said priests are always available to bless the tombs and to celebrate Masses for the dead ahead of the annual observance. (CBCP News)

## Vatican Briefing

### Pope Francis blesses bell that will ring out in defense of unborn

Pope Francis blessed a large bell Wednesday that Polish Catholics hope will ring out in the defence of unborn life. “May its ring awaken the consciences of legislators and all people of good will in Poland and the whole world,” Pope Francis said Sept. 23. The Voice of the Unborn bell, commissioned by the Yes to Life foundation, is a symbolic bell to be used at Poland’s March for Life and other pro-life events. It is decorated with a cast an ultrasound image of an unborn child and a quotation from Blessed Jerzy Popieluszko: “A child’s life begins under the mother’s heart.” **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

### 2 Vatican officials sign agreement to cooperate on fighting corruption

The Vatican’s prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy and auditor general signed a memorandum of understanding on the fight against corruption on Sept. 18. According to a message from the Holy See press office, the agreement means the offices of the Secretariat for the Economy and the auditor general “will collaborate even more closely in identifying the risks of corruption.” The two authorities will also work together to implement Pope Francis’ new anti-corruption law, issued in June, which aimed at increasing oversight and accountability in the Vatican’s procedures for awarding public contracts. The memorandum of understanding was signed by Fr. Juan Antonio Guerrero, S.J., head of the Secretariat for the Economy, and Alessandro Cassinis Righini, interim head of the Office of Auditor General. **(Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)**

### Pope appoints Maltese bishop as secretary general of Synod of Bishops

Pope Francis appointed a new secretary general of the Synod of Bishops on Sept. 16. The Holy See press office said that the pope had named Maltese Bishop Mario Grech to the post after accepting the resignation a day earlier of Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, who had served as secretary general since 2013. Grech, the emeritus bishop of Gozo, was appointed pro-secretary general of the Synod of Bishops on Oct. 2, 2019, serving alongside Baldisseri. The Italian cardinal said at the time of the appointment that Grech would assume the full position of secretary general when his own mandate expired. One of Grech’s main tasks will be preparing for the forthcoming synod on synodality, scheduled for Oct. 2022. He took part in last year’s Amazon synod. **(CNA)**

### Pope Francis to release new encyclical on Oct. 4

Pope Francis will release his new encyclical Oct. 4, the Vatican announced Wednesday. The Holy See press office said Sept. 16 that the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, on fraternity and social friendship, would be issued at noon Rome time on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. The Vatican announced earlier this month that Pope Francis would sign the third encyclical of his pontificate during a visit to Assisi on Oct. 3. Pope Francis will offer a Mass at the tomb of St. Francis in Assisi privately at 3 p.m. before signing the encyclical, the Holy See press office said Sept. 5. **(CNA)**

### Pope Francis: Don’t let financial concerns dominate healthcare

Economic considerations must not be allowed to encroach on the relationship between medical staff and patients, Pope Francis said Friday. Speaking to members of the International Gynecologic Cancer Society (IGCS) Sept. 11, the pope said that humane care of the sick should not depend on the individual doctor but rather be an integral part of health systems. “Financial concerns should not be allowed to dominate the field of healthcare to the point where such essential aspects as building relationships with patients are overlooked,” he said. **(CNA)**

### Pope Francis pleads with Catholics not to gossip

Pope Francis implored Catholics Sunday not to gossip about one another’s faults, but instead to follow Jesus’ directive on fraternal correction in the Gospel of Matthew. “When we see a mistake, a defect, a slip of a brother or sister, usually the first thing we do is go and tell others about it, to gossip. And gossip closes the heart of the community, disrupts the unity of the Church,” Pope Francis said in his Angelus address Sept. 6. “The great talker is the devil, who always goes about saying the bad things of others, because he is the liar who tries to disunite the Church, alienating brothers and sisters and unmaking community. Please, brothers and sisters, let’s make an effort not to gossip. Gossiping is a plague worse than COVID,” he told pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

### Pope Francis: science and faith together can protect environment

Pope Francis said Thursday that science and faith together can help humanity to overcome ecological crises. Addressing a delegation of French ecological experts Sept. 3, the pope said that the Catholic Church was committed to defending the planet from exploitation. “It has no ready-made solutions to propose and does not ignore the difficulties of the technical, economic and political issues at stake, nor all the efforts that this commitment entails,” the pope said in a speech that was handed out to the delegation. “But it wants to act concretely where this is possible, and above all wants to form consciences in order to promote a deep and lasting ecological conversion, which alone can meet the important challenges we face.” **(CNA)**

# Cardinal Pell to return to Rome this week

ROME— Cardinal George Pell is set to return to Rome on Tuesday, his first time back in the Vatican since 2017, when he took a leave of absence from his role as prefect of the Vatican’s Secretariat for the Economy to travel to Australia.

The cardinal is set to fly on Sept. 29, sources close to Pell confirmed to CNA on Sunday, following an initial report by Australian journalist Andrew Bolt in the Herald Sun newspaper.

Pell has been living in his former Archdiocese of Sydney since his acquittal by Australia’s High Court in April on charges of sexual abuse.

In 2014, the cardinal was appointed by Pope Francis to take charge of the newly created Secretariat for the Economy and to lead efforts at reforming Vatican financial affairs. After charges of sexual abuse were brought by Victoria police, Pell took temporary leave of his role in 2017 in order to return to Australia and prove his innocence.

Pell faced allegations from a single accuser related to his time as Bishop of Melbourne. He spent 13 months in solitary confinement after he was initially convicted and given a six-year prison sentence, before being vindicated on appeal to the High Court.

Pell’s term of office as head of the Vatican’s financial secretariat expired during his time in prison, with Pope Francis naming Fr. Juan Antonio Guerrero Alves, SJ, to succeed him in

2019.

The news of Pell’s return to Rome comes just days after the dramatic resignation of Cardinal Angelo Becciu, whom Pope Francis asked to resign as prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints and from the rights extended to members of the College of Cardinals on Sept. 24 after he was linked to an ongoing investigation of financial misconduct at the Vatican.

Becciu had worked previously as the number two-ranking official in the Vatican’s Secretariat of State, where, CNA has previously reported, he repeatedly clashed with Pell over the reform of Vatican finances.

Pell, who had not spoken publicly about his former Vatican role since his exoneration, responded to the news of Becciu’s resignation with gratitude.

“The Holy Father was elected to clean up Vatican finances. He plays a long game and is to be thanked and congratulated on recent developments,” Pell wrote in a statement sent to CNA Sept. 25.

“I hope the cleaning of the stables continues in both the Vatican and Victoria,” Pell said.

CNA has reported that in 2015 Becciu seemed to have made an attempt to disguise the loans on Vatican balance sheets by canceling them out against the value of the property purchased in the London neighborhood of Chelsea, an accounting maneuver prohibited by

new financial policies approved by Pope Francis in 2014.

The alleged attempt to hide the loans off-books was detected by the Prefecture for the Economy, then led by Pell. Senior officials at the Prefecture for the Economy told CNA that when Pell began to demand details of the loans, especially those involving the Swiss bank BSI, then-Archbishop Becciu called the cardinal in to the Secretariat of State for a “reprimand.”

In 2016, Becciu was instrumental in bringing to a halt reforms initiated by Pell. Although Pope Francis had given the newly created Prefecture for the Economy autonomous oversight authority over Vatican finances, Becciu interfered when Pell’s financial secretariat planned an external audit of all Vatican departments, to be conducted by the firm PriceWaterhouseCooper.

Unilaterally, and without permission of Pope Francis, Becciu canceled the audit and announced in a letter to all Vatican departments that it would not take place.

When Pell challenged internally the audit’s cancellation, Becciu persuaded Pope Francis to give his decision *ex post facto* approval, sources inside the prefecture told CNA. The audit never took place.

Becciu held a press conference in Rome Sept. 25 at which he protested his innocence of financial wrongdoing. **(CNA)**

## Seafarers charity Apostleship of the Sea is renamed Stella Maris

THE Apostleship of the Sea, a Catholic charity helping seafarers worldwide, will now be known as Stella Maris.

In a letter to the organization’s chaplains and volunteers released by the Holy See press office Monday, international director Fr. Bruno Ciceri said the change was necessary because the charity had different names in different countries, causing “confusion and misunderstanding.”

“From now on ‘Stella Maris’ will be the official name with which the Apostolate of the Catholic Church for the people of the sea will be known. This will replace the current name, ‘Apostleship of the Sea,’” he wrote, also unveiling a new logo for the charity which is present in 55 countries and supports more than a million seafarers a year.

In a letter marking the organization’s 100th anniversary, Cardinal Peter Turkson praised the updated logo.

“The new Stella Maris logo has been designed by affirming



our Catholic roots and maintaining the distinctive symbolism of the past,” the prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development said.

“The logo is not only a nice sticker but it represents our unity and common identity. It should be our guide and source of our inspiration for our commitment at the service of the maritime world.”

In his letter, Ciceri noted that when the port ministry was founded in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1920, the organization was named

Apostleship of the Sea as it was inspired by the Apostleship of Prayer, a global association that began in France in 1844.

“Furthermore, with the growth of the Apostolate, many new seafarers centers were established in different ports and were called ‘Stella Maris’ (in English, Star of the Sea), a traditional name for Our Lady—referring to her as the guiding star who leads to Christ,” he said in his letter to members dated Sept. 24.

“These two names are often inscribed inside the logo,

appearing interchangeably and commonly used to define our ministry to the people of the sea. Sometimes this has created confusion and misunderstanding, giving the impression that we were two different and separate organizations.”

Ciceri argued that Stella Maris was a better name for the charity “because, being Latin, it has greater potential for global reach.” He explained that it would not need to be translated into different languages, removing another source of potential confusion.

He added: “The term also transliterates well into non-Roman alphabet systems (such as Cyrillic) or even pictorial language systems (such as Chinese). Both these language systems are important to the shipping industry and the crews of ships.”

Ciceri urged the organization’s branches to also adopt the new logo, replacing one designed by co-founder Peter F. Anson. **(CNA)**

## Vatican Cardinal Angelo Becciu resigns from office and ‘rights’ of cardinals

CARDINAL Angelo Becciu, who until today was prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints, has resigned from that office, and in an extremely rare move, from the rights extended to members of the College of Cardinals.

The cardinal worked previously as the number two-ranking official in the Vatican’s Secretariat of State, and has been connected to an ongoing investigation of financial malfeasance at the secretariat.

A statement from the Holy See press office Thursday said: “Today, Thursday, Sept. 24, the Holy Father accepted the resignation from the office of Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and related rights of the Cardinalate, presented by His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu.”

Becciu remains technically a cardinal, and the Vatican’s announcement did not specifically delineate what rights Becciu has resigned. In 2015, Pope Francis accepted a similar renunciation from Scottish Cardinal Keith O’Brien, who in 2013 admitted to serial sexual misconduct. O’Brien did not subsequently attend public ecclesiastical events, and was ineligible to participate

in a future papal conclave. The Vatican press office could not be reached for comment Thursday evening.

The cardinal himself has not yet responded to a request for comment from CNA.

The move was unexpected, and does not seem to have been long planned. Becciu had been scheduled to preside over the beatification of Ven. Carlo Acutis, which will take place in Assisi Oct. 10.

Becciu served as “sostituto,” or second-ranking official at the Secretariat of State, from 2011 to 2018, when Pope Francis named him a cardinal and moved him to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. During his tenure in that position, he was linked to a number of financial scandals, most recently the Secretariat’s investment of hundreds of millions of euros with the Italian businessman Raffaele Mincione and the controversial purchase of a London building.

CNA has previously reported that a substantial part of the \$200 million used to finance the Secretariat of State’s purchase of a luxury development at 60 Sloane Avenue came through credit extended by BSI, a Swiss bank with a long track record of violating money-laundering and fraud safeguards in its

dealings with sovereign wealth funds.

CNA has also reported that in 2015 Becciu seemed to have made an attempt to disguise the loans on Vatican balance sheets by cancelling them out against the value of the property purchased in the London neighborhood of Chelsea, an accounting maneuver prohibited by new financial policies approved by Pope Francis in 2014.

The alleged attempt to hide the loans off-books was detected by the Prefecture for the Economy, then led by Cardinal George Pell. Senior officials at the Prefecture for the Economy told CNA that when Pell began to demand details of the loans, especially those involving BSI, then-Archbishop Becciu called the cardinal in to the Secretariat of State for a “reprimand.”

In February 2017, Pope Francis named Becciu as his personal delegate to oversee the “spiritual and moral” reform of the Order of Malta, with particular attention to the professed members. It is unclear if he will continue in the role.

Pope Francis created Becciu a cardinal on June 28, 2018. He was appointed prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on Aug. 31, 2018. **(CNA)**

# Cardinal Sarah: In UN message, Pope Francis decries 'We must return to the Eucharist' abortion and family breakdown



Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. BOHUMIL PETRIK/CNA

IN a letter to the leaders of the world's episcopal conferences, the head of the Vatican's office for worship and sacraments said that Catholic communities should return to Mass as soon as it can be done safely, and that the Christian life cannot be sustained without the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Christian community of the Church.

The letter, sent to bishops this week, said that, while the Church should cooperate with civic authorities and be attentive to safety protocols amid the coronavirus pandemic, "liturgical norms are not matters on which civil authorities can legislate, but only the competent ecclesiastical authorities." It also emphasized that bishops can make provisional changes to liturgical rubrics in order to accommodate public health concerns, and urged obedience to those temporary changes.

"In listening to and collaborating with civil authorities and experts," bishops and episcopal conferences "were prompt to make difficult and painful decisions, even to the point of suspending the participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist for a long period. This Congregation is deeply grateful to the Bishops for their commitment and effort in trying to respond in the best possible way to an unforeseen and complex situation," Cardinal Robert Sarah wrote in Let us return to the Eucharist with joy, dated Aug. 15 and approved by Pope Francis Sept. 3.

"As soon as circumstances permit, however, it is necessary and urgent to return to the normality of Christian life, which has the church building as its home and the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, as 'the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; and at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows' (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10)."

Sarah noted that "as soon as is possible... we must return to the Eucharist with a purified heart, with a renewed amazement, with an increased desire to meet the Lord, to be with Him, to receive Him and to bring Him to our brothers and sisters with the witness of a life full of faith, love and hope."

"We cannot be without the banquet of the Eucharist, the table of the Lord to which we are invited as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters to receive the Risen Christ himself, present in body, blood, soul and divinity in that Bread of Heaven which sustains us in the joys and labours of this earthly pilgrimage."

We "cannot be without the Christian community," Sarah added, "cannot be without the house of the Lord," "cannot be without the Lord's Day."

"We cannot live as Christians without participating in the Sacrifice of the Cross in the which the Lord Jesus gave himself unreservedly to save, by his death, humanity which had died because of sin...in the embrace of the Crucified One all human suffering finds light and comfort."

The cardinal explained that while streamed or televised Masses "have performed a great service...at a time when there was no possibility of community celebration, no broadcast is comparable to personal communication or can replace it. On the contrary, these broadcasts alone risk distancing us from a personal and intimate encounter with the incarnate God who gave himself to us not in a virtual way," but in the Eucharist.

"One the concrete measures that can be taken to reduce the spread of the virus to a minimum have been identified and adopted, it is necessary that all resume their place in the assembly of brothers and sisters... and encourage again those brothers and sisters who have been discouraged, frightened, absent, or uninvolved for too long."

Sarah's letter made some concrete suggestions for the resumption of Mass amid the coronavirus pandemic, which is expected to continue to spread in the United States in the fall and winter months, with some models predicting a doubling of the death count by the end of 2020.

The cardinal said that bishops should give "due attention" to "hygiene and safety regulations" while avoiding the "sterilization of gestures and rites" or "instilling, even unconsciously, fear and insecurity in the faithful."

He added that bishops should be certain that civil authorities not subordinate the Mass to a place of priority below "recreational activities" or regard the Mass as only a "gathering" comparable to other public activities, and reminded bishops that civic authorities cannot regulate liturgical norms.

Sarah said that pastors should "insist on the necessity of adoration," work to ensure the dignity of the liturgy and its setting, and ensure that "the faithful should be recognized as having the right to receive the Body of Christ and to worship the Lord present in the Eucharist," without "limitations that go even beyond what is provided for by the norms of hygiene issued by public authorities." (CNA)

POPE Francis told the United Nations Sept. 25 that denying the existence of human life in the womb through abortion does not solve problems.

"Unfortunately, some countries and international institutions are also promoting abortion as one of the so-called 'essential services' provided in the humanitarian response to the pandemic," Pope Francis said in his address to the UN Sept. 25.

"It is troubling to see how simple and convenient it has become for some to deny the existence of a human life as a solution to problems that can and must be solved for both the mother and her unborn child," the pope said.

Speaking to the high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly via a video message, Pope Francis said that the problem of today's "throwaway culture" was rooted in a disrespect for human dignity.

"At the origin of this 'throwaway culture' is a gross lack of respect for human dignity, the promotion of ideologies with reductive understandings of the human person, a denial of the universality of fundamental human rights, and a craving for absolute power and control that is widespread in today's society. Let us name this for what it is: an attack against humanity itself," he said.

"It is in fact painful to see the number of fundamental human rights that in our day continue to be violated with impunity. The list of such violations is indeed lengthy, and offers us a frightening picture of a humanity abused, wounded, deprived of dignity, freedom and hope for the future," he continued.

"As part of this picture, religious believers continue to endure every kind of persecution, including genocide, because of their beliefs. We Christians too



Pope Francis records a video message delivered to the United Nations Sept. 25, 2020. SCRENGRAB/HOLY SEE UN

are victims of this: how many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world are suffering, forced at times to flee from their ancestral lands, cut off from their rich history and culture."

Pope Francis urged world leaders to be especially attentive to the rights of children, "particularly their right to life and to schooling," acclaiming the example of Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani advocate for female education.

He reminded the UN that the first teachers of every child are his or her mother and father, adding that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights describes the family as the "natural and fundamental group unit of society".

"All too often, the family is the victim of forms of ideological colonialism that weaken it and end up producing in many of its members, especially the most vulnerable—the young and the elderly—a feeling of being orphaned and lacking roots," Pope Francis said.

"The breakdown of the family echoes the social

fragmentation that hinders our efforts to confront common enemies," he added.

In his speech, Pope Francis said that the coronavirus pandemic had highlighted the urgent need to "make every person's right to basic medical care a reality" and exposed "the rapidly growing inequality between the super-rich and the permanently poor."

"I think of the effects of the pandemic on employment ... There is an urgent need to find new forms of work truly capable of fulfilling our human potential and affirming our dignity," he said.

"In order to ensure dignified employment, there must be a change in the prevailing economic paradigm, which seeks only to expand companies' profits. Offering jobs to more people should be one of the main objectives of every business, one of the criteria for the success of productive activity."

Calling on the international community to "put an end to economic injustices," the pope proposed instead an economic

model that "encourages subsidiarity, supports economic development and invests in education and infrastructure benefiting local communities."

The pope also renewed his appeals that the poorest and the most vulnerable be given priority in an effort to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines and for the forgiveness of debt burdens for the poorest nations.

For the first time in its history, the UN General Assembly is virtual this year, with world leaders delivering pre-taped remarks via video link due to the coronavirus restrictions on travel to New York. The UN is commemorating this week the 75th anniversary of its founding.

This was Pope Francis' second speech to the UN General Assembly in the seven years since his election. It was the sixth time that a pope has addressed the UN, following Pope Paul VI in 1964, Pope John Paul II in 1979 and 1995, and Pope Benedict XVI in 2008. (Courney Mares/CNA)

## Russia seeks to bar foreign-educated religious leaders from teaching, preaching

CATHOLIC leaders in Russia are expressing concern about a bill that would restrict the ability of Russian religious ministers who receive religious education abroad to teach or preach in Russia.

The bill calls for "recertification" in Russian educational institutions of pastors and "personnel of religious organisations" who have received religious education abroad, ostensibly with the goal of preventing the spread of "extremist ideology" from abroad, the Barnabas Fund reports.

The bill was proposed in the Federal Assembly and approved for first reading Sept. 22, but the reading has been postponed.

Father Kirill Gorbunov, vicar general for the Archdiocese of the Mother of God at Moscow, told RIA Novosti, according to Asia News, that priests ministering from Russia who were educated elsewhere should be informed about the history, culture and religious traditions of Russia, and should not disseminate extremist ideas in their preaching.

However, he said it is the Church's responsibility to regulate this, not the state's— and the Catholic Church has no tolerance for extremist ideas, he said.

## Preparations resume for World Youth Day in Portugal

PREPARATIONS for the next World Youth Day have resumed after they were disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Organizers of the event in Lisbon, Portugal, restarted their work Sept. 5, according to Vatican News.

Bishop Américo Aguiar, an auxiliary bishop of Lisbon and president of the WYD Lisbon 2023 Foundation,

The attempt by the Kremlin to regulate what is being taught to religious leaders "does not provide for effective solutions, rather it would lead to inextricable contradictions."

In addition to Catholics, Russian Buddhists typically study abroad as part of their formation, Asia News reported.

The bill comes amid several years of deteriorating religious freedom in Russia.

In 2016, Russian president Vladimir Putin approved a new set of laws that would restrict evangelization and missionary activity to officially registered Church buildings and worship areas.

Anti-terrorism measures, catalyzed by the 2002 Federal Law on Countering Extremist Activity, have given Russian police powers to disrupt private worship services, to arrest and detain individuals handing out unapproved religious materials, and to outlay any publish preaching without prior approval from Russian authorities.

In 2017, the country's Supreme Court banned Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist group. Judges ordered the closure of the ecclesial community's Russian headquarters and almost 400 local chapters, and the seizure of its property.

told the website that Pope Francis was following developments.

"The pope is very pleased, but also reassured because he is aware that the preparatory work for WYD is progressing," he said.

The pope announced that the Portuguese capital would host the global Catholic gathering of young people at the closing Mass of the last

As of August 2020, over a thousand homes have been searched, nearly 400 Jehovah's Witnesses have been charged, a few dozen convicted, and ten are currently serving time, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reports.

Before Communism came to Russia, a majority of the country's citizens were Eastern Orthodox Christians. During the reign of communism, the government attempted to destroy the Church by blowing up buildings and killing priests, religious sisters, and anyone who resisted them.

Once the government gained control of the Russian Orthodox Church, they appointed their own agents as hierarchy, who would then turn people in who came to the Church seeking baptism.

The seeds of distrust planted at that time still run deep, and the Russian Orthodox Church maintains its ties to the government today.

On Sept. 16, USCIRF held a virtual hearing on the state of religious freedom in Russia and Central Asia, warning that "vague and problematic" definitions of "extremism" in Russian law give the authorities wide latitude to interfere in the religious sphere. (CNA)

international World Youth Day, in Panama City, on Jan. 27, 2019.

Lisbon, a city of 505,000 people, is around 75 miles from Fatima, one of the most visited Marian pilgrimage sites in the world. The 2018 report "European Young Adults and Religion" found that Portugal has one of the highest levels of weekly Mass attendance among young

people in Europe.

The Lisbon event was initially scheduled for August 2022, but the Vatican said in April that it would be postponed by a year, to August 2023.

Holy See press office director Matteo Bruni said that Pope Francis' decision to move the date was "due to the current health situation

EDITORIAL

Returning to the Eucharist

THE head of Vatican's dicastery for worship and sacraments, Robert Cardinal Sarah, sent a letter to the bishops around the world in mid-September urging them to return to celebrating the Mass as soon as it can be done safely amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The letter which was approved by Pope Francis said that, while the Church should cooperate with civic authorities and be attentive to safety protocols, "liturgical norms are not matters on which civil authorities can legislate, but only the competent ecclesiastical authorities."

Earlier in May, Manila apostolic administrator Broderick Pabillo called the Philippine government's directives "unreasonable and preposterous." It allowed only 5 persons during religious activities in Churches when an area is under MECQ and 10 persons when on MGCQ. He asked: "Where did they get these number? Why is it that they do not give the absolute numbers of persons who can enter a store, or work in the office, or in the factory? Can they say that only 10 persons should work in an office, or that 20 persons can work in a factory, or that only 5 person can enter a store at a time?"

Pabillo further observed that "this directive on religious activities was surely taken without any consultation with the religious sector. This is the problem with the government. They make arbitrary decisions without proper consultation with the sectors involved. So they come out with unreasonable directives!"

Obviously, the government did not consider spiritual nourishment as something essential, or something that people can do without for a long period of time, just like going to beauty parlors or tourist destinations. It seems weird that after almost 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines still government functionaries and decision makers do not have an iota of idea of the essentiality of the human spirit and psyche in all facets of life. And its weirdest that after good schooling in prominent universities, these people have not encountered Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs that starts with the physiological needs and rises up to the psychological and self-fulfillment needs.

In August, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra, who is a member of IATF, sought the intervention of the Catholic Church and spiritual leaders in addressing the increasing suicide cases in the country by providing counseling and guidance to those suffering from depression and anguish amid the pandemic.

Put in another way, Cardinal Sarah in the same aforementioned letter admonished the bishops to see to it that civil authorities do not subordinate the Mass to a place of priority below "recreational activities" or regard the Mass as only a "gathering" comparable to other public activities. He said that pastors should "insist on the necessity of adoration," and ensure that "the faithful should be recognized as having the right to receive the Body of Christ and to worship the Lord present in the Eucharist," without "limitations that go even beyond what is provided for by the norms of hygiene issued by public authorities."

After over six months of uncertainty and fear, it's time to return to the Eucharist with joy—or so says the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Let's always have civil discourse

WE have to convince ourselves that the best way to resolve our unavoidable differences and conflicts in the area of politics, social life, and other fields prone to contention and controversies, is for us to always engage in civil discourse, in cordial dialogue.

We have to avoid as much as possible engaging in discussions where we think our views and positions are the only correct ones, the only fair ones, etc., and those of the others have no validity whatsoever. That's definitely the wrong way to look at things.

It's unbelievable that some politicians, for example, claim that they have all the truth, that they are practically infallible about their views and ways, and that their opponents have nothing whatsoever of what may be considered as true and fair. We need to listen to everyone, no matter how different and even in conflict their views are from ours. They will also have some good reason for their opinions and we just have to learn to respect them.

Even in their clearly wrong views, as in being immoral and sinful, they can always be handled properly without sacrificing charity, since evil can only have a power that is borrowed from what pertains to its corresponding good. All we have to do to rebut evil is to appeal to the good and the truth that is being distorted or denied.

It's important that we presume that everyone has good intentions. We have to avoid calling to question the intentions behind the views of others, unless it can be clearly ascertained that there is malice. And even if that is the case, it should be brought up in as cordial a manner as possible. To be avoided are the ways of sarcasm and ironies, direct, frontal attacks, insults and mockeries, name-calling, etc. In other words, to respond without charity. Charity and good manners should never be abandoned.

Let's never forget what Christ told us about loving our enemies. St. Paul reiterated that point when he said, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil...If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge...but leave room for God's wrath...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom 12,17-21) St. Peter also said something similar. (cfr. 1 Pt 3,9)

While we can have our partisan position in political issues, we have to remember that such condition should not undermine our universal goal for the common good that can be pursued in different and even in legitimately and morally conflicting ways.

Let's not forget that temporal matters, as in politics, can follow some political doctrines that at best can only have a tentative effectivity and varying interpretations, and are always in need of updating, purifying and contextualizing.

These temporal matters hardly have dogmas where everyone is supposed to agree and to follow all the time. Temporal matters do not have the same status as religious faith and creed. And even in the latter, their dogmas are not supposed to be forced on anyone.

Editorial / A7



ILLUSTRATION BY ZACH BORRONEO



Living Mission

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

IN this year 2020 the Philippine Bishops have asked our local Church to focus on the triple themes of *Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Indigenous Peoples*; all three elements demand an attitude of "dialogue." Beginning in the previous issue, we began explaining some "practical guidelines" found in what is popularly termed the "**Dialogue Decalogue**" (the so-called "Ten Commandments of Dialogue").

The first five "rules" or "guidelines" were previously presented; now we hear Rules Six to Ten. We recall that Pope John Paul II in his mission encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, stated: "Interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission" (RM 55). For this very reason, the Church actively engages in interfaith collaboration.

**RULE SIX:** Each dialogue partner should not only listen to the other partner with openness and sympathy, but also attempt to agree with the dialogue partner as far as is possible. This genuine openness and sincere appreciation does not require that somehow one would "compromise" one's own faith. All dialogue partners are to maintain integrity in their own faith tradition. Authentic dialogue does not imply "watering-down" or "surrendering" one's faith; rather, all participants maintain fidelity in their own faith. In this encounter, authentic

dialogue prospers.

**RULE SEVEN:** Authentic dialogue only takes place between equals. Both partners, though members of different faith traditions, come mainly to learn from each other; thus, the dialogue is (and must be): "equal with equal." Therefore, if it be, for example, that the Christian views Hinduism as inferior, or if the Hindu views Christianity as inferior, there will be no genuine dialogue. Dialogue recognizes the authenticity of the other person's religious faith.

**RULE EIGHT:** Dialogue takes place only on the basis of mutual trust. Hence, it is wise not to tackle the most difficult problems in the beginning, but rather to approach first those issues most likely to provide some common ground, helping to thereby establish human trust. One thinks immediately about how the practices of prayer, fasting, meditation, and service of the needy poor have common perspectives across various religions. Points of religious teaching or doctrine can be discussed only at a much later time.

**RULE NINE:** Persons entering into interreligious dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own religious tradition. A lack of such self-criticism implies that one's own faith tradition already has all the correct answers; such an attitude makes

dialogue not only unnecessary, but even impossible. One honestly examines and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of one's own religion; one still loves that faith tradition, but is also aware of its limitations.

**RULE TEN:** Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the other partner's religious framework "from within." A Christian asks: How does my Muslim or Hindu neighbor view and draw strength from the faith that he or she follows? John Dunne, who has explored interfaith relations in great depth, speaks of "passing over" into another's religious experience; then, one journeys back to his own religious faith. Thus, he returns as a renewed person who has been enlightened, broadened, and deepened from his close encounter with his neighbor's faith. Mutual enrichment occurs through such sincere encounters; faith is deepened!

**Summary:** In entering into interfaith dialogue, we are implementing the Second Vatican Council and are cooperating with several recent Popes who have affirmed that interreligious dialogue is integral to a comprehensive understanding of the Church's mission in the contemporary world. We seek to translate the perspective of dialogue into daily life, enriching all dialogue partners, and at the same time promoting world peace.

The priestly prayer of Jesus

WHAT prayer do we pray in these "abnormal" times when—on top of our anxiety over an indefinitely staying pandemic—come incessant and unsettling news about multiple natural disasters worldwide?

Flash floods and landslides due to heavy rains claim lives and destroy homes and crops. Volcanoes are acting up, too: a total of 55 eruptions from 55 volcanoes worldwide have been recorded from January 1 to September 14, 2020. In the

same period, 7,718 wildfires in California alone have razed 1,396,743 hectares of forests and residential areas. Heat waves and hurricanes seem to have become deadlier than usual. Climate change continues to impact life on earth, the most recent evidence being dead fish washed ashore along beaches in North Carolina and South Carolina. Then there's the rising sea level caused by polar ice melt which is predicted to cause beloved coastal cities to

And That's The Truth

Teresa R. Tunay, OCDS



sink in time. Don't natural disasters sometimes make us humans feel helpless and insignificant?

As if all that weren't enough to make life harder, there are yet man-made disasters to contend with: oil spills, explosions, mining accidents, groundwater contamination, technology failures, etc. Further pushing man deeper into a quicksand of insecurity are political unrest, acts of terrorism, border conflicts, the threat of war evident in

military muscle flexing by world "superpowers". And closer to home—do we not at times fear that we would one day just wake up with our Motherland already a "province of China"?

Being a people of faith, we pray. But what do we pray? The isolation imposed upon us by Covid 19 has led us to become more prayerful, more reflective than usual. Fearing for our lives and seeing how the "invisible enemy" has the power to

And That's the Truth / A6

Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimagala



BECAUSE of the pandemic, there is growing concern about the mental health of the people. It seems the mental cases are surging. Many people are getting depressed, gripped in some inescapable worries and anxieties and hardly able to cope with their difficulties, trials and challenges. Their thoughts and reactions are generally negative and dark. There are even signs of discouragement and despair.

It's good that many people, of course, have sought medical and psychological attention. And some authorities have

organized classes, seminars and conferences about self-care and mental fitness to address this issue.

These are very understandable reactions to our current condition. But I believe we should not forget one basic element in all these concerns. And that is that developing a genuine life of piety can greatly help in handling these challenges.

Let's remember that in the end, we are body and soul. There is something material and biological in us, as well as something spiritual. And if we take our Christian faith

Piety and mental health

seriously, we also know that we are meant to have a supernatural life with God even now, while we are still here in this world.

Though the relationship between the body and the soul, the natural and the supernatural is wrapped in mystery, we also know that what happens in the body is somehow caused by our spiritual soul as well as affects it.

It's also vice-versa. How our spiritual soul is affects our body. If the spiritual soul is healthy, as expressed in our thoughts and desires,

then the body would also be healthy, unless there are some underlying organic disorders. We would have peace and joy inside us, and our outlook would be positive and bright.

Again, if we take our Christian faith seriously, we know that it is actually our spiritual soul that gives life to our body. Of course, our soul has to be properly animated by the true spirit, which is the Spirit of God. Regarding this point, Christ said: "The Spirit gives life. The flesh counts for nothing..." (Jn 6,63)

Candidly Speaking / A6

CBCP Monitor

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

Pedro Quitorio  
Editor-in-Chief

Roy Lagarde Mercedita Juanite  
Associate Editor Circulation Manager

Ron Ramos, Sky Ortigas Marcelita Dominguez  
Design Artists Comptroller

The CBCP Monitor is published fortnightly by the CBCP - Media Office with editorial and business offices at 3rd Floor, CBCP Compound, 470 General Luna Street, Intramuros, Manila. Email Address: cbcppmonitor@areopaguscommunications.com, Business: (632) 8404 - 1612, ISSN 1908-2940.



## By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

*"John the Baptist arrived in those days and started preaching in the desert of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 3:1-2)*

THE recent highly controversial calls for a revolutionary government from among some pro-administration groups have now fallen on largely unfriendly ears. It is just too bad. I am of the view that a real revolutionary government is what we need. But we need to define what it really is.

First off, a real revolutionary government begins with the self. We need to overthrow our own personal systems and structures of behavior that do us and others little good but, instead, turn us away from God and neighbor; instead we need to replace them with those that do the opposite, so that, growing together in the values this twofold relationship requires, such as love which is charity, we toil individually and communally to seek the common good and social justice. In contrast, we need to let go of the Filipino insistence on trying to please people with power, wealth or influence at the expense of God's values, of the common good, of the love of preference for the many who are poor, or even of the basic tenets of decency. St. John Paul II once looked at the world's political, social and economic realities, on the one hand, and the needed changes, on the other, and asserted the latter would be impossible "without the conversion of hearts" (Redemptor Hominis, no. 16).

Second, the revolutionary government that uses violence in word and action

has already lost the struggle. That is, unless the violence applied is spiritual and moral, such as against selfishness, greed, arrogance and the lust for power. Installing a government of a dominant self-and/or an equally dominant collective by force will eventually self-destruct simply because it does not have a sine-qua-non: the real consent of its purported subject(s). It may flourish for some time by virtue of enforced existence fed to a great degree by the fear of the populace. Revolution by definition from its Latin root "revolvere", literally a 'turning' or 'roll back', involves a turning of personal and social conduct according to more fundamental centers of orientation. Such centers revolve—no pun intended—on the basic human drive towards the good, the true, the just, the orderly and the harmonious inherent in the nature of the human person and which find an echo in human conscience.

Third, the history of revolutions that aimed only at a change of systems and structures of government offers ample proof of enthusiastic beginnings that end in eventual failure. At times the fiascoes happen in a massive scale that other systems and structures completely different replace them with their total obliteration as a singular aim. The French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Bolshevik and later Soviet Revolution, the Communist Revolution (Russia, Vietnam, China, Cuba) radically changed political, social and economic structures. But human hearts remained the same. The howling collapse of the Soviet Union shows, for

example, how external social changes that have little impact on persons' inner realities do not really uproot the evils that the new dispensations, in the first place, intended to uproot. Instead of being uprooted, the hated social evils simply took on an entirely different clothing and playground, with different rules driven by the same dark drives. Revolution then has mostly become a farce. Even the so-called Philippine Revolution, despite its lofty beginnings, at best, has not yet truly realized itself. The country is still a slave to poverty, to social injustice, to illusory forms of leadership, to corruption, to interminable internecine conflicts.

All because our inner realities are ruled by the forces of darkness.

All true revolutions begins with humility. Without it we will not be able to see how our existing social evils have deep roots in our own sins. The sins that push us to run for office on lies, to elect incompetent and unfit candidates on hopes of self-oriented benefits, to sell our votes or buy those of the poor and the unprincipled on an unquenchable quest for power. Without humility we will not be able to accept that real change for the better is impossible on mere human efforts. No matter how averse humans are to the idea of a God factor, real changes that saved persons and civilizations were inspired, nourished and sustained by moments of deep prayer and faith.

In the end, the real revolution's final stop is the coming of God's kingdom when every petition of the Our Father is made real by God's action through human beings.

## Repentance, the real revolution



## Life Matters

Carlos Antonio P. Palad

## State of perversity: Torture, sins against purity and Martial Law

WHENEVER September 21 (anniversary of the declaration of Martial Law in 1972) comes around, Philippine media publishes (or republishes) articles about human rights violations from 1972 to 1986, in the face of fading memories and the rise of new attempts at whitewashing the Marcos era. Many of the articles are about the torture of dissidents and rebels during those days. A commonly repeated statistic is that during Martial Law 70,000 people were imprisoned, of whom half (35,000) were tortured—a staggering number.

I first became aware of Marcos-era torture as a grade school student. One day I opened a copy of Philippine Free Press, and my eyes landed on grim and graphic drawings of various forms of torture practiced during Martial Law – electrocution, water cure, being forced to eat feces, getting burned in the nipples and genitals, squeezing the fingers with bullets placed between them, etc. I also read about the horrific case of Boyet Mijares, the 16-year-old son of Marcos critic Primitivo Mijares; Boyet's dead body was found violently tortured; it has been speculated that he was savaged and killed in front of his father, whose own body has not been found. Fast forward to my college days in UP Diliman: I had a professor who assigned me to make a report and a paper on torture during Martial Law. (I later found out that he had been tortured too—it left him a bit "affected" in the head, to put it mildly.) To fulfil this task I read Amnesty International reports on the Philippines from the 1970's and the early 1980's; they were full of graphic accounts of torture which I then had to meticulously summarize for my paper, and report to class. In recent years, I have also read the various accounts of Martial Law torture published by Rappler, Philippine Star and Inquirer, as part of their attempt to prevent the historical reality of that time from being buried by revisionism and historical amnesia.

There are many alarming things to be found in these accounts of torture. One is struck in these accounts by the lack of empathy and the sadism displayed by these torturers in inflicting sustained and prolonged pain on helpless prisoners, many of whom were only teenagers. An argument I have encountered elsewhere is that the uniformed personnel who were responsible for these acts did so partly because of the psychological effects on them of the brutal hazing they endured as part of their training. Any explanation, however, has to further elucidate why these accounts of torture also bear witness to a pervasive culture of sexual perversity among the torturers. An example of this perversity is found in the following account from Fr. Benjamin Alforque MSC, first published by Inquirer on Sept. 21, 2014 (<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/639643/im-afraid-but-i-must-write-to-let-young-people-know-fr-benjamin-alforque#ixzz6YkecoMBi>), and republished on social media on the same day in 2020:

It was at this point that I was subjected to psychological and moral torture, and various indignities. First, the tactical investigator, Sergeant Garingalao, talked to me of sex and sexual descriptions, to break me.

That tack not having proved successful, I was made to witness how the uniformed military men tortured the other detainees. I was made to hear the terrible pained cries of detainees from the torture chambers. (...)

I was forced to witness the torture and sexual harassment of seven farmers from Samar province that the military had arrested and accused of being NPA members.

The farmers were blindfolded. They were made to face one another and the wall and to throw punches with all their might. They were hitting at each other and the wall, according to the whim of the military torturer. Bruised and in great pain, the farmers were then told to masturbate and drink their own semen.

What kind of moral monster forces other men to do what is mentioned in the last sentence? Unfortunately, such perversities were apparently not out of the ordinary. Accounts of torture from the Martial Law era are replete with references to sexual assault and rape, which were treated as part of the panoply of torture in order to break prisoners. Women dragged to the torture chambers could expect to suffer rape or acts of lasciviousness. Men, however, were not exempt from the sexual deviances of their male captors. I do not wish to delve into details; let us just say that going by existing accounts, Marcos-era torturers particularly enjoyed inflicting pain and doing perverse things to the private parts of their male victims.

Life Matters / A7



## Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

THE celebration of Season of Creation started on September 01 and closes on October 11 with the theme Jubilee for the Earth. The Culminating Activity will be on October 04, Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of the environment. Bishop Pablo Virgilio "Ambo" David of the Diocese of Kalookan said that Jubilee is like a sabbatical year. "The year 2020, as a sabbatical year, is an opportunity for us to do a soul searching with regard to our attitude and behavior as human species towards nature and our environment. Our existence as species is suddenly threatened by the mutation of the microscopic virus. It awakens us to our vulnerability and made us realized how helpless we can be despite the scientific and technological advances that we think we have achieved. Covid 19 is an environmental phenomenon."

Pope Francis said in his message that "May we feel challenged to assume, with prayer and commitment, our responsibility for the care of creation. May God, "the lover of life", grant us the courage

to do good without waiting for someone else to begin, or until it is too late.

Thus, Bishop Ambo, as Acting CBCP President, called on his brother bishops "to heed the call of Pope Francis and to take the lead in integrating this advocacy not only in our prayer and liturgical life but also in our social action, in our education and faith formation and in the rest of our pastoral programs and plans. What is at stake is our own survival as human species. The earth is indeed our common home, we are not its masters, we are its guests, its caretakers its stewards. Let us learn to put ourselves in our proper place and role in the scheme of God's inscrutable plans of creation which is a work in progress."

\*\*\*

In connection with caring for our common home, there are posts going around social media which are very alarming, horrifying and unbelievable. It is about the infrastructure by the DENR's (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) Manila Bay white

sand project along Roxas Boulevard. Terry Ridon, Infracwater PH convenor and former urban poor chief of the Duterte administration, said the approved budget of the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program (Baywalk area) is P397.897 Million, such that the white sand project costs around P795,000 per meter of rehabilitating the Manila Baywalk. Ridon stated that "for comparison, the average cost of a two-lane road is around P25 million to P30 million per kilometer. The same amount can also fund a month's social amelioration funding for almost 80,000 vulnerable families."

It is unthinkable that this project is being done during this pandemic, when President Duterte himself admitted during his press conferences that the government has no more fund to give "ayuda" or financial or food assistance to the people. But lo and behold! The government has funds for this beautification project which is given priority than the purchase of PPEs of Personal Protective Equipment, hazmat suits and medical

supplies especially the N-95 face mask for our medical frontliners. Many doctors, nurses and healthworkers are being infected, and dying, with corona-virus due to lack of these PPEs. It is like a family spending money to buy beauty products instead of buying medicines for the sick members of the family.

Worst, this Manila Bay White Sand Dump is a clear source of anomalies: Health Hazards, Overpriced, Misuse.

1. HEALTH HAZARDS—Ridon stated that dolomites will be used in the project, which has already proven ill effects on human health. "(a) It may cause irritation of cornea, burning, itching and redness to the eye; (b) Inhalation of dolomite, repeated or prolonged exposure may dry out the skin and cause irritation of the lungs and cause respiratory disease; coughing or choking may occur; (c) Chronic effects: For prolonged or repeated exposure exceeding the occupational exposure limits (ARC lists respirable crystalline silica as a lung disease hazard); (d)

Duc in Altum / A6

## Season of Creation - caring for our common home

## Viral loading



## Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco

VIRAL load refers to the amount of virus in an infected person's blood. Experts would technically describe this as the number of viral particles in each millimeter of blood: thus, a higher load would imply greater risk of getting sick or being capable of infecting others.

With so much of COVID still misunderstood, people and establishments are taking more and more serious measures in order to physically stem the pandemic: social distancing, the wearing of face masks and shields, reminders to sanitize one's hands with alcohol and avoiding social and religious gatherings.

People, through such health measures, may indeed be lessening their chances of catching an invisible threat to their health. They are, however, catching less and less of another invisible reality without

which may weaken their spiritual well-being: the sacramental graces of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

Recently, Cardinal Robert Sarah, the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship stressed that it is 'necessary and urgent' for the faithful to return, following closely the guidelines of health officials, to the normal mode of attending the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

The Cardinal clarified that although the streamed masses and other celebrations where helpful, "No broadcast is equivalent to personal participation, nor can it substitute for that participation." Moreover, he explains, "these transmissions ... risk moving us away from a personal and intimate encounter with the Incarnate God who gave himself to us not in a virtual way, but in a real way." (Letter, Let us return to the Eucharist with joy!

Sept. 3, 2020)"

The Cardinal reflects how the lockdowns have somehow helped to appreciate better the Sacrament: "Aware that God never abandons the humanity He has created, and that even the hardest trials can bear fruits of grace, we have accepted our distance from the Lord's altar as a time of Eucharistic fasting, useful for us to rediscover its vital importance, beauty and immeasurable preciousness."

Thus, as soon as circumstances may allow, he urged the faithful to return to the Sacraments. "We must return to the Eucharist with a purified heart, with a renewed amazement, with an increased desire to meet the Lord, to be with Him, to receive Him and to bring Him to our brothers and sisters with the witness of a life full of faith, love and hope." We "cannot be

without the Christian community," he added, "cannot be without the house of the Lord," and "cannot be without the Lord's Day. (Ibid.)"

May his words help us to fight back the virus of routine and indifference towards the transforming graces that can only be gifted us in the sacraments. Even though in some circumstances it may not be possible to attend the Eucharistic celebration or to go to confession, may we at least strive to intensify our participation in the Mass and seek constant works of penance within our homes.

For example, although there is nothing wrong with watching masses in different parts of the world that the Internet may leisurely provide, let us anchor our participation to one familiar physical venue and at a set time during the week or day. This will already help to give the mass an

important place during the day. It will also be like physically setting ourselves to go there with our family and relatives.

Let's not just watch the celebration, may we be already engaged beforehand: familiarizing ourselves with the readings and responses, already spiritually huddled with the family's prayer intentions and after the Mass—even if we may not have received our Lord physically—to spend a few minutes thanking our Lord for both visible and invisible graces received.

If we make a daily effort not to fall into mediocrity, our Lord will surely reward our intense desires with the fruitful graces of conversion. Let us pray that parishes and churches will soon open and together we may all joyfully proclaim, "I rejoiced when they said let us go to the house of the Lord! (Ps. 122)"

# Cardinal Tagle opens up about his quarantine



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. PHOTO BY ROY LAGARDE

CARDINAL Luis Antonio Tagle on Sept. 25 opened up about his experience during the coronavirus quarantine and his recovery.

Speaking at an online conference for Catholic educators, he admitted struggling with “fear and anxiety” during the isolation.

“But getting out of the quarantine I realized that for you to really survive, you need a deep sense of interconnectedness,” Cardinal Tagle, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, said.

Now that he has recovered, the 63-year-old cardinal said the “enemy” is still the feeling that he is a “threat” and “danger to others”.

“Then you feel like maybe it is better to just isolate yourself. But then the

isolation also bothers you,” according to him.

“But it is the sense that you're interconnected... you are connected to God, to the water, to the air — that will energize you,” he said.

The Vatican official was the keynote speaker of this year's Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) Congress that was held online due to the pandemic.

Cardinal Tagle is also a member of the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

For nearly an hour, he discussed the event's theme, “Missio: Dialogue of Faith and Life and Culture Beyond Creed, Beyond Borders, Beyond COVID”.

“That's why I could say

that for the survival, even the mentality of those who go through this crisis, this connectedness or what we call dialogue is important,” he said.

“Your existence depends on a rediscovery of the reality that you are not alone, you are always connected,” he added.

What was supposed to be a low-profile visit to Manila made international headlines when Cardinal Tagle was tested positive for the coronavirus after flying from Rome on Sept. 10.

He remained asymptomatic the entire two-week quarantine. And after another test on Sept. 23, he finally came out negative.

“I'm very grateful to the many people who prayed, assuring you that you are not alone,” he said. (CBCP News)

## CFC offers relief for displaced OFWs

THE Couples for Christ (CFC), one of the world's largest family-oriented groups, has found their own way to help overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) displaced by the coronavirus pandemic.

The CFC launched on Sept. 25 the “Tawid OFW Program” to assist repatriated OFWs through its “Adopt an OFW Family” initiative in coordination with the bishops' Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

Bro. Jess Ferrer, CFC Migrants Program head, said the goal is to help the recipients generate income and reintegrate them with their families and communities.

“The program aims to shorten their dependency on dole-outs and to reintegrate the family into the society equipped with livelihood skills,” Ferrer said.

Aside from helping address the OFW's daily sustenance, the initiative will also require their families to join in values formation programs.

There are more than 10 million OFWS deployed all over the world. Due to the pandemic, an estimated 300,000 OFWs have lost



Hundreds of distressed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Sept. 26, following their repatriation from Beirut, Lebanon. PCOO

their jobs and the figure may reach 500,000 by December.

As of today, close to 200,000 Filipino workers abroad have already been repatriated because of the health crisis.

“The untimely termination of their contract left the OFWs unprepared with little or zero savings,” Ferrer said.

Based on a survey conducted by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas from 2007 to 2018, 97 percent of

OFW families still depend on the remittances for their daily food and needs.

The study also showed that only 38% have the ability to set aside some savings and only 6% of OFW households have some form of investment.

“Our ‘unsung heroes’ are hurting. Now more than ever they need our help,” he said.

Scalabrinian Fr. Resty Ogsimer, ECMI executive secretary, lauded the CFC for

the “good example that other communities can emulate”.

As the church currently celebrates 34th National Migrants Sunday, he encouraged everyone to replicate the effort “that conveys care, compassion, acceptance and welcome” for OFWs in distressful situations.

“Each of us can do something in whatever way possible,” he said. (CBCP News)

## Bishop to catechists: Be creative, adaptive amid pandemic

AS students continue their education through online learning, a Catholic bishop exhorted catechists to be “creative and adaptive” in their ministry.

Auxiliary Bishop Medyphil Billiones of Cebu said that because of the coronavirus pandemic, the digital space has become even more the “frontier of evangelization”.

He urged catechists to utilize the digital platform and be with their students who are mostly confined to online education.

“Let us do our work of catechizing even in that space,” Bishop Billiones said. “Let us not fear it but be creative and become effective communicators.”

The prelate made the call in a video message for this year's

National Catechetical Month, celebrated by the Catholic Church in the Philippines every September.

According to him, even the digital world can become a space of encounter with God.

“The key instrument to facilitate this is all of you, our dearly beloved catechists,” Bishop Billiones said.

As the health crisis brought “pessimism and pain” to a lot of people, he also stressed the need for catechists who are “joyful messengers”.

But that this does not mean that they act as if there is no problem, the bishop said. Joy, he added, is rather the spirit of hope that people can heal with God's grace.

“Nourish this first... and then you will naturally radiate this to others,” he said. (CBCP News)

### Duc in Altum / A5

Overexposure may cause silicosis, cancer, bronchitis, or emphysema.” Dolomite is a source of toxic metals. Calcium and calcium magnesium carbonate specimens submitted as urinary tract stones. Ridon said the DENR should have known the health risks of dolomite sand before giving the “go signal” for its Manila Bay project; there is nothing to be proud about using dolomite sand as topfill. The DENR will be causing another round of public health emergencies if they insist on this material for the project.

2. OVERPRICED: Project is reportedly costs 397 Million but the overpriced project would cost no more than the total amount of PHP 56.977-Million for 62,100 cu. meters. “The unit cost of dolomite sand should be no more than P600 per metric ton (or no more than the total amount of P56.977 million for 62,100 cu. meters) which is the highest retail price recorded by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in 2017.

### Candidly Speaking / A4

This is where the value of piety comes in, playing a crucial role in keeping us healthy mentally, emotionally, psychologically and even physically. Piety is our relationship with God. It is nourished by God's gifts of faith, hope and charity to which we have to correspond knowingly, freely and lovingly.

We have to realize more deeply our need to have a genuine life of piety to be truly healthy, first in the spirit and then in the body. We have to spread this Good News widely. It hardly involves money or some material things. What only is needed is an act of faith, which is something spiritual, a matter of our will and intelligence.

The current market price of dolomite sand is P469.50 per metric ton. Anything more will lead the public to believe that the project is not only a health hazard, but also overpriced.”

3. MISUSE: According to Ridon “Dolomite crushed and cut is used primarily as construction materials for cement and used for their ability to neutralize acids. “Dolomite sand has typically been used as auxiliary materials for iron and steel, plate glass for construction materials, automotive glass, fertilizer, soil conditioner. *Nothing in this list mentions dolomite as viable for use as artificial sand for beaches.* So why is the DENR insisting that there is nothing irregular about using dolomite sand in Manila Bay?”

Ridon asserted that “This (the project) is not a good sight, given government's inadequate funding to confront the coronavirus crisis. Because harmful white sandy beaches will certainly not put food in the mouths of our most vulnerable families.”

### And That's the Truth / A4

kill anyone in an instant, we seem to pray more than before, flooding social media—our only “social life” in quarantine season—with prayer requests. In the many group chats that I happen to be enlisted in, I notice that prayers consist largely of petitions for sick or dying family members. And everyone seems supportive, promising prayers and even offering sacrifices for the petitioners. Same with prayers found at online Mass sites—which are slightly more expansive, including prayers for “the safety of OFWs”, “all people suffering from Covid 19”, “the poor souls in purgatory”, “the complete healing of Cardinal Tagle”, and expressions of gratitude for blessings received. However, I have yet to see in those chat platforms someone praying for the environment, enemies, or even people they don't admire (certain politicians, for example); the concern is almost always for “my family, my relatives, my loved ones, me”. Of course, no humble prayer is bad prayer. I assume that whatever is not remembered in the faithful's prayers are all covered by the Pope's prayer intentions for every month.

How do we pray in the face of an impending calamity? This past week some chat groups have asked me about a letter circulating in social media, supposedly coming from a visionary appealing to President Duterte to consecrate the Philippines to Our Lady of Guadalupe. In part, here's the letter: “This time I saw a devastating huge earthquake on our way to our country. With the Marikina faultline reaching Laguna—the earthquake will affect this time the volcanic eruption of Mt. Makiling and this will erupt worse than Mt. Pinatubo did during Cory Aquino's time... The eruption will be horrific and

will affect Southern Luzon and Metro Manila and all of Luzon. I saw Skyways collapsing n many tall buildings destroyed by the strong earthquake of a much greater magnitude of 8.5. We shall need rescuers, but many dead bodies will never be recovered. Rescue teams will not be enough to recover trapped men, women and children living in High Riser Condos. Hunger, Thirst and pestilence will occur days like that of YOLANDA. The fly overs can only withstand an earthquake with a magnitude of 7... I saw the Mexico earthquake last nite! I was accurate about Mexico's 8 magnitude. I m not here to sow FEAR, but am appealing for our President to heed our Lady's urgent request to Consecrate our country n our people to the Blessed Mother of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The devastation can be mitigated...”

So, they were asking me what I thought of the letter, and if I knew its author. I called up the visionary to confirm if she indeed wrote it. She said yes, but she was wondering how it got around, because it was sent only to Secretary Martin Andanan in the hope that it would reach the president. She also said the attached Prayer of Consecration was missing from the letter circulated. Feeling her visions to be genuine although regretting that “...they spread only the sensational part but left out the prayer,” she said she believed “Our lady must have a plan...” She added that since the letter to Andanan is already public, “it would be nice if someone could show it somehow to Sarah Duterte, because she's Marian, then maybe Sarah can give it to her father.”

Besides disclosing to the chat groups my conversation with the visionary, I did not give the opinion they requested. (But I did think that if it's true, it's

frightening indeed, especially since my residence is just 25 meters off the fault line!) However, to the handful who were truly worried (because as they say “There are at least two Marian groups who are appealing for prayers because of the end times, and a seer who said that Our Lady of the End Times has been giving him messages about the end times...”), I simply replied: “The BIG ONE has been predicted countless number of times, both by scientists and psychics. But as to WHEN it may occur, God alone knows. All we need to do is to live as purely as possible each day as if it were our last, embracing God's will. Our Father loves us and wants only what's best for us.”

Alone and silent, after the exchanges with the chat groups, I confront the “What ifs” lurking in the back of my mind. When you have worked hard to keep yourself out of debt while saving enough to provide for your retirement and your children's future, you can't escape the “What ifs”. Wars, pandemics and natural calamities are no respecter of persons. Everything can be taken away from you in an instant—the possessions you sweated blood for, your health, your future. What if the killer earthquake swallows up my home while I'm asleep? What if, what if, what if... In that “What if...” mode, when even my most heartfelt prayer turns to ashes in my mouth, only one prayer has the power to engulf my being—John 17, the high priestly prayer of Jesus. What this prayer does to me—or in me, for me, whatever—defies understanding. Merely reading it (strangely) makes me feel catapulted to the heavens, losing myself yet finding myself, knowing with utmost clarity that being in that sacred place is the only thing that matters. And that's the truth.

## Bishop deplores killing of red-tagged parish lay leader

LEGAZPI City— Bishop Joel Baylon of Legazpi has condemned the killing of two village officials, including a parish lay leader in Albay province.

Village chief Luzviminda “Kap Ida” Dayanda and treasurer Albert Orlina of Brgy. Batbat in Guinobatan town were gunned down on Sept. 21.

The two were killed by unidentified gunmen while heading back home after helping a constituent go to a hospital and meeting with the town’s mayor.

The bishop called for an investigation on the murders of the two officials “and speedy disposition of their cases so that justice may be served”.

Dayanda, he said, is also active lay leader in St. Vincent Ferrer Parish in Mauraro village, while also serving as chair of their village pastoral council.

“People who knew her attest to her quiet faith in God, humble service to the Church, and passionate commitment to the people under

her care,” Baylon said.

“We pray for consolation, peace, and safety of their community and the family and loved ones they left behind,” he said.

According to him, Dayanda complained of being accused as a New People’s Army supporter by some soldiers who were staying in their village, “a charge she vehemently denied”.

The prelate also expressed concern over reports of NPA activities in the village and nearby areas, as well as alleged human rights violations against civilians by government forces.

Baylon asked the warring parties to stop violence, saying that “peace and security cannot be achieved at the expense of justice and human rights”.

“When armed groups clash in communities, without regard for rule of law and the dignity of persons, it is the poor and vulnerable residents who suffer the most,” he said. **(CBCP News)**

## Bishop, clergy in Quezon oppose coal plant projects

LUCENA, Quezon— The government must stop the construction of all new coal-fired plants in Quezon province because it is inconsistent with the efforts to mitigate climate change, local church officials said.

In a statement, Bishop Mel Rey Uy and the clergy of the Diocese of Lucena, said the power plants “must be ceased” if only to help avert the impacts of climate change.

The cancellation of the projects, according to them, will also stand as a decisive rejection of all unsustainable and carbon-intensive practices not just in Quezon but in the entire country.

“We oppose these coal-fired power plants also because they are entirely inconsistent with the care for our common home so desperately needed today,” they said.

The statement was released Sept. 1 as the Church starts the annual celebration of the “Season of Creation”.

With the country’s growing energy demand, the government has continued to approve new coal-

fired plants, raising concerns that “it will add more environmental degradation and health risks to our locality”.

The church leaders were referring to the two coal-fired power plants proposed by SMC Global Power Holdings to be constructed in Pagbilao town.

They also reiterated its opposition against the construction of Meralco’s coal-fired plant in Atimonan town.

The diocese appealed to the coal proponents “to listen to the cry of the earth and cancel their plans to set up this dirty, deadly and costly source of energy”.

“We appeal to the local and national government and their respective agencies, to listen to the cry of the people of Quezon and disallow these projects and any further coal plants in our beloved province,” they added.

The diocese also enjoined the project proponents to place their efforts and resources in developing Quezon’s renewable energy sources instead of “outdated, profit-oriented and polluting power plants”. **(CBCP News)**

## Bishop calls for more ‘missionaries of creation’

SAN FERNANDO, La Union— A Catholic bishop appealed for more “missionaries of creation” who will continue to advocate for environment protection.

Bishop Daniel Presto of San Fernando de La Union said the country needs more voices “to care for the earth” and towards a better future.

“[We need] voices that will reach including our government leaders to support initiatives to address the climate emergency,” he said.

The prelate made the statement in his message for the ongoing Season of Creation that started on Sept. 1 and will end on October 4.

He invited the people to use the celebration as an opportune time to reflect on Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* and the Philippine bishops’ pastoral letters on the

environment.

The bishops have been issuing a series of pastoral exhortations on the care of creation over the last three decades.

“Let this season of creation urge us to do some actions... and become missionaries for creation,” Bishop Presto added.

For his part, Bishop Severo Caermare of Dipolog also called on the people to reaffirm their personal vocation to be “stewards of creation”.

The Season of Creation, according to him, is also a special time “to pray and act as one”.

“Caring for creation honors the creator,” Bishop Caermare said.

“We are invited to protect the vulnerable people and our common home,” he said. **(CBCP News)**

# Infanta prelate: Fight against Kaliwa dam a matter of ‘survival’

INFANTA, Quezon—The local Catholic Church in Quezon province renewed their opposition to the multibillion mega dam project, saying their fight is a matter of survival of the people.

Bishop Bernardino Cortez of Infanta reiterated that the Kaliwa Dam project poses risks to lowland agricultural and fishing communities with a history of flash flooding.

The prelatore, which covers the northern part of Quezon and the Aurora province, lies along the Sierra Madre Mountain Range and on the east of the vast Pacific Ocean.

The area is also home to thousands of Dumagats, an indigenous community in the highlands of Infanta.

“So, you will understand by geography our very survival depends on the care of our mountains, forests, rivers, protection of mangroves and seashores,” Cortez said.

The prelate made the statement a video message



A “No to Kaliwa Dam” tarp posted outside the St. Mark and the Child Jesus Cathedral in Infanta, Quezon. **CBCP NEWS**

for this year’s Season of Creation.

The P12.2 billion China-funded Kaliwa Dam is among the government’s priority projects as a long-term solution to Metro Manila’s water woes.

The prelate argued that the dam would also pose danger to the environment as the project falls within the Kaliwa Watershed

Forest Reserve.

Cortez urged the government to instead look for alternative sources of water such as watershed rehabilitation and improving existing dams and water facilities.

“We hope and pray that our people in this ‘Jubilee for the Earth’ will develop a new mindset

and a paradigm shift in our care and use of the common home,” he said.

In February, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines added its voice to those against the dam construction.

The bishops also called for “proper review” of the project “to correct its flawed procedures”. **(CBCP News)**

## Bohol diocese plants 60k trees in single day

TAGBILARAN City—Thousands of people planted 60,000 tree saplings in Bohol province on Sept. 6 in a local Church campaign to improve the environment.

Bishop Alberto Uy of Tagbilaran said priests, nuns and volunteers planted fruit-bearing and hardwood trees in parishes across the diocese.

He particularly noted the participation of young people in the activity that was held to mark this year’s Season of Creation.

“This is what we prayed for — that people, especially the young, will learn to love creation and to care for

the environment,” Bishop Uy said.

At least 100 volunteers in every parish joined the initiative and planted 10 trees each in their surroundings, backyards, and other designated areas.

Not only that trees bring aesthetics and many practical benefits, the prelate stressed that every Christian is called to care about God’s creation.

“May all of us develop love for nature and start caring for the environment,” he said.

More than 70 church and civil society organizations on Sept. 1

opened the Philippine celebration of the Season of Creation, which urges people to “respond to the calls to care for the earth, our common home”.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, acting president of the Catholic bishops’ conference, asked dioceses and parishes to “take the lead in integrating” the campaign in all church ministries.

He stressed it is “never too late” to act and to “put ourselves in the proper place”.

The season ends October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. **(CBCP News)**

### Editorial / A4

We all have to create the proper environment and atmosphere for a civil discourse, a cordial dialogue to take place. This is especially incumbent on our leaders, both the civil and the spiritual. Everything should be done to keep

this environment as it should be—clean, open, welcoming, always working for unity.

The different actors and parties should do their part. The media especially should be fair and balanced in monitoring the

developments. Everyone should have a clear idea of what can be tolerated and what not in the exchanges of opinions. Everyone should agree that some compromises may have to be made to reach a certain consensus, so everyone

can move on.

There has to be some set of ground rules that everyone should accept. Of course, these ground rules may also be modified as we go along, but such modification should also be done gradually, not violently!

### Nuncio / A1

Philippines.

“We are very thankful for having a new Nuncio to journey with us to receive guidance from the Pope,” he said.

Nuncios represent the pope in the Church in a foreign country. His role is equivalent to that of an ambassador, representing the Holy See to the government of their host country.

They also play key roles in selecting and

appointing new bishops as well as disciplining erring clergymen.

There are currently five vacant ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the country including Manila, Alaminos, Malaybalay, San Jose in Mindoro, and Taytay.

In many Catholic countries like the Philippines, the nuncio is also the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

Born in New York,

Brown is the third American to head the Vatican’s diplomatic mission in the Philippines, after Archbishop Edward Joseph Adams who served the post from 2007 to 2011.

Turning 61 on Oct. 13, the archbishop has been the Apostolic Nuncio to Albania since March 2017.

In Manila, he succeeds Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, who Pope Francis appointed permanent

observer to the United Nations in November 2019.

Before entering the diplomatic service, Brown had worked with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI, in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for around a decade.

He also represented the Holy See in Ireland for six years before moving to Albania. **(CBCP News)**

### Life Matters / A5

Male prisoners forced to do sexual acts, or raped, or sexually abused by their male torturers were not uncommon.

All these point to an issue that few if any have dared to discuss. It would seem that during the Marcos era, certain parts of the state’s security personnel were not only inured to sadism and violence, but were also corrupted by an inclination to sexual perversity and unnatural acts. Unfortunately, it is possible that this corrupt inclination has not been rooted out. Some may remember that as recently as 2010, a video of a naked robbery suspect being subjected by a policeman to genital torture was widely circulated on Philippine news media. Even then, I could not help but think ... of a hundred and one ways to inflict pain, why did that policeman choose a particularly perverse manner? What did that say about him and his colleagues, who nonchalantly went about their tasks while he tortured the suspect? As noted by media at that time, it pointed to such torture being considered as “normal” by some policemen.

The mixing of torture with perversity is a particular cause of concern that should

not be dismissed lightly.

The specter of Martial Law continues to haunt our country. In the last few years, we have heard calls for and threats of a return to Martial Law. In the last four years we have witnessed the impunity with which thousands of people have been killed, apparently by state forces—killings that have been defended if not welcomed by many Filipinos. Love for authoritarianism and the arbitrary use of state violence seems to have become ingrained in many of our fellow citizens. A future return to Martial Law may yet happen, and cannot be laughed away or dismissed as an improbable fantasy. When that happens, there is no reason to think that we will not see torture being used on a massive and widespread scale. And just as during Martial Law, and just as with that case in 2010, it will be likely be torture combined with horrific forms of sexual abuse on innocent men and women. Those who, because of their commitment to various political and spiritual causes, have good reason to believe that they will face torture should such a dark day ever come, should be prepared to suffer every indignity

imaginable, both in body and mind.

The Church must make it clear in its ministry to security forces—as clear as the sky on a bright summer day—that torture is immoral and unjustified, and that torture involving sexual immorality and perversity is doubly sinful and damnable. Nothing—NOTHING—can ever justify a policeman or a soldier in doing base, carnal, unnatural and perverse sex acts on a prisoner whether male or female, not even the demands of “interrogation” or the need to gain “life-saving information” or as a form of “punishment”. Indeed, any torturer who takes part in such sins, goes not only against the fifth commandment, but also against the sixth and the ninth—with all the heavy burdens on conscience that they bring, and the added punishment that will be their lot for all eternity in the next life if they do not repent. (I might add that a torturer who happens to be married, who commits sexual acts on the body of another prisoner in the course of torturing the latter, is also guilty of an adulterous act.)

For reactions please write to caloyantoniopalad@gmail.com

### World Youth Day / A3

and its consequences on the movement and aggregation of young people and families.”

The local organizing committee welcomed the delay, saying that it shared “with the Holy Father the call that, in the current context and in the coming time, the focus of everyone’s attention is on caring for the most vulnerable, families, and all who, for very different reasons, suffer from the effects of the pandemic caused by COVID-19.”

World Youth Day, which is usually held every three years and often attracts millions of youngsters, was founded by St. Pope John Paul II in 1985. An estimated 700,000 young Catholics attended the last gathering in Panama.

In June 2019, the pope revealed that the theme of the next World Youth

Day would be “Mary arose and went with haste,” from St. Luke’s account of the Virgin Mary’s visitation to her cousin Elizabeth after the Annunciation.

The traditional handover of the World Youth Day cross and icon of the Virgin Mary was due to take place on Palm Sunday in St. Peter’s Square, but was also postponed because of the coronavirus outbreak.

A delegation from Panama is now scheduled to pass the cross and icon to young people from Portugal Nov. 22, the Feast of Christ the King. But Aguiar said this date might be subject to change due to the pandemic.

He added that he hoped that “the event in Lisbon will be held in harmony with the lifestyle, way of feeling and language of the youth.” **(CNA)**

## Archbishop Cabantan takes helm of Cagayan de Oro archdiocese



Archbishop Jose Cabantan is seated in his cathedra during his installation Mass on Aug. 28, 2020. SCREENGRAB/ARCHDIOCESE OF CDO

ARCHBISHOP Jose Cabantan took his new mission amidst the coronavirus pandemic on Aug. 28 by telling the flock “to confront the unseen enemy” with “hope and care for one another”.

In a solemn ceremony at the city’s St. Augustine Cathedral, Cabantan was formally installed as the fifth archbishop of Cagayan de Oro.

The archbishop sat in a symbolic “bishop’s seat” for the first time after his appointment was read declaring him the archdiocese’s new shepherd.

He said his appointment during a health crisis “calls us to rise as one, to survive as one, to live in solidarity, to strengthen our communion with one another and with God above all”.

“This pandemic allows us to shape once again the kind of church we should be,” the 63-year-old Cabantan said.

By calling the church a “field hospital,” the former Malaybalay bishop said that Pope Francis calls a radical rethinking of ecclesial life.

“Like the field hospitals which are built to be able to treat more of our infected brothers and sisters, the church then should not just

stay at the center of the parish but to be in the field,” Cabantan explained.

“This the church in the midst of people, a church that goes forth, a church always in mission. To infect our brothers and sisters with love and mercy of God is our common mission,” he added.

The ceremony included the rite of imposition of pallium conferred by Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, the archbishop emeritus of Cotabato.

Attendance was limited because of the pandemic but the service was streamed on the archdiocese’s Facebook page.

Pope Francis appointed Cabantan on June 23 to lead the southern Philippine archdiocese with more a million Catholics in 62 parishes.

He replaced Jesuit Archbishop Antonio Ledesma, who served the archdiocese for 14 years until his retirement two months ago.

Cabantan was ordained a priest for Cagayan de Oro in 1990, until he was appointed bishop of Malaybalay in 2010.

The pope has yet to announce Cabantan’s successor in Malaybalay. (CBCPNews)

## Homonhon parishioners celebrate dedication of new church



The newly built St. John the Baptist Parish Church on the historic Homonhon Island. CBCPNEWS

A DECADES-LONG dream for Homonhon islanders has come to fruition.

Parishioners finally have a bigger “home” in which to participate in Mass and other liturgical services in a new church.

The St. John the Baptist Parish celebrated its new 504-square-meter church on Friday during dedication ceremonies led by Bishop Crispin Varquez of Borongan.

Completion of the church, which cost around P7 million, is the result of years of work by parishioners, said Fr. Christian Ofilan, the parish priest.

He said the new church is “very timely and providential” as the diocese prepares for the quincentennial celebration of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines.

“It is a fitting gift to the parish community as it prepares to welcome in 2021 the dawn of the quincentennial anniversary of the arrival of the Christian faith on this historic island,” Fr. Ofilan said.

Homonhon is located

off Guiuan town in the southernmost part of Eastern Samar province where Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan first landed nearly 500 years ago.

Some theorists even claim that the first Mass may have been celebrated on the island, where Magellan and his men took a weeklong respite on March 16, 1521.

The government has earlier affirmed Limasawa, an island off the neighboring province of Southern Leyte, as the site of the “First Easter Sunday Mass” on March 31, 1521.

The priest said the construction lasted for around two years, starting with the demolition of the old church in September 2018.

He added that the new church was built mainly from the donation of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Allana, a parishioner based in Manila, and from the generosity of the locals.

“May this beautiful church be a reflection of the unwavering faith of the people of Homonhon,” he said. (CBCPNews)

# CEAP elects woman as head for first time

FOR the first time in its history, a woman will lead the country’s largest organization of Catholic schools, colleges and universities.

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) on Tuesday elected Sr. Marissa Viri of the Religious of the Virgin Mary congregation as its new President.

Sr. Viri, who is currently CEAP’s Vice President, will succeed Fr. Elmer Dizon of the Archdiocese of San Fernando, who served the post since September 2019.

The nun, who is currently the President of the University of the Immaculate Conception in Davao City, was

elected on Tuesday during the CEAP’s organizational meeting.

Also elected as the new Vice President is Fr. Thadeu Enrique Balongag, a trustee of the CEAP Negros Island.

CEAP also named Fr. Gilbert Sales as its new corporate secretary, and reelected

Fr. Albert Delvo as Treasurer.

Fr. Sales is the president of the St. Louis University in Baguio City, while Fr. Delvo is currently the Superintendent of the Diocesan Schools of Novaliches.

The election of the new officers took place at the ongoing CEAP Congress



CEAP’s newly elected president, Sr. Marissa Viri, RVM. PHOTO FROM CEAP

being held online. They will take their oath on Friday at the event’s closing ceremonies.

CEAP is a national association of Catholic

educational institutions in the Philippines founded in 1941. It now has more than 1,524 member-schools. (CBCPNews)

## Philippines now has 17 minor basilicas



Bishop Honesto Ongtioco of Cubao leads the celebration of the Solemn Declaration of the Santuario de San Pedro Bautista as a Minor Basilica in Quezon City on September 14. ERIC PAUL GUANLAO/DIOCESE OF CUBAO

QUEZON City’s oldest church was formally declared a minor basilica on Sept. 14, making it the 17th Catholic place of worship in the Philippines with such title and dignity.

The Franciscan-run Santuario de San Pedro Bautista was officially elevated to a minor basilica status in solemn rites led by Bishop Honesto Ongtioco of Cubao.

In his homily, he said that becoming a minor basilica is not only about its historical and patrimonial but a recognition of its special role and mission in evangelization.

The parish community led by its pastor, he said, is then challenged more than ever to seek new ways of service and to be steadfast in evangelization.

“But above all the church is mother because of her love for and thus this sanctuary must have that mark of motherhood, that charity that is the heart of all missionary efforts in the church,” Bishop Ongtioco said.

Being a basilica, he added, is not only a privilege but as in the case of any honor in the church, “it carries with it the obligation to service”.

Monday’s ceremony comes after Pope Francis in early June approved the petition to elevate the parish church into a minor basilica.

In making a church a basilica, a designation made through the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the pope declares the church to be one of his own.

There are over 1,800 minor basilicas in the world, and the second in the Cubao diocese.

The designation binds San Pedro Bautista to the four major basilicas in Rome: St. Peter, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul Outside the Walls.

Basilicas are granted the privilege of an “ombrellino”—a red and yellow, cone-shaped canopy—and a “tintinnabulum,”

a bell mounted on a pole that can be carried in processions. Basilicas are also permitted to use the crossed “papal keys” on banners and signs.

The celebration also took place as the country continues to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic.

Bishop Ongtioco encouraged the faithful to visit the minor basilica, especially those who are greatly affected by the situation.

“This has always been a place of rest and healing for troubled souls and it will continue to be,” he said.

The new minor basilica is one of the country’s oldest churches, which dates back to 1590. The church is located in the same area where the parish’s patron saint, San Pedro Bautista, stayed when he was in the Philippines.

St. Pedro Bautista is a Franciscan missionary and a known theologian, served in the country for 10 years before he was sent to Japan where he was martyred. (CBCPNews)

## Laoag diocese gets relics of St. Augustine, St. Nicholas

A RELIC dating back to 430 A.D. is not something that is easy to obtain.

When the Diocese of Laoag received a first class relic of St. Augustine of Hippo on Sept. 15, it was considered a blessing to the local Church.

“These sacred relics will certainly remind us of our ‘Augustinian Roots,’” Bishop Renato Mayugba said.

He said the relic will be enshrined in a parish church dedicated to St. Augustine in Paoay town.

Along with St. Augustine’s is another first class relic of St. Nicholas of Tolentino which will be placed at a newly declared diocesan shrine.

The relics were extracted “ex ossibus (from the bones)” of the Augustinian saints.



The first class relics of St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Nicholas of Tolentino enshrined in parish churches dedicated to them in the towns of Paoay and San Nicolas, both in Ilocos Norte.

The bones of St. Augustine are reposed in a sarcophagus at Pavia, Italy, while the bones of St. Nicholas rest in his basilica in Tolentino, also in Italy.

The Augustinian Friars from the older “Provincia

del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús,” now based in Spain were responsible for the evangelization of the Ilocos in the 1570s.

The Augustinians are credited to be the founders of the old Ilocos towns including

the construction of now world-renowned churches of Paoay and Santa María.

One of the churches they also built is already a minor basilica, the church in Badoc town.

“We have received the faith through the many zealous and holy Augustinians who planted the faith in this land some 500 years ago,” Bishop Mayugba said.

As the Church will celebrate the 5th centenary of the country’s Christianization next year, the prelate requested relics of the two saints from the Order of St. Augustine in Rome through the Augustinian Province of the Santo Niño de Cebú.

The relics, he said, shows a “revival of the great mission of the Augustinians in the province”. (CBCPNews)





Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Sept. 13, 2020. FILE PHOTO

# Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

“You shall thus hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim a release throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you.” (Lev 25:10)

*DEAR Brothers and Sisters,*  
Each year, particularly since the publication of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (LS, 24 May 2015), the first day of September is celebrated by the Christian family as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and the beginning of the Season of Creation, which concludes on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi on the fourth of October. During this period, Christians worldwide renew their faith in the God of creation and join in prayer and work for the care of our common home.

I am very pleased that the theme chosen by the ecumenical family for the celebration of the 2020 Season of Creation is *Jubilee for the Earth*, precisely in this year that marks the fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day. In the Holy Scriptures, a Jubilee is a sacred time to remember, return, rest, restore, and rejoice.

## 1. A Time to Remember

We are invited to remember above all that creation's ultimate destiny is to enter into God's eternal Sabbath. This journey, however, takes place in time, spanning the seven-day rhythm of the week, the cycle of seven years, and the great Jubilee Year that comes at the end of the seven Sabbath years.

A Jubilee is indeed a time of grace to remember creation's original vocation to exist and flourish as a community of love. We exist only in relationships: with God the Creator, with our brothers and sisters as members of a common family, and with all of God's creatures within our common home. “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth” (LS, 92)

A Jubilee, then, is a time of remembrance, in which we cherish the memory of our inter-relational

existence. We need constantly to remember that “everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others” (LS, 70).

## 2. A Time to Return

A Jubilee is a time to turn back in repentance. We have broken the bonds of our relationship with the Creator, with our fellow human beings, and with the rest of creation. We need to heal the damaged relationships that are essential to supporting us and the entire fabric of life.

A Jubilee is a time to return to God our loving Creator. We cannot live in harmony with creation if we are not at peace with the Creator who is the source and origin of all things. As Pope Benedict observed, “the brutal consumption of creation begins where God is missing, where matter has become simply material for us, where we ourselves are the ultimate measure, where everything is simply our property” (*Meeting with Priests, Deacons, and Seminarians of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone*, 6 August 2008).

The Jubilee season calls us to think once again of our fellow human beings, especially the poor and the most vulnerable. We are asked to re-appropriate God's original and loving plan of creation as a common heritage, a banquet which all of our brothers and sisters share in a spirit of conviviality, not in competitive scramble but in joyful fellowship, supporting and protecting one another. A Jubilee is a time for setting free the oppressed and all those shackled in the fetters of various forms of modern slavery, including trafficking in persons and child labor.

We also need once more to listen to the land itself, which Scripture calls *adamah*, the soil from which man, *Adam*, was made. Today

we hear the voice of creation admonishing us to return to our rightful place in the natural created order—to remember that we are part of this interconnected web of life, not its masters. The disintegration of biodiversity, spiralling climate disasters, and unjust impact of the current pandemic on the poor and vulnerable: all these are a wakeup call in the face of our rampant greed and consumption.

Particularly during this Season of Creation, may we be attentive to the rhythms of this created world. For the world was made to communicate the glory of God, to help us to discover in its beauty the Lord of all, and to return to him (cf. SAINT BONAVENTURE, *In II Sent.*, I, 2, 2, q. 1, conclusion; *Breviloquium*, II, 5.11). The earth from which we were made is thus a place of prayer and meditation. “Let us awaken our God-given aesthetic and contemplative sense” (*Querida Amazonia*, 56). The capacity to wonder and to contemplate is something that we can learn especially from our indigenous brothers and sisters, who live in harmony with the land and its multiple forms of life.

## 3. A Time to Rest

In his wisdom, God set aside the Sabbath so that the land and its inhabitants could rest and be renewed. These days, however, our way of life is pushing the planet beyond its limits. Our constant demand for growth and an endless cycle of production and consumption are exhausting the natural world. Forests are leached, topsoil erodes, fields fail, deserts advance, seas acidify and storms intensify. Creation is groaning!

During the Jubilee, God's people were invited to rest from their usual labour and to let the land heal and the earth repair itself, as individuals consumed less than usual. Today we need to find just and sustainable ways of living that can give the Earth the rest it requires, that

satisfy everyone with a sufficiency, without destroying the ecosystems that sustain us.

In some ways, the current pandemic has led us to rediscover simpler and sustainable lifestyles. The crisis, in a sense, has given us a chance to develop new ways of living. Already we can see how the earth can recover if we allow it to rest: the air becomes cleaner, the waters clearer, and animals have returned to many places from where they had previously disappeared. The pandemic has brought us to a crossroads. We must use this decisive moment to end our superfluous and destructive goals and activities, and to cultivate values, connections and activities that are life-giving. We must examine our habits of energy usage, consumption, transportation, and diet. We must eliminate the superfluous and destructive aspects of our economies, and nurture life-giving ways to trade, produce, and transport goods.

## 4. A Time to Restore

A Jubilee is a time to restore the original harmony of creation and to heal strained human relationships.

It invites us to re-establish equitable societal relationships, restoring their freedom and goods to all and forgiving one another's debts. We should not forget the historic exploitation of the global South that has created an enormous ecological debt, due mainly to resource plundering and excessive use of common environmental space for waste disposal. It is a time for restorative justice. In this context, I repeat my call for the cancellation of the debt of the most vulnerable countries, in recognition of the severe impacts of the medical, social and economic crises they face as a result of Covid-19. We also need to ensure that the recovery packages being developed and deployed at global, regional and national levels must be regeneration packages. Policy, legislation and investment

must be focused on the common good and guarantee that global social and environmental goals are met.

We also need to restore the land. Climate restoration is of utmost importance, since we are in the midst of a climate emergency. We are running out of time, as our children and young people have reminded us. We need to do everything in our capacity to limit global average temperature rise under the threshold of 1.5°C enshrined in the Paris Climate Agreement, for going beyond that will prove catastrophic, especially for poor communities around the world. We need to stand up for intra-generational and inter-generational solidarity at this critical moment. I invite all nations to adopt more ambitious national targets to reduce emissions, in preparation for the important Climate Summit (COP 26) in Glasgow in the United Kingdom.

Biodiversity restoration is also crucially important in the context of unprecedented loss of species and degradation of ecosystems. We need to support the U.N. call to safeguard 30% of the earth as protected habitats by 2030 in order to stem the alarming rate of biodiversity loss. I urge the international community to work together to guarantee that the Summit on Biodiversity (COP 15) in Kunming, China becomes a turning point in restoring the earth to be a home of life in abundance, as willed by the Creator.

We must restore with justice in mind, ensuring that those who have lived on the land for generations can regain control over its usage. Indigenous communities must be protected from companies, particularly multinational companies, that “operate in less developed countries in ways they could never do at home” (LS, 51), through the destructive extraction of fossil fuels, minerals, timber and agroindustrial products. This

# Sacramental Confession in the COVID-19 pandemic

## A call to return to the House of the Father

By Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD



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

*THE recent Pastoral Instruction of Bp. Broderick Pabillo, the Apostolic Administrator of Manila (8.IX.2020) focused on the need for Sacramental Confession. After six months of different grades of quarantine, despite the availability of online substitutes for many of the usual practices in the Catholic Church, this call to return to the House of the Father is not only timely but quite moving. We can review the norms and the recent dispositions in this regard on the occasion of the Corona pandemic.*

### Individual and integral confession and absolution is the only ordinary way for serious sins to be forgiven

Can. 960 states: *Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary way by which the faithful, who is aware of serious sin, is reconciled with God and with the Church; only physical or moral impossibility excuses the person from confession of this type, in which case reconciliation can take place in other ways.*

Can.961, §1 states a general prohibition: *Absolution cannot be imparted in a general manner to a number of penitents at once without previous individual confession, unless....*

“The canon sanctions the obligation of individual confession, with the accompanying absolution, as the *only ordinary way* for obtaining reconciliation with God and with the Church. Such ordinary way is qualified as pertaining to *Divine Law* by the Council of Trent (cf. DS 1707).

“The duty sanctioned in c.960 is complemented and confirmed by the norm established in c.986, §1 that states: *All to whom the care of souls is committed by reason of an office are obliged to provide that the confessions of the faithful entrusted to their care be heard when they reasonably ask to be heard and that the opportunity be given to them to come to individual confession on days and hours set for their convenience.* In fact, this is a fundamental right of the faithful and a serious duty of justice of the *sacred pastors* (cf. cc.213 and 843).”

### General absolution has an exceptional character with stringent conditions for the exception

A Response from the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts—with Prot. No. 5309/96 and dated 8.XI.1996—settled this issue by first pointing out that “John Paul II had expressly underscored this exceptional character: *The reconciliation of several penitents through general confession and absolution, hold an exceptional nature and hence cannot be left to free choice, but should be regulated by norms instituted for this purpose* (Apost. Exhort. *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, AAS, LXXVII, 1985, p.267).” It then summarized the present norms as follows:

Can. 961, §1, nn.1°-2°, presenting the extraordinary way of collective absolution, taxatively establishes two conditions that indicate the only cases in which such absolution is licit:

1° *danger of death threatens (imminent periculum mortis) and there is no time for the priest or priests to hear the confessions of the individual penitents. (This is a reference to the original motive for the concession of general absolution in the*

*conflictive period of the two World Wars).*

2° *there exists a grave necessity (ad sit gravis necessitas). The state of necessity, the canon explains, exists when the number of penitents and the scarcity of priests causes the faithful, through no fault of theirs, to be deprived for a notable length of time of the sacramental grace or of Holy Communion.*

In other words, three conditions must actually concur: a scarcity of priests, a great number of penitents, and the faithful have not had nor have the possibility of confessing individually beforehand or immediately afterwards.

### The special situation of the COVID-19 pandemic

After reaffirming the foregoing norms and criteria, a *Note from the Apostolic Penitentiary on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the current pandemic*, dated 20.III.2020, at the start of the Covid-19 quarantines, stated the following:

1) “This Apostolic Penitentiary believes—N.B. it is only stating an opinion, albeit a very prudent one—that, especially in the places most affected by the pandemic contagion and until the phenomenon recedes, the cases of serious need mentioned in can. 961, § 2 CIC above mentioned, will occur.” In other words, it is not stating that it has occurred, or is occurring, but that it will most probably occur.

2) “Any further specification is delegated by law to diocesan bishops, always taking into account the supreme good of the salvation of souls (cf. can. 1752 CIC).” This phrasing is very important, because it in fact remits to the existing norms contained in the cited canon and further explained by the aforementioned Response from the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts (Prot. No. 5309/96, 8.XI.1996).

3) “In the present pandemic emergency, it is therefore up to the diocesan bishop to indicate to priests and penitents the prudent attentions to be adopted in the individual celebration of sacramental reconciliation, such as the celebration in a ventilated place outside the confessional, the adoption of a suitable distance, the use of protective masks, without prejudice to absolute attention to the safeguarding of the sacramental seal and the necessary discretion.” In this regard, it is noteworthy that the CBCP, in fact, had given guidelines in this respect, which the different Local Ordinaries had ratified in their proper circumscriptions.

4) “Furthermore, it is always up to the diocesan bishop to determine, in the territory of his own ecclesiastical circumscription and with regard to the level of pandemic contagion, the cases of grave necessity in which it is *lawful to impart collective absolution: for example, at the entrance to hospital wards, where the infected faithful in danger of death are hospitalized, using as far as possible and with the appropriate precautions the means of amplifying the voice so that absolution may be heard.*” In fact, this is the only novelty of this Note—i.e., citing a very specific case when the exception can be made. Since the norm on general absolution is an exception to a prohibition (to impart general absolution, as laid down in c.961, §1), this specific case should be interpreted in a strict sense—i.e., *only in this specific scenario of a COVID-19 infected medical facility, where the confessor*

*cannot enter without prejudice to his own health.*

5) “Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).” This final disposition bears further looking into as it holds the key to unraveling the controversy that the Note seems to have roused.

### The efficacy of perfect contrition when sacramental confession is impossible

What the *Note* really expressed was that in the impossibility of administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the manner laid down by canon law—including the two exceptions outlined in c.961, §1, 1° & 2°—the merciful Love of God will prevail. There is no need to accommodate the Sacramental sign to special circumstances—e.g., extending the faculty for general absolution which was specific for the case of chaplains of hospitals not being able to approach the patients infected with Covid-19. Pope Francis could not have been more explicit: a sincere act of contrition effects reconciliation with God.

On the same day that the abovementioned *Note* came out, Pope Francis himself reminded the faithful of the same thing:

“I know that many of you go to confession before Easter so you can be right with God again. But many will say to me today: ‘But, Father, where can I find a priest, a confessor, when I can’t leave the house? And I want to make peace with the Lord. I want Him to embrace me. I want my Daddy to embrace me... How can I do it if I can’t find a priest?’ Do what the Catechism says. It is very clear. If you don’t find a priest to go to confession, speak to God. He is your Father. Tell Him the truth: ‘Lord. I did this and this and this. Pardon me.’ Ask His forgiveness with all your heart with an Act of Contrition, and promise Him, ‘afterward I will go to confession, but forgive me now.’ You will return to God’s grace immediately. You yourself can draw near to God’s forgiveness, as the Catechism teaches us, without having a priest at hand. Think about it: this is the moment! This is the right moment, the appropriate moment. An Act of Contrition, made well. In this way our souls will become as white as snow.” [Homily on 20.III.2020]

### The need to go to sacramental confession as soon as possible

However, both the Pope and the Apostolic Penitentiary reminded everyone of the obligation to go to Sacramental Confession as soon as possible:

*Pope Francis*: “Ask His forgiveness with all your heart with an Act of Contrition, and promise Him, ‘afterward I will go to confession, but forgive me now.’”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.1452: “Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be

remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones.”

This need to go to Sacramental Confession is what is being addressed now by the Apostolic Administrator of Manila:

“In extraordinary circumstance we can receive the grace of forgiveness, even on grave sins, by making sincere acts of sorrow, or perfect contrition. Part of the condition for a sincere act of sorrow is the resolve to come to sacramental confession as soon as possible and to confess each and every one of our grave sins that are not yet confessed (cf. CCC 1452).

“I invite all the faithful to come to avail of the great mercy of God that is poured on us by the sacrament of reconciliation. The parishes are instructed to set aside time for confession and to make provisions for places for confession that are hygienically safe for both the priest and the penitent. Each one may also make an appointment in the parish office for confession and the priests will readily accommodate you. Confession cannot be done online. It has to be done personally. So, I invite all to take time to receive this sacrament in the coming weeks.” (*Pastoral Instruction*, 8.IX.2020)

### Confession cannot be done online

The fundamental requirement for validity is that priest and penitent sense their mutual presence and immediate communication—i.e., that the individual penitent (accuser and accused) is in fact speaking to the individual priest (judge). What should be precluded is some manipulation of the communication between the two parties—through some technical means.

Purely as an exercise—a *gedanken* (thought) experiment as the Germans would say—can the phone or internet guarantee the absolute fidelity of the communication between priest and penitent, excluding any possibility of manipulation in the process? It is not difficult to conceive of an arrangement that would make this possible, thereby assuring the validity of the sacramental sign. However, there is one difficulty, the danger of which has led Church authority to preclude this option all these years: the possibility of breaking the sacramental seal: phones can be hacked (and legally even by the service provider), and more so the internet. That is like allowing Confession to take place with an eavesdropper. That is why the Supreme Authority of the Church has not allowed confession by phone or by internet. If one were to do that—and the priest were to absolve him/her—that might be valid, but it would definitely be *illicit*, such that both priest and penitent would be guilty of profanation of the Sacrament and possibly even of breaking the sacramental seal, which is punishable by *automatic excommunication* of the priest, the remission of which is reserved to the Holy See (cf. c.1388, §1), and a just penalty (not excluding excommunication) for all others involved—e.g., the penitent and the possible hacker (cf. c.1388, §2).

As Bp. Pabillo simply said: “Confession cannot be done online. It has to be done personally.”

# My first ten years of grace

By Archbishop-Emeritus Antonio J. Ledesma, SJ

ON August 31, 1996, 24 years ago, I was ordained as Coadjutor Bishop of the Prelature of Ipil in the Cathedral of Cagayan de Oro. Looking back, it was the beginning of my first decade of grace from 1996 to 2006 as a bishop in a remote and, at that time, the youngest ecclesiastical unit of the Church in Mindanao.

From the earlier Jesuit Mission District in the northeastern part of Zamboanga Archdiocese, the Prelature of Ipil was created in 1980 with the appointment of its first bishop, Bp. Federico Escaler, SJ. I succeeded Bishop Escaler on July 16, 1997 and therefore had the privilege of working as an apprentice bishop under him for almost a year. During that first year as coadjutor bishop, I was asked often to take his place in Confirmations and fiesta Masses. It was at that time an unforgettable experience in traveling to many of the 19 rural parishes over rough roads which included even the national highway connecting Pagadian to Zamboanga.

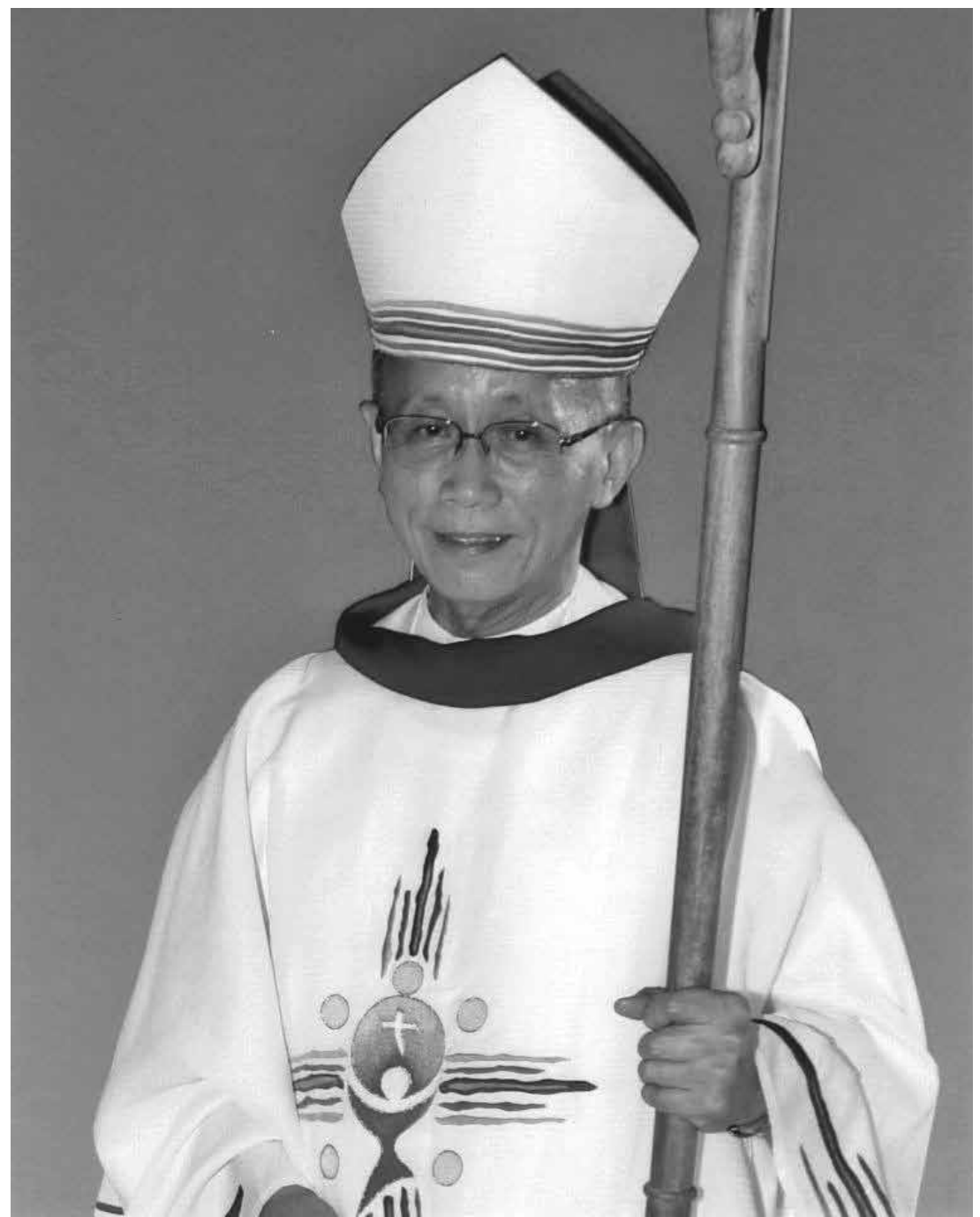
The period of the 80's and 90's in the Prelature was a time of turbulence under martial law and the intermittent conflict between Muslims and Christians; but it was also a time of hope, with EDSA I, and rapid changes with the continued influx of settlers from other parts of Mindanao and the rest of the country. We were cautioned that five armed groups had their presence within the Prelature — Moro pirates along the coast; military checkpoints along the highway; the NPA, the "lost command" and some bandit groups in the hinterlands. In the course of events, three Italian priests were kidnapped within the prelature; three public school teachers and several businessmen also suffered the same fate; and a Protestant pastor was killed along the shoreline of Ipil during the first month I arrived there.

It was one of these "lost commands" purportedly that held up Bishop Escaler and several of his companions as they were traveling to Zamboanga in February 1985; they were kept hostage for three days before they were rescued by military commandos after a brief firefight that ended miraculously with no casualties. Ten years

of the Prelature decided to form an interfaith and transpartisan citizens' alliance, called *Silingan Ka (Sibugaynon Lihok Ngadto sa Nagpakabanang Katawhan!)* or Sibugaynon's Movement for a Concerned Citizenry. This would no longer be under the church. This group included several Protestant, Muslim and Subanon participants, in addition to the majority Catholic members. The SK! Movement articulated their own principles and organized forums for all the political candidates to present their platform of government. As election day approached, the SK! leaders decided to choose across party lines their own candidates for local officials. They distributed a sample ballot containing an advisory list of worthwhile candidates. By this means, a significant number of SK!-backed candidates were elected into office. This movement for Good Governance has continued in subsequent elections and has been instrumental in preventing a political dynasty from a nearby province from coming into the local scene.

A third learning from Ipil Prelature was the introduction of *Gasa Balik sa Dios (GBSD, Gift Offered Back to God)*. The practice of regular pledging of support by parishioners, instead of the arancel system of stole fees, was a more systematic way of sustaining the ministries of the church, and removed the image of a church "selling" the sacraments. I first sent a parish priest and a lay finance worker to attend the seminar on diocesan tithing offered by Bishop Nicolas Mondejar and his team in San Carlos Diocese. Then we started with the pilot parish of Kabasalan, the second largest parish after Ipil. From then on, with some modifications, the practice has been adopted by practically all the other parishes.

fourth learning that I received directly from Bishop Escaler was his careful and prudent accounting of resources for a fledgling prelature. Regularly every Christmas season he would send a summary financial report of the state of the prelature to friends and donors as well as to the clergy themselves. Local resources amounted to less than a third of the total expenses. Despite



facilitate instant communication when telephone lines and mobile cell phones were still non-existent. The bishop's car was equipped with this radio set to enable

been cut off. Eventually, this stewardship accounting of limited resources led to the adoption of Standard Living Allowances for the clergy.

Beyond these four practices, the most lasting learning I received was my association and collaboration with the clergy, religious and lay leaders of Ipil Prelature. As a neophyte bishop, I looked up to my "elders," the veteran missionary priests that had toiled in many remote parishes on the Zamboanga mainland and Olutanga Island. Among these were Jesuit, Claretian, PIME, Maryknoll, Sacred Heart and later on SVD priests. There was also a growing number of Filipino diocesan priests who were beginning to take over several parishes; one of them has become the new bishop of Iligan. The sisters' congregations included: Spinola, Guardian Angels, Faithful Companions of Jesus, Hijas de Maria, Tertiary Capuchins, Mercy, SPC, RVM, CM, DC, SFIC and OP sisters. Among the priests and religious sisters were several nationalities: Italian, Spanish, American, Polish, Belgian, Indian, Indonesian, German, British, Panamanian and Filipino. The numerous local lay co-workers would not be outdone in the ministries they carried out, such as catechetics, family life and natural family planning, community-based health program, youth, BEC formation, Subanon apostolate and social action. Ipil Prelature offered a microcosm of the universal Church at work in mission territory.

Because of these learnings and pastoral experiences, I must confess that Ipil was my "first love" as a bishop. But then after 14 years in the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, a second love has grown—with God's grace for both. *Deo gratias!\**



later in 1995, a mixed group of Muslim militants raided the Ipil town center, burned the market place, broke into two banks, and killed about 60 people. Because of Bishop Escaler's own admonition of non-retaliation against the Muslim minority in the town, Ipil became a symbol for peace and development, the episcopal motto I adopted as Bishop of the Prelature: *Pax et Progressio*. It was during these initiation years as a bishop that I learned the value of four practices that later on I would try to adapt in the much larger Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro.

First was the KRISKA (*Kristohanong Kasilinganan*) program. This was the formation of Basic Christian Communities (BCC's), comprising *selda* groupings of household heads as well as the activation of *kapilya* communities at the barangay or sitio level. The clustering of chapels also created the *sonas* (zones) that provided a larger scope for in-service training. Many local leaders were formed and empowered to become *alagads* (cell facilitators), or *kaabags* (chapel lay ministers) or chapel presidents. Due to the lack of priests and the distances involved, many of the chapel or zone communities took on the functions of a mini-parish, with their own planning for liturgical and socio-economic activities. For a time "*Mag KRISKA ta!*" on t-shirts displayed an open invitation for parishioners to join this new way of being church.

Second, during the election period of 2004, several lay social action workers

this, he would gradually be able to provide for the priests the motorcycles and later on four-wheel vehicles they needed to traverse the rough roads of the prelature. We were also able to purchase single-side-band radio units for all the parishes to

communication with parishes even while traveling. It was the availability of this radio central unit at the bishop's house that provided instant news to the outside world about what was happening during the Ipil raid, when communication lines had



# CBCP-ECMI's message for the 34th National Migrants' Sunday

IN these difficult and trying times of COVID-19, we are experiencing the harshness of life. Many of our OFWs are forced to come back home with no security of a better life. Yet, they are still luckier than those who return home in caskets or urns, or those whose remains could not be repatriated.

At home, lately, we have come to know the meaning of LSIs—locally stranded individuals, stranded in the places where they were when the quarantine was declared. There were many construction workers from Visayas and Mindanao who were left to fend for themselves; students who could not go home to their families, and many others who could not return to their loved ones.

This pandemic has displaced many others, especially those whose jobs were in the service industry—public transportation drivers, restaurant and salon workers, those in the entertainment industry, etc. There are those who have no more work to go back to, their companies having folded up or closed. These are displaced workers, and they have families to take care and feed. It has also displaced the economy. It has made life doubly hard, and the end is not yet in sight.

This must have been the insecurity

of Mary and Joseph who were forced to flee from their own country with the baby Jesus in order to protect him. We know that we have to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate displaced migrants, especially in these trying times. This pandemic has also become an equalizer; everybody is affected by it. Nevertheless, even if we claim that all of us feel its effects, we are still capacitated to be in solidarity with those most in need, and not to discriminate nor isolate our victim brothers and sisters.

COVID-19 is no reason to forget the displaced migrants. This is the message of the mystery of the Incarnation: God became one like us so we can become like him. Let us share our hope with our displaced migrant workers and those displaced by COVID-19. This is the time when we need each other the most.

In the Heart of Jesus,

+NARCISO ABELLA, MSC  
Bishop of the Diocese of Romblon  
Chairman, CBCP Episcopal  
Commission on Migrants and  
Itinerant People

September 24, 2020



Hundreds of distressed overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Sept. 26, following their repatriation from Beirut, Lebanon. PCOO

# Movements of the ship: Sail, carry and reach

Pastoral Message on the occasion of the 25th National Seafarers Sunday, 27 September 2020



PHOTO FROM THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA

IN celebration of our National Seafarers Sunday, on behalf of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, let me express our gratitude for the services and sacrifices of our dedicated and devoted seafarers. With your hard works, strength in body and spirit, your ships reach their destination efficiently and safely. We proudly recognize the sensible and credible

pastoral care of the Apostleship of the Seas-Philippines. Our seafarers find a caring and loving home in our Stella Maris.

The Philippine Catholic Church is not only very proud of you but we spiritually journey with you in our prayers and commitment to your welfare and well-being. We are one with you for the promotion of your rights and protection. In the

assuring words of our beloved Pope Francis, "you are not forgotten."

Thanking Apostleship of the Seas-Philippines and Scalabrini Migration Center for this Webinar, let me share with you my reflective message focusing on the movements of the ships. For me, these are the following:

- Ship sails in the open seas.
- Ship carries its load.

Ship reaches her port, readies to sail again.

First, the ship is made to sail, to venture in the open seas. A ship docked at the port is safe, but that is not what the ship is meant for. She has to sail. Her strength is measured how she faces the harsh weather and braves the unpredictable oceans.

Our life here on earth is a journey, as if we are sailing on earth towards our true home, in Heaven. Whatever life has to offer, we go on. Even life has its ups and down, we are ready to ride into it. Even life is not smooth-sailing as its road is rough and rugged, we always raise our sails and look beyond the new horizon.

Our dearest seafarers don't let the storms of separation and loneliness break your spirit and make you withdraw into dark corner of your being. Don't let the waves of material pleasure and luxuries distract your vision of harmonious homecoming to your loved ones. We must not let the temptations of easy money or vices ruin our dreams of happy and healthy family.

Just remember, with our innate qualities as brave and best Filipino seafarers, our potentials for being fruitful and successful are as immense as the seas. In spite of what lies ahead, sail on.

Second, the ship carries her load. It can either be cargo or passengers, or both. As the ship takes her load, you do everything to give your best. Everything is well-taken care of, protected and conserved. Nothing will be lost, damaged, or wasted. Everybody is protected and being served with utmost diligence and respect.

In our earthly sailing, we bring

and carry our luggage. We bear our loads. We are advised that too many luggage slow down our journey. So in life, take only what is very necessary, cast aside what will hinder us from completing our pilgrimage to God.

Our dearest seafarers, you have heavy burdens on your shoulders and the load weighs you down. Climate batters our body. Sustenance at home and the present condition of family members sometimes undermine our mental disposition. So be strong. Set your sight on God. Let Jesus be the captain of your soul. Anchor your life on His words. Jesus will surely keep us safe and successful.

If you are in pain or nursing family problems, your chaplains are available to walk with you and work for you. If you feel alone or at lost, your Stella Maris are your home and your comfort. If you need rest and refuge, your Apostleship of the Seas are your shelter and family. Come to us. We will walk alongside you, and help carry your loads.

Facing trials is like being hurled into a ferocious storm in the sea. But be encouraged. God's providence is greater than all the problems and afflictions in this ocean of life. Nothing and no one can hinder His plans for you. His voice will be like a beacon of light in the middle of the sea, telling us "take courage, it is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14, 27).

Lastly, the ship reaches her port. Even though the sea journey is long and tiring, the ship will surely dock at the port. Amidst storms and the scorching heat of sun, the ship's journey will still come to its completion. Whatever the

Ship / B7

# AMRSP statement on the commemoration of the declaration of Martial Law

*"We wept when darkness fell upon our beloved land."*

FORTY-EIGHT years ago, Ferdinand E. Marcos declared martial on September 21, 1972. It ushered in an unprecedented reign of terror and unbridled greed.

Suddenly, the whole country was plunged into darkness and uncertainty. Organizations critical of the administration were suddenly declared illegal, thus many of them were forced to go underground. The myth of "Malakas" and "Maganda" as the saviors of this country who would lead us out from the darkness of poverty and start a new era of peace and prosperity reigned in mass media, losing the freedom of the press and the people's right of access to credible information and politicizing the military and judiciary.

The public coffers were plundered resulting in economic collapse. According to the Presidential Commission on Good Governance, about \$5 billion to \$10 billion were plundered by Marcos and his cronies. Companies were seized

and their ownership transferred to Marcos' cronies. In the countryside, thousands of farmers' and indigenous peoples' communities were subjected to harassments, massacres, blockades, and forced evacuations, to give way to multi-million development projects.

We raised our voices when repression reared its ugly head.

Shuddering are the accounts of human rights violations committed by state forces during the dark era of martial law. According to the data of Amnesty International, about 34,000 Filipinos suffered torture in various forms, 77 "desaparecidos" (some of them are religious, like Fr. Rudy Romano, CSsR and Rev. Carlos Ma. Tayag, OSB), 70,000 were imprisoned for their political involvement, and 3,240 known cases of extrajudicial killings from 1974 to 1981.

In response, we in the AMRSP and our predecessors committed ourselves to be prophets and witnesses to a church of and for

the poor.

Many Christians, especially Catholics, inspired by the Gospels, the development of Liberation Theology, and the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, began to participate in the anti-dictatorship struggle as an exercise of their faith in the saving and liberating power of God who actively works in history.

Many of us joined the mobilizations in the streets, organized discernment circles where national and sectoral situationers were discussed and analyzed using the lens of the faith. Some were found in the picket lines of workers' strikes, calling for workers' rights and assisting their families. They were even at the "barikadang bayan" of the urban poor fighting against the demolition of their communities to give way to projects both of local and multinational corporations.

Others actively participated in Fact-Finding Missions and prison visits to document human rights violations. Still others went to the

rural communities, answering the challenge of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference to "bring Christ to the rural poor" by establishing Basic Christian Communities (BCCs, the predecessor of BEC) and Community-Based Health Program (CBHP).

Many of them found the face of Christ in the suffering poor, reinvigorating their faith by actively upholding their prophetic witnessing in the society. Many would later testify that the period of their involvement in the anti-dictatorship struggle is some of the best years of their lives, deepening their commitment both as Christians and as consecrated women and men.

In the process, we were vilified, demonized, and many of our members arrested, tortured, and even killed. The church and its people were persecuted.

Yet to keep us going, we celebrated the courage and resistance of a people despite all the threats, arrests, detention, torture, disappearance

and salvaging still stood their ground and defied the dictatorship until it was driven away.

Our fundamental rights and freedoms were somehow restored through the blood, sweat and tears of the unsung and nameless heroes and martyrs who burned light in the darkness of the night. We rejoiced when we saw the light. The whole world that was watching us change our situation without violence.

Today tyranny is on the rise again.

Now we weep again for the more than thirty thousand human beings arbitrarily killed in this war on drugs. The orphans and widows demand justice. We demand accountability and justice. There will be no peace until the blood spilled in our streets and our homes find justice.

We are appalled again by continuing attacks on human rights defenders and all those who serve the least, the last and the lost. They are the modern-day apostles of our times—mocked, harassed,

Statement / B7

# Pastoral Instructions for All Saints and All Souls Day

Circular 2020-33  
RE: All Saint's-All Souls' Day

Reverend Fathers:

It is evident and to be expected that like the Lenten and Easter seasons, our observance of All Saints-All Souls Days will be substantially affected by the Covid-19 pandemic that we are going through.

## OUR FAITH

Before we look into the adjustments in the pious devotional practices that we traditionally observe on All Saints'-All Souls' Days, let us return to some fundamental Catholic teachings.

1. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church is our first guide.*

The Church in its pilgrim members has always honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' she offers her suffrages for them."

Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective. (#958).

2. On her death bed, Saint Monica taught her son Augustine, "Lay my body anywhere. Let not the care for that in any way disquiet you. I only ask this: that you remember me at the Lord's altar, wherever you are."

3. Sacramentals are sacred signs and practices instituted by the Church. They prepare men to receive the fruit of the sacraments and sanctify different circumstances of life. (CCC 1677, 1679). Visiting cemeteries is a sacramental.



Families light candles and keep vigil on All Saints' Day before an apartelle-type graves for the dead in a cemetery in Laguna on November 1, 2012. FILE PHOTO

OUR SITUATION: Still in Community Quarantine

1. At the individual level, each of us should practice basic health precautions. These include frequent and proper handwashing, proper cough etiquette, and social distancing of two meters. These measures minimize the spread of COVID-19 because the virus travels in the air through water droplets.

2. At the community level, each of us should minimize our social mobility and stay home to prevent the social interactions between infected and non-infected people that are necessary for pandemic spread. When we are out in public, we should wear masks and face shields, because again, these simple measures block infectious water droplets from moving from one person to another.

## REVERENCE FOR THE DEPARTED

1. Let the motherly counsel of Saint Monica be our guide, "Lay my body anywhere. Let not the care for that in any way disquiet you. I only ask this: that you remember me at the Lord's altar, wherever you are." Visiting the graves of our loved ones is a pious devotion called sacramental. There is something higher and more spiritually beneficial than sacramental—the sacraments.

Starting October 7, memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary until November 2, all Masses in the archdiocese will be offered as suffrage for the

faithful departed. All green ferial days must be Masses for the Faithful Departed.

The Catholic faithful can request the names of their departed loved ones to be remembered in the Masses within these days.

2. Within October 7 to October 31, those who wish to offer votive candles may bring the unlit candles to the parish office. They will be gathered until October 31 and will be lit by designated lay leaders in the cemetery of the parish as an act of reverence for the faithful departed.

3. The image of the dead Christ will be put out for veneration in the parish church, properly secured to prevent people from kissing or touching the image. To the image of the dead Christ, the faithful who wish to offer flowers by the graves of their loved ones may just lay the flowers before the image of dead Christ and offer prayers for the faithful departed.

4. From October 24 to November 1, the enclosed Prayers of the Faithful will be used for the souls in purgatory. Before Mass, the Novena for the Poor Souls, as enclosed, will be prayed. Within this novena days, the parish priest must visit the cemetery to bless the graves and tombs without making any announcement on the specific date so as not to unduly gather people to join the blessing.

5. While the Filipino custom of offering flowers is recognized as religious inculturation,

the current pandemic and creeping hunger so prevalent in our communities should also encourage us to offer, instead of flowers and candles, alms for the poor in the parish, to be used for feeding and giving out food relief packs. The parish must organize an alternative UNDAS by giving food bags to the poor on October 27, the Sunday before UNDAS in memory of the faithful departed. Almsgiving covers a multitude of sins and is beneficial for the souls in purgatory more than flowers and candles.

6. The Catholic cemeteries will not be accessible to the Catholic faithful on October 31 to November 2 as an act of social responsibility. As most of us have availed of spiritual communion during this time that we are unable to physically attend Mass, so we are encouraged to focus more on the spiritual communion of prayers for the faithful departed this year.

The parish priests with private memorial parks or government cemeteries in their areas are advised to request the local government units and the memorial park owners to observe these same protocols for the sake of social order and public health. We have no jurisdiction over them but we plead in the spirit of social responsibility and solidarity against the pandemic. It would also help to warn the police about the possible priest impostors who might take advantage of the

season and offer fake religious rites for pay.

7. Enclosed is a Prayer Guide for Family Prayers for the Faithful Departed which the Catholic faithful can use at home with the family. The pandemic can be a good occasion to recover the value and beauty of family prayer.

I borrow the words of Cardinal Robert Sarah from his letter "Let Us Return to the Eucharist with Joy". The Church "bears witness to hope, invites us to trust in God, recalls that earthly existence is important, but much more important is eternal life: sharing the same life with God for eternity is our goal, our vocation. This is the faith of the Church, witnessed over the centuries by hosts of martyrs and saints."

In this time of pandemic he urged us pastors to "renew our intention to be witnesses of the Risen One and heralds of a sure hope, which transcends the limits of this world."

We who are unable to visit the cemeteries pray that someday, we can join the saints in heaven. Our destiny is heaven not the grave.

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

Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist  
September 21, 2020

## Pastoral Instruction: One with our beloved dead



A replica of Michaelangelo's Pietà at the Blessed Souls Chapel of the Manila Cathedral. ROMAIN GARY LAZARO

MY dear people of God in the Archdiocese of Manila,

A few weeks ago, the mayors of Metro Manila came out with a resolution to close the public cemeteries from October 31 to November 3 this year to avoid large crowds congregating and thus spread the Corona 19 virus. I commend our local executives for their care to prevent any upsurge of the disease. This was extended nation-wide by the IATF resolution 72 which came out on September 15. It states: "All public and private cemeteries, and memorial parks, including columbariums and the like throughout the country shall be closed to visitors from October 29 to November 4, 2020." I enjoin everyone to cooperate.

We hold on to our faith in the Communion of Saints and to our oneness with our beloved dead. We believe that death does not totally separate our loved ones from us. In physical death life is changed, not ended. Our relationship with our beloved dead, however, is no longer material but spiritual. In fact, we go to the cemetery during the UNDAS to remember and pray for them. Remembrance and prayers are spiritual activities. We can still do these. We can go to visit them in the cemeteries on other days, not just in the first two days of November. So we can schedule our family visit to the

cemetery on any day before October 29 and on any day after November 4. What is to be avoided is that we congregate together and form large crowds only on certain days.

On November 1 and 2, all are encouraged to go to Church and offer Mass for our beloved dead. The Holy Eucharist is the best prayer that we can offer. All of us, living and dead, are united in the offering of Jesus in the Holy Mass. Our parishes will celebrate more Masses on those days to accommodate more churchgoers with proper physical distancing. Lighting of candles for the dead can also be done in areas provided by the parishes during the month of November. The lighting of candles is an external manifestation of our prayer.

Instead of going to the cemeteries on November 1 and 2, we can also set aside time together as a family in our homes and pray for those who have gone ahead of us. It is a good and holy thought to pray for the dead. It would also be good if we can share with the family members our recollections about our beloved dead so that their memory can bind us closer to each other.

During these past six months, many have experienced death in the family, and for hygienic reasons many of our dead were cremated. I would like to remind everyone that it is not allowed for us to keep the urns

containing the ashes in our homes permanently. There is great danger of desecration in the future, especially when we are no longer around to look after and care for these ashes. So the ashes should be laid to rest in columbaria in the cemeteries or in churches. In this way too, other people outside of our families who would like to visit and pray for them can freely do so any time.

We give due respect to the remains of the dead because we believe that "just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life" (1 Cor. 15:22). So we all await our coming together into God's house at the resurrection of the dead. We believe in the words of our Lord Jesus: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be" (Jn. 14:2-3). Our regular visits to cemeteries and our remembrance and prayers for the dead are deep signs of our longing to be with them forever in our Father's house.

Yours truly in Christ Jesus,

+BRODERICK S. PABILLO, DD  
Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Manila  
September 21, 2020

# Exceptionally generous is God to us!

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 20:1-16)  
September 20, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

THE Parable of the Laborers of the Vineyard tells the story of a vineyard owner who hired from a labor pool at various hours of the day. When evening drew on, all the hired men, including those who were hired at five in the afternoon, received the same payment. If one looks at the parable in terms of labor relations, he can always sympathize with those who labored all day, beginning at nine in the morning, but nonetheless received a wage that was exactly the same as those who came at five in the afternoon. It is not difficult to see the injustice done to them, if by justice is meant the giving of what is due to everyone. Obviously, it is a gross injustice for the estate owner to give the same wage to those who came to work early in the day and those who came late in the afternoon. That would be a case of unfair labor practice. But the parable is not about labor relations. For the focus of the story is not on the laborers who came to the vineyard, but on the owner who was extremely gracious to those who came last—he was extremely generous!

In trying to understand the lesson of the parable, it may be helpful to point out that at Jesus' time, the market place was some kind of a labor exchange. Men went there in the morning and waited for an employer to come along. And in the normal course of things, any employer would always hire the skilled or the competent workers. Consequently, if there were any workers standing idle in the marketplace from morning to afternoon, they were certainly the leftovers whom no one hired. The lesson of the parable lies here, for it is in connection with these leftovers that the extreme generosity of the owner is shown. For one thing, in spite of the fact that they were

unskilled, the owner was generous enough to take them in. For another, he gave each of them a wage that was more than commensurate with their work. One wonders, of course, whether this could be practiced in a business corporation. It is easy to imagine a company eventually folding up because of the extreme generosity of the owner—being exceptionally gracious would send the company into bankruptcy! But that is how human thinking goes. Nonetheless, the first reading reminds us: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:5-6).

Linked with the parable, this Isaianic saying merely indicates that God does not deal with men in the same way that men deal with their fellow men. To curb greed and inequality, men like to appeal to justice—give each one his due, they say! But one wonders whether justice is enough. Law brings justice, but one can easily recognize that something is lacking—it lacks compassion, magnanimity and similar values! Dura lex sed lex, the law may be harsh, but it is the law! Obviously, the world cannot be ruled by law alone, and it would be unfortunately to leave the world only to lawyers or justices! Love is to be added, for it is love that enables us to share with those who are marginal and abandoned members of the community. "The Lord is good to all, and compassionate towards his work" (Ps 145:9), says the Responsorial Psalm, but that is because God is first of all love. Equality may express justice, but it does not convey the compassion and love of God. It may be difficult

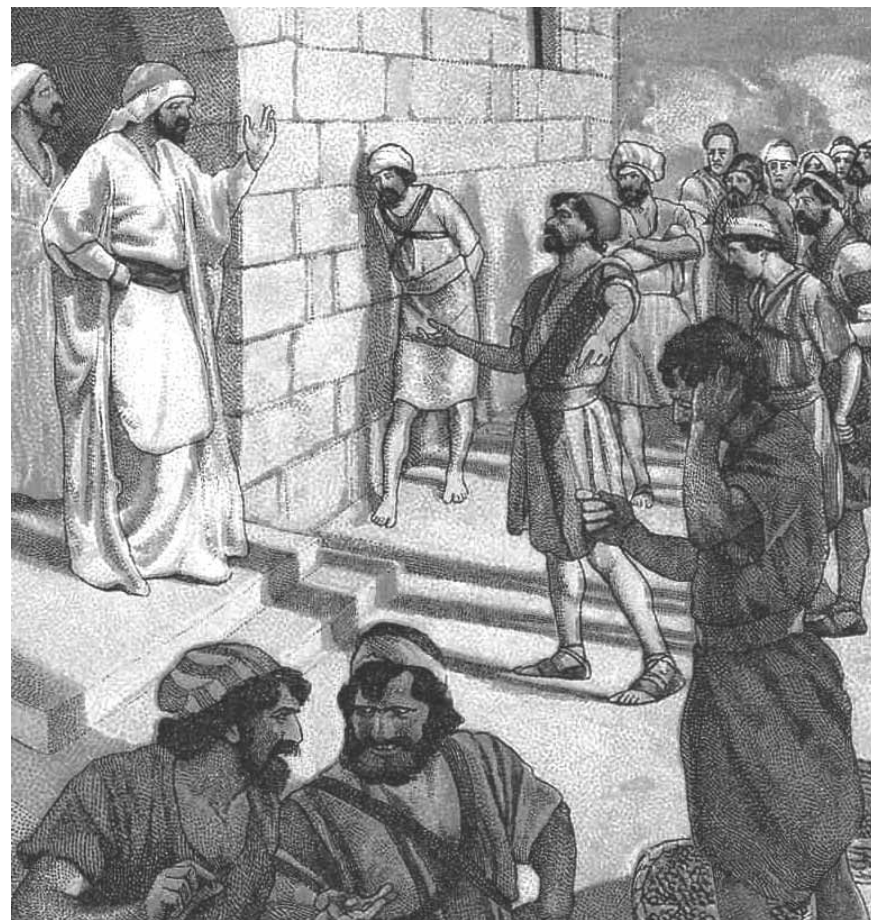
to fathom, but one can understand why God's thought is unlike human thought.

But if God does not deal with us in the way men do, it is because if he does, no one would probably survive: "If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, Lord, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered" (Ps 130:3-4). Since no one can stand if God deals with us like we do, he deals with us in his mercy and forgiveness. God remains good to humans, even if the latter are not good to him. He deals with us in his generosity. God is good to us not because we are good, but because he is good. This is the way the parable answers the murmuring of the Pharisees. When Jesus accepted the prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners to table fellowship, the Pharisees complained that he was thereby making sinners on par with them who were perfect observers of the law. For the Pharisees, they stand above transgressors of the law, and they deserve a reward that was much higher than sinners'. But Jesus answered that that God is extremely generous that he could even give equal pay for unequal work. What counts, in other words, is the mercy of God, not our own merits! What does this imply for the community? This means that since all are recipients of his mercy, members should rejoice whenever they receive gifts from God. Gifts are not earned; they are simply given! There is therefore no reason to be envious, when someone receives more than the others. The Christian community has no room for people who cannot bear to see others surpass them in gifts or talents. On the contrary, all have to rejoice in that, despite their unworthiness, God remains generous to them with his gifts!

# Learning from God to be magnanimous

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 20:1-16)  
September 20, 2020

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB



THE "workers of the first hour" had been praiseworthy, available, hard-working, laboring the whole day in the scorching heat. Really, they had done their best to earn their wages. But their complaining at payday tarnishes their image, for it reveals their weakness: they are envious. In spite of all our efforts to sympathize with their concern for a fair retribution, the truth of the matter is that they do not know how to appreciate the magnanimity of their Master. They feel envious when they see that others are offered a better deal. Their jealousy clouds their vision.

They would be right if everything in life were to be reduced to proportional retribution – so much compensation for so much done or produced. But if this were the only rule in life, no one would have time and attention (and money!) for those who do not "produce" – the weak, the sick, the disabled, the babies, the aged . . .

Even the strongest among us would have had a very short life. For all of us, in fact, there was a time when we were weak, when we did not "produce" anything at all, and were totally dependent on the generous love of our parents and other people.

We live on borrowed life! We all are the fruit of God's generosity, not of God's retribution. And He keeps being generous with us, even when we positively deserve His just punishment.

Why react negatively, then, at His "exceptional generosity" toward some of our brothers and sisters when we know that everyone will have to account in proportion to what one has received? Why be saddened by God's generosity toward others, and forget that we too, and more than once, have been the beneficiaries of His wonderful liberality?

Envy is a terrible woodworm. It devours us from within. If left unchecked, it can destroy so much good in us and around us. Envy over the good fortune or achievements of our neighbor is like a plague that makes everybody's life miserable. Instead, we should learn from God, who is ever so generous, ever so good. We should learn to rejoice at His liberality toward all His creatures. We should learn to imitate Him, in our little way, by using His very gifts to do good to others. The person who really loves is never jealous. He/she who really loves "God's way" always rejoices in the good fortune and success of others.

# A test of discipleship: words backed up by deeds

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 21:28-32)  
September 27, 2020

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

WORDS have to be substantiated. This is the main point of today's parable of the two sons. The story is extremely short. When their father asked them to go and work in his vineyard, the first one objected, but eventually changed his mind and obeyed. The second one said yes but never went. To the question of Jesus, "who of the two did the father's will?" the answer of course is the first son. There are various ways of understanding the parable, depending on the level of interpretation one wants to focus on. As told by Jesus, the story seems to have been originally linked with the question of who was a true Israelite. The first son portrays the tax collectors and sinners. Because they were unable to follow the law, they were treated as outside the pale of the true Israelite community. The second represents the scribes and the Pharisees, those who know the law. They claimed to represent the true Israelite community because they were faithful in its observance. Because of their claim, they became so secure in their position that when God revealed himself not through the law but through a person named Jesus, he refused to respond to him. That is why they are compared with the second son because they said yes to God, but in actual fact, they did not obey his word spoken through Jesus. On the other hand, the tax collectors and sinners, who were regarded as transgressors of the law, now said yes to the revelation in Jesus. Hence, they are identified with the first son.

It is even possible that the parable was applied first not to the ministry of Jesus but to that of John the Baptist. In his case, the poor who did not know the law accepted his teaching,

but the religious establishment did not. But at the level of Christian life, the parable is about discipleship. In particular, it has to do with the importance of practical response to God's invitation in Jesus. No doubt, the first son is held up as an example of discipleship. It does not matter whether one was born to a pagan family, or to morally questionable parents; what matters is that, in the ultimate analysis, one accepts God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ through repentance and faith. Just as the tax collectors and sinners repented and believed in Jesus (Matt 21:32), so any person, whatever might be the beginnings of his life, has only to respond to the offer of discipleship by changing his life and putting on the life of Christ. Such a person is God's son, Jesus's disciple, heir to the kingdom of God: "Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me" (Matt 12:30). One of the bitterest criticisms of Jesus against the Pharisees precisely consisted in this—that they merely talk, but their deeds are scarce: "Do not follow their [the Pharisees'] example. Their words are bold, but their deeds are few" (Matt 23:3). They are like the second son who said yes to his father, but failed him.

Discipleship is thus a matter of deeds. Discipleship is what makes one a child of the kingdom, Jesus could say: "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my father in heaven" (Matt 7:21). On the basis of this, one can only be amused that peripatetic preachers and born-again Christian could be so zealous in their attack against the Catholic Church, convinced as they are they

have the truth, but are intolerant of those who happen to disagree with them. How often they forget that they have to love in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18). The final test that one is a disciple is not the ability to quote the appropriate biblical text to prove that one's argument is rooted in the Bible, but the fleshing out of that belief in love.

The parable is a big challenge to us, Catholics. The center of our lives is the Eucharist, where we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes (1 Cor 11:26). In Christian life, to borrow the words of the Second Vatican Council, it is "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in her sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper" (Sacrosanctum concilium, 10). But there looms the danger that the Eucharistic celebration may be reduced to a mere ritual celebration, divorced from our daily life. It could happen that though we are faithful in celebrating it, we do not make an effort to live the life patterned after Jesus', which is a life of self-giving (Phil 2:9; Second Reading). In that sense, we could be like the Pharisees whose words are bold, but whose deeds are few and far between. To make the Eucharist the real center of our life, it must also affect our very life—all our thoughts and actions come from it and lead toward it. For a Eucharistic celebration that does not lead to action on behalf of others is simply empty; it does not exhibit a response to the offer of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

# Aiming at imitating Jesus, the Son who "said yes" and "did yes"

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Matt 21:28-32)  
September 27, 2020

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

MANY of us, whenever we read the story of the two sons featured in today's Gospel passage, may dismiss it as irrelevant to our situation. Others may remain puzzled by the indirect praise given to the "first son" by the chief priest and elders of the people (who, most likely, thought that "the first son" represented them.) He definitely did better than the "other son." But the behavior of the former, too, was far from being perfect, for he dared to say an arrogant "No!" to his father before doing what he had been asked to do. The villain of course, is the "other son" who said "Yes" but did "No."

The surprise, however, to the embarrassment of the religious authorities, comes when Jesus identifies "the first son" not with the chief priests and the elders, but with the tax collectors and the prostitutes as the ones who are entering the Kingdom of God. The latter, in fact, at the preaching of John, underwent conversion, unlike the religious authorities who did not believe in John. (See vv. 31b-32.)

As for us, independent "judges," we somehow feel that there must be a better way of relating to one's father who symbolizes God, our heavenly Father . . . This "better way" is not included in today's parable, but it is the basic message of "the parable" of Jesus' life. This "better way is: "Saying YES" and "Doing YES." That is the way of Jesus, the perfect "YES!"

to the Father. The whole Gospel is about this wonderful "parable" that teaches us how Jesus—the "perfect Son"—always responded with a perfect "Yes!" to the Father, both in words and actions.

Such should also be the way of all Christians. It is not enough to be "nominal Christians," (being Christians only in words). It is not enough either to be "occasional Christians" (people who sometimes behave well, though refusing to make a clear profession of faith in Jesus.) What we need is CONSISTENCY. All of us must be "consistent Christians," i.e., people who constantly live by the faith we profess. Indeed, the test of our worth as Christians lies in honoring our commitment to God, in doing the good we have promised to do, and in avoiding what we promised to avoid.

Being a real Christian entails also taking responsibility for one's failings and faults, rather than trying to put the blame on others, as the Israelites did during their exile. (See today's First Reading.) Genuine Christians know that they are not perfect. They know they can fail and they are ready to admit that, occasionally, they did fail. This honest and humble admission has to be followed by a real and lasting conversion. This is the basis for resuming with determination saying "YES!" to God in words and deeds, following the example of all saints, the best imitators of Jesus.

# Corruption and spread of Covid-19

By Fr. Shay Cullen

THERE are many global threats facing the world today. The most serious in everybody's mind is the coronavirus pandemic with 200,000 dead in the USA alone and spreading. It is a cause of shock and realization that we humans for all our economic, military and medical power is very weak and vulnerable to the invisible virus that has invaded our world, our communities, families and our bodies. Some nations have had success in controlling it; others have failed through incompetence and corruption.

Martha has a cheerful, happy-go-lucky personality, a healthy mother of four. On a recent Saturday evening, she forgot herself and went to a house party with friends to celebrate a birthday. She ignored precautions as did others and wrongly believed it wouldn't touch her. But it did. By Friday, she was having strong coughing and fever symptoms and reactions and was rushed to the overcrowded hospital. There in painful convulsions, Martha struggled and gasped for breath, isolated from family, only the nurse, dressed in blue plastic, went to help her. It was no use, Martha quickly fell silent and died. It was her weak lungs, they said. Some underlying health condition, said another. No

her precious, beautiful, happy life and that of her family. But it is also the many mistakes of the politicians that have failed to act decisively in time to lead and instruct the people that Covid-19 is a dangerous deadly virus with the power to kill and maim. They fail to insist that everyone must wear masks, avoid contact with others, disinfect, wash their hands frequently since anyone may have the deadly killer virus. It is spreading because many people ignore these precautions and corrupt, inadequate and stupid failed leaders do not order and impose protective measures to save the vulnerable people and issue strong, consistent health warnings. They have failed to implement and insist on a national response to test and trace the infected people and isolate them. How else can this vicious virus that spreads like venom be contained? Those strong, respected leaders who did respond to the attack of Covid-19 in a wiser, more scientific and disciplined and educated manner saved hundreds of thousands of their citizens, which is their sworn duty.

In the nations with the highest death rates, it seems they have restricted the showing of videos of mass burials, lines of waiting coffins, full crematoriums, overcrowded



A Caritas Manila worker helps distribute relief goods to more than 400 jeepney drivers received in Malabon City on Sept. 26. CARITAS MANILA



Fr. Hans Magdurulang of San Felipe Neri Parish prays over the medical staff of Santa Ana Hospital in Manila on August 31. COURTESY OF SAN FELIPE NERI PARISH

one really knows why she died so quickly. There was no time for an autopsy, not even a proper funeral. She was brought straight to the crematorium, leaving behind a weeping crying, traumatized family.

There are hundreds of thousands of people like Martha and more of them every day. A mistake took away

hospitals, dying people and sick doctors and nurses. It is too shocking. Is it for some effort to deny and cover up the real extent of their incompetence, criminal behaviour and lack of moral conscience all for the sake of retaining political power? Covid-19 is spreading and causing more sickness and death

because of some selfish, pleasure-seeking and irresponsible people who flout precautions and care for no one other than themselves. In their ignorance, they demonstrate against the safety precautions no less.

It is our fervent hope and belief that the majority of humans are good, law-abiding people that care for others, protect them from Covid-19 and care for the public health and environment. They choose the good over evil. They act in a responsible way saving their own lives, their families and neighbors. The people who do believe and choose to do the good and practice the values of love of the stranger, of neighbor and work for justice, have a responsibility to share those values so that equality, peace and harmony can be a reality in society. We should actively persuade and convince the others to do likewise. Inactivity in the face of wrong is to allow it to grow and prosper.

It may seem like mission impossible to persuade the virus deniers and the climate sceptics of the truth of a pandemic and global warming. We have to challenge and call out the oppressors, corrupt leaders and politicians to do justice, respect the rights of all, to care and protect the public health and to serve humbly. To convince these people who live in darkness that it is a better life to be in the light and to bring happiness to people, not terror, oppression, pain, suffering, rights violations and death. It is a mission to persuade the ordinary people to always choose the good over evil. It is a challenge for all to teach by good example, taking action for justice and accepting and living the truth that justice and goodness is the path to happiness for all. It is a great shining ideal, but will it ever come to be?

This is the goal we must work for. There is so much evil in the

world that allows the virus to spread uncontrolled in many countries, mostly among the poor. We see much irresponsible selfish behavior by some national leaders, bankers, industrialists, military, police and criminals. We know that abuse and evil persist because they with the power choose the evil and reject the good as they exercise their free will corruptly. The evil comes from making the wrong choice to crush and hurt others to retain political and economic power and to plunder the nation. For them, the health and well-being of others is just a matter of lip-service, words without meaning, action without purpose, hypocrisy and skulduggery for selfish personal gain. The great hope is that a society, a nation, will evolve with the beautiful values, principles, and compassion that motivate overwhelming good that is the paramount driving force that brings happiness to all.

## Message / B1

corporate misconduct is a "new version of colonialism" (SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*, 27 April 2001, cited in *Querida Amazonia*, 14), one that shamefully exploits poorer countries and communities desperately seeking economic development. We need to strengthen national and international legislation to regulate the activities of extractive companies and ensure access to justice for those affected.

### 5. A Time to Rejoice

In the biblical tradition, a Jubilee was a joyous occasion, inaugurated by a trumpet blast resounding throughout the land. We are aware that the cries of the earth and of the poor have become even louder and more painful in recent years. At the same time, we also witness how the Holy Spirit is inspiring individuals and communities around the world to come together to rebuild our

common home and defend the most vulnerable in our midst. We see the gradual emergence of a great mobilization of people from below and from the peripheries who are generously working for the protection of the land and of the poor. We rejoice to see how young people and communities, particularly indigenous communities, are on the frontlines in responding to the ecological crisis. They are calling for a Jubilee for the earth and a new beginning, aware that "things can change" (LS, 13).

We also rejoice to see how the *Laudato Si'* Special Anniversary Year is inspiring many initiatives at local and global levels for the care of our common home and the poor. This year should lead to long-term action plans to practise integral ecology in our families, parishes and dioceses, religious orders, our schools and universities, our healthcare, business and agricultural institutions, and many

## Statement / B4

and vilified. We are humbled by their courage and selfless service. Our democratic institutions, our freedom of expression, freedom of the press and other fundamental rights are muzzled.

The culture of death is being glorified, first with the continuing perpetration of the bloody "War on Drugs" which have claimed thousands of lives of people, especially from the urban poor sector, blamed to be "drug pushers or users" without the benefit of the judicial process.

And now, the death penalty is being sought to be re-imposed. Large-scale corruption committed by the administration's allies is rampant, for example, the PhilHealth corruption issue.

Fake news is the norm, while critical thinking is met with branding as "communist" or "dilawan". And now, even the already-narrowing democratic space in the land is being further stifled with the passage of the Anti-Terror Law of 2020, which we demand from Supreme Court to declare it unconstitutional.

We, as citizens of our country, strongly uphold that dissent and opposition are inextricably linked to a democracy however flawed it may be. A popular mandate is not a license to do as one pleases. It does not replace reason. Our social contract imposes check and balances for institutions of governance and accountability.

While it is true that EDSA 1 failed

others as well.

We rejoice too that faith communities are coming together to create a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. We are particularly happy that the Season of Creation is becoming a truly ecumenical initiative. Let us continue to grow in the awareness that we all live in a common home as members of a single family.

Let us all rejoice that our loving Creator sustains our humble efforts to care for the earth, which is also God's home where his Word "became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14) and which is constantly being renewed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

"Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth" (cf. Ps 104:30).

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 1 September 2020

FRANCISCUS

to emancipate our people from feudal bondage and exploitation, the drift towards tyranny is going to the other side of the pendulum. Now, the Marcoses are trying to re-write history to sanitize themselves.

On this day we pray to the God of liberation and renew our commitment to serve the voiceless and dehumanized, to a Faith that does justice and makes for peace. Today we declare, "Never Forget, Never Again to Dictatorship and Tyranny!"

FR. CIELITO R. ALMAZAN, OFM  
SR. MARILYN A. JAVA, RC  
AMRSPO Co-Chairpersons

September 21, 2020

## Ship / B4

hindrance may be, the ship sails. Difficulties and setbacks will not derail nor stop her from sailing.

Reaching the port, the ship gets reviewed, making sure everything is accounted for; getting repairs or restorations done. She readies for the next sea voyages.

Yes, along our journey we get tired or even hurt. Our hurts can come from being rejected or ridiculed because of our color or customs, or even our accent. We hear offensive words. We are in pain because of problems at home or with our working relationships on board. These are moments to turn to God and trust Him more. Remember, God is always beside you. Recall His goodness. Our almighty God will refresh our spirit and we will surpass all those hardships. He will strengthen us, sustain us for renewed service.

Our dearest seafarers, our journey does not stop. But once at the port or at home, we focus not on the past but what lies ahead. We nurse our wounds. We correct our mistakes. We equip ourselves better with faith, experience, and hope. As the ship prepares herself to sail, we likewise move on. We don't give up, having the assurance that with God, we will have a very successful completion of our journey and ultimately He will lead us safely back home.

On September 11, Friday, I, together with the parish priest of Saint Michael the Archangel in Orion, Father Percival Medina, along with Italian Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, Father Pierpaolo Monella, were supposed to be at the Port of Capinpin in Barangay Puting Buhangin in Orion for the first crew change hub outside Manila. It is the commitment of our country to the International green lane

protocol where the change of crew of a certain vessel is accepted and facilitated. But reflecting deeper, this is not only to fulfill the International protocol but it is also a manner of showing our true character. We are genuinely very hospitable people, always extending our hands to help.

With grateful hearts, we thank and appreciate the goodness of our municipal mayor, Antonio Raymundo, who promptly arranged everything, informing him that our Diocese of Balanga is always open and offering her pastoral and spiritual services. We in Bataan, especially Barangay Puting Buhangin and Orion are not afraid to welcome those seafarers amidst the threat of Covid-19 pandemic.

We narrated to Father Pierpaolo that Bataan was formerly a refuge and home to the so called "boat people" fleeing from Indochina wars. From then on, Bataan has no borders. Her roads, our homes are wide open especially for those who take the "journey of hope."

Unfortunately, Father Percival Medina whom came to me twice was contact traced from baptism he ministered the Sunday of September 6. This temporarily put a halt to our plans. But like a ship on quarantine, we patiently wait until the time we can go to Port Capinpin to welcome our dear seafarers. Who knows? You may be one of them. Meanwhile, let us anticipate that moment by fixing our gaze at these three movements:

Ship sails.  
She carries the load.  
Ship reaches the port.

+RUPERTO CRUZ SANTOS, DD  
Bishop of Balanga  
CBCP Bishop-Promoter of the Apostleship of the Seas-Stella Maris Philippines

**CINEMA**  
Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

|                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT</b> | <b>MORAL ASSESSMENT</b> |
| 5: Excellent                |                         |
| 4: Above Average            |                         |
| 3: Average                  |                         |
| 2: Below Average            |                         |
| 1: Poor                     |                         |

**CINEMA RATING**

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



# The King: Eternal Monarch

**DIRECTOR:** Sang-Hoon Baek  
**LEAD CAST:** Lee Min-ho, Kim Go-eun, Woo Do-hwan, Lee Jung-jin, Kim Kyung-nam, Kim Young-ok, Jung Eun-chaee  
**SCREENWRITER:** Eun-sook Kim  
**PRODUCERS:** Jinnie Choi, Yoon Ha-rim  
**GENRE:** Fantasy Drama/Romance  
**DISTRIBUTOR:** Netflix  
**LOCATION:** South Korea  
**RUNNING TIME:** 16 episodes, 1 hr 10 min per episode

Technical assessment: 4  
Moral assessment: 4  
CINEMA rating: V 16  
NETFLIX rating: 16+

Bloodshed mars the serenity of the night in the Kingdom of Corea when Lee Lim (Lee Jung-jin) murders his half-brother, the king, and steals the mythical bamboo flute called manpasikjeok in the king's safekeeping. Intending to take over the throne, Lee Lim charges to kill his nephew, the young crown prince Lee Gon (Lee Min-ho), who witnesses his father's murder and fights off his uncle. In the scuffle, the flute breaks in two, with Lee Gon grasping half and Lee Lim the other. Overpowered, the boy is sure to die were it not for a mysterious figure who appears and stops the carnage. The flute apparently is a key to eternity, at the same time that it enables its bearer to travel through time and space. Lee Gon, now king of the Kingdom of Corea, uses the flute to cross over to a parallel universe in contemporary Korea where he finds his mysterious savior, his one love, Lieutenant Jung Tae Eul (Kim Goe-un). The quest for the other half of the manpasikjeok continues across parallel realms as Lee Lim builds an army of villains in contemporary Korea by smuggling criminals and disenfranchised citizens from the Kingdom of Corea. Lee Gon tries to stop him from getting the other half of the flute, which would give him absolute power. On the king's side is Lee Gon's loyal imperial guard Jo Young (Woo Do-hwan), Tae Eul, and another wandering soul

from Corea who is now Tae Eul's fellow law enforcer in contemporary Korea, Kang Shin-jae (Kim Kyung-nam). As the two opposing forces transit from one universe to the other, two truths endure across time and space: the love between Lee Gon and Tae UI, and Lee Gon's friendship with his royal guard Jo Young. Characters portray a dual role in this phantasmagoric dalliance in quantum physics; they are neither similar nor different but definitely not the same. If we see the nuances in their characters, it is thanks to the way the outstanding array of actors was directed and the scenes intricately constructed, along with the music and lighting that idealize the mood and the seamless editing that transports us from one realm to the other. Scenes showcase the grandeur of the old and new nation of Korea, with the writer adroitly embedding science and math in the story. The profound is melded with the characteristic Korean romantic drama formula of close-ups as the camera lingers in slow motion on the tender images of the characters. No doubt, the movie is another milestone for Hallyu, the Korean wave that infuses our consciousness with Korean culture through the movie's costumes, food, music, customs, nationalism, and values. We are engaged from start to finish, and there is never a question of whether



we would watch all 16 episodes through the end. The struggle rather is whether we could fight the powerful urge to consume the series in one sitting. The movie contains violence and bloodshed — they are warranted in the story and never egregious. Still, we caution against letting children watch it. Teens and adults, on the other hand, will be drawn to thinking (and researching) science and mathematical theories and finding the historical backdrop for the events and characters in the movie. The women are strong; they take on roles traditionally reserved for men, such as Tae UI as a police officer and Koo Seo Ryeong (Jung Eun-chaee) as prime minister. Seo Ryeong is subjected to the usual disparaging behavior toward

women: "The party helped you gain that position" and "All you're doing is putting on more makeup." But she fires back and fulfills her duty in the most feminine fashion (that she has a dark side is another story). Then there is the heartfelt bromance between Lee Gon and Jo Young, a friendship of reciprocal selflessness between ruler and subject. Most magnetizing of all is the enduring love between Lee Gon and Tae UI, demonstrating how true love and mutual respect grow gradually as one peels off one's person, talents, gifts, weaknesses, wealth, and want. We can conceive of The King: Eternal Monarch as an allegory of Christ who loves us first, seeks to connect with us, and comes to our world to be with us.

# 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.

# Cuties

**DIRECTOR:** Maimouna Doucoure  
**LEAD CAST:** Fathia Youssouf, Medina El Aidi-Azouni, Esther Gohourou, Ilanah Cami-Goursolas, Mainouna Gueye; Mbissine Therese Diop  
**WRITER:** Maimouna Doucoure;  
**PRODUCERS:** Sylvain de Zangroniz;  
**MUSIC:** Niko Noki;  
**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Yann Maritaud;  
**EDITING:** Mathilde Van de Moortel, Stephane Mazalague;  
**GENRE:** Drama;  
**COUNTRY:** France;  
**LANGUAGE:** French;  
**DISTRIBUTED BY:** BAC Films/ Netflix;  
**RUNNING TIME:** 96 minutes

Technical assessment: 3.5  
Moral assessment: 2.5  
CINEMA rating: V 16  
NETFLIX rating: 16+

Cuties presents a strong narrative of misplaced duty and misguided coming of age expressions. Ami must decide what a woman should be — become either docile like her mother or liberated like the Cuties. The poignant storytelling seems to cross the line of acceptable morals until we realize this is actually a stand against society's mindless use of social media and discrimination against women in certain cultures. In both cases, women are objectified. Youssouf, Gueye and Diop perform their re-

spective characters strongly and allow viewers to empathize with them. We don't agree with their choices, but we understand them well. There is poetry in Maritaud's shots and Doucoure's direction — the hated dress for her dad's wedding being blown by the wind as if beckoning her to be the dutiful daughter, Ami suffering for her sins while gyrating as a sinner. While the film might have benefitted with less emphasis on sexualizing 11 year olds and tightening of some scenes it is arguably a



well crafted movie that invites serious reflection. The sudden outburst of netizens over Cuties is more about Netflix's marketing and framing of the story rather than the story itself. People need to differentiate the trailer from the film, in the same manner the more discerning ones differentiate clickbait headlines from the

content. There are two strong issues the film brings forth. One, and probably the most controversial, is the negative effect of social media. True, the idea of 11 year olds scantily dressed and gyrating like loose women, is disturbing and hard to watch. But it is the adults who irresponsibly post tasteless and improper content on social media, un-

mindful that they are easily accessible to children. The film does not condone how the Cuties behave. In several occasions we see the adults in the film rejecting the girls' conduct, the older boys telling them to act their age, the contest's audience showing obvious distaste in their choreography, and even the Cuties considering Ami's

flashing of her private parts unacceptable. But it does warn us that social media exploits the unguided and misguided. Because Ami and Angelica felt better appreciated in social media than with their families, they easily cast aside modesty and integrity. The second and stronger theme, though overshadowed by controversy presented by the Cuties' provocative dance and outfit, is a critique of duty and how women in certain cultures are treated like second class citizens. That they need to accept if their husbands bring home another wife. That they need to be at the husband's beck and call. That their role is more of a servant than a partner. That they have no right over their lives or their hearts. This very thinking pushed Ami to rebel and try to live the opposite. While we respect the different cultures and ways of life, the very basic respect for women cannot be set aside just because of tradition. As Ami realizes freedom from the shackles of the unreasonable tradition does not mean living a life with loose morals, Mariam realizes duty needs to be within reason and allows loosening of the shackles.





# THE CROSS



A Supplement Publication of the Order of the Knights of Columbus and KCFAPI

KofC Family... Our Concern

Vol. 24, Nos. 18 & 19

August 31 - September 27, 2020

## Philippine Jurisdictions join the 138th Supreme Convention

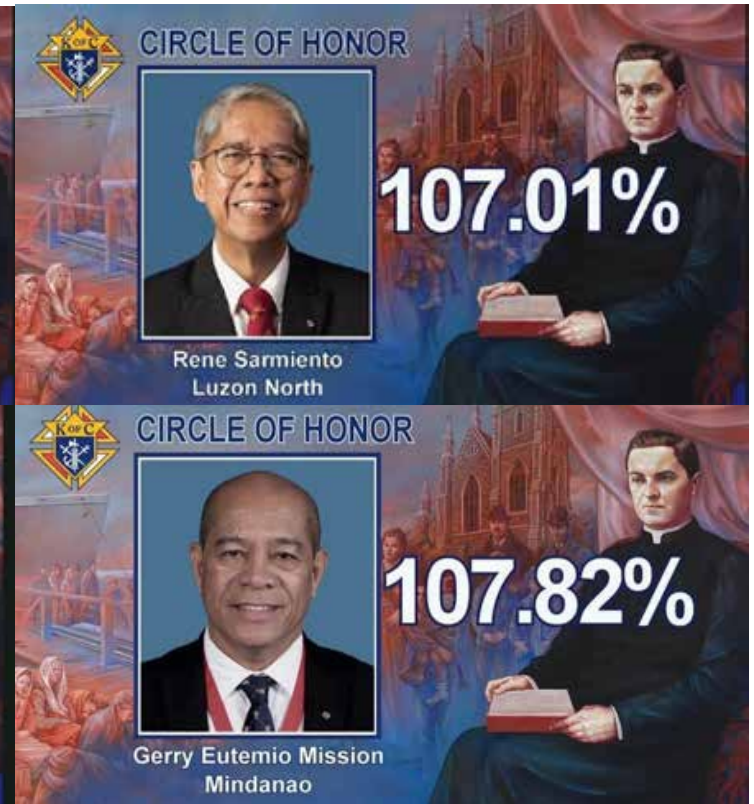
ANNUALLY, the members of the Order of the Knights of Columbus gather for the Supreme Convention. This year, the 138th Convention with the theme "Knights of Columbus: Knights of Fraternity" and a celebration of the upcoming beatification of Fr. Michael J. McGivney, founder of the Order, was held at New Haven, Connecticut from August 4 to 6, 2020.

The current COVID-19 crisis prompted the Order to celebrate this event virtually. In the Philippines, the pandemic situation in country did not dampen the spirit of the valiant Filipino Brother Knights to miss this once in a year occasion. The Visayas Jurisdiction led by Worthy State Deputy (WSD) Bro. Teofrido B. Lagria together with the delegates of the jurisdiction virtually attended the convention at the Marriott Hotel, Iloilo City. On the other hand, the Mindanao Jurisdiction led by WSD Bro. Gerry Eutemio T. Mission and delegates of the jurisdiction virtually joined the convention at the Dusit Thani Hotel, Davao City. Both Luzon North and Luzon South delegations joined the

festivities online.

An Opening Mass was held on August 4, 2020 at St. Mary's Church, New Haven, Connecticut concelebrated by Most Rev. William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore and Supreme Chaplain; Very Rev. Jonathan C. Kalisch, OP, Prior of St. Mary's Priory; Rev. John Paul Walker, OP, Pastor of St. Mary's Parish, Rev. Jeffrey V. Romans, Connecticut State Chaplain, and Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair, Archbishop of Hartford as homilist.

During the convention, the achievements of jurisdictions for Columbian Year 2019 to 2020 were acknowledged. Over the years, the jurisdictions in the Philippines received numerous awards for consistently overachieving their targets. The Circle of Honor Awards, an award given to State Deputies who meet or exceed their Annual Membership targets, were given to WSD Bro. Bonifacio B. Martinez of Luzon South for achieving 113.58%, WSD Bro. Teofrido B. Lagria of Visayas for achieving 113.44%, WSD Bro. Gerry Eutemio T. Mission of Mindanao for achieving 107.82% and WSD Bro. Rene V. Sarmiento of Luzon North



The Philippine State Deputies Worthy State Deputy (WSD) Bro. Bonifacio B. Martinez of Luzon South, WSD Bro. Rene V. Sarmiento of Luzon North, WSD Bro. Teofrido B. Lagria of Visayas and WSD Bro. Gerry Eutemio T. Mission of Mindanao as recipients of the Circle of Honor Awards during the 138th Supreme Convention held at New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

for achieving 107.01%. All Philippine State Deputies were also recipients of the New Council Development Awards, an award given to jurisdictions who meet and exceed their new council targets for the Columbian Year, by establishing

62 Councils for Mindanao Jurisdiction, 21 Councils in Visayas Jurisdiction, 14 Councils in Luzon North and 10 Councils in Luzon South. These recognitions are indeed firm testaments of the Philippines State Deputies' love and

commitment to the Order of the Knights of Columbus.

The three-day convention was ended with a memorial mass for the dearly departed members of the Knights of Columbus around the world concelebrated by Most Rev.

Leonard P. Blair, Archbishop of Hartford; Very Rev. Jonathan C. Kalisch, OP, Prior of St. Mary's Priory; Rev. John Paul Walker, OP, Pastor of St. Mary's Parish and Rev. Jeffrey V. Romans, Connecticut State Chaplain.

## KCFAPI Commemorates the 43rd Death Anniversary of Fr. George J. Willmann, SJ.



Wreath laying ceremony (L-R); Administration Services Department Manager - Bro. Michael P. Cabra, Knights of Columbus Luzon North State Deputy and Knights of Columbus Fr. George J. Willmann Charities, Inc. (KCFGJWCI) Trustee - Bro. Rene V. Sarmiento, Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Fr. George J. Willmann - Fr. Robert T. Young, Knights of Columbus Luzon South State Deputy and KCFGJWCI Treasurer - Bro. Bonifacio B. Martinez, and Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. OIC-Executive Vice-President Bro. Ronulfo Antero G. Infante. (KAYngco)

LAST September 14, 2020 the Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc., through the Knights of Columbus Fr. George J. Willmann Charities, Inc., has commemorated the 43rd Death Anniversary of the Servant of God, Fr. George J. Willmann. On that same day, we also celebrated the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, the universal symbol of our catholic faith.

The Holy Eucharist was presided by one of our Foundation scholars and Board of Trustee, Fr. Robert T. Young, who taught us the meaning of the cross by reminding us of its origins. That once, it was the figure of death

and dishonor, and through Jesus, it turned into a symbol of life and his glory as we celebrate his triumph over death.

We commemorate this day to honor Fr. George J. Willmann, Servant of God of his works and sacrifices for the church and the Order. His selfless ideas of upbringing the life of the poor and the needy, his charitable works, and the lives of the people he has changed. Fr. George turned difficulty into new possibilities. During the time that the Supreme Council could not provide an agency to cater life protection to Filipino KC members, Fr. George thought of a way of funding a local insurance system.

Years later, from its humble beginnings, it is now an institution that still embodies his aspirations and objectives of helping the poor, supporting the activities of the church, and worthy causes of the Knights of Columbus in the Philippines.

After the Holy Mass a wreath laying ceremony was held at the Fr. George J. Willmann Statue within the KCFAPI premises along Gen. Luna St. in Intramuros, Manila.

During this day let it remind us to promote the life and works of Fr. George J. Willmann for his love to the Order and the Church. So that one day we may raise his honors in the altar.



The KofC Visayas Jurisdiction delegates headed by Bro. Teofrido Lagria, State Deputy as virtual attendees during the 138th Supreme Convention at the Marriott, Iloilo from August 4 to 6, 2020. (Photo Credits: Bro. Dante Dolar)



The KofC Mindanao Jurisdiction delegates headed by Bro. Gerry Eutemio Mission, State Deputy as virtual attendees during the 138th Supreme Convention at the Dusit Thani Hotel, Davao City from August 4 to 6, 2020. (Photo Credits: Bro. Gerry Eutemio T. Mission)



The Luzon South Jurisdiction during one of their Leave No Neighbor Behind - COVID-19 Relief Operations at Dagat Dagatan Caloocan. Other relief operations were also held in other areas within the jurisdiction such as in Intramuros, Baseco and Maypajo. (Photo Credits: K of C Luzon South Jurisdiction)



The Luzon North jurisdiction Basco Batanes Council during their Tree Planting Activity held last September 11, 2020. (Photo Credits: K of C Luzon North Jurisdiction)



COVID-19 Relief Operations of the Visayas Jurisdiction Council 15190 at Barangay Bugas, Sabang South, Borongan City wherein they donated face shields to front liners. (Photo Credits: K of C Visayas Jurisdiction)



The Mindanao Jurisdiction Council 14370 Holy Cross De Nazarene, participated in their province-wide Clean-up drive at Balulang River, Cagayan De Oro last September 19, 2020. (Photo Credits: K of C Mindanao Jurisdiction)

Bonifacio B. Martinez

## President's Message



### Fr. George J. Willmann SJ: Father McGivney of the Philippines

AS time goes by with many hardships that are being experienced by most individuals in all of life's aspects, we are still blessed with the people that are dedicating most of their lives to the acts of service to others. Despite their personal issues and life challenges they never fail to consider others, especially in times of crisis. One of the great examples for this is Fr. George Willman known as the father of the Knights of Columbus here in the Philippines.

Many articles have been written describing and referring to Fr. George J. Willmann SJ, as the "Father McGivney of the Philippines," because they have the same passion and lifelong advocacy—the growth and prosperity of the Order. Both of them worked hard as they wish for the transformation of faith into action. He has devoted 44 fruitful and productive years here in the Philippines serving the young people, the sick, poor, oppressed, orphans, and many more. He was born on June 29, 1897 in Brooklyn, New York with devoted Catholic parents. He was granted Philippine citizenship by then President Ferdinand Marcos through Presidential Decree No. 740. Father Willmann established numerous organizations in the country most notable of which is the KCFAPI founded in 1958.

Fr. Willmann dedicated most of his life serving the Philippines the young people, the poor, the sick, the orphans, the oppressed, the lonely, and the desolate. Aside from his unparalleled service and dedication in his lifelong advocacy is the foundation of the Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. (KCFAPI). In September 1958 KCFAPI was established, the insurance system and cooperative works specifically designed for brother knights and their families. Fr. Willmann is a visionary and a great man. He had thought of this institution as a way to alleviate the hopelessness of the families being left by their husbands and sons by various circumstances. KCFAPI changed our lives forever. Since its existence, we have done a lot and have helped so many.

In the year 1977 or 43 years ago may have been a long time. However, both the K of C here in the Philippines and KCFAPI are flourishing. Indicating that as if he is still alive – helping and guiding all our endeavors.

Thus, in these trying times may we always have strong and generous hearts towards the greater and mightier Knights of Columbus. It may have hindered us from doing our normal routines but please bear in mind all the things that we need to be thankful for, our good health, peace of mind, the food we eat, and many more. May we never leave our neighbors behind as we combat COVID-19 pandemic. In this, we are together.

Vivat Jesus!

Arsenio Isidro G. Yap

## A Brother's Insight



### Humanity vs. COVID19

DOES anybody really know how to handle COVID 19? There are a lot information out there on how we could avoid the very persistent virus. All seems to be easy enough to do or follow. Unfortunately, a good number of people do not take the virus seriously. This seemingly total disregard for the dangers of the virus has fueled it further and has cling within us with such tenacity that we could not get away from it.

Some even think that they could not be affected by the virus simply because they think they are strong enough and healthy enough to be infected by it. These carelessness and irresponsibility on the part of many a people spells defeat against the virus. This makes the virus strong, reaching and infecting even those who are already homebound. They can be likened to the "Makapili's" of World War II, the traitors who took the side of the enemies.

The only way we could kill or get rid of the virus is to starve it to death. The best way we could do this is by keeping safe distance from one another; wearing a face mask whenever we're outside of our residence and probably by knowing the health condition of people we meet, not to mention our own. And we should always bear in mind that people we meet could be infected by it and we should likewise think we are infected by it. With this line of thinking, it would only be natural for anybody to take extra safety precaution in stopping the spread of the virus.

We should also keep tab of people we meet for contact tracing, in case we might have interacted with somebody who is infected. We should also be responsible enough to inform those people if we ever show signs of symptoms more so if we tested positive from COVID19. This way, those people would

Brother's Insight / C3

Jose C. Reyes, Jr.

## Chairman's Update

### October is the month of the Rosary

OCTOBER is the month when we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, specifically on October 7 of each year. Her title used to be Our Lady of Victory because Pope St Pius V attributed the miraculous victory of the Christian forces in the Battle of Lepanto more to the power of the rosary than the power of cannons and valor of soldiers who fought there. The Rosary was told to be given by Mother Mary to St. Dominic to help him in times of conflict. Through the efforts of St. Pius V, the Rosary became one of the most popular devotions in Christendom.

Knowing the promises of Mary to Christians who recite the Rosary will help us appreciate why people up to this date continue to pray the rosary not only in the month of October but even as a

daily prayer. In our small community at Villa San Miguel, my wife and I used to wake up early for the 5:45 am daily mass. Afterwards, my wife and a few others stay behind to say the rosary while I prepare to leave for work. One day, she came across her files a bookmark that enumerated Mary's promises to those who recite the rosary. Allow me to give an abbreviated form of these 15 Promises she gives:

1. signal graces
2. special protection
3. armor against Hell
4. virtue and good works
5. sanctification of souls
6. eternal life
7. assurance of all sacraments
8. light of God
9. deliverance from Purgatory

10. high degree of glory in heaven
11. granted petitions
12. help in necessities
13. intercessors in life and death
14. become children of God
15. sign of predestination

At this time of COVID19 Pandemic, let us make sure we pray the rosary for our protection and for frontline health workers, for the victims, so that they will complete all the sacraments before they die, and for those most vulnerable to the virus so that they get the help they need through the intercessors in life and death. Now more than ever, we need the help of Mama Mary. Let us pray to her more fervently so that we can save lives and return to normalcy with greater faith in God.

Vivat Jesus!



Karlo Serviento

## Pondering the Words

### Brave Soldiers

KNIGHTS of Columbus has been into another major turn as the coronavirus hit the globe. As an order actively participating on the church in need by any means and circumstance, it immediately adapted to the new normal scheme by having social media and the use of technology to reach its members and even to have new members. Pandemic became not a hindrance in fulfilling its mission, rather an avenue to prove that the Order can do more beyond its capacities.

Since the time of our conception, it is the voice of the Lord that called us to satisfy a mission. A mission always starts with a call. Jesus in the Gospel called His first apostle by these words: "Follow me." (Mt.9:9) Being members of the Order, it is also the same words we have heard when we responded our "Yes" to the call we have received. Remember the first time we heard about KofC. Some might be puzzled, others might be hesitant to join,

still here we are, responding to that call and continuing the legacy of the first charter members on the basement of St. Mary's Church with the Venerable Michael McGivney as their guide. What makes the KofC unique from other fraternal groups is that it can straightforwardly adjust and respond to whatever instance they are about to face.

The Lord first called Matthew. Who would have thought that a tax collector can be one of Jesus' apostles and was even given the divine inspiration to transcribe the Gospel of Christ which is passed from generation to generation? Apostles are also entrusted to be the brave soldiers of our faith and so as the Knights of Columbus members. We are all unworthy to be called one but Jesus makes worthy those whom He calls. Being its member is a vocation and a ministry. We respond to the call and we satisfy our response as we are not only to abide the rules of the Order but we are called to live the gospel as its new

witnesses.

Brave soldiers are sent to the hardest battle as the king knew that they will return to the kingdom with a flag of victory. We are God's brave soldiers. With the cross of Christ as our guide, we are sent to the battlefield of life. Tempus fugit. Memento mori. We are always reminded that we have only one life, seize each day with Jesus as our model and guide. A battle well fought is a victory of our faith.

We are sent to be warriors of faith as Jesus knows we can return to the home of His Father with the flag of victory. What flag is this that we are to bear? It is our own hearts with the souls whom lives we have touched and renewed, those we have won and brought back into the grace of God amidst the challenges in life. Be it an epidemic or a pandemic, no one can separate us from the fact that we are entrusted to fight for the welfare of the church and of our brethren. We continue to serve those in need. Our hands will be

their hands to accompany them in their journey. Our shoulders will be their own shoulder when they need someone to lean on. And our arms will be their arms that can give them warmth in the coldness of the night. We are our own keepers. It is the love of Jesus that binds us and will continue to bind us as one, that same love manifested first on the wood of the cross which now serves as our guide going on before our heavenly army.

With the sword of faithfulness and the maternal shield that comes from our Blessed Mother, we can bring home the crown of victory in the courts of our Supreme Master, Jesus Christ.

Lord, as we continue to fulfill our mission as a response to Your call in the Order of the Knights of Columbus in the midst of this pandemic, grant us the courage to stand up for our faith by being the ministers of your mercy in the face of our brethren whom you have entrusted to us, your brave soldiers.



Erwin John Mallari

## EJ's Corner

### Republic day

DURING the month of October, many Catholic organizations and parishes organize a Marian exhibit. This month is also known as the month of the Holy Rosary. This is because of the celebration of the feast of Our Lady of the most Holy Rosary which is held every October 7.

The Holy Rosary is a tool given by the Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Dominic to use against heretics. Many years later, on October 7, 1571, The Holy League faced off against the mighty Ottoman empire in a naval battle known as the Battle of Lepanto. The Holy League (the combined navy forces of the Papal States, Venice, and Spain) was heavily at a disadvantage

so Pope Pius V, called for all of Europe to pray the Holy Rosary for victory. The Pope also led a Rosary procession in Rome. After five long hours of rigorous battle in the gulf of Corinth, in western Greece, the Holy League somehow managed to stop the Ottoman empire and prevent it from advancing towards the Atlantic Ocean and to the Americas.

Because of this profound victory, Pope Pius V instituted October 7 as the feast of Our Lady of Victory, which he attributed to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1573, it was Pope Gregory XIII that changed the name from the "Feast of Our Lady of Victory" to the "Feast of the Holy Rosary" and moved

it to the 1st Sunday of October. Pope Pius X restored the celebration to October 7 in 1913 because of the significance of the date and as part of his effort to restore the celebration of liturgy of the Sundays. The Dominican Friar Juan Lopez wrote in his book that the celebration of the feast is "in memory and in perpetual gratitude of the miraculous victory that the Lord gave to his Christian people that day against the Turkish armada".

During this time of the pandemic, let us not lose hope but rather use it to strengthen our faith. Let us all celebrate the month of the Holy Rosary and continue praying with our families.



Atty. Luis Voltaire D. Formilleza

## By the Reading Lamp

### Beyond this Pandemic

AS of writing, much had already been said (and written) about the Covid-19 pandemic. Seven months had passed by since we had gone from being normal to embracing the so-called new normal. Slowly we are reclaiming some semblance of the old lives we once had but I cannot help but to think that we are still deprived of that single-most important aspect of our lives that makes us whole and complete- human interactions. Well at least the one's we were used to.

This is based on the premise that humans are social beings

after all. While food on the table, air in our lungs and roof over our heads are essential for nourishment and physical well-being, social interactions make it all worth it. For who or what we choose to live for will only matter when that is shared or witnessed by or with others. Hence, there is a natural impetus to not only promote physical health during this pandemic. Mental and emotional well-being is as just as important. It should therefore not come as a surprise why we all tend to see others acting or behaving differently than how they

usually would during these trying times. This is more apparent in social spaces like the work place.

Having said that, I reckon workplace management should shift and likewise focus in not only ensuring safety against infection from the corona virus. It should likewise consider the mental and emotional well-being of those who, by virtue of the nature of work, are labored to leave the confines of their homes to be in the workplace. This is to find support in existing recommended government guidelines for

establishments who are operating during this time of protracted community quarantine.

While the responsibility of work place management befalls primarily on the shoulders of establishment owners and management, to come up with programs on mental health, I believe that each of us who spend hours in the office are responsible for each other's mental and emotional health. Social distancing should not preclude us in being able to say hi or hello, eat

By the Reading Lamp / C3



## THE CROSS

A Supplement Publication of the  
Order of the Knights of Columbus and KCFAPI

### Editorial Board

Jose C. Reyes, Jr.  
Chairman

Bonifacio B. Martinez  
President

Ronulfo Antero G. Infante  
OIC - Executive Vice President

Msgr. Pedro C. Quitarior III  
Spiritual Director

Mary Magdalene G. Flores  
Editor-in-Chief

Jhon Lyndon D. Palafox  
Associate Editor

Jerome P. De Guzman, Erwin John B. Mallari, Kris Jay Rolex A. Yngco,  
Atty. Luis Voltaire D. Formilleza, Juan Karlo S. Serviento, Jerald D. Javier  
Contributors

The Cross is published monthly with its business at KCFAPI, General Luna cor. Sta. Potenciana  
Sts., Intramuros, Manila with tel. no. (02) 8527-22-23 to 27 (trunk line) local 200, 201. Email  
Address: kcfaternal@kofc.org.ph. Website: http://www.kofc.org.ph

# A Sure Way Forward

*The authentic history of saintly missionaries, Native Americans and Our Lady of Guadalupe shows us the path of reconciliation and justice*



by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson

RECENTLY, WE HAVE witnessed throughout the United States attacks on our Catholic heritage. Catholic churches and statues of saints have been desecrated, especially statues of St.

Junípero Serra. This heroic and holy missionary has become the victim of a false history.

In the late 18th century, Father Serra walked from Mexico City up the coast of California, founding missions that became great cities. He demanded a declaration of rights to protect the native peoples. And he obtained it. At his death, the Native Americans who gathered around him referred to Junípero Serra as “el santo” — “the saint.”

Why is the truth about Father Serra not more widely known? Catholics should realize that, for generations, much of the history of Catholic missionaries in New Spain and New France was written by their historic competitors — that is, English-speaking Protestants. And today, the legacy of our missionaries is viewed by many through the distorting lens of a militant,

anti-Catholic atheism.

Catholic missionaries sought to lead native people to the faith. They never sought to eliminate whole peoples, as the Puritans did when they destroyed the Pequots in Connecticut or other tribes during King Philip’s War. In fact, Junípero Serra sought to protect from the death penalty even Native Americans who had killed Europeans.

In the mid-1800s, Alexis de Tocqueville, writing in Democracy in America, recounted the condition of the Native Americans he observed. “I was the witness of sufferings which I have not the power to portray,” he wrote, concluding, “I believe that the Indian nations of North America are doomed to perish.”

None of these sufferings were caused by Catholic missionaries. They did not map out the Trail of Tears, walked by the Cherokee,

nor were they at the massacres of Sand Creek or Wounded Knee. Junípero Serra never called for the “extermination” of the native people of California as did the governor of that state after gold was discovered there.

We do not fear an honest review of the Catholic legacy in North America. Indeed, we welcome it. We urge every city, state and province to undertake a careful review of its own treatment of native peoples.

Tragedy and hardship are only one aspect of the story of Native Americans. For centuries, many tribes have also witnessed to their strong Catholic faith. As brothers and sisters in the faith, their story is part of our story. They, too, are part of the history of our Church in North America.

Native peoples have a right to have their story told with accuracy and integrity. Only

in this way can we find a path of reconciliation, healing and justice. The Knights of Columbus is prepared to walk that path with them.

Twenty years ago, I dedicated the Knights of Columbus to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Just two years before the Virgin Mary’s appearance in 1531, Bishop Juan de Zumárraga of Mexico said of the situation in New Spain, “If God does not provide the remedy from His hand, the land is about to be completely lost.”

We know the land was not lost. Instead, millions were converted and a new Catholic culture emerged as a result of Our Lady’s message of love, hope and reconciliation.

Our Lady of Guadalupe was not imposed upon native peoples by Europeans. And her message was not introduced by the Spanish. To the contrary, St. Juan Diego, a Native American, brought her message to the

Spanish.

It was with her image that missionaries such as St. Junípero Serra brought Christianity to the Indigenous peoples. St. John Paul II told us she is the “example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization” (Ecclesia in America, 11).

I believe she is Our Lord’s answer to the crisis our nation faces today. Our nation once again needs her message.

During the canonization Mass of Junípero Serra five years ago, Pope Francis said, “He was the embodiment of ‘a Church which goes forth.’” Perhaps this is why today he is under such attack. His motto was Siempre adelante! Always forward!

So let us go forward with renewed confidence under the banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe. May she again lead our Church to a new and inculturated evangelization! Vivat Jesus!

## The Gentle Warrior

By James B. Reuter, SJ

### CHAPTER FIVE

GEORGE was appalled at the number of Jesuits lost in the war: Big Ed McGinty died of malnutrition in Santiago Hospital; Francisco Lopez was shot in the back by a sniper when he was climbing over the wall between Ateneo and Assumption, bringing bandages to the nuns; Ricardo Pimentel was killed in the Ateneo compound, in front of the auditorium, with shrapnel through the head; Abrogina was bayoneted and his body thrown into the flames of the Cathedral of Lipa; Consunji was beaten to death; and the body of Old Joe Mulry was still in that shallow grave, in Los Baños.

And Manuel Colayco — his good friend Manuel Colayco — died heroically, as he had lived. He led the American forces into the Japanese prison camp at the University of Santo Tomas. Manny was the first man through the gate. He was shot, and killed.

But there were some good things. An Ateneo basketball player, a real star — the most valuable player in the NCAA in 1941— married during the war. They spoke of the liberation of Manila street by street — Taft Avenue, from Herran to Padre Faura. When the Philippine General Hospital was liberated, the patients came out from under the Hospital, because that was where the air raid shelter was. The Hospital was a wreck. There were holes in the building. Whole floors were sagging. And this young basketball player came out from under the Hospital, carrying his wife, who was carrying their baby girl.

He put her down, and then went to look for his house, on M.H. del Pilar. At that time, M.H. del Pilar was a beautiful residential district, with big trees and magnificent Spanish houses. He could not find even a corner, from which to measure off where his house ought to be. The house was gone. The whole area was flat. All his possessions were in that house. And they were all gone. All he had left was the clothes that he was wearing — no money, no food, no home, no job, nothing!

He wandered around until he found Father Hurley at Plaza Guipit, in what later became Nazareth School. It was filled with refugees. Father Hurley was in charge. The priest said: “Sure, I will take you in! I cannot give you a place

in a classroom. They are all filled with refugees. But I can give you a bed, on the second corridor.”

So that is what he got: one single bed, on the second floor corridor, overlooking the patio — for himself, his wife, and his newborn baby. And he had been a wealthy young man.

That night the basketball player was sitting on the floor, talking in the dark. George was sitting on his bed in the dormitory. George had a bed, because he was a Jesuit. The basketball player was heavily bandaged. He had many flesh wounds. He was talking in the dark, because the war was still on, and the whole city was under blackout.

He said: “I don’t know what I ever did, that God should do this to me!” George thought that he was getting resentful, because he had lost everything he owned. The boy went on: “You know, my baby was born by kerosene lamp! There wasn’t any electricity in that hospital! They told me that childbirth was beautiful, but they never told me about the blood! The blood was pouring, like a little waterfall! I’m a man, but I couldn’t watch! I turned away. I was so ashamed. Until the bombing! The whole building began to rock! I turned to look, and there was the doctor, slipping and sliding in the blood, hanging on to the delivery table so that he would not fall down. Then, when the building stopped rocking, he went back to the delivery.... And do you know? My baby — perfectly normal! Perfectly normal! The doctor gave my baby to the nurse, and then he said to me: ‘You better take your wife downstairs! This building is going to collapse!’”

“So I picked up my wife, and I started down the stairs. I was only there at the top of the stairwell when this shell went through the wall, right over my head, and all the rubble began to fall down around me! I held my wife as tight as I could, and I braced myself, and I prayed! Because I thought that the stairwell was going to collapse, and we would fall down three storeys, and she would break her back! But, do you know? My wife — not a scratch! Not a scratch!”

George put his hand on the shoulder of the boy. The boy put his own hand over the hand of George and said: “Father, I don’t know what I ever did, that God



should be so good to me!”

He had lost everything he owned. And he did not even remember it. What he had was his wife and baby, love and life. And that was enough! In the horror of war, suddenly he was seeing the world with the eyes of God.

He said: “My brother is in Baguio. He’s such a good man. And he is probably dead. And here I am, with everything! .... I was a lucky player! I was a lucky player! .... What did I ever do, that God should be so good to me?”

Other good things happened to George while he was in the city. He discovered that in the Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus, held in Toronto, Canada, in 1944, authority was granted for the establishment of an Educational Trust Fund for the children of Knights.... who gave their lives while serving in the armed forces in World War II, who died from a service-connected cause within ten years following the termination of the war, who became permanently and totally disabled as a result of military service in the war.

The Fund, set aside, was \$1,000,000 dollars. It would provide: “a four-year scholarship at a Catholic college of the student’s choice, leading to the Degree of Bachelor of arts or its equivalent.... tuition, board and room (or an allowance for board and room if the student does not reside on the campus), books, laboratory fees and other incidental college charges that may be levied upon the student in the pursuit of his education.”

(to be continued in the next issue)



### An INVITATION to become a FR. GEORGE J. WILLMANN, SJ FELLOW

THE “Fr. George J. Willmann Fellows” was launched by the Knights of Columbus Father George J. Willmann Charities, Inc. last June 29, 1997 during the Centennial Birth Anniversary celebration of Rev. Fr. George J. Willmann, S.J. This fundraising campaign finances the theological research expenses necessary to possibly raise Fr. Willmann to the honors of the altar. Last December 7, 2015, Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle has officially opened the Archdiocesan Process for the Causes of Beatification and Canonization of Fr. George J. Willmann.

Membership to the Fr. Willmann Fellows is open to all Knights of Columbus councils, members, their families, friends and even to business institutions. As of December 2019, more than 1,100 individuals and 36 institutions all over the country have already joined this fellowship. Father Willmann Fellows serve as co-sponsors in the work of spreading the good news about Fr. Willmann’s life, works and holiness. Their donation is a lifetime subscription to the initiative of the Knights of Columbus of promoting awareness on Father Willmann in order that authentic devotion to him may be encouraged among the faithful, especially those who need his intercession for God’s grace.

We therefore cordially invite you and your loved ones to join the Fr. Willmann Fellows. Aside from being an advocate in spreading the sanctity of Father Willmann and the graces that come with it, each Fellow is entitled to receive the following items as memorabilia: (1) a Certificate of Membership, (2) a lapel pin and (3) a pamphlet entitled “A Quest for a Cause of Fr. George J. Willmann, S.J.”. We further urge you to fervently seek Fr. Willmann’s intercession in all your petitions for God’s graces and to report to the Foundation all blessings you may have received with the intercession of Fr. Willmann.

**KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
FR. GEORGE J. WILLMANN CHARITIES, INC.**  
Gen. Luna cor. Sta. Potenciana Sts., Intramuros, Manila  
Tel. Nos. 8527-2223 local 221 & 8527-2244 (Fax)

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP  
to FATHER GEORGE J. WILLMANN, S.J. FELLOW

1. Name of Applicant (individual or institution): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. Nos. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Office Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. Nos. \_\_\_\_\_

4. K of C Council Number and Location: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Enclosure: \_\_\_\_\_

Cash P \_\_\_\_\_

PMO/check No. \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Please make check payable to KC Fr. George J. Willmann Charities, Inc.)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### By the Reading Lamp / C2

communally with caution, and be as vicarious as we can in serving our clientele. These forms of human interaction are beyond what government guidelines can recommend and what management can instruct all of us to do.

Hence, as we traverse through this pandemic, we ought to make it a better one for all of us. Hence, the term “better normal”. Interact.

Relate. Be empathetic. See through the face masks and face shields, the human person beyond these accessories and barriers. Our lives today might not be as good or normal than what it used to be, but it is definitely better considering the alternative. To choose living a life over simply living to survive, knows no time or place. And it definitely is, beyond this pandemic.

#### Brother's Insight / C2

or should isolate themselves from other people, most especially from members of their family.

Contact tracing is easy enough to do to stave off the spread of the virus, but most infected (the “Makapili’s”) people couldn’t care less of what happens to those they had interacted with. This careless and irresponsible attitude is the main reason why the virus is still very much around spreading havoc to the innocent and the unwary.

No sector of society is exempted from the virus. Other than the vulnerable, it has also victimized the rich, the powerful, members of the clergy, the frontliners, and people from all walks of life. It spares no one as we are not united enough to make a stand against the spread of the

virus.

Whether they know it or not, careless and irresponsible people are spreading the disease without let-up, keeping the virus in tip top condition to prey on the weak.

The virus is a threat to our very own existence. It’s like being in a war, but unlike in any war, we cannot see the enemy. The virus is within us and at any moment could infect us all to extinction. There are too many battlefronts. It is within our doorsteps, ready to strike the moment we step out.

Unless we put our acts together and make a collective stand against the virus, the efforts of a few to stave off its spread would be for naught, an exercise in futility. Governments should recognize

the dangers of the virus and should treat it seriously. It should not downplay its threat to all of us, as it is already within us, striking at every chance it gets. And we are the ones fueling its spread.

It’s World War III - Humanity versus COVID19. Humanity must unite and kill the enemy - COVID19. This is one war wherein we do not take any prisoners alive. The enemy must be totally eradicated from the face of the earth. It’s time to sign up in this great battle to win the war against the virus. No one is too old or too young to fight, and nobody will be denied. For Humanity’s sake, we must all do our part and stop COVID19 from threatening our very own existence. Be safe and stay safe.

# KCFAPI Celebrates its 62nd Anniversary



Some of the BC Relations Office (BRO) team members led by Ms. Gloria O. Alegre, BRO Manager, during the 62nd Anniversary of The Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. (KCFAPI) last September 9, 2020 at the KCFAPI Center, Intramuros Manila.

THE current pandemic did not stop the Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association, Inc. (KCFAPI) from commemorating its 62nd Anniversary last September 9, 2020. It was not the usual celebration that everyone was used to have because of health and safety restrictions that needed to be followed but everyone did their part in their own little ways to celebrate this milestone. The celebration was started with a thanksgiving mass held at the Fr. George J. Willmann, SJ Chapel, Intramuros, Manila officiated by Rev. Fr. Robert Young attended by KCFAPI President, Bro. Bonifacio B. Martinez, selected officers and employees. Inside the office, various departments joined the

festivities by designing their work areas to set the spirit of joyous celebration of the occasion.

The BC Relations Office gave some give-away to clients who visited the office during the month as a form of thanksgiving for patronizing the products of the Association. A joint small training activity for selected employees was also conducted by the Human Resources and Corporate Communications Department and Legal Services wherein topics such as Time Management, Stress and Anxiety Management and Basic Legal Compliance and Mutual Benefit Association Regulatory requirements were discussed. The Fraternal Benefits

Group also made a special incentive program specific to the occasion.

On its 62nd year, it is also worth mentioning that the Association has been very successful in providing fraternal service to all its BC Holders. In 2019, KCFAPI had a total insurance inforce of P20.3 billion in face value with a total of 68,082 members. This achievement is a great feat and testament of the Association's commitment to provide optimum fraternal benefits to brother knights and their families.

There is nothing but a better KCFAPI is expected in the next years in the service of the Order of the Knights of Columbus in the Philippines.

## KCFAPI Commemorates 62nd Founding Anniversary through Essay Writing Contest

THE Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. celebrated its 62nd Founding Anniversary last September 9. The Home Office of KCFAPI and its Satellite Offices participated in the celebration. Several departments decorated their respective areas with colorful balloons and other decors to make the festivity felt in the office which was also witnessed by visiting BC Holders and other guests during the weeklong celebration.

One of the initiatives that the Association launched was the Essay Writing Contest entitled

"I Am Proud Of My Dad, My Knight And My Hero!" It was participated by 38 sons and daughters of Brother Knights writing about how much love and gratefulness they have for their fathers. The initiative also helped broaden the reach of the insurance program of KCFAPI through social media.

Out of the 38 entries, Top 10 entries were chosen by a panel of judges and they were posted on the official KCFAPI Facebook page. The chosen entries were given 10 days to gather heart reactions from the public which also helped the Facebook page gather more followers.

The Top 3 winners are as follow:

1ST PLACER (Visayas Jurisdiction)

Warlito Alagao, Jr.

The Building Blocks of Life

2ND PLACER (Luzon South Jurisdiction)

Kaye Ziel Masagca

My Unsung Hero

3RD PLACER (Luzon South Jurisdiction)

Nepo Jerome Benter

Hero at the Backseat

The Top 3 entries are the ones that got the highest scores from the judges and they also belong to those who got the highest number of heart reactions on the official

Facebook page of KCFAPI. The initiative did not only showcase the writing skills of the participants but it also promoted the KofC order and insurance program of KCFAPI to the audience that we want to reach.

The Association is extremely happy for all the support the initiative was able to get from our Brother Knights nationwide. The sons and daughters of these 38 Brother Knights surely found a way on how they can express to the world how much they appreciate their fathers for all that they do for their families.

## The Building Blocks of Life by Warlito Alagao, Jr.



EVERYTIME I look at my father, I remember "Magbubunga rin ang paghihirap" vividly in my mind. Papa, back in the days, was impoverished, thus not having enough resources and opportunities open. Despite that fact, Papa strived hard in order to reach his childhood dream of being a civil engineer; it is undeniable that every now and then I look up to him for motivation. I have acknowledged that no father is perfect, but the word itself is unattainable in reality, my Papa's efforts to become a good father is all enough for me to make him my hero.

Helping selflessly has been a rare quality these days, but I have never seen my Papa refuse to give support for people in need; whether it would be from his relatives to someone he doesn't know, because nobody is a stranger to him when it comes to providing aid. The Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. (KCFAPI) has been a platform for my father to reach farther into extending a helping hand. His construction also gives bundles of joy to the workers, and long-time workers have insurances all paid by Papa as

a thank you for their dedication and hard work. My father's modest acts have brought people happiness and seeing them blissful speaks volumes for his gratitude.

There are lessons we have learned all throughout our lives shown by Papa being both a loving husband and an exceptional father. My parents have been married for 29 years and counting; and they have unending support for each other. Every business my Mama delves into, you can expect Papa to follow as well. They just got into utilizing to grow fruit-bearing trees and vegetables; and all I can think of is my Papa saying that plants are one of the best investments a person could do to have a sustainable future. In relation, both my parents decided to acquire the KCFAPI Family insurance and the KCFAPI College Plan, in which I am currently a recipient of. It is imperative that my father thinks ahead thereby securing us a worry-free future.

Having a life-work balance is kind of hard for some, but I am proud to say that my Papa has that too. Being the sole proprietor of his own construction company, the current President of the

Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers - Biliran Chapter, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Naval Water District, and the Diocesan Membership and Program Coordinator, Fraternal Councilor and Unit Manager (EVL4) of the KCFAPI - Diocese of Naval. The dedication my father has for his work is commendable for the reason that I have seen him work tirelessly late in the night yet he still has time with us as a family. He knows how to prioritize important things in his life; and that family always comes first. Every family vacation he even jokes about not going, but when in reality Papa is the one hyped about the outing. Simple moments like these are always cherished and matter most to me.

Above all, I know that these are not much to describe my father, but to sum it up, Papa is a responsible, selfless and God-fearing person. He is more than the three words combined, I admit that he is not perfect but there is nothing I could wish more than providing us a foundation and molding us to who we are now as his children. I am forever grateful for and proud to call him my hero.




(L-R) Mr. Angelito A. Bala, VP for Actuarial and Business Development; Rev. Fr. Marvin S. Mejia, CBCP Secretary General; Mr. Bonifacio B. Martinez, KCFAPI President and Mr. Ronulfo Antero G. Infante, KCFAPI OIC-EVP during the turn-over of Seed of Hope Fund donation last September 14, 2020 at the CBCP Office, Intramuros, Manila. (KAYngco)

KCFAPI CARES Endowment Series

KC Capital Builder

Prepare and Protect the Entrepreneur within you




Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc.

KofC Family... Our Concern



KC GEM SAVINGS SERIES

save your hard-earned money and let it grow



Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc.

KofC Family... Our Concern

