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PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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Bishops offer church facilities as vaccination hubs

THE country's Catholic bishops on Jan. 28 said they are willing to transform church facilities into Covid-19 vaccination sites.

Archbishop Romulo Valles, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said the Church's role is to serve God and His people.

And during this pandemic, he said that helping in the vaccine roll-out is an effective way they can do those things.

"The bishops decided to offer, if needed, church facilities to be vaccination centers or facilities related to the vaccination program," Valles said in a virtual press conference after their two-day online plenary assembly.

The bishops acknowledged how daunting the vaccination program can be so they wanted to help out.

"We can offer our church facilities to help in this massive and complicated and very challenging program of vaccination," Valles said.

The government earlier said it is targeting to inoculate at least 50 to 70 million individuals within the year.

If necessary, Valles said they are also willing to roll up their sleeves in public and get vaccinated if it can help build confidence in vaccine campaign.

"If the Holy Father and the Pope Emeritus had themselves vaccinated (in public) and, in my estimation, it helps... if people would see me publicly vaccinated, then why not?" Valles said.

"The point is because our people understandably have this fear of the vaccine. So if our being vaccinated is a big help, then why not," he added.

Echoing Valles' statement, Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, CBCP Vice President, said they are willing to help allay some people's fear of the vaccine.

"Anything that can allay the fears of vaccination, we will offer in the Church," he said. **(CBCP News)**

Red-tagging incidents 'worrisome' – CBCP

By Roy Lagarde

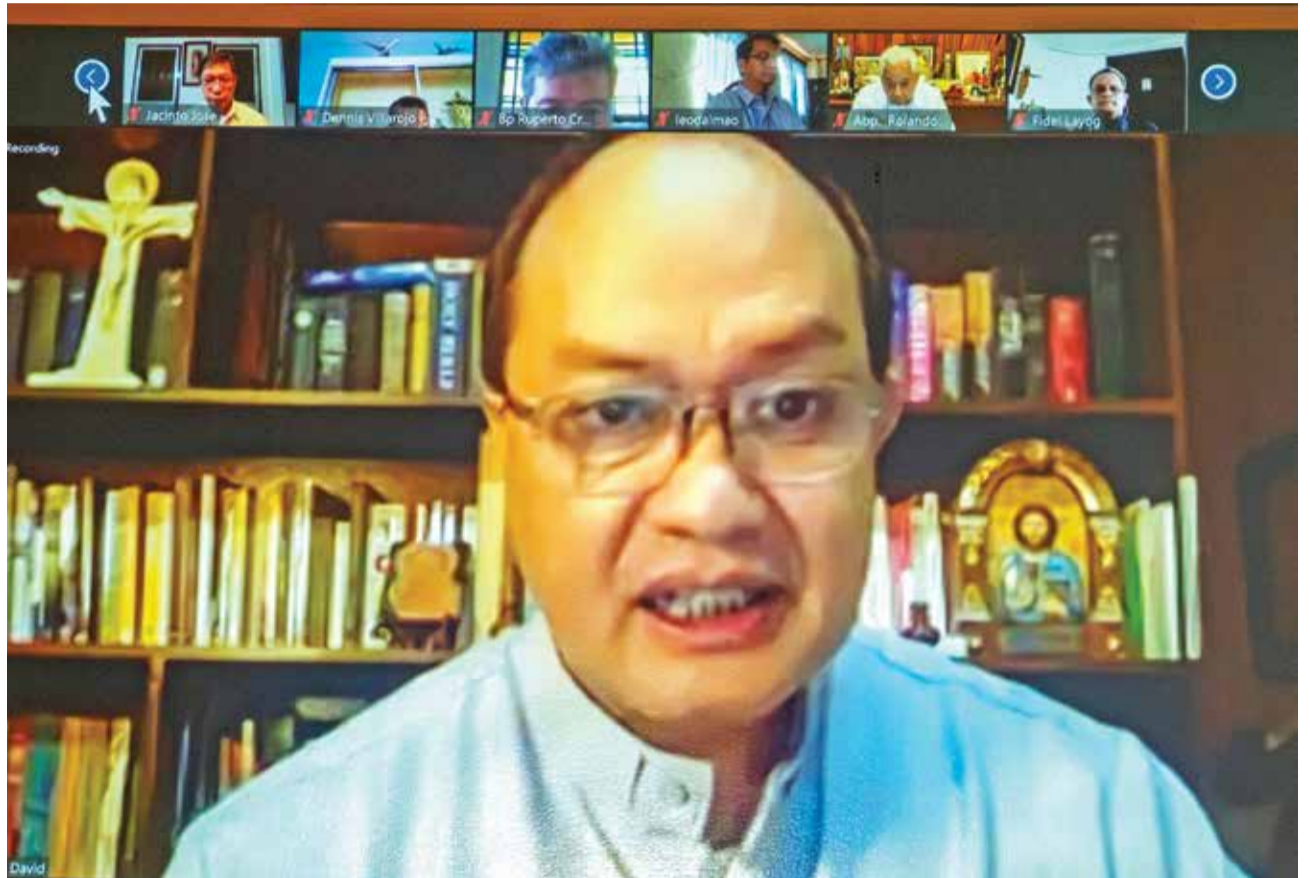
THE spate of red-tagging incidents in the country has been described as 'worrisome' by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

Speaking in a virtual press conference on Jan. 28, CBCP vice president Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan said the recent red-tagging involving activists and universities is a serious cause for concern.

"It is becoming worrisome. Definitely," David said. "I think there is reason for people to be afraid when that becomes a trend."

The prelate spoke to the media following their unprecedented online plenary assembly, that saw over 80 bishops discuss pressing issues and the Church's continuing response.

According to him, red-tagging brings back memories of being under the dictatorship during the martial law regime.



Red-tagging / A6 Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, CBCP Vice President, speaks during their virtual plenary assembly on Jan. 27, 2021. CBCP NEWS

Pope Francis calls Philippine bishops to 'evangelical charity'

POPE Francis has called on Philippine bishops to continue their efforts in giving concrete witness to "evangelical charity" amid the prevailing coronavirus pandemic.

In his message for the bishops' virtual plenary assembly, he expressed hope that their deliberations will lead to "more creative expressions" of pastoral charity.

In doing so, he said it would enable the Church in the Philippines "to be recognized as 'a home

with open doors', offering hope and strength to the suffering and to all who seek a more humane and dignified life".

The pope also assured his support and blessings to members of the CBCP as they discuss matters that affect the Church and the country.

His message was read to the assembly on Jan. 26 by Archbishop Charles John Brown, apostolic nuncio to the Philippines.

The bishops' 121st plenary assembly is taking place in



Archbishop Charles John Brown (on screen), Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, delivers the message of Pope Francis for the CBCP 121st online plenary assembly on Jan. 26. PHOTO BY ROY LAGARDE

an online format from Jan. 26 to 27 because of the

health crisis. More than 80 bishops

attended the biannual meeting, which is usually held in January and July.

Among the items in the agenda were the reports from the nine regional representatives of the CBCP Permanent Council about their situation amid the pandemic, their responses and plans of action.

The bishops will also discuss updates on the plans for this year's quinquennial celebration of the coming of Christianity to the Philippines. **(CBCP News)**

CBCP remains opposed to Charter change

THE Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines remains opposed to any moves to amend the 1987 Constitution, its leaders said Jan. 28.

Speaking to the media virtually after their two-day plenary assembly, CBCP president Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao said there is no need to rush Charter change in the midst of a pandemic.

"When I mentioned two previous documents from the CBCP, with prudent wordings, we said not yet, not this time," Valles said.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, CBCP Vice President, said their previous pastoral statements on Charter change are still relevant.

"We are against Charter change, based on previous statements. And we still are," David said.

"We have made ourselves very clear in the 2018 CBCP pastoral statement on Charter change. It is still very relevant. The basic questions are still the same. Why now?" he said.

Charter change was among the topics discussed by the



CBCP president Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao presides over the bishops' online plenary assembly from his residence in Davao City on Jan. 26, 2021. CBCP NEWS

bishops during their online meeting held on Jan. 26 to 27, amid renewed talks on tinkering with the economic provisions of the Constitution.

David said having lawmakers use the pandemic as reason to again push constitutional amendments is what makes things worse.

"All the more reason to be suspicious," David said. "Why you would be bringing

in the agenda of Cha-cha when our focus and priority should be the pandemic?"

The bishops' social action arm, in a separate statement, also warned against Charter change under an "unstable governance".

"The present unstable governance is very susceptible to corruption of the mind," said the National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace (Nassa).

"Therefore, the charter change can be used as a ploy for no-eL (no election), term-extension, or a revolutionary government—all of which are detrimental to people's welfare," it said.

Nassa also asked the faithful to openly participate in the political exercise by being vigilant and lobbying politicians to stop Charter change at this time. **(CBCP News)**

Church renews commitment to abolish 'arancel' despite pandemic



Parishioners attend Mass at the Saint Anthony of Padua Parish Church in Manila's Malate district on Dec. 18, 2020. CBCP NEWS

THE Catholic Church in the Philippines has reaffirmed its commitment to abolish the "arancel" system even amidst the crisis spurred by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a "pastoral statement on stewardship", the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) stressed that the arancel has become prejudicial against the poor.

Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, CBCP President, said that the fixed amount asked for church services "can be a hindrance for the

poor to receive God's grace and blessings".

"Let us do our best, then, to remove obstacles to genuine service, especially to the poor," Valles said.

"This is a concrete step in renewing ourselves in the practice of stewardship, praying that others may see us truly 'as good stewards of God's varied graces,'" he said.

The bishops' statement was issued on Jan. 28, following their two-day plenary assembly held online.

Arancel / A6

Vatican Briefing

Vatican cardinal speaks out against social stigma for leprosy patients

People with leprosy suffer not only from physical disease but also from harmful social stigmas which can lead to mental illness, Cardinal Peter Turkson said on Sunday. In a message for World Leprosy Day on Jan. 31, the cardinal encouraged people to include those sick with leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, in their communities and relationships. "Not everyone will have the skills or expertise to cure Hansen's disease physically, but everyone is capable of promoting that culture of encounter which brings about healing and the mental well-being of those affected by this distressing illness," he said. **(Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)**

Pope Francis encourages catechists to lead others to a personal encounter with Jesus

Pope Francis said Saturday that catechists have the vital responsibility of leading others to a personal encounter with Jesus through prayer, the sacraments, and Scripture. "The kerygma is a person: Jesus Christ. Catechesis is a special space for fostering a personal encounter with Him," Pope Francis said in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace Jan. 30. "There is no true catechesis without the testimony of men and women in flesh and blood. Who among us does not remember at least one of his catechists? I do. I remember the nun who prepared me for my First Communion and was so good to me," the pope added. Pope Francis received an audience with some of the members of the National Catechetical Office of the Italian bishops' conference at the Vatican. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

Pope Francis appeals for fight against 'unacceptable poverty'

Pope Francis encouraged Catholic organizations on Friday to continue to fight against "unacceptable poverty." In a message to two Belgian groups released on Jan. 29, the pope said that the coronavirus pandemic had made poverty relief even more difficult. "The challenges that await you are compounded by the crisis of COVID-19, which is affecting the entire world, but even more terribly the poorest and most neglected. It is therefore more important than ever to continue and develop the action undertaken," he said in the message, dated Jan. 8. The message was addressed to members of Entraide et Fraternité and Action Vivre Ensemble. **(CNA)**

Pope Francis gives over \$100K for earthquake relief in Croatia

Pope Francis has given a Catholic charity in Croatia more than \$121,000 for earthquake relief. The money was given to Caritas, part of the local bishops' conference, to aid families in the Banija region, which was struck by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake last month. The quake and its foreshocks and aftershocks, which hit on Dec. 29, killed at least seven people, injured dozens, and destroyed homes and churches. The funds from Pope Francis were donated through the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. **(Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)**

Vatican archbishop: Turn off your phone and open the Gospel

A Vatican archbishop urged Catholics to turn off their cell phones and open the Gospel instead as he celebrated Mass marking the Sunday of the Word of God. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, issued the appeal on Jan. 24 in a homily prepared by Pope Francis for the Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. "Let us set the Gospel in a place where we can remember to open it daily, perhaps at the beginning and at the end of the day, so that amid all those words that ring in our ears, there may also be a few verses of the word of God that can touch our hearts," Fisichella said. "To be able to do this, let us ask the Lord for the strength to turn off the television and open the Bible, to turn off our cell phone and open the Gospel." **(CNA)**

Pope Francis: Witness to the truth by exposing 'fake news'

Pope Francis issued a new warning about misinformation on Saturday, weeks after he was the subject of a viral "fake news" story. Writing in his World Communications Day message, released on Jan. 23, the pope said that "the risk of misinformation being spread on social media" was now widely recognized. "We have known for some time that news and even images can be easily manipulated, for any number of reasons, at times simply for sheer narcissism," he wrote. "Being critical in this regard is not about demonizing the internet, but is rather an incentive to greater discernment and responsibility for contents both sent and received." "All of us are responsible for the communications we make, for the information we share, for the control that we can exert over fake news by exposing it. All of us are to be witnesses of the truth: to go, to see and to share." **(CNA)**

Vatican official calls for synergy in fight against poverty and climate change

The Vatican Secretary of State has called for a new model of development built on "the synergistic bond" between the fight against climate change and the struggle against poverty. In a video message to the Climate Adaptation Summit taking place online Jan. 25-26, Cardinal Pietro Parolin said that climate change is "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." "This is a moral and humanitarian imperative, especially since the greatest negative consequences of climate change often affect the most vulnerable: the poor and future generations," the cardinal said. "While the poor are the least responsible for global warming, they are the most likely to be affected, since they have the least adaptive capacity and often live in geographical areas which are particularly at risk." The Climate Adaptation Summit is a virtual international summit organized by the Netherlands aimed at outlining practical solutions for confronting climate change. **(Courtney Mares/CNA)**

UN adopts resolution on protecting religious sites

The U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution Jan. 21 calling for greater efforts to protect religious sites from acts of terrorism and asking for a global conference on the subject.

Titled "Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites," the resolution asks Secretary General Antonio Guterres to launch an international conference to discuss the best means of implementing the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites.

"Religious sites are representative of the history, social fabric and traditions of people in every country and community all over the world and should be fully respected as such," the resolution says.

The resolution highlights the increasing threats to culturally and spiritually significant sites by terrorists and militias, who have at times destroyed religious property and illicitly trafficked artifacts.

The resolution denounces "all attacks on and in religious places, sites and shrines ... including any deliberate destruction of relics and monuments" and condemns "all acts or threats of violence, destruction, damage or endangerment, directed against religious sites as such, that continue to occur in the world, and denounces any moves to obliterate or forcibly convert any religious sites."

It calls on the governments to promote these religious sites as vulnerable targets and to implement safeguards to protect them. The resolution states that governments should assess risks



United Nations Headquarters in New York. UN PHOTO

and potential targets as well as "ensure that comprehensive measures are in place for the immediate response to an attack."

The resolution also challenges the United Nations to develop "strategies, educational initiatives, and global communications campaigns and tools" that foster greater multicultural respect and media awareness.

"[We invite] all Member States to enhance education and capacity-building to counter incitement to violence through fostering the messages of unity, solidarity and interreligious and intercultural dialogue," it said, calling for the promotion of peace and coexistence among different religions

and cultures.

Saudi Arabia proposed the resolution, which was co-sponsored by Arab nations including Egypt, Iraq, the UAE, Yemen, Sudan, and Palestine. The resolution was also supported by the United States and the European Union.

"The United States is pleased to join the European Union's statement concerning this resolution, and recalls that the rights to freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression are mutually reinforcing and complementary," said David Messenger, the advisor for Political Affairs of the U.N. Mission to the United States, in a Jan. 21 statement. **(CNA)**

Vatican gradually to defund some mission territories

VATICAN— Earlier this month the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples sent a letter to the bishops of some 1,100 Catholic territories and announced the gradual reduction of the financial support they regularly receive from the Vatican.

Since apostolic vicariates and prelatures are regarded by the Vatican as mission territories, they fall under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and the vast majority of them are in the poorest parts of the world.

The Vatican has traditionally supported these jurisdictions via the "Universal Solidarity Fund" of the Pontifical Mission Societies. The main source of income of the fund comes from the collection of World Mission Sunday, celebrated every year on the second to last Sunday of October. The fund is independent from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

But some bishops' conferences in Latin America contacted by CNA claim that the local nuncios have announced a significant cut in the Vatican financial support and have requested local bishops from non-missionary territories to make up for the difference.

Speaking with CNA on Jan. 20, Archbishop Giampietro



The Palazzo di Propaganda Fide in Rome. Credit: Sheila1988 via Wikimedia (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Dal Toso, adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and president of the Pontifical Mission Societies, stressed that "the letter is in no way intended to cut the support we are giving to the diocesan missions. It instead aims at a better distribution of the money, following the criteria of stewardship."

It means, he explained, that "if there are dioceses or bishops able to carry on with their resources, they could renounce to their share and give the opportunity to other, poorest dioceses to

get more."

Archbishop Dal Toso stressed that "along with Aid to the Church in Need, the Pontifical Mission Societies only support pastoral projects. This is very important for the future of the Church." By pastoral, the archbishop means funds that go to specific expenses related to the work of evangelization, as opposed to social justice funds, which are usually more readily available.

According to 2016 figures, the Congregation (also known with the Latin name of Propaganda Fide)

has jurisdiction over 186 archdioceses, 785 dioceses, 82 apostolic vicariates, 39 apostolic prefectures, 4 apostolic administrations, 6 missiones sui iuris, 1 territorial abbacy, and 6 military ordinariates.

In 2019 the Societies distributed some \$130 million, all of it collected during World Mission Sunday. There are no figures regarding the 2020 collection, but Dal Toso said he expects to collect less money than in 2019, because of the economic crisis as a consequence of COVID 19. **(CNA)**

Cardinal expresses concern about preteens using social media

AN Italian cardinal expressed concern this week about the use of social media by children, encouraging the Church to do its part to give young people hope for the future amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, president of the Italian bishops' conference, spoke about kids and social media use on Jan. 24, after the death of a 10-year-old girl in Sicily, which some have tied to use of the video platform TikTok.

"You have to pay close attention to kids. At the very least, they can approach certain [social media] programs when they are older—14-15 years old—but at 8-10 years old it is harmful," Bassetti told journalists after Sunday Mass at the cathedral of the archdiocese of Perugia.

The cardinal was responding to a question about the accidental death of a 10-year-old child in Palermo last week. The child's father told the Italian newspaper La Repubblica that, according to their other daughter, the girl had been playing a TikTok "game" before her death. The "game," reportedly called the "blackout

challenge," involves restricting oxygen to the brain to induce a high.

"Certainly there is also a responsibility of the media," Bassetti said, declining to comment on the specific situation of the family in Palermo, which he said he did not know.

He added that with young children, "the sense of imitation is very strong, and if you create a hero figure, or even the sense of competition, we can have tragic results, as has happened."

The coronavirus pandemic has created "a sad moment and a difficult moment, especially for kids and young people," he said, "and therefore, we need to be close to them also as a Church. We must do more."

The girl died in a hospital after being found with her cell phone in the bathroom on Jan. 20 by her five-year-old sister. The child's phone was taken by police.

After the accident, the Italian Data Protection Authority blocked access to TikTok users whose ages cannot be proven, at least through February 15. TikTok's terms and conditions state that users must be at least 13 years old.

Italian prosecutors have opened an

investigation into the death, which has been widely reported as being caused by the video-making platform.

TikTok, which is owned by Chinese company ByteDance, is cooperating with authorities in the investigation into possible "incitement to suicide."

The company responded on Jan. 22 that it had not identified any content on its platform which could have induced the child to participate in something such as the "blackout challenge."

Bassetti also commented on the need for hope during the coronavirus emergency—and the role young people can have in communicating hope to the elderly and disabled.

"If hope is not brought by young people and we are unable to communicate hope to young people, who should transmit it?" he said.

In his homily at Mass, the cardinal addressed young people specifically, especially "adolescents, who live in an age of transition, of delicate and fundamental personal growth for their life, but who are forced to live it indoors, without being able to establish normal social relationships." **(CNA)**

Cardinal Bo urges Burma's military to release Aung San Suu Kyi after 'shocking' coup



Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, archbishop of Yangon. MAZUR/CATHOLICNEWS.ORG.UK

CARDINAL Charles Maung Bo urged Burma's military on Wednesday to release Aung San Suu Kyi after its "shocking" coup on Feb. 1.

In a statement published Feb. 3 on the website of the Archdiocese of Yangon, the cardinal appealed to the armed forces to free the country's elected civilian leader.

Aung San Suu Kyi was detained after the military seized power in the early hours of Monday, along with Burma's President Win Myint.

Addressing Aung San Suu Kyi, Win Myint, and other members of their party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), directly, Bo said: "You are in this plight in your unending struggle to bring democracy to this nation. The unexpected turn of events has made you prisoners. We pray for you and urge all concerned to release you at the earliest."

Describing Aung San Suu Kyi as "the voice of our people," Bo added: "At this moment I offer my personal sympathies with your plight and pray that you may once again walk amidst your people, raising their spirits."

Bo is the first cardinal in the history of Burma, also known as Myanmar, a country with a population of 54 million people bordering China, Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India.

Since his appointment as Archbishop of Yangon, the former capital city, in 2003, he has emerged as a leading advocate for democracy in the country.

In his message, the cardinal emphasized that he was writing as a spiritual leader.

"We are journeying through most challenging times of our history," he said. "I write with love towards all, seeking a durable solution, praying for an end forever to the periodic darkness that envelops our dear nation."

The cardinal, who is also president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, boldly challenged Burma's new military rulers, known as the Tatmadaw, to fulfill their promise to restore civilian rule. The armed forces took power alleging fraud during last November's elections, won by the NLD.

"When, in 2015, a peaceful transition to the elected government was effected by the Army, that won the admiration of the world," Bo wrote.

"Today the world tries to understand what went wrong in the following years. Was there a lack of dialogue between the elected civilian authorities and the

Tatmadaw?"

Referring to Burma's troubled history since it gained independence from Britain in 1948, he continued: "We have seen so much pain in conflicts. Seven decades of shedding blood and the use of violence brought no results."

"You all promised peace and genuine democracy. Democracy was the streak of hope for solving the problems of this once rich country. This time millions voted for democracy. Our people believe in peaceful transfer of power."

Questioning the military's rationale for taking power, the 72-year-old cardinal said: "Allegations of voting irregularities could have been solved by dialogue, in presence of neutral observers. A great opportunity was lost. Many leaders of the world have condemned and will condemn this shocking move."

"Now you promise greater democracy — after investigation and another election. Myanmar people are tired of empty promises. They will never accept any fake protestation."

"You also promise to hold multiparty elections after one year. How will you gain the trust of our people? They will trust only when words are matched by sincere actions."

Pope Francis visited Burma, a majority Buddhist country, in 2017. He met with Aung San Suu Kyi as well as Min Aung Hlaing, the army general who now leads Burma following the coup.

Speaking during an in-flight press conference after the visit, the pope told reporters: "This general asked me to speak. And I received him. I never close the door. You ask to speak and enter. Speaking you never lose anything, you always win."

"It was a beautiful conversation. I couldn't say because it was private, but I didn't negotiate the truth. But I did it in a way that he understood a bit that the path as it was during the nasty times renewed again today isn't viable. It was a good meeting, civilized and also there the message arrived."

Urging the armed forces not to use violence against the civilian population, Bo said: "Sadly, the elected representatives of our people belonging to NLD are under arrest. So are many writers, activists and youth."

"I urge you, respect their rights and release them at the earliest. They are not prisoners of war; they are prisoners of a democratic process. You promise democracy; start with releasing them." (CNA)

Pope Francis proclaims World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

POPE Francis announced Sunday the establishment of an international day to honor grandparents and the elderly to take place each year in July.

"The Holy Spirit ... arouses thoughts and words of wisdom in the elderly today: their voice is precious because it sings the praises of God and guards the roots of peoples. They remind us that old age is a gift and that grandparents are the link between generations, to transmit to young people an experience of life and faith," Pope Francis said in the library of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace Jan. 31.

"Grandparents are often forgotten and we forget this wealth of preserving and passing on the roots. For this reason, I have decided to establish the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly," the pope said.

The World Day for the Grandparents and the Elderly will take place annually on the fourth Sunday of July, close to the feast of the grandparents of Jesus, Saints Joachim and Anne.

This year it will take place on Sunday, July 25, and Pope Francis will offer a special Mass to mark the occasion, according to the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life.

In his Angelus address—

offered via a live video broadcast due to the COVID-19 pandemic—the pope recalled the upcoming liturgical celebration of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple by Mary and Joseph.

"The day after tomorrow, February 2, we will celebrate the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, when Simeon and Anna, both elderly, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, recognized Jesus as the Messiah," the pope said.

Pope Francis also pointed to the example of the Virgin Mary who "always kept Jesus' words and gestures in her heart and followed Him with total willingness and faithfulness."

"May she help us too to listen to Him and follow Him, to experience the signs of His salvation in our life," he prayed.

The pope said that Jesus "speaks not with human authority, but with divine authority, because he has the power to be the definitive prophet, that is, the Son of God who saves us, heals us all."

He asked: "Do we listen to the words of Jesus which are authoritative?"

"Always, do not forget, carry a small Gospel in your pocket or bag, to read it during the day, to listen to that authoritative word of



Pope Francis and an elderly person at an audience in October 2016. VATICAN MEDIA

Jesus," he said.

The pope explained that Jesus' ministry of healing, exorcisms, and "preaching with authority" show that Christ "aimed at defeating the evil present in humankind and in the world."

"Jesus' teaching has the same authority as God speaking; in fact, with a single command he easily frees the possessed from the evil one and heals him," he said.

"His word points directly at the kingdom of Satan: it puts him in crisis and makes him retreat, forcing him to leave," Francis said.

After the Angelus prayer, children from the diocese of Rome joined the pope in the Apostolic Palace to read a letter about the importance of peace. The children are

participants in the virtual "Caravan of Peace" organized by Catholic Action.

Pope Francis also highlighted World Leprosy Day, which occurs each year on the last Sunday of January. He appealed to world leaders to join efforts to treat those suffering from leprosy — officially called Hansen's Disease — and to work for their social inclusion.

"I express my closeness to those who suffer from this disease, and I encourage missionaries, health workers and volunteers committed to their service," the pope said.

"The pandemic has confirmed how necessary it is to protect the right to health for the most vulnerable people." (Courtney Mares/CNA)

Pope Francis calls for 'mission of compassion' spurred by coronavirus pandemic

POPE Francis urged Catholics on Friday to engage in a "mission of compassion" to a world ravaged by the coronavirus crisis.

Writing in his World Mission Day message, released on Jan. 29, the pope warned Catholics not to succumb to the temptation of justifying indifference on the basis of COVID-19 restrictions.

"In these days of pandemic, when there is a temptation to disguise and justify indifference and apathy in the name of healthy social distancing, there is urgent need for the mission of compassion, which can make that necessary distancing an opportunity for encounter, care and promotion," he wrote in the message signed on Jan. 6, the Feast of the Epiphany.

World Mission Day — also known as World Mission Sunday — was established by Pope Pius XI in 1926. It is usually observed on the third Sunday of October and will be celebrated this year on Sunday, Oct. 17.

This year's theme is "We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The pope described the theme as "a summons to each of us to 'own' and to bring to others what we bear in our hearts."

In the message, he reflected on the missionary drive of the early Church, as described in the Acts of the Apostles.

"The first Christians, far from yielding to the temptation to become an elite group, were inspired by the Lord and his offer of new life to go out among the nations and to bear witness to what they had seen and heard: the good news that the Kingdom of God is at hand," he wrote.

He encouraged readers to think of the missionaries who, in centuries past, risked their lives so that Catholics today could know the faith.

He said: "We know that the call to mission is not a thing of the past, or a romantic leftover from earlier times. Today too Jesus needs hearts capable

of experiencing vocation as a true love story that urges them to go forth to the peripheries of our world as messengers and agents of compassion."

"He addresses this call to everyone, and in different ways. We can think of the peripheries all around us, in the heart of our cities or our own families. Universal openness to love has a dimension that is not geographical but existential."

Quoting from his latest encyclical, "Fratelli tutti," he added: "Always, but especially in these times of pandemic, it is important to grow in our daily ability to widen our circle, to reach out to others who, albeit physically close to us, are not immediately part of our 'circle of interests.'"

"To be on mission is to be willing to think as Christ does, to believe with him that those around us are also my brothers and sisters. May his compassionate love touch our hearts and make us all true missionary disciples."

A worldwide collection is held each year on World Mission Day for the Pontifical Mission Societies, an umbrella group of Catholic missionary societies under the pope's jurisdiction. They include the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Society of St. Peter the Apostle, the Holy Childhood Association, and the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious.

In 2019, the Societies distributed around \$130 million from the World Mission Sunday collection. But the pandemic is likely to have significantly reduced the collection in 2020, with potentially serious consequences for missionary territories that depend on it.

The pope said in his message that, like the first Apostles, Catholics today were living in difficult times.

"The pandemic has brought to the fore and amplified the pain, the solitude, the poverty and the injustices experienced by so many people," he wrote.

"It has unmasked our false sense of security and revealed the brokenness and polarization quietly growing in our midst. Those who are most frail and vulnerable have come to feel even more so."

"We have experienced discouragement, disillusionment and fatigue; nor have we been immune from a growing negativity that stifles hope."

Nevertheless, he said, the resurrection of Jesus still proclaims a "powerful message of life."

"What we have seen and heard, the mercy we have experienced, can thus become a point of reference and a source of credibility, enabling us to recover a shared passion for building a community of belonging and solidarity worthy of our time, our energy and our resources," he said, referring again to "Fratelli tutti."

"The Lord's word daily rescues and saves us from the excuses that can plunge us into the worst kind of skepticism: 'Nothing changes, everything stays the same.'"

Citing his 2013 apostolic exhortation "Evangelii gaudium," he continued: "To those who wonder why they should give up their security, comforts and pleasures if they can see no important result, our answer will always remain the same: 'Jesus Christ has triumphed over sin and death and is now almighty. Jesus Christ is truly alive' and wants us to be alive, fraternal, and capable of cherishing and sharing this message of hope."

"In our present circumstances, there is an urgent need for missionaries of hope who, anointed by the Lord, can provide a prophetic reminder that no one is saved by himself."

The pope concluded his message by invoking the Virgin Mary.

"May Mary, the first missionary disciple, increase in all the baptized the desire to be salt and light in our lands," he wrote. (CNA)

It's what you do than what you say, Archbishop Peralta reminds priests

CATHOLICS pay more attention to what their pastors do than what they say, a church official said.

Archbishop Marlo Peralta of Nueva Segovia said all priests are called to witness Christ through their lives and the faithful have a right to expect this of their pastors.

While preaching is an important element in evangelism, he said that the "more effective" way to do their ministry "is by believing and practicing what we teach."

"In other words people do not give so much attention to what we say as to our life of witness," Peralta said.

"We may be able to explain very well articles of the faith but what they seek in us more than ever is our life of witness," he said.

The church leader was speaking during Mass for the imposition of the pallium upon Archbishop Ricardo Baccay at the Tuguegarao Cathedral on January 14.

In his homily, he discussed the three important functions of an archbishop: to teach, sanctify, and to rule.

Regarding the ministry of sanctifying, he said pastors need to lead their flock to the path of holiness, which should start with "our rootedness in Christ."

"It is very important that we recognize this first step that we cultivate our personal relationship with Christ for it can bear fruit in

our ministry," Peralta said.

The ministry of ruling, according to him, is all about "kindness, mercy and compassion."

"We are asked to lead our Church, the faithful and also our priests with mercy and compassion," he added.

Pope Francis entrusted to Peralta the imposition of the sacred bond of white wool on Baccay, who was installed as archbishop of Tuguegarao a year ago.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, organizers allowed a limited attendance of mostly priests, nuns and some local government officials.

Also present were Baccay's predecessors in the Tuguegarao archdiocese — retired archbishops Sergio Utleg and Diosdado Talamayan.

Bishop David William Antonio of Ilagan and Bishop Prudencio Andaya of Tabuk also graced the occasion. (CBCP News)

EDITORIAL

Ridiculous yet worrisome

IN a virtual press conference this January 28, after the bishops' plenary assembly, which was also virtual, the vice president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, said: "It was really ridiculous. Ridiculous. We are glad that these universities banded together and came out with a collective statement in order to question that kind of red-tagging."

Red-tagging perpetrated by the military of the Duterte government is condemned not only by the prestigious universities in the country that have been tagged as "recruitment havens for the New People's Army," but mostly by well-meaning Filipinos. Responding to the malicious accusation of Lieutenant General Antonio Parlade, Jr., of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), the leaders of Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University, University of Santo Tomas and Far Eastern University denounced in a joint statement the red-tagging against them by the military. The careless accusation has cast a bad light to these institutions of learning, that may in all likelihood endanger the lives of both students and teachers. The naming by the military of some prominent UP alumni as communists was so indiscriminate that no sooner had they realized their mistake and recalled their careless charge. That was a shameful admittance of very poor intelligence that ironically gets the largesse of annual budget.

But worse is the fate of activists, cause oriented groups, those critical of governance and even journalists because red-tagging could mean a death sentence much like the "Tokhang" euphemism of the propaganda-laced drug war that reportedly claimed over thirty thousand lives of poor Filipinos. Red-tagging and the planting of evidence, as recently claimed by journalist and Manila Today editor Lady Ann Salem, to substantiate the tag shows a dearth of military intelligence and a penury of tactics. Or maybe an oblique understanding of insurgency just in terms of hazard pays and more military budget.

The roots of insurgency or the reasons why young people may be lured to join leftists groups while leaving behind the security and comforts of their homes cannot be addressed solely by military tactics no matter how fierce. The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) says it more clearly in a recent statement, "We encourage the government to address the roots of the problem of insurgency, like poverty and marginalization."

"It is becoming worrisome. Definitely. I think there is a reason for people to be afraid when that becomes a trend...It sort of brings back to memory the times when we were under authoritarian rule. We are in a democracy. In a healthy democracy, it is good to question policies like this," says Bishop David of red-tagging.

It is indeed ridiculous. Yet its worrisome. Because who knows who could be next.

To vaccinate or not?

THIS is the burning question at the moment. While the general response should be, yes, we should, there are serious questions and issues raised around this matter. It's usually the public officials who are pushing the official line that we should get vaccinated. And that's very understandable.

But some people, who also have their own credentials, say otherwise. They talk about a sinister conspiracy being hatched in this matter, about a certain plan by some powerful men to control people's lives, to eliminate certain people due to overpopulation, etc.

Others, who are in the medical and research field, say that the vaccines presently made available are still in their experimental stage. Their effectivity is put in doubt. In fact, there are reports of some terrible side effects of a few of those who have already been vaccinated.

Still others claim that some of these vaccines being developed make use of tissues from aborted babies, raising the question about the morality in the use of these vaccines. In this point, a sharp debate is ongoing.

Obviously, these claims just cannot be dismissed outright. But we need a lot of time and expertise to sort out which ones are true and which ones are false. Sometimes we get the sensation of being between the devil and the deep blue sea, of being between a rock and a hard place, of being damned if you do and damned if you don't.

We are indeed all thrown into confusion, which should remind us of the story about the tower of Babel. (Gen 11,1-9) Could this present state of public dilemma and perplexity a reprise of that biblical story that gives us a painful lesson about humility and about always acknowledging God's power properly?

Especially now with our powerful communication technologies, we find ourselves awash with all sorts of information and data, many of which are contradicting each other. And we cannot be so naïve as to think that all these pieces of information and data are presented to us with the purest of intentions. So, who would not be confused?

We are aware that there are some people who, with their hidden agenda and in pursuit of their selfish interests, can take advantage of some extraordinary situations like what we are having these days. With their power and resources, they can easily weaponize certain things to meet their goals.

Let's remember that Christ told us that while we should be as simple and innocent as doves, we should also be as shrewd, clever, wise and cunning as serpents. (cfr. Mt 10,16) Yes, we

Editorial / A7



Along the Way

Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSsR, STD

"In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate the process of healing and renewed encounter." (Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti 225)

WE live in a violent world. Violence is taking place in the homes, in neighborhood communities, in schools, in the streets and in the countryside. To solve the problem of drug addiction, some governments wage war on drugs often resorting to extrajudicial killings. In pursuit of justice, equality and social change movements resort to violence or armed struggle. As a reaction, the state use violence that often leads to violation of human rights. Mining and logging companies who are destroying the environment use violence against indigenous communities and those who protect the environment. Nations engage in armed conflict or wage war with other nations. The spiral of violence goes on

and on. The culture of violence prevails which is a manifestation of the culture of death. Genuine lasting peace and justice remain elusive.

As Christians we are called to follow the way of peace and nonviolence amidst the situation and culture of violence. This is the way of Jesus Christ. This is what he taught in the sermon on the mount and this is what he showed by his death on the cross. Nonviolence involves doing no harm and intending no harm following the commandment: "Thou Shall not Kill". More than that, it is based on Christ's commandment of love for one's neighbor that includes love for one's enemy. This love is accompanied by mercy and compassion and the readiness to forgive and attain reconciliation.

Nonviolence is also grounded on the recognition of human dignity and inalienable rights of each one made in the image of God. It is based on the acknowledgement that we are all brothers and sisters created to be in communion with God, with each other and with creation. Violence is one of

the consequences of the rupture of this communion due to sin. Christ came to restore this broken communion and friendship with God, with each one and with creation which is achieved when the kingdom of God is fully realized.

By his suffering and death on the cross, Jesus showed what nonviolence is all about. In fulfilling his prophetic and liberating mission he manifested his willingness to suffer and give his life without taking life. In doing so he showed how love can overcome the forces of sin and evil and break the cycle of violence. The way of the cross is the way of nonviolence.

Jesus' way of peace and nonviolence have inspired those who struggled for justice, freedom, equality and transformed society peacefully like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, Cesar Chavez, Benigno Aquino Jr. The strategy of nonviolence has been used against dictatorial regimes in the Philippines, Eastern Europe, Middle East, etc. Nonviolent actions

Along the Way / A7

Online Masses

OF course, online Masses are a poor substitute for actual attendance in the real Eucharistic celebration, but under the pandemic-bred circumstances, online Mass is better than no Mass at all. Ask senior citizens who have made the daily Mass a vital part of their day. Missing the daily Eucharist is some kind of deprivation. For seniors, it's all right to be rejected at malls or restaurants, but to be kept out of the church is another matter.

In spite of relatively relaxed quarantine restrictions, churches still discourage "seniors over 65" from attending Holy Mass, even if they're obviously fit for their age or even stronger than some 50-year-olds. Sure, it's

a precautionary measure—that's quite acceptable—and with so many hours to choose from, the over-65s are quite content to "attend" (not just to "watch") Mass by internet each day.

After almost 11 months of virtually joining the faithful in these online Masses, I can't help but notice certain odd practices that I pray the liturgists or Church authorities would do something about in order to create an environment for the Eucharistic celebration that could help us online Mass-goers to (in the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) "... discover ever more fully in the Eucharist the sacrament of Christ's sacrificial love, the inspiration and strength

needed to work ever more generously for the spread of God's Kingdom and the growth of the civilization of love."

While the odd practices I notice tend to distract me from the solemnity of the Eucharistic celebration, allow me to comment at the moment on but two of them. If there's one thing that this Covid thing has forced me to learn, it is to embrace imperfection where I find it. So, as far as online Masses go, I can now say I can accept with serenity the things I am not in a position to change, like the non-existent aesthetic refinement in liturgical decorations—some churches smother the sanctuary with oversized

candelabras, overabundant flower pots, and an inharmonious plethora of statues—and the lack of choir rehearsals evident in their cacophonous performance. My sincere trust in the loving intentions of the faithful who decorate and sing for the liturgy has dulled my senses to the otherwise offensive sights and sounds they present.

Of all the online Masses I have heard so far; I find the ones celebrated in the Manila Cathedral the most conducive to prayer. First, the priests consistently act and speak reverently—that alone sets the tone for a solemn celebration. The visuals are clean and appropriate—the

And That's The Truth / A7

And That's The Truth

Teresa R. Tunay, OCDS



Virtue signaling and gaslighting



Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimaglia

WE have to be wary of these tricks that news and opinion makers often use these days to push their ideas, agenda or narrative. While it's good that they should set out their credentials to establish and strengthen their credibility, we have to see if the tone and timing of such journalistic devices are proper and relevant to the issues at hand.

We cannot help but be discerning of the real motives of these news and opinion makers, because we cannot deny that often instead of objectivity and fairness, what is aimed at is the fulfillment of their biases and other ulterior motives. While generally we should give everyone the benefit of the doubt, these days to omit this consideration would generally be considered as a clear manifestation of naivete.

Especially in matters of opinion and even in matter of faith and beliefs, we can expect differences and conflicts. These differences and conflicts are not necessarily bad. With the proper attitude and skills, they can enrich our knowledge of things in general and occasion the development and refinement of virtues.

When differences and conflicts occur, we should rather try to engage in respectful dialogue, sorting out things carefully, and looking for common ground rather than getting stuck with what can divide us.

One source defines virtue signaling as "the action or practice of publicly expressing opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or the moral correctness of

one's position on a particular issue." This is meant, of course, to undercut others who differ or contradict their views.

Another source puts it as "a pejorative neologism for the conspicuous and disingenuous expression of moral values with the intent to enhance one's own image." Still another source describes it as taking "a conspicuous but essentially useless action ostensibly to support a good cause but actually to show off how much more moral one is than everybody else." We should try our best to stay away from virtue signaling.

Gaslighting, on the other hand, is, as one source describes it, "a form of psychological manipulation in which a person or a group covertly sows seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or

Candidly Speaking / A7

CBCP Monitor

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

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By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

"You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire" (Ps 104:29)

"I believe that morally everyone must take the vaccine...It is the moral choice because it is about your life but also the lives of others."—Pope Francis

FROM the start, world leaders, including local ones, have seen and touted the vaccine as the silver bullet by which to slay the dreaded deadly virus. Throughout the year 2020 Oratio Imperata prayers were offered by many, if not all, dioceses in the Philippines and in the entire planet partly for scientific and medical experts to find a cure and/or a vaccine against Covid-19. Like a sign from heaven, a number of anti-Covid-19 vaccines emerged in the latter part of the year past.

For a while there was muted euphoria. People started thinking of planning to take back their normal lives. But reality appears to be pointing to, at best, a long wait ahead or, at worst, another round of uncertainty and bitter economic realities. Too many have too little to tide things through. Many have lost their jobs or sources of income and are hard pressed to find new ones. Government help is coming in drip.

Anyone who has family, friends or relatives who work or reside in richer and more developed countries realize with a somewhat numbing force how fortunate they are. Many, if not most, already have been vaccinated and are talking to their counterparts in the Philippines about side-effects they either experienced or avoided. Their richer and more developed locations have started distributing the vaccines among their own people, mostly starting with a public vaccinations of their leaders to boost the public's trust and confidence in the vaccine's safety and efficacy. Although their numbers (positive cases and deaths) considerably dwarf those of the Philippines—for which local authorities must be acknowledged—

one easily notices how the enormity of their resources have translated into better quality vaccines and systems of distribution.

It is not the same reality throughout the world. In the Philippines there is still a lot of verbiage about the procurement of different vaccines from different sources or promises of varying numbers of allocations being expected to arrive in the country. The better-off local government units have begun arranging for their own purchases of the vaccines albeit through the national government. My province of Eastern Samar has of late appeared to still be determining how many of our local residents are willing to be vaccinated in an apparent attempt at a realistic assessment of the public trust in the vaccines being touted by government. One wonders what the LGU would do to those who do not want to be vaccinated; in any case, the move does not seem wise because it does not promise to help solve the problem. It is doubtful if it has enough funds to procure the vaccines themselves—a probable reason behind its action—or whether it will only wait for its share from the national government. When that happens it remains uncertain if people could be free to choose which vaccine they want for themselves or their families. The national government's politically charged policy of pivot to China and Russia has dramatically complicated the chaos. At one point, the presidential spokesman asked citizens not to be too choosy when it comes to which type of vaccine to take, apparently because the vastly promoted vaccines from the favored countries are least trusted not only in the Philippines but also around the world due to the lack of transparency surrounding their production and testing. Concerned citizens have countered, "Don't we want only the best for ourselves and our families? Why should we not be choosy?" It is nigh impossible to argue against views such as this. No amount of presidential assurances

of the smartness or brilliance of his favored countries' scientists could allay an anxious public already reeling from the hard socio-psycho-economic effects of anti-Covid-19 measures.

All indications point to the very same realities that make the world and, particularly, the Philippines a bittersweet proposition. Richer and more developed countries have better access to better vaccines and have better systems of distribution. Poorer countries are seemingly akin to beggars waiting at the sidelines for crumbs. They often are at the mercy of richer and more powerful countries ever ready to take advantage of any weakness to advance their own economic and political agenda. In a poor country like the Philippines the same plague is at work—richer LGUs trample poorer LGUs in the race to vaccine procurement and distribution. Where there is an inequality, there is also chaos. When both are not addressed or resolved, the hardest lockdown will be of little help.

We are a People of Faith. Our God whom the Savior reveals created all of us as his images and likenesses, adopting us in Christ Jesus as his children. For him, says Paul the Apostle: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). The hard but worthy effort—or struggle—towards equality must permeate and manage even what seems solely a health issue such as vaccinating people against Covid-19. We ought to do this not only because we all equally deserve the chance to survive the virus but, most of all, because we want to live by what our faith requires. The future does not belong to only one class of human beings; it belongs to all. The prophet Jeremiah brings us God's perspective: "For I know the plans I have for you.... plans for welfare not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11).

The ongoing chaos cannot be an option.

Vac-Scene of chaos and inequality

Commentary

Michael Cook

UN experts alarmed at growing trend for 'right to die'

THIS week UN human rights experts expressed alarm at a growing trend to enact legislation enabling access to medically assisted dying based largely on having a disability or disabling conditions, including in old age.

"We all accept that it could never be a well-reasoned decision for a person belonging to any other protected group—be it a racial minority, gender or sexual minorities—to end their lives because they experience suffering on account of their status," the experts said. "Disability should never be a ground or justification to end someone's life directly or indirectly."

The experts are: Gerard Quinn, rapporteur on the rights of the disabled; Olivier De Schutter, rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; and Claudia Mahler, an expert on human rights of the elderly.

Legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide, they said, would institutionalize and authorize ableism, and directly violate Article 10 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which requires States to ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively enjoy their inherent right to life on an equal basis with others.

The experts said that when life-ending interventions are normalized for people who are not terminally ill or suffering at the end of their lives, such legislative provisions tend to rest on—or draw strength from—ableist assumptions about the inherent "quality of life" or "worth" of the life of a person with a disability.

"These assumptions, which are grounded in ableism and associated stereotypes, have been decisively rejected by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Disability is not a burden or a deficit of the person. It is a universal aspect of the human condition.

"Under no circumstance should the law provide that it could be a well-reasoned decision for a person with a disabling condition who is not dying to terminate their life with the support of the State."

The experts said that even when access to medical assistance in dying is restricted to those at the end of life or with a terminal illness, it is still dangerous. People with disabilities, older persons, and especially older persons with disabilities, may feel subtly pressured to end their lives prematurely due to attitudinal barriers as well as the lack of appropriate services and support.

"The proportion of people with disabilities living in poverty is significantly higher, and in some countries double, than that of people without disabilities," they said.

"People with disabilities condemned to live in poverty due to the lack of adequate social protection can decide to end their lives as a gesture of despair. Set against the legacy of accumulated disadvantages their 'architecture of choice' could hardly be said to be unproblematic."

The experts also expressed concern at the lack of involvement of people with disabilities, as well their representative organizations, in drafting such legislation. "It is paramount that the voices of people with disabilities of all ages and backgrounds are heard when drafting laws, policies and regulations that affect their rights, and especially when we talk about the right to life," they said.

"Ensuring that people with disabilities and their representative organizations participate meaningfully in key legislative processes affecting them, including with regard to assisted dying, is a key component of States' obligations to promote, protect and fulfill human rights and respect everyone's right to life on an equal basis."

While various United Nations agencies have drawn fire from pro-life campaigners, some of its officials have clearly recognized the dangers of euthanasia. In the 2019 the then rapporteur for the disabled Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, reported:

"If assisted dying is made available for all persons with a health condition or impairment, regardless of whether they are terminally ill or not, a social assumption might follow that it is better to be dead than to live with a disability.

"Therefore, a first concern is that persons with a newly acquired impairment may opt for assisted dying based on prejudices, fears and low expectations of living with a disability, before even having the chance of coming to terms with and adapting to their new disability status.

"Second, persons with disabilities may decide to end their lives because of social factors, including loneliness, social isolation and lack of access to quality support services.

"A third problem is that persons with disabilities, particularly older persons with disabilities, may be vulnerable to explicit or implicit pressures arising from their context, including expectations from family members, financial pressures, cultural messages and even coercion."

Clearly, it would be false to campaign for the "right to die" and claim that it is supported by the United Nations!



Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

EVERYONE is worried whether the Philippines would be able to obtain the anti-covid-19 vaccine in due time. Controversies surrounded the government's procurement of the much-needed vaccine. The different Local Government Units or LGUs conducted survey among their constituents on whether or not they want to be vaccinated, and if yes, what is their preferred vaccine. Majority of the population surveyed explicitly replied that they want to be inoculated so that they would be protected and shielded from covid-19 virus and would be secured from being infected by covid-19 patients, covid-19 positive and asymptomatic.

The survey results preferred either Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. The populace rejected both Sinovac Biotech

and Sinopharm from China. Sinovac vaccine has 50.38% efficacy while Sinopharm developer stated that it showed 79.34% efficacy based on an interim analysis of late-stage clinical trials. Reviews show covid-19 vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna have overall efficacy that is essentially identical; 95 percent for Pfizer and 94.1 percent for Moderna. The covid-19 vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca has an overall efficacy of 70.4%. This is lower than the 95% efficacy offered by the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, but studies show the shot reduces the risk of flu illness by around 40% and 60%. AstraZeneca also says its vaccine can hit 90 percent efficacy under certain dosing conditions. Likewise, the vaccine is cheaper and easier

The people have the right to choose the vaccine

to distribute than the Pfizer-BioNTech alternative.

As to the cost of covid-19 vaccine per dose in the world market: Pfizer \$20; Moderna \$10 to \$50; AstraZeneca \$4; Sinovac \$18. On the other hand, in the Philippines, Senator Sonny Angara, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance stated that during the budget hearing, the Department of Health (DOH) gave the following prices of covid-19 vaccines per dose: Pfizer P2,379.00; Moderna P3,904.00 – P4,504.00; AstraZeneca P610.00; Sinovac P3,629.50.

Considering the factors of efficacy and cost, the government's choice is still to procure Sinovac. It cannot be helped but we ask these questions: Why should the government choose Sinovac when the population rejected

it? Is it not a waste of money especially if nobody would like to be vaccinated with Sinovac? Likewise, it has the least efficacy among the covid-19 vaccines. Moreover, the price of Sinovac is more than five (5) times higher than AstraZeneca, the choice of the LGUs. The prices of the vaccines had been disclosed in all media platforms, both internationally and locally, however, why is it that the government does not want to release the price of Sinovac, stating the non-disclosure clause of its purchase agreement with Sinovac?

The taxpayers have the right to be informed of the cost not only of Sinovac, but all of the vaccines, after all, it is the taxpayers money that will be used to buy them. The government must be transparent in its

Duc in Altum / A6



Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco

"IN life, there are no coincidences!" This is a common adage of those who believe that God's providence oversees everything and everyone with His love. There is nothing that our Father God will allow in our life that will not have some a good, small and lasting repercussion. Being human, we are not capable of seeing all the good that He showers us with even during these times of our pandemic.

I once read a meme containing a 'complaint' to God on how He could allow such a tragic pandemic to happen to humanity now. Smiling, God replied: "I have

already foreseen this, that's why I gave man his ears so that he could wear his mask!" Amusing as it is, there are really no coincidences in life even with the strange lateral protrusions from our heads we call 'ears'.

In the past months, I have had the blessed opportunity to chat with new parents whose daughters study in the school where I work as chaplain. Out of curiosity, during our brief ZOOM meetings, I would ask what their 'take-home' from COVID will be. After zooming with more than 50 couples I have come up with a brief compilation of COVIDences that have been blessings for

them as well as for many other families.

- Discovering new talents. With the pandemic, people's former molds of work, leisure and socialization have been disrupted. But this has positively opened for them new horizons where they discover their skills in cooking and baking, painting and playing some musical instrument or even overcoming their fear of technical instruments as computers and tablets.

- Family time and bonding. Majority of parents would agree that the pandemic has brought them closer. In fact, it has helped them to value family time over dinner,

work and rest. Some dads who used to travel or arrive late have treasured being with their children more and engaging them in activities that previously their hectic workload and schedule did not permit them to achieve.

- Watching the children grow up. With living together comes the wonderful phenomenon of treasuring the experience of seeing how the children are growing and maturing. Parents would refer to how each son or daughter starts to display distinctive features in their personalities and characters. This would not have been evident especially in their

previous engagements that only allowed them to be with their children during dinner time.

- Living life simply. Many parents have once again cherished the simple joys of life. For example, they were happier and more united even without having to go out to malls, restaurants and theme parks. Naturally, going out less also help them save on their finances. But they realized that what they have reaped from the pandemic lifestyle is that life's profound joys can be found in living it simply.

- Praying together. Most parents agree that they have

been praying more as a family. Of course, the digital participation in Mass and other religious commitments will never compare to physically going to mass or confession. But in some way, the pandemic has helped many to discover the deeper and more fruitful meaning of praying together as a family.

As much as the on-going pandemic lifestyle may continue to burden us with many unwanted restrictions, it too occasions for us to appreciate and embrace the apparent coincidences through which God helps to increase our faith, hope and love.

"Covidences"

Amid pandemic, celebrate 500 years of Christianity with good deeds — CBCP head

THE best way to celebrate 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines amid the health crisis is “to make our faith shine in deeds of charity and mercy,” a top church official said Jan. 26.

Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said the “gift of faith” must be shared with others.

“Anyone of us can take up this challenge – to serve the least and lowest of our brethren,” Valles said in his opening remarks for the bishops' virtual plenary assembly.

While plans for the celebration have been changed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, he said the Church and the faithful “cannot take this precious gift for granted.”

“For if we do not, we may no longer be ‘gifted to give,’” Valles referring to the theme of the Great Jubilee.



CBCP president and Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles (on screen) addresses the bishops' 121st plenary assembly on Jan. 26, 2021. CBCP NEWS

“We might wake up one day, like other peoples have, no longer able to share this gift with others, for our hearts and souls have been hijacked by other beliefs,

ephemeral if not empty,” he said.

Due to the pandemic, the bishops have earlier announced that the Great Jubilee will be extended for

another year.

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

Unity is both gift and responsibility, says Church's ecumenism chief



Archbishop Angelito Lampon, chairman of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Ecumenical Affairs. PHOTO FROM DAVAO CATHOLIC HERALD

CATHOLIC bishops' top ecumenical official has called for more work for unity, saying that ecumenism is not just a gift but a responsibility.

Archbishop Angelito Lampon, chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Ecumenical Affairs, said a concerted effort is needed to achieve unity not only among Christians but all mankind.

“While unity is a gift from God, it is also a task and responsibility that we have to work hard in order to achieve it,” Lampon said in a video message for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The Cotabato archbishop said this can be done by “our coming together, respecting each other's beliefs and rejoicing in our diversity.”

“We are already making a huge statement to the world that unity is possible not only among Christians but also for humanity,” he added.

This week of prayer kicked off on Monday via online due

to the prevailing coronavirus pandemic.

The theme for the celebration was taken from the Gospel of St. John: “Abide in my love... you shall bear much fruit.”

Archbishop Charles John Brown, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, also said that the initiative, that has been going on for 27 years, may bear fruits and collaboration.

Albeit marred by the pandemic, he lauded the efforts to observe the annual celebration “to pray together, to beseech, to entreat the Lord for the gift of unity.”

He explained this year's theme that highlights the need for people to come together because “with Him all things are possible, without Him nothing is possible.”

“Ecumenism is a gift from God, a gift that becomes possible through prayer,” Brown said. (CBCP News)

Cry for justice loud in burial of slain Bukidnon priest

SLAIN Father Rene Regalado was buried in a southern Philippine city on Jan. 29 amid calls for justice over his “brutal” death.

Fr. Regalado was laid to rest at a cemetery in Valencia City following a funeral Mass at the San Jose Parish Church officiated by Archbishop Jose Cabantan of Cagayan de Oro.

Msgr. Noel Pedregosa, diocesan administrator of Malaybalay, appealed for anyone with information on the incident to come forward.

“I am challenging the people of good conscience to please come out in the name of truth, justice, and in the name of God,” Msgr. Pedragosa said.

“Likewise, please stand for the truth, please stand for justice, please stand for heaven, please stand for God,” he said.

The priest of the Malaybalay diocese was gunned down near the Carmel Monastery in the city on Jan. 24 by still unknown assailants.

His body showed signs he was mauled before he was killed.

The diocese said that Fr. Regalado had been receiving death threats since last December.

The priest was also out on bail over allegations that he raped an 18-year-old girl last October when he was still assigned at a parish in Lala town in Lanao del Norte province.

But Fr. Regalado had always maintained his innocence.

His claim was confirmed when the medicolegal report showed negative for rape, said Fr. Cerilo Sejalan in one of the wake Masses at the Malaybalay



Priests carry the casket of Fr. Rene Regalado during his funeral at the San Jose Parish Church in Valencia City on Jan. 29, 2021. PHOTO FROM THE DIOCESE OF MALAYBALAY

Cathedral on Jan. 27.

“So that means the accusation is false,” said Fr. Sajelan said in his homily.

Before Fr. Regalado went on mission in the nearby Diocese of Iligan from 2017 until October 2020, he was known for his fight against illegal logging in Bukidnon province.

The bishops and priests whom he had worked with also vouched for the innocence of the Fr. Regalado.

Archbishop Cabantan, who served as bishop of Malaybalay from 2010 to August 2020, said the accusation was “not true” and “baseless”.

Bishop Jose Rapadas of Iligan said that “by no stretch of the imagination” could anyone think that Fr. Regalado's “fruitful” ministry “would simply come

to this dreadful end in the hands of ruthless murderers”.

“We are in solidarity with you in mourning, in praying and in seeking justice for the brutal killing of the good servant of God, Father Rene,” said Rapadas, who was also present during the funeral service.

Fr. Regalado is the third priest to be killed in the diocese.

In 1991, the diocese's “green priest” Fr. Nerlito Satur was murdered for his convictions in defending the environment.

Jesuit Fr. Godofredo Alingal, who worked for the rights of the province's poor, was also killed by still unknown perpetrators in 1981. (CBCP News)

Arancel / A1

The document was also released as the Church marks this year the 30th anniversary of the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines, which mandated the gradual abolition of the arancel system.

The gradual abolition of the arancel and replacing it with a concrete stewardship program had been a constant topic in the bishops' meeting in recent years.

As of today, a number of dioceses have already scrapped the arancel and adopted the tithing system and other stewardship programs.

The arancel has also been totally abolished in many parishes that are well-oriented to Basic Ecclesial Communities.

The CBCP said it will also put up a service arm that will assist the dioceses

that are having difficulty in implementing the program despite the pandemic, which dealt a blow to parishes' finances.

“Let us not be afraid to give freely and cheerfully, even in times of crisis and difficulty like the Covid-19 pandemic that we are presently experiencing,” Valles said.

“Let us sustain the spirit of generosity that has

spontaneously overflowed during this pandemic and has kept our communities in operation.”

“We will look back with amazement and gratitude at these times, wondering how we got by even at the height of the lockdowns that we thought would seriously challenge the sustainability of our parishes,” he said. (CBCP News)

Red-tagging / A1

“It sort of brings back to memory the times when we were under authoritarian rule. We are in a democracy. In a healthy democracy, it is good to question policies like this,” he said.

Anti-terror law

David noted that red-baiting is also one of the reasons why the CBCP explicitly opposed the controversial “anti-terror” law.

“It is the fear of the exaggerated response to the move to address terrorism that might compromise human rights of people,” he said.

The bishop cited as examples the recent killings by state forces of nine indigenous peoples on Panay Island,

which was condemned by the bishops in Western Visayas region.

“Much of that is also related to red-tagging, and we express solidarity with our brother bishops there,” he said.

David also pointed at the recent allegations that some Catholic universities are among the supposedly “breeding grounds” for communist insurgents.

“It was really ridiculous. Ridiculous. We are glad that these universities banded together and came out with a collective statement in order to question that kind of red-tagging,” he said.

The military has earlier accused the Ateneo De Manila University,

University of Santo Tomas, De La Salle University, Ateneo De Naga University and Holy Angel University as among the schools that are allegedly hotbeds of rebel recruitment and radicalization.

Address roots of insurgency

Instead of red-tagging educational institutions, a group of Catholic educators also called on government to address injustices and other roots of the insurgency problem.

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines said that continued red-tagging will not help but only “endangers the security and welfare of teachers and students.”

“We encourage the government

to address the roots of the problem of insurgency, like poverty and marginalization,” the CEAP said in a statement released Jan. 30.

The CEAP assured the government that Catholic schools can never support any armed struggle because they are committed to nation-building “through peaceful and non-violent means”.

“We remain committed to live out our Catholic principles of respect for human life and liberties, and promotion of social justice and peaceful social transformation,” it said.

“We continue to promote our Constitutionally-guaranteed basic human rights of free speech, expression, and association,” the

group added.

Academic freedom

The CEAP, which has more than 1,500 schools in its roster, also stressed the importance of upholding academic freedom, which provides “our society a space, free from external constraints, where truth can be shifted from untruth, and right from wrong”.

“We believe this is essential and necessary for the benefit of society and the common good,” it said.

Saying that the challenges of nation-building are “complex”, CEAP said it will continue to engage the government “in a spirit of partnership and dialogue”.

Duc in Altum / A5

commercial dealings to avoid being accused of kickback and overpricing, considering that the national elections is just around the corner.

Spokesperson Harry Roque was quoted saying “why be choosy... otherwise sign a waiver.” It is the Constitutional right of every Filipino to choose which vaccine should be administered on him. Section 1, Article III (Bill of Rights) of the 1987 Constitution reads: “No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws.” The government cannot impose on each and every Filipino to be vaccinated by Sinovac, if he does not want that vaccine. The government cannot also impose on a person to sign a waiver. In this time of pandemic, each and every Filipino must be vaccinated with covid-19 vaccine. No person should be left behind. Any person not inoculated may be the carrier of the virus, and it would put to waste the vaccines purchased and administered on everyone.

The medical practitioners who are frontliners know that they have the right to choose which vaccine to be administered on them, so are the poorest of the poor. Let their economic status in life not be the reason to inoculate them with vaccines they rejected and did not approve.

We pray that the twice a year Plenary Session of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines or CBCP in the last week of January be a successful one. May our bishops be guided by the Holy Spirit in the discussion of all topics during their sessions so that they will be able to release a meaningful and much-awaited Pastoral Letter.

To our parish priest Fr. Amado “Bong” Gino and the parishioners, Happy Feast of our Patron Saint San Ildefonso of Toledo. This is the 28th Fiesta Celebration since San Ildefonso became a parish in January 23, 1993. Unlike in the previous years, many fiesta activities will not be held. Instead of procession, there will be a motorcade in the morning (due to curfew in the evening) composed of only ten (10) 4-wheeled vehicles, including the pick-up vehicle which will carry the image of San Ildefonso. Bishop Emeritus Deogracias Iniguez, Jr. will be the Main Celebrant at 6pm Mass. At 8pm, there will be a fund-raising Virtual Concert and may be watched at the Parish FB Page San Ildefonso Parish—Navotas, with 4 segments—Pananalig or Faith, Pag-asa or Hope, Pag-ibig or Love and Paglilingkod or Service. Persons will share their experiences before and after the pandemic; choirs and priests will sing, including its parish priest, the Parish Pastoral Council Execom and the ministries and organizations.

W. Visayas bishops: Hear indigenous peoples' cries against mega dam project

WESTERN Visayas' Catholic bishops called on the government to hear the cries against a mega dam project following the killings of indigenous peoples on Panay Island.

In a pastoral letter issued Jan. 15, the eight bishops in the region condemned the recent atrocities and called for an independent investigation into the incident.

They said those killed were leading a fight against the Jalaur mega dam construction that would displace them from their ancestral land.

To prevent further bloodshed, the bishops urged the government to "listen to the legitimate cries of the Tumandoks against the construction of the Jalaur mega dam".

"We call on everyone to be highly vigilant in defending the sacredness of life and in respecting and protecting the

rights of all," they said.

At least nine Tumandok tribespeople in the upstream villages of Capiz and Iloilo provinces were killed and a number were arrested in predawn raids on Dec. 30.

Authorities alleged the fatalities were communist rebels who fought back during the joint police and military operations in search of illegal firearms and explosives.

But the families of those killed refuted police's claim, adding that the supposedly recovered firearms were planted.

Various human rights groups also believe the killed Tumandoks were red-tagged because of their strong opposition to the dam project.

Signatories of the statement include Cardinal Jose Advincula of Capiz, Archbishop Jose Lazo of Jaro, and bishops Marvyn

Maceda of San Jose de Antique, Patricio Buzon of Bacolod, Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos, Louie Galbines of Kabankalan, Jose Corazon Tala-oc of Kalibo, and Narciso Abellana of Romblon.

"Let us all together contribute whatever we can to stop the killings; respect the rights of people to live in peace; and stop the militarization of the IP communities," they said.

To protect the police against false accusations, the bishops also asked that they be required to use body cameras.

"This will also protect the civilians from the use of violence or abuse of power such as planing of evidence, illegal arrest and even killings," they said.

The pastoral letter will be read in all Masses in all churches of Western Visayas on January 24. **(CBCP News)**



Western Visayas bishops, top from left: Cardinal Jose Advincula of Capiz, Archbishop Jose Lazo of Jaro, Bishop Patricio Buzon of Bacolod, Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos, Bishop Louie Galbines of Kabankalan, Bishop Marvyn Maceda of San Jose de Antique, Bishop Jose Corazon Tala-oc of Kalibo, and Bishop Narciso Abellana of Romblon.

Cagayan Valley dioceses to plant 1.2 million trees in 500 days

FOLLOWING the massive flooding that devastated parts of Cagayan Valley, the dioceses in the area banded together to plant more than a million trees in 500 days.

Dubbed "Missio 500," the initiative aims to plant 500 trees per day in the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao and in its suffragan areas of Ilagan, Bayombong, Tabuk, and Batanes.

The target is to plant at least 1.25 million trees by early next year.

The program was launched on Jan. 14 before the ceremony for the imposition of the sacred pallium on Archbishop Ricardo Baccay of Tuguegarao.

Baccay said the launching of the initiative was timed for the occasion "as a symbol of our solidarity, working together, and convergence".

The project also aims to celebrate this year's 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines.

Since the initiative involves local governments, civil society organizations and non-government organizations, the number of trees to be planted could exceed the target.

Bishop Elmer Mangalinao of Bayombong said last November's flooding that affected thousands of families shows "the urgency to protect



An aerial photo of some villages in the province of Cagayan in the northern Philippines shows the aftermath of typhoon "Ulysses" in November 2019. PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO

our common home".

"The missio 500 is a testament to our commitment to teach, to mold, and to remind our faithful that we are the stewards of God's creation," he said.

Bishop Danilo Ulep of Batanes, for his part, also expressed his prelature's commitment to the initiative.

"May this project intensify and strengthen our advocacy to protect God's creation and heal the wounds of mother earth for sustainable development of

our communities," he said.

Also launched was the Metropolitan Ecology Desk and the Eco-convergence Luzon Hub, in partnership with Caritas Philippines.

Eco-convergence is a partnership of church and civil society groups to promote the teachings of Pope Francis' encyclical on ecology, Laudato Si.

The two other regional hubs are the Diocese of San Carlos for the Visayas and the Diocese of Marbel for Mindanao. **(CBCP News)**

Sto. Niño feast: Cebu archbishop urges faithful to 'have faith over fear'

ON the feast of Sto. Niño, the head of Cebu's Roman Catholic Church called on the people back to God and out of fear they may be experiencing during the pandemic.

In a restrained Mass due to Covid-19 restrictions, Archbishop Jose Palma said that through faith, people will not live in fear.

"Today, the Niño tells us to have faith rather than fear. Put your trust in this little child, small but powerful," Palma said in his homily.

The celebration, which usually attracts millions of people, was held at the Basilica Minore del Sto. Niño with very limited attendance due to the Covid-19 crisis.

The basilica has earlier suspended all public Masses to avoid coronavirus transmission, and instead urged devotees to participate online.

Despite the pandemic and the cancellation of the significant events for the fiesta, he said the day is still a "moment of thanksgiving".

"We are assured of God's continuing presence and support in our journey of faith," Palma said.

The archbishop then challenged the faithful to "concretize" their devotion by reaching out to those in the peripheries.

Pointing to the centuries-old image of the Holy Child, he said the icon is a reminder to the other "littles in the society".

To drive his point, the archbishop said that even the Sto. Niño needed the care of Mary and Joseph.

"So we have to care for each other, especially for the poor, the sick, the little ones, the marginalized," Palma said. **(CBCP News)**

Editorial / A4

have to do some deep study, research and consultation here, but this will take time and the proper attitude.

In the meantime, what we can always do is to pray that we get enlightened somehow. In this life, we

are not expected to judge all things correctly, to make the proper decisions all the time. We are expected to make errors, to commit mistakes, though we should try our best to avoid them.

What is truly essential is

that whether in the end we are right or wrong on some issues, we should all be with God. We should follow our conscience that is properly formed and informed.

So, whether we should get vaccinated or not will be call

by each one's conscience, by one's perception of what God is telling him. After all God knows everything and can derive good from evil. Even our mistakes will work out for the good. (cfr. Rom 8,28)

And That's The Truth / A4

décor is tasteful, and no unnecessary objects clutter the sanctuary. Even before the Mass begins, there are Mass Intentions projected on the screen—no talkies—followed by a beautiful image of the Mary artistically placed off center: it's as though the silence and the empty space beside her were deliberately meant to calm down the online faithful in preparation for Christ's sacrifice.

That was how perfect and edifying the Manila Cathedral Masses were. Was? Were? Past tense? Well, forgive me, but a little addition on the tv screen is proving to be a not-so-little distraction for me. Since the Mass for the Black Nazarene in early January, the live chat has been turned on as Mass is in progress, introducing unnecessary movement and "noise" on the screen. The human eye, I believe, is automatically attracted by movement and the live chat messages moving up the screen nonstop can easily grab one's attention from what's taking place at the altar.

I have caught myself a number of times reading those messages without meaning to—I plead guilty, O woeful me! I have been trying to ignore it but with little success, especially when the chat band blocks the view of some prayers, such as the Act of Spiritual Communion. Thus, instead of intensifying my fervor at Communion the live chat exposes me to chatty petitions (pardon the pun): "Lord, keep my family safe from

covid." "Father God, thank you for your blessings. Bless our business and help us pay our debts..." "Jesus, tulongan mo po akong patawarin ang mga nanglilibak sa akin..." "Lord, I pray you make my husband realize he is wrong..." It is like attending Mass in church while someone is loudly reciting a novena beside you. Nonetheless, by way of saying "Sorry" to the Lord for the distraction, I did pray for them once, thus: "Lord I believe this is how You want them to feel Your love, so I won't stand in the way." Still, I do wish the live chat ribbon would be silenced at least during Consecration and Communion; otherwise, I can cover that side of the screen until I am given the grace to be blind to it.

Speaking of noise: one live streaming church makes you sit through announcements for three minutes before the final blessing is given. The "announcements" are in reality a repetitive recitation of what is already on the screen in huge bold red and black text: several bank accounts numbers and Gcash and PayMaya details for those who wish to donate, the procedure to follow if you wish to donate in person at the parish office, and virtual advertisements of products available in the parish store. Maybe some people will find me priggish, but don't you think there is a more discreet way of doing this? It would probably not seem so offensive for those attending the actual

Mass in the church, but for one who has only a small television screen as a physical connection to the marvelous liturgy just ended, this could be very jarring.

In the moments after the spiritual communion, one could still be very much in adoration mode which (again in Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's words) "...prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself. ...Through this gaze of adoration, He draws us toward Himself, within His mystery, through which He wants to transform us as He transformed the Host." Imagine being in this sublime moment when "time remains embraced by divine eternity" and then being rudely knocked in the head by a promo salesman.

Back to the thumbs up to the Manila Cathedral. Its online Mass projects similar information for donation but does so respectfully—after the final blessing and the recessional hymn—just flashed on the screen, sans verbal solicitation. This makes me feel they have the dignity to trust that potential donors would know what to do with the information given. They couldn't be more right—I, for one, just took a photo of the screen and with all those bank details already saved on my phone, giving came easy. More sweetly, too, for I felt I did not need to be nagged to give. And that's the truth.

Along the Way / A4

such as peaceful protests, human barricades, marches, general strikes, non-cooperation, negotiations, etc. have proven to be more effective than armed struggle. Many paid the price of being arrested, going to prison and giving up their life without taking life.

The way of peace and nonviolence is indeed an integral part in the promotion of justice, peace and integrity of creation. It can be used as a means for demanding justice and accountability, in addressing the ecological crisis, in peace-making and in the context of interreligious dialogue. It should be promoted among families in their homes, in communities, in schools and universities. Grassroots communities such as Basic

Ecclesial Communities have an important role in peace-making and promoting nonviolence. All these require developing a culture of encounter, peace and dialogue – building bridges rather than walls.

Each of us are called to practice nonviolence in our day to day living, remembering that peace begins in me and around me. This requires inner healing - rooting out negative and toxic emotions such as anger, resentment, hatred and the desire for revenge. This will lead to inner peace. This also means cultivating compassion and love. The practice of mindfulness and meditation can be of great help. Whatever we do as a group or individual should lead to ending the cycle and spiral of violence.

Candidly Speaking / A4

group, making them question their own memory, perception and judgment...Using denial, misdirection, contradiction, and misinformation, gaslighting involves attempts to destabilize the victim and delegitimize the victim's beliefs."

In other words, gaslighting is a form of attack that is immoral, with the requirements of charity thrown away and the Machiavellian principle of any means justifying the end as its main guide. It does not attack so much the views of a person as the person himself.

In its real and bare character, gaslighting uses the crude means of insulting, mocking, ridiculing those with different or conflicting views,

perhaps a bit camouflaged with some subtle rhetorical devices, which makes things worse since they can appear to be acceptable in public exchanges.

We have to do everything to stay away from these journalistic tricks that can only add poison to our social environment but in a manner that is subtle and not easily detectable.

What we should rather do is always to listen to everyone no matter how different and in conflict their views are from ours. The exchanges should be courteous all the time, and effort should always be made to find the common ground rather than to get stuck in the differences and conflicts.

Pope Francis adds feast of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus to Church calendar

POPE Francis on Tuesday added the memorial of Sts. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to the General Roman Calendar, giving the siblings the combined feast day of July 29.

A decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship said on Feb. 2 that Pope Francis had included the three saints in the General Roman Calendar “considering the important evangelical witness they offered in welcoming the Lord Jesus into their home, in listening to him attentively, in believing that he is the resurrection and the life.”

The General Roman Calendar is the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church, which denotes the dates of holy days and the feast days of saints commemorated annually.

The memorial of St. Martha was already included on Jan. 29 in the General Roman Calendar before the Second Vatican Council, but St. Lazarus and St. Mary had been originally left off due to uncertainty about the identity of Mary Magdalene.

The decree explained that these uncertainties “have been resolved in recent studies and times,” and pointed out that Mary and Lazarus are already commemorated on July 29 in the Roman Martyrology, the Church’s official catalog of martyrs and saints.

Sts. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were three siblings living in the town of Bethany outside of Jerusalem

during the time of Christ.

Signed by Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Divine Worship congregation, the pope’s decree said that “in the household of Bethany the Lord Jesus experienced the family spirit and friendship of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and for this reason, the Gospel of John states that he loved them.”

“Martha generously offered him hospitality, Mary listened attentively to his words and Lazarus promptly emerged from the tomb at the command of the One who humiliated death,” the decree continued.

The July 29 feast day of Sts. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus will now appear in the Church’s calendars and liturgical texts as a memorial.

Memorials rank third in the classification of feast days on the Catholic Church’s liturgical calendar. The memorial of Sts. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus will be an obligatory memorial, which means it must be observed.

Pope Francis also added three other saints and Doctors of the Church as optional memorials on the General Roman Calendar.

According to a Feb. 2 decree, St. Hildegard of Bingen will be commemorated on Sept. 17, St. Gregory of Narek on Feb. 27, and St. John of Ávila on May 10.

“The combination of holiness with knowledge in the experience

of the mystery of Jesus Christ is inextricably linked to the mystery of the Church,” Cardinal Sarah wrote in the decree.

“This link between holiness and understanding things divine and also human shines out in a very special way in those who have been given the title ‘Doctor of the Church,’” he said.

“Indeed, the wisdom that characterizes these men and women is not solely theirs, since by becoming disciples of divine Wisdom they have themselves become teachers of wisdom for the entire ecclesial community. It is in this light that the holy ‘Doctors’ are inscribed in the General Roman Calendar,” Sarah explained.

St. Gregory of Narek was a 10th-century priest, monk, mystic, and poet beloved among Armenian Christians. He was named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Francis in 2015.

He is venerated as a saint both in the Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is not in full communion with Rome.

Sts. John of Ávila and Hildegard of Bingen were named Doctors of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012.

Doctor of the Church is a title given to some saints in recognition of their extraordinary contribution and universal importance to the



The Raising of Lazarus (1857), by Léon Joseph Florentin Bonnat. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Catholic Church through their learning and writings. At present, the Church has given this title to 36 saints.

From the 12th century, the German St. Hildegard was a Benedictine abbess, writer, philosopher, Christian mystic, and visionary.

She was also a musical composer and is one of the best-known composers of sacred monophony, meaning songs with a single tune or melody, usually performed by a single voice or instrument.

St. John of Ávila lived in Spain in the 1500s and is sometimes called

the “Apostle of Andalusia” because of his extensive ministry to that area.

He was a priest, author, and mystic, and is known to have corresponded with, and influenced, Spanish saints such as St. Teresa of Ávila, St. John of God, and St. Ignatius of Loyola.

With the insertion of their feast days in the General Roman Calendar as optional memorials, the three saints may now be commemorated at Mass and other liturgies. (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

CBCP elevates Obando Church to national shrine status



San Pascual Baylón Parish-Diocesan Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepcion de Salambao in Obando, Bulacan. PHOTO FROM OBANDO CHURCH

A POPULAR pilgrimage site widely known for its fertility festival in Bulacan province has been designated a national shrine by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines.

The San Pascual Baylón Parish-Diocesan Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepcion de Salambao in Obando town now joins the 26 other churches across the country with such a title.

It is also the fourth national shrine in the Diocese of Malolos, located just north of Manila.

The bishops on Jan. 27 voted in favor of the petition to declare the parish as a national shrine during their online plenary assembly.

The Obando Church was founded by the Franciscan missionaries on April 29, 1754.

Its humble beginnings came with the settlement at the small chapel dedicated to St. Clare of Assisi, which was then already established in the town in order to Christianize the local pagan rituals connected to fertility. The missionaries chose St. Paschal Baylón, a Spanish lay Franciscan friar, as the titular patron of the parish. His surname Baylón means to dance, identifying the saint as a dancing devotee to the Blessed Mother.

On June 19, 1763, three fishermen brothers discovered an image of Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion while fishing in waters near the borders of Obando and Malabon City using a large net attached to a bamboo raft called “salambao”.

Just like how Jose Rizal stated in “Noli Me Tángere”,

Obando has been a pilgrimage site for barren couples and their families.

In the middle of May, devotees dance to the tune of “Santa Clara pinong-pino...” following the steps of the traditional “Pandanggo”.

The Obando fertility dance is celebrated in three consecutive days from May 17 to 19, each one honoring St Paschal Baylón, St. Clare of Assisi and Our Lady of Salambao respectively.

With profound faith and devotion of pilgrims and locales alike, the tradition of the fertility dance and its Marian following continues to grow through the ages.

In the 250th year of the parish in 2004, the venerated image of Our Lady of Salambao was granted an episcopal coronation, the first of its kind in the Diocese of Malolos, by Bishop Jose Oliveros.

In 2007, the same bishop elevated the parish as a diocesan shrine in honor of Our Lady as Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepcion de Salambao.

Between the years 2014 to 2020, the church’s patio, interior and exterior had undergone continuous development through the generosity of pilgrims from across the nation.

On Dec. 19, 2020, the parish also opened to the public a 2-storey museum, which houses devotional artwork, antique images, treasured attire of Our Lady and a visual presentation of Obando’s history as pilgrimage center.

No date has been set yet for the rite to formally declare the parish as a national shrine. (CBCP News)

Archbishop Baccay of Tuguegarao receives sacred pallium

ARCHBISHOP Ricardo Baccay of Tuguegarao on Jan. 14 received his sacred pallium, exactly a year after formally assuming his post.

Archbishop Marlo Peralta of Nueva Segovia conferred the pallium on Baccay in a liturgy at the Saint Peter Metropolitan Cathedral.

With the pandemic, fewer people attended the actual ceremony but presumably attended online by many through live-stream over Facebook.

The woolen band that symbolizes unity with the pope and responsibility to care for the flock was blessed by Pope Francis on the feasts of Sts. Peter and Paul last June 29 in Rome.

Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, Archbishop Baccay was unable to travel to Rome for the papal blessing of the pallium, which was entrusted to Archbishop Peralta for conferral.

While the pope continues to bless palliums and give them to new archbishops as his predecessors did, he decided in 2015 that each



Archbishop Marlo Peralta of Nueva Segovia confers the pallium on Archbishop Ricardo Baccay during Mass at the St. Peter Metropolitan Cathedral in Tuguegarao City on Jan. 14, 2021. PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL PETER VALDEPEÑAS

archbishop receives it in his archdiocese, in front of the faithful and other bishops.

In his homily, Archbishop Peralta said the imposition of pallium completes the installation of Baccay as metropolitan archbishop of Tuguegarao.

The vestment, he said, implies that an archbishop has to be united with the pope in governing the Church

“intended to be imbued with Christ’s mercy and compassion”.

Turning to Baccay, he stressed that to be entrusted with an archdiocese, fairness and justice should play a role.

“You are to promote the common good. fairness and justice should be part of the overall picture in the pastoral governance of your metropolitan archdiocese,”

Peralta said.

“While we need to be kind and merciful we also need to practice fairness because this is the only way that we can promote the common good,” he added.

Baccay was appointed archbishop of Tuguegarao by Pope Francis on Oct. 19, 2019. He was installed to the post on Jan. 14, 2020. (CBCP News)

Retired Bishop Sorra of Legazpi dies aged 91

PHILIPPINES’ oldest bishop, Jose Sorra of Legazpi, has died on Jan. 21 at the age of 91.

He passed way around midnight “due to respiratory failure secondary to pulmonary embolism,” said Bishop Joel Baylon, Legazpi’s current bishop.

“We ask for your prayers for his eternal rest,” said Bishop Baylon said.

Worshippers and mourners paid their last respects to Sorra, who was laid to rest at a crypt in the Virac Cathedral on Feb. 1.

The interment took place after a funeral Mass presided over by Archbishop Rolando Tria Tirona of Caceres.

As the funeral took place amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the diocese had arranged it to comply with health protocols.

Sorra, who died at a hospital in Legazpi City on Jan. 21 at the age of 91, was buried in Virac in Catanduanes province where he served as its first bishop from 1974 to 1993.

While in Virac, he was the first bishop to systematize youth formation in the Philippines.

The Youth Encounter (YE), which he founded, was also adopted by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the

Philippines as a formation program for the youth.

He also served as the first chairman of the CBCP’s Episcopal Commission on Youth, which was established in 1986.

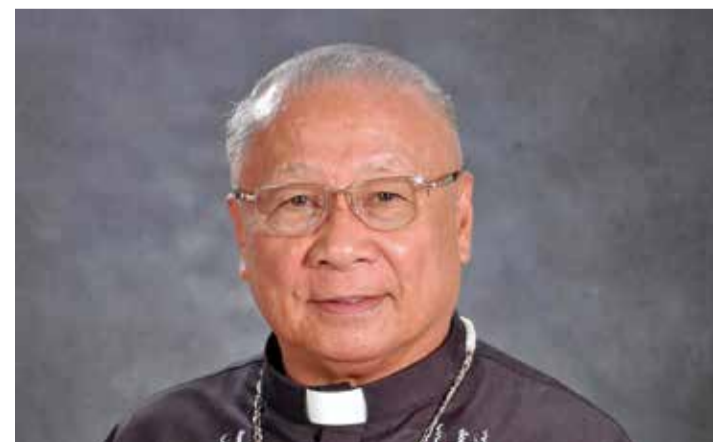
In his homily, Tirona said that Sorra has achieved many goals “but above all, he has touched many hearts”.

“That is why his memory will leave lasting moments in our hearts,” Tirona said.

“Of all the good things that we are saying about Bishop Sorra, one thing is certain, that he is a son of God who dedicated his life serving the least and the most vulnerable,” he added.

Sorra was ordained for the Legazpi diocese in 1956.

Before his elevation to episcopacy, he served as CBCP Secretary General and National Director of the Student



Bishop Emeritus Jose Sorra of Legazpi (1929-2021)

Catholic Action of the Philippines from 1972 to 1974.

After serving Virac for 19 years, he was appointed the fourth bishop of Legazpi.

Under his term, he set up a welfare plan for the clergy, and built the Bethlehem Pastoral and Retreat Center, an edifice for continuing formation of the lay and the priests.

Sorra also caused the celebration of the historic First Diocesan Synod of Legazpi, where he served until his retirement in 2005. (CBCP News)



Bishop Socrates Mesiona of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Princesa celebrates Mass at a chapel located in a remote village in Palawan province's Balabac town on August 28, 2020. AVPP-UGNAYAN

Pastoral Statement on Stewardship

“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied graces.” (1 Pet.4:10)

Dear People of God,

We mark this year the 500th year of the coming to our shores of the Christian Faith. Our commemoration of the event is an acknowledgment of this immense gift to our people and our land. We did not only receive the Faith, but also allowed it to take root and grow in our Filipino culture throughout these years. With this gift of Faith, we have become God’s people, partakers of “divine mysteries” (1 Cor 4:1). We are grateful to God for this immeasurable gift.

We are not, however, the ultimate owners of this special gift. We are ‘stewards’ -‘katiwala’ (tinugyanan, katalek) of God’s gifts. ‘Is there anything that we did not receive as gift?’ (Cf. 1 Cor. 4:7). Each gift we receive is meant to be shared to one another. And so, ‘we are gifted to give’; we must share the Faith.

Every gift is a responsibility. We recognize every gift, nurture it, generously share it with others, and gratefully return it with increase to the Lord. This is the meaning of the Spirituality of Stewardship.¹

After five centuries of striving to live the Christian Faith more fully, we heighten consciousness of our identity as stewards. We are stewards of life, talent, time and material resources. These gifts are given to us for service, that we may become channels of God’s Providence to one another. The Holy Scriptures

remind us: “as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10). We are certainly blessed not only when we receive, but especially when we give.

God calls us to serve one another more generously, especially our poor brothers and sisters. The Lord Jesus made his own the prophecy of Isaiah, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor” (Lk. 4:18). We, then, take the banner of preferential love for the poor. On this, Pope Francis tells us: “Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care” (Evangelii Gaudium #200).

In this spirit, we re-affirm the mandate given us by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) in 1991, namely: “tithing,² after a good pastoral catechesis, shall be introduced with the end in view of the gradual abolition of the Arancel System” (PCP II Decree #118).

The ‘arancel’, which is the fixed amount asked for services given in our churches, can be a hindrance for the poor to receive God’s grace and blessings. Let us do our best, then, to remove obstacles to genuine service, especially to the poor. For in the end, ‘each of us will give an account of ourselves to God’

2 By tithing, we refer, not necessarily to the Biblical notion of ten per cent of one’s earnings, but to various models of making regular voluntary pledges, sometimes also called “Baik-Handog.” Our BECs (basic ecclesial communities), have set a good example in this regard. Like them, we hope our traditional parishes would be able to draw inspiration from the example of the early Christian communities, as attested in Acts 2:44-45.

(Romans 14:12). And we heed the Lord Jesus’ instruction to his disciples as he sent them on mission: “Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give” (Mt. 10:8).

Therefore, we, as Church in the Philippines, once more commit ourselves to the gradual abolition of the *arancel* system. This is a concrete step in renewing ourselves in the practice of stewardship, praying that others may see us truly “as good stewards of God’s varied graces” (1 Pet. 4:10).

We commit ourselves to education, formation and catechesis in the Spirituality of Stewardship for our clergy, religious and laity in our dioceses, parishes, communities and families, in view of adopting a concrete stewardship program in our dioceses to replace the *arancel* system as soon as possible. In view of this, we will also put up a service arm that will concretely assist the dioceses that are having a difficulty in implementing this program. We envision local churches, parishes and BECs (Basic Ecclesial Communities) sustained by a generous sharing of resources, where those who have none are not left out of spiritual and material care, where stewardship is a way of life. This is a true image of the Church.

Brothers and sisters, we are all part of this endeavor for we all belong to the Church, the one family of God. We all share responsibility for the Church. Thus, we encourage all the baptized to regularly, wholeheartedly and generously contribute to the Church so that we can fulfill our common mission of spreading the Good News, of serving humanity and car-

ing for the whole of creation. For ‘the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it’ (Psalm 24:1).

Let us not be afraid to give freely and cheerfully, even in times of crisis and difficulty like the Covid-19 pandemic that we are presently experiencing. Let us sustain the spirit of generosity that has spontaneously overflowed during this pandemic and has kept our communities in operation. We will look back with amazement and gratitude at these times, wondering how we got by even at the height of the lockdowns that we thought would seriously challenge the sustainability of our parishes.

St. Paul reminds us: “God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8). May we not waver in our trust in God, for He never fails to provide for our needs. In all things, let God be our priority. Did not the Lord Jesus himself assure us: “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides?” (Mt. 6:33).

For the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines:

+ROMULO G. VALLES, D.D.
Archbishop of Davao
CBCP President
28 January 2021

The Sunday of the Word of God

The Canonical Provisions of Pope Francis' M.P. *Aperuit illis* of 30 September 2019

By Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD

LAST 24 January, the 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, we celebrated the Sunday of the Word of God, better known in the Philippines as Bible Sunday. What may not be known by many is that this was of quite a recent establishment; still less would people be aware that the Holy Father established a series of norms for its observance. For parish priests, especially, the normative aspects of the *motu proprio* that established the event should be of interest.

Rationale for establishing the Sunday of the Word of God.

“At the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, I proposed setting aside a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people’ (*Misericordia et Misera*, 7). Devoting a specific Sunday of the liturgical year to the word of God can enable the Church to experience anew how the Risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world” (*Aperuit illis*, n.2). With those words as preamble, the Holy Father proceeded to establish the 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time as the Sunday of the Word of God: “I hereby declare that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God.”

He stated the main reasons as follows:

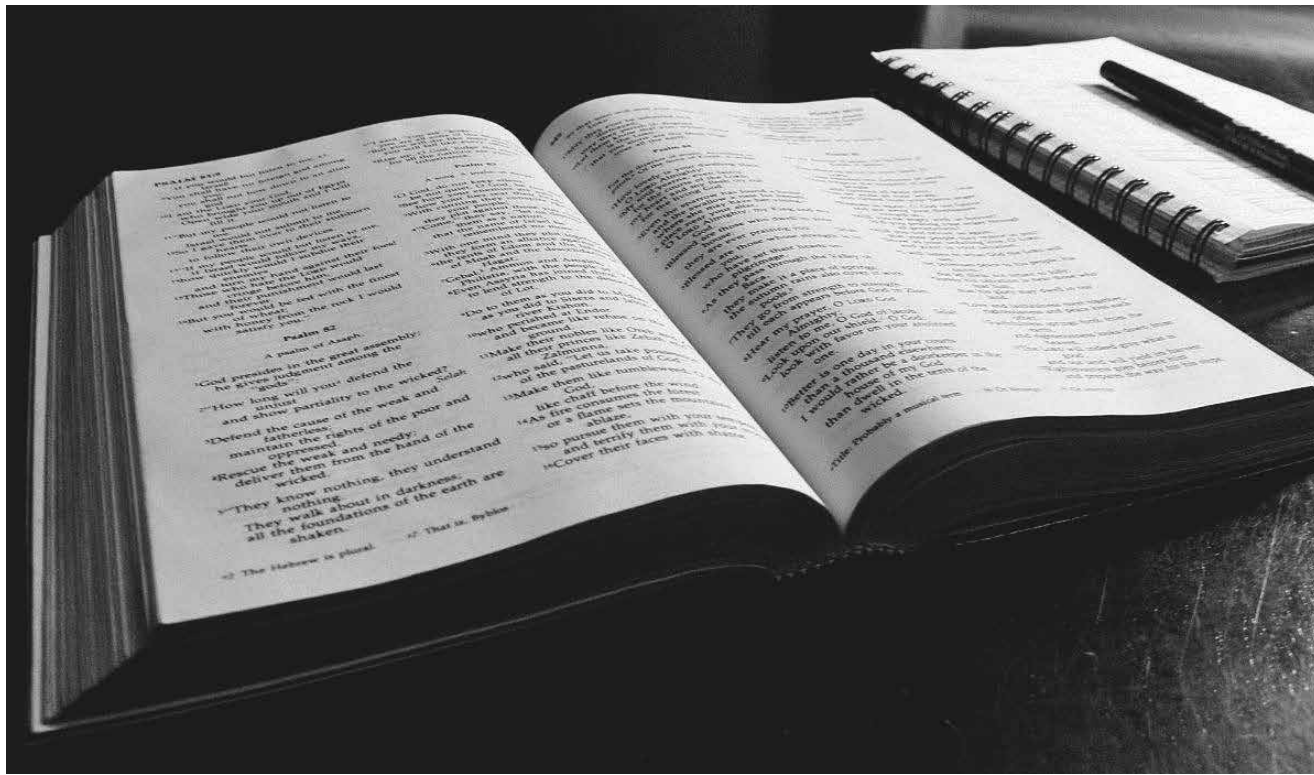
1) **It was the request of the people of God:** “With this Letter, I wish to respond to the many requests I have received from the people of God that the entire Church celebrate, in unity of purpose, a Sunday of the Word of God. It is now common for the Christian community to set aside moments to reflect on the great importance of the word of God for everyday living. The various local Churches have undertaken a wealth of initiatives to make the sacred Scripture more

accessible to believers, to increase their gratitude for so great a gift, and to help them to strive daily to embody and bear witness to its teachings.”

2) **It was the mind of the Second Vatican Council:** “The Second Vatican Council gave great impulse to the rediscovery of the word of God, thanks to its Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, a document that deserves to be read and appropriated ever anew. The Constitution clearly expounds the nature of sacred Scripture, its transmission from generation to generation (Chapter II), its divine inspiration (Chapter III) embracing the Old and New Testaments (Chapters IV and V), and the importance of Scripture for the life of the Church (Chapter VI).”

3) **The performative character of the Word of God:** “To advance this teaching, Pope Benedict XVI convoked an Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2008 on The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, and then issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, whose teaching remains fundamental for our communities. That document emphasizes in particular the performative character of the Word of God, especially in the context of the liturgy, in which its distinctively sacramental character comes to the fore. It is fitting, then that the life of our people be constantly marked by this decisive relationship with the living word that the Lord never tires of speaking to his Bride, that she may grow in love and faithful witness.”

4) It fits into the Christian Unity Octave, which precedes the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25): “This Sunday of the Word of God will thus be a fitting part of that time of the year when we are encouraged to strengthen our bonds with the Jewish people and to pray for Christian unity. This is more than a temporal coincidence: the celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God has ecumenical value, since the Scriptures point out, for those who listen, the path



The Holy Bible. VATICAN MEDIA

to authentic and firm unity.”

Normative Character of the Motu Proprio

At first glance, like most papal pronouncements—especially by Pope Francis—the *motu proprio* might sound like just a pastoral pronouncement. On closer look, however, we realize that the document actually has two parts: the first half containing normative and pastoral guidelines, while the second part dwells more with theological and spiritual considerations. We can briefly enumerate the norms established as follows:

1) **Day of the Year:** “I hereby declare that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God” (n.3).

2) **Manner of Celebrating:** “The various communities will find their own ways to mark this Sunday with a certain solemnity.” However, some details need to be observed: (n.4)

a) **Enthronement of the sacred text:** “It is important, however, that in the Eucharistic celebration the sacred text be enthroned, in order to focus the attention of the

assembly on the normative value of God’s word.”

b) **Highlight the proclamation of the word:** “On this Sunday, it would be particularly appropriate to highlight the proclamation of the word,” and the document specifies how:

(1) **Emphasis in the homily:** “to emphasize in the homily the honor that it is due;”

(2) **Rite of Installation of Lectors:** “Bishops could celebrate the Rite of Installation of Lectors or a similar commissioning of readers, to bring out the importance of the proclamation of God’s word in the liturgy.”

(3) **Formation of Lectors:** “renewed efforts should be made to provide members of the faithful with the training needed to be genuine proclaimers of the word, as is already the practice in the case of acolytes or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.”

Pastoral Guidelines

Aside from the strictly normative provisions, the *motu proprio* also contains pastoral guidelines by way of desiderata:

1) **Make the Bible more accessible:** “The Bible cannot be just the

heritage of some, much less a collection of books for the benefit of a privileged few. It belongs above all to those called to hear its message and to recognize themselves in its words. (...) The Bible is the book of the Lord’s people, who, in listening to it, move from dispersion and division towards unity. The word of God unites believers and makes them one people” (n.4). The document goes down to specific suggestions:

a) “Parish priests can also find ways of giving a Bible, or one of its books, to the entire assembly as a way of showing the importance of learning how to read, appreciate and pray daily with sacred Scripture, especially through the practice of *lectio divina*” (n.3).

b) “Parish priests are primarily responsible for explaining sacred Scripture and helping everyone to understand it. Since it is the people’s book, those called to be ministers of the word must feel an urgent need to make it accessible to their community” (n.5)

2) **Improve homilies:** “The homily, in particular, has a distinctive function, for it possesses “a quasi-sacramental character”

Sunday / 87

Pro Populo Masses

Pastor can delegate the intention

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



Catholics observing physical distancing while participating in a Mass at the Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat in Manila on Dec. 24, 2020. PHOTO BY ROY LAGARDE

Q: In the Ordo, it states that Masses *pro populo* are said on Sundays and holy days by the pastor. Can another priest or visiting priest say the Mass *pro populo* and not the pastor? — M.P., St. Petersburg, Florida

A: The pastor’s obligation to offer Mass and other prayers

for the souls entrusted to him derives from the mission itself as shepherd of souls. Moreover, this obligation is enshrined in canon law. To wit:

“Can. 534 §1. After a pastor has taken possession of his parish, he is obliged to apply a Mass for the people entrusted to him on each Sunday and holy day of obligation

in his diocese. If he is legitimately impeded from this celebration, however, he is to apply it on the same days through another or on other days himself.

“§2. A pastor who has the care of several parishes is bound to apply only one Mass for the entire people entrusted to him on the days mentioned in §1.

“§3. A pastor who has not satisfied the obligation mentioned in §§1 and 2 is to apply as soon as possible as many Masses for the people as he has omitted.”

Therefore, every parish priest is required to offer the Mass *pro populo*. This also applies to parochial administrators and priest moderators in accordance

with canons 540 §1 and 517 §2.

In most cases the Mass *pro populo* should be programmed from the beginning of the year and listed in the bulletin as either “pro populo,” or “for the People of the Parish[es].” This helps avoid assuming other intentions for the Eucharistic celebrations set aside for the *pro populo* Mass.

In many places, the Mass reserved for the *pro populo* intention is the principal parish Mass and is celebrated with some elements of greater solemnity. This is not a strict requirement, however, and a pastor who is scheduled to be away from his parish for a good reason could fulfill his obligation by offering Mass at another location.

The obligation to celebrate the Mass falls primarily on the pastor himself. As such, it is not something that he should habitually delegate to another priest. However, Canon 534 §1 recognizes that if a legitimate reason prevents the pastor from this obligation, he may apply it on the same day through another or on another day himself.

For example, a pastor with more than one church might have to cover for another priest who has fallen ill and be unable to return in time for the *pro populo* Mass. In such a situation he can ask another priest to celebrate the *pro populo* Mass along with its intention.

On other occasions, he may retain the intention but not preside at the Mass. For example, should a newly ordained priest return to celebrate his first solemn Mass at his home parish at the celebration foreseen as *pro populo*, the pastor can concelebrate with the *pro populo* intention even though he does not preside at the Mass.

Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding access of Women to the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte

To the Venerable Brother Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria, S.J.
Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

THE Holy Spirit, the bond of Love between the Father and the Son, builds up and innervates the communion of the entire People of God, bringing forth in it a wealth and variety of gifts and charisms (cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 117). Through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, the members of the Body of Christ receive from the Spirit of the Risen One, in various measures and with a diversity of expressions, those gifts that allow them to offer the necessary contribution to the edification of the Church and to the proclamation of the Gospel to every being.

In this regard, the Apostle Paul distinguishes between gifts of grace—charisms (“charismata”) and services (“diakonai”—“ministeria”) [cf. Rom 12:4ff and 1 Cor 12:12ff]. According to the tradition of the Church the diverse forms that charisms assume when they are publicly recognized and are made available to the community and to its mission in stable form are called ministries.

In some cases a ministry has its origin in a specific sacrament, the Sacred Order: it pertains to the “ordained” ministries, of the bishop, the priest, the deacon. In other cases the ministry is entrusted, with a liturgical act of the bishop, to a person who has received Baptism and Confirmation and in whom specific charisms are recognized, after an appropriate journey of preparation: we then speak of “instituted” ministries. Many other ecclesial services or offices are in fact exercised by many members of the community, for the good of the Church, often for a long period and with great efficacy, without the expectation of a particular rite for the bestowal of the role.

In the course of history, with the changing of ecclesial, social, cultural situations, the exercise of ministries in the Catholic Church has assumed different forms, while the distinction, not only of degree, remains intact between “instituted” (or “lay”) ministries and the “ordained” ministries. The former are particular expressions of the priestly and royal condition of every baptized person (cf. 1 Pt 2:9); the latter are proper to certain members of the People of God who as bishops and priests “receive the mission and capacity to act in the person of Christ the Head” or as deacons “are empowered to serve the People of God in the ministries of the liturgy, the word and charity” (Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Omnium in mentem*, 26 October 2009). To indicate this distinction expressions such as baptismal priesthood and ordained priesthood (or ministerial) are used. In any case it is good to reiterate, with the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council, that they are “interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ” (LG, n. 10). Ecclesial life is nourished by this reciprocal reference and is fostered by the fruitful tension of these two poles of the priesthood, ministerial and baptismal, which despite the distinction are rooted in the one priesthood of Christ.

In line with the Second Vatican Council, the Supreme Pontiff Saint Paul VI wished to review the practices relative to non-ordained ministries in the Latin Church—until then called “minor orders”—adapting them to the needs of the times. This adaptation, however, must not be interpreted as surpassing prior doctrine, but as the implementation of the dynamism that characterizes the nature of the Church, always called with the aid of the Spirit of Truth to respond to the challenges of every era, in obedience to Revelation. The Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Ministeria quaedam* (15 August 1972) configures two offices (duties), that of the Lector and that of the Acolyte, the first



A lay woman reads at Mass in the Casa Santa Marta on February 4, 2020. VATICAN MEDIA

strictly connected to the ministry of the Word, the second to the ministry of the Altar, without excluding that other “offices” may be instituted by the Holy See upon the request of the Episcopal Conferences.

The modification of the forms of exercise of non-ordained ministries, moreover, is not the simple consequence, on the sociological level, of the desire to adapt to the sensibility or to the culture of periods and places, but is determined by the need to allow each local/particular Church, in communion with all the others and having as the centre of unity the Church which is in Rome, to live the liturgical action, service to the poor and the proclamation of the Gospel in fidelity to the mandate of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the duty of the Pastors of the Church to recognize the gifts of each baptized person, also to guide them toward specific ministries, promoting and coordinating them, in order to ensure that they contribute to the good of the communities and to the mission entrusted to all disciples.

The commitment of the lay faithful, who “are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God” (Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 102), cannot and certainly must not exhaust itself in the exercise of non-ordained ministries (cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 102), but one of their best configurations and a more precise reference to the responsibility that arises, for each Christian, from Baptism and from Confirmation, will be able to help the Church rediscover the meaning of the communion that characterizes her and to implement a renewed commitment in the catechesis and the celebration of the faith (Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 102). And it is precisely in this rediscovery that the fruitful synergy born of the reciprocal ordination of ordained priesthood and baptismal priesthood can find a better translation. This reciprocity, from service to the sacrament of the altar, is called to flow back, in the distinction of tasks, in that service to “make of Christ the heart of the world” which is the particular mission of the whole Church. Precisely this unique, although distinct, service in favour of the world, expands the horizons of the ecclesial mission, preventing her from withdrawing into sterile logic aimed above all at claiming spaces of power and helping her to experience herself as a spiritual community that “goes forward together with

humanity and experiences the same earthly lot which the world does” (Paul VI, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 40). In this dynamic one can truly understand the significance of a “Church that goes forth”.

In the horizon of renewal outlined by the Second Vatican Council, one feels ever greater today the urgency to rediscover the co-responsibility of all the baptized in the Church, and particularly the mission of the laity. The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region (6-27 October 2019), in the fifth chapter of the final document indicated the need to think of “new paths for Church ministries”. Not only for the Church of the Amazon, but rather for the entire Church, in the variety of situations, “it is urgent for the Church in the Amazon to promote and confer ministries for men and women... It is the Church of baptized men and women that we must consolidate by promoting ministries and, above all, an awareness of baptismal dignity” (Final Document, n. 95).

In this regard, it is known that the *Motu Proprio Ministeria quaedam* reserves the ministries of Lector and Acolyte to men only and thus as a result establishes can. 230 § 1 of the CIC. However, in recent times and in many ecclesial contexts, it has been observed that dissolving such a reservation could help to better manifest the common baptismal dignity of the members of the People of God. Previously on the occasion of the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (5-26 October 2008) the Synod Fathers hoped “that the ministry of the Lector would also be open to women (cf. *Proposizione n. 17*); and in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), Benedict XVI explained that the exercise of the munus of reader in liturgical celebrations, and particularly the ministry of Lector as such, is a lay ministry in the Latin Rite (cf. n. 58).

For centuries the “venerable tradition of the Church” has considered those that were called “minor orders”—including, precisely, the Lector and the Acolyte—as steps on a path that was to lead to the “major orders” (Subdiaconate, Diaconate, Presbyterate). Being that the Sacrament of Orders is reserved to men only, this was a valid fact for the minor orders as well.

A clearer distinction between the responsibilities of those that

today are called “non-ordained (or lay) ministries” and the “ordained ministries” allows a loosening of the reservation of the former to men only. While, with regard to the ordained ministries, the Church “does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination” (cf. Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, 22 May 1994), for the non-ordained ministries it is possible, and today it seems opportune to surpass this reservation. This reservation had its meaning in a specific context but may be reconsidered in new contexts, however, always having as a criterion fidelity to the mandate of Christ and the will to live and proclaim the Gospel imparted by the Apostles and entrusted to the Church so that it may be religiously heeded, devoutly safeguarded, faithfully proclaimed.

Not without reason, Saint Paul VI refers to a venerabilis tradition, not a veneranda tradition, in the strict sense (namely, it “must” be observed): it can be recognized as valid, and for a long time it has been so; however it does not have a binding character, since the reservation to men only does not pertain to the nature proper to the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. To offer lay people of both genders the opportunity to enter the ministries of Acolyte and Lector, by virtue of their participation in the baptismal priesthood, will increase recognition, also through a liturgical act (institution), of the precious contribution that for a long time many, many lay people, including women, have offered to the life and mission of the Church.

For these reasons, I found it opportune to establish that not only men but also women—in whom, through the discernment of pastors and after an appropriate preparation, the Church recognizes “the steadfast will to faithfully serve God and the Christian people”, as written in the *Motu Proprio Ministeria quaedam*, by virtue of the Sacrament of Baptism and of Confirmation—may be instituted as Lectors and Acolytes.

The choice to confer also to women these offices, which entail stability, public recognition and a mandate on the part of the Bishop, renders more effective in the Church everyone’s participation in the work of evangelization. “This would also allow women to have a real and effective impact on the organization, the most important decisions and the direction of communities, while continuing to do so in a way that

reflects their womanhood” (Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, n. 103). The “baptismal priesthood” and “service to the community” thus represent the two pillars on which the institution of the ministries is founded.

In this way, in addition to responding to what is required for the mission in the present time and to welcome the witness given by many, many women who have attended to and attend to service to the Word and to the Altar, it will appear more evidently — also for those who are oriented toward the ordained ministry—that the ministries of Lector and Acolyte are rooted in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. As such, on the path that leads to diaconal and priestly ordination, those who are instituted as Lectors and Acolytes will better understand they are participants in a ministry shared with other baptized, men and women. Such that the priesthood proper to every faithful (commune sacerdotium) and the priesthood of ordained ministers (sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum) may be seen even more clearly interrelated (cf. LG, n. 10), for the edification of the Church and for the witness to the Gospel.

It will be the responsibility of the Episcopal Conferences to establish appropriate criteria for the discernment and preparation of men and women candidates for the ministries of Lector or Acolyte, or for other ministries that may be deemed to be instituted, according to what has already been provided for in the *Motu Proprio Ministeria quaedam*, subject to the approval of the Holy See and according to the necessities of evangelization in their territory.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments shall provide for the implementation of the aforementioned reform with the amendment of the *Editio typica* of the Pontificale romanum or of the “*De Institutione Lectorum et Acolytorum*”.

In renewing to you the assurance of my prayers, I impart my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing to Your Eminence, which I willingly extend to all the Members and Collaborators of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

From the Vatican, 10 January 2021,
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

FRANCIS

“You have but one teacher and you are all brothers” (Mt 23:8). A trust-based relationship to guide care for the sick

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the XXIX World Day of the Sick 2021

DEAR brothers and sisters,

The celebration of the XXIX World Day of the Sick on 11 February 2021, the liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, is an opportunity to devote special attention to the sick and to those who provide them with assistance and care both in healthcare institutions and within families and communities. We think in particular of those who have suffered, and continue to suffer, the effects of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. To all, and especially to the poor and the marginalized, I express my spiritual closeness and assure them of the Church's loving concern.

1. The theme of this Day is drawn from the Gospel passage in which Jesus criticizes the hypocrisy of those who fail to practice what they preach (cf. Mt 23:1-12). When our faith is reduced to empty words, unconcerned with the lives and needs of others, the creed we profess proves inconsistent with the life we lead. The danger is real. That is why Jesus uses strong language about the peril of falling into self-idolatry. He tells us: “*You have but one teacher and you are all brothers*” (v. 8).

Jesus' criticism of those who “preach but do not practice” (v. 3) is helpful always and everywhere, since none of us is immune to the grave evil of hypocrisy, which prevents us from flourishing as children of the one Father, called to live universal fraternity.

Before the needs of our brothers and sisters, Jesus asks us to respond in a way completely contrary to such hypocrisy. He asks us to stop and listen, to establish a direct and personal relationship with others, to feel empathy and compassion, and to let their suffering become our own as we seek to serve them (cf. Lk 10:30-35).

2. The experience of sickness makes us realize our own vulnerability and our innate need of others. It makes us feel all the more clearly that we are creatures dependent on God. When we are ill, fear and even bewilderment can grip our minds and hearts; we find ourselves powerless, since our health does not depend on our abilities or life's incessant worries (cf. Mt 6:27).

Sickness raises the question of life's meaning, which we bring before God in faith. In seeking a new and deeper direction in our lives, we may not find an immediate answer. Nor are our relatives and friends always able to help us in this

demanding quest.

The biblical figure of Job is emblematic in this regard. Job's wife and friends do not accompany him in his misfortune; instead, they blame him and only aggravate his solitude and distress. Job feels forlorn and misunderstood. Yet for all his extreme frailty, he rejects hypocrisy and chooses the path of honesty towards God and others. He cries out to God so insistently that God finally answers him and allows him to glimpse a new horizon. He confirms that Job's suffering is not a punishment or a state of separation from God, much less as sign of God's indifference. Job's heart, wounded and healed, then makes this vibrant and touching confession to the Lord: “I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you” (42:5).

3. Sickness always has more than one face: it has the face of all the sick, but also those who feel ignored, excluded and prey to social injustices that deny their fundamental rights (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 22). The current pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in our healthcare systems and exposed inefficiencies in the care of the sick. Elderly, weak and vulnerable people are not always granted access to care, or in an equitable manner. This is the result of political decisions, resource management and greater or lesser commitment on the part of those holding positions of responsibility. Investing resources in the care and assistance of the sick is a priority linked to the fundamental principle that health is a primary common good. Yet the pandemic has also highlighted the dedication and generosity of healthcare personnel, volunteers, support staff, priests, men and women religious, all of whom have helped, treated, comforted and served so many of the sick and their families with professionalism, self-giving, responsibility and love of neighbor. A silent multitude of men and women, they chose not to look the other way but to share the suffering of patients, whom they saw as neighbors and members of our one human family.

Such closeness is a precious balm that provides support and consolation to the sick in their suffering. As Christians, we experience that closeness as a sign of the love of Jesus Christ, the *Good Samaritan*, who draws near with compassion to every man and woman wounded by sin. United to Christ by



Pope Francis blesses a sick person in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 26 Nov. 2017. VATICAN MEDIA

the working of the Holy Spirit, we are called to be merciful like the Father and to love in particular our frail, infirm and suffering brothers and sisters (cf. Jn 13:34-35). We experience this closeness not only as individuals but also as a community. Indeed, fraternal love in Christ generates a community of healing, a community that leaves no one behind, a community that is inclusive and welcoming, especially to those most in need.

Here I wish to mention the importance of fraternal solidarity, which is expressed concretely in service and can take a variety of forms, all directed at supporting our neighbors. “Serving means caring ... for the vulnerable of our families, our society, our people” (*Homily in Havana*, 20 September 2015). In this outreach, all are “called to set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable... Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, ‘suffers’ that closeness and tries to help them. Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people” (*ibid.*).

4. If a therapy is to be effective,

it must have a relational aspect, for this enables a holistic approach to the patient. Emphasizing this aspect can help doctors, nurses, professionals and volunteers to feel responsible for accompanying patients on a path of healing grounded in a trusting interpersonal relationship (cf. *New Charter for Health Care Workers* [2016], 4). This creates a covenant between those in need of care and those who provide that care, a covenant based on mutual trust and respect, openness and availability. This will help to overcome defensive attitudes, respect the dignity of the sick, safeguard the professionalism of healthcare workers and foster a good relationship with the families of patients.

Such a relationship with the sick can find an unfailing source of motivation and strength in the *charity of Christ*, as shown by the witness of those men and women who down the millennia have grown in holiness through service to the infirm. For the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is the source of the love capable of giving full meaning to the experience of patients and caregivers alike. The Gospel frequently makes this

clear by showing that Jesus heals not by magic but as the result of an *encounter*, an *interpersonal relationship*, in which God's gift finds a response in the faith of those who accept it. As Jesus often repeats: “Your faith has saved you”.

5. Dear brothers and sisters, the commandment of love that Jesus left to his disciples is also kept in our relationship with the sick. A society is all the more human to the degree that it cares effectively for its most frail and suffering members, in a spirit of fraternal love. Let us strive to achieve this goal, so that no one will feel alone, excluded or abandoned.

To Mary, Mother of Mercy and Health of the Infirm, I entrust the sick, healthcare workers and all those who generously assist our suffering brothers and sisters. From the Grotto of Lourdes and her many other shrines throughout the world, may she sustain our faith and hope, and help us care for one another with fraternal love. To each and all, I cordially impart my blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 20 December 2020,
Fourth Sunday of Advent

FRANCISCUS

Pastoral statement on potential Covid-19 vaccines in the Philippines



STEVEN CORNFELD/UNSPASH

AFTER almost a year of suffering the ravages of the pandemic—both in terms of lost lives and a devastated economy – it is only right that we thank God for the news that scientists have developed vaccines to immunize persons against COVID-19. We therefore support the efforts of our national government to procure and to deploy these vaccines in our country, and we thank the private organizations who have come forward to help acquire them. We urge our government and the private organizations who have helped fund the procurement of

the COVID-19 vaccines to commit themselves to a single vaccine distribution plan that prioritizes medical frontliners and those who are most at risk for COVID-19. It would be a moral tragedy if young, healthy company employees who are at low risk for the disease are immunized before our doctors, nurses, and other frontliners, and before our senior citizens who are at higher risk for illness.

We especially commend our national government for considering the poor in our national vaccination program. The poor are beloved of

the Lord. They should be especially protected because their poverty makes them vulnerable to infection and severe disease. The COVID-19 vaccines will only be able to end the pandemic in our country if enough Filipinos are vaccinated so we urge all of our people to be immunized when the vaccines arrive in the Philippines. Nonetheless, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience”

(§1782). We therefore recognize that each individual person should be left free to decide to choose to be vaccinated or not according to his or her conscience with full awareness of the obligation to protect oneself from being an instrument of contagion and the farther spread of the virus.

As pastors, we have to call attention to one ethical concern. We have learned that some of the COVID-19 vaccines were manufactured using cells obtained from the remains of an aborted female fetus who was killed in 1973. The perennial teaching of the Church must be repeated: Deliberately procuring abortion, even if it is for the purpose of obtaining material for vaccines, is morally unacceptable. The end does not justify the means; otherwise, the most inhuman and inhumane acts would be permissible in order to attain supposedly “worthwhile” ends.

In our October 17, 2020, CBCP guidelines, we said that “if there are several available vaccines we urge the national government to prioritize vaccines that were developed without the use of the morally controversial cell lines derived from the remains of an aborted child.”

At the same time the Vatican has recently explained, “when ethically irreproachable Covid-19 vaccines are not available (e.g. in countries where vaccines without ethical problems are not made available to physicians and patients, or where their distribution is more difficult

due to special storage and transport conditions, or when various types of vaccines are distributed in the same country but health authorities do not allow citizens to choose the vaccine with which to be inoculated) it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.”

We thank our scientists who have once more applied their expertise to the welfare of human beings and to their protection from the dreaded scourge of disease. We know that the study and work that precede the production of a vaccine are arduous. We commend our brothers and sisters who have perished to the love of God, and we raise a common prayer of thanksgiving for our health workers and other front liners who served most gallantly in these terrible months that have gone by.

May St. Joseph, who saved the Child Jesus and his Mother, from the deadly designs of a king continue to protect us. May Mary, Health of the Sick and Help of Christians, pray for us.

+RICARDO L. BACCAY, D.D.
Chairman, Office on Bioethics
January 8, 2021

Endorsed:

+ROMULO G. VALLES, D.D.
Archbishop of Davao
CBCP President

Pastoral letter of Western Visayas bishops on the Tumandok killings

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties... especially of those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ,” (Gaudium et Spes, #1).

Life is sacred! “YOU SHALL NOT KILL!” (Ex. 20:13)

WE, the bishops of Western Visayas, share the griefs and anxieties of our brothers and sisters of the TUMANDOK tribe in Tapaz, Capiz. We grieve with the families of the nine TUMANDOK tribespeople who were killed. We share the sufferings of those arrested and of their families. We empathize with the FEAR and INSECURITIES of those displaced by the ATROCITIES. And WE CONDEMN in the strongest possible term, all the KILLINGS and especially, the KILLINGS of our BROTHERS—the TUMANDOKS.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reaches that, “God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end” (CCC #2258).

The voices of the blood (Gen. 4:10) of the many, of those 27,000 victims of the senseless war against illegal drugs, cry to God for justice. We lament that little or nothing at all has been done to do justice. Recently, from Negros Island, we are hearing the voices of the blood of those tagged as members or supporters of the Communist Party of the Philippines—New People’s Army (CPP-NPA). Now, we are hearing it from the island of Panay. Compelling a brother Bishop to say that the killings were a “continuation” of the “mass killings and arrests” of other activists in the central Philippines in recent months.”

In the early morning of December 30, 2020, a joint operation of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police VI to serve 28 Search Warrants under the Synchronized Enhanced Management of Police Operation

(SEMPO) resulted to the death of nine (9) people and the arrest of 17 members and leaders of the Tumandok tribes of Tapaz, Capiz and Calinog, Iloilo.

Those killed and arrested included former or current village officials and leaders of the group Tumandok nga Mangunguma nga Nagapangapin sang Duta kag Kabuhi (TUMANDUK).

TUMANDUK, an alliance of 17 indigenous peoples’ (IP) communities in Tapaz and Jamindan towns in Capiz and Calinog in Iloilo province, strongly opposes the construction of the Jalaur Mega Dam. The leaders believe that because of their strong opposition to the project, they became victims of red-tagging, being accused as members or supporters of the CPP-NPA.

“NANLABAN”. They fought it out, that’s why they were killed, the police claimed.

But the families counterclaimed, “The victims did not resist arrest. The firearms and explosives were planted. The victims were murdered.”

The atrocities created a climate of FEAR and UNCERTAINTIES among the residents of the Tumandok communities. Fear forced many to leave their communities and migrate to more secure places in the Poblacion or in the houses of relatives. Fear also forced many to surrender to authorities to clear their names or admit that they were former members and supporters of the CPP-NPA.

Amidst the plight of our Tumandok brothers

and sisters, we, the bishops of Western Visayas, raise our prophetic voice as WE DEMAND:

1. A thorough investigation by an independent body to ascertain what really happened last December 30, 2020;

2. That once again we—government, the church, business community—listen to the legitimate cries of the Tumandoks against the construction of the Jalaur Mega Dam;

3. That the militarization of the IP communities should stop immediately so that our brothers and sisters, the Tumandoks, can go home and live in peace again;

4. That the PNP and the AFP follow conscientiously the ethical standards in the rules of engagement in their police or military operations;

5. That police officers be required to use body cameras in all police operations to protect the police against false accusations. This will also protect the civilians from the use of violence or abuse of power such as planting of evidence, illegal arrest and even killings.

We call on everyone to be highly vigilant in defending the sacredness of life and in respecting and protecting the rights of ALL.

We also encourage the ILONGGO community to reach out in compassion to our bereaved and displaced TUMANDOK brothers and sisters.

We urge everyone to DISCERN and PRAY for the will of God amidst all the killings and violations of human rights and to ACT guided

by the principles of NONVIOLENT ACTION.

Lastly, let us all together contribute whatever we can to: STOP THE KILLINGS; RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE TO LIVE IN PEACE; and STOP THE MILITARIZATION OF THE IP COMMUNITIES!

All these we lip up to God through the intercession of NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA CANDELARIA, the patroness of Western Visayas, as we mandate that this letter be read in all the masses in all the Churches of Western Visayas on January 24, 2021.

Signed: January 15, 2021

METROPOLITAN SEE OF CAPIZ:

H.E. Jose Cardinal Advincula, Archbishop of Capiz

Most Rev. Jose Corazon Tala-oc, Bishop of Kalibo

Most Rev. Narciso Abellana, Bishop of Romblon

METROPOLITAN SEE OF JARO:

Most Rev. Jose Lazo, Archbishop of Jaro

Most Rev. Marvyn Maceda, Bishop of San Jose de Antique

Most Rev. Patricio Buzon, Bishop of Bacolod

Most Rev. Gerardo Alminaza, Bishop of San Carlos

Most Rev. Louie Galbines, Bishop of Kabankalan

Statement of the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace on Charter change



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES
NASSA/Caritas Philippines

THE recent proposals in both houses of congress to amend the 1987 Philippine Constitution, in the guise of “improving our economic openness to the world” will not benefit the nation.

Converting congress into a constitutional assembly at this time of a pandemic and when the terms of public office are about to end, is to our mind, not only malicious but altogether dangerous. The Philippine politics has been so focused on personalities, on who holds power, machinery and resources – that giving them blanket authority to amend the constitution is like providing explicit permission to commit murder.

One of the most vital elements for constitutional reform is the direct participation of the citizens in the process, which at this point is a very remote possibility mainly due to COVID-19 pandemic. More importantly, decent and coherent public discourse about charter change is also nonviable at this time considering that at least 75% of Filipinos have little or almost no knowledge of the Philippine Constitution.

Thus we, the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace, echo the wisdom of the January 2018 CBCP Pastoral Letter on Charter Change: *“If the Constitution is to be revised at all, the process should lead to a greater defense and promotion of the moral values of human dignity and human rights, integrity and truth, participation and solidarity, and the common good.”* (CBCP Pastoral Guidelines for Discerning the Moral Dimension of the Present-Day Moves for Charter Change)

We also take note of the insight provided by Pope Francis’ Fratelli Tutti: *“Public discussion, if it truly makes room for everyone and does not manipulate or conceal information, is a constant stimulus to a better grasp of the truth, or at least its more effective expression.”* (203)

Therefore, we again say these:

Genuine constitutional reform will only come from the collective participation, free engagement and ownership of the process of the Filipino people in politics – not from an exercise of power rooted in fear, distrust and greed.

Now is not the time for charter change. Issues on COVID-19 pandemic response, disaster financing and management, climate emergency, unemployment, challenges to the current educational system, false red-tagging and execution of farmers, indigenous peoples’ communities and environmental and human rights defenders, questionable automated elections, inefficient justice system, and many more need better and urgent attention from the whole of our government. Changes in the economic provisions of the constitution will

not improve over-night our poverty status – better delivery of social services will. Real accountability and transparency across the board all public-private transactions will.

The present unstable governance is very susceptible to corruption of the mind. Therefore, the charter change can be used as a ploy for NO-EL (no election), term-extension, or a revolutionary government – all of which are detrimental to people welfare.

Hence, we urge our lay faithful, the children and the youth, parents, community leaders and every Filipino to:

Be vigilant. Lobby our politicians to stop charter change at this time.

Discuss politics at home. We have to form educated and brave voters, and politicians. This is the only way we can change the political environment in the Philippines.

Use social media. Use technology now to disseminate accurate information, uplifting stories, and insightful posts.

Support good politicians. We need them to stay longer in public offices. Be their support systems.

Pray for our leaders. Let us seek God’s help to provide our leaders with wisdom, strength and compassion for others.

Let the common good be the aim of our politicians and let the common good be the basis of our choice for our next set of public officials, then truly, “love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss” (Ps 85:11) in our land. (Seek the Common Good, CBCP Pastoral Letter, January 2019)

Signed this 26th day of January, 2021:

+ **JOSE COLIN M. BAGAFORO, DD**
Chairman, Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace
Bishop, Diocese of Kidapawan

+ **GERARDO ALMINAZA, DD**
Vice Chairman
Bishop, Diocese of San Carlos

+ **CERILLO ALLAN CASICAS, DD**
Secretary
Bishop, Diocese of Marbel

+ **JOHN F. DU, DD**
Treasurer
Archbishop, Archdiocese of Palo

+ **HONESTO ONGTIOCO, DD**
Treasurer
Bishop, Diocese of Cubao

+ **GUILLERMO AFABLE, DD**
Member
Bishop, Diocese of Digos

+ **COSME ALMEDILLA**
Member
Bishop, Diocese of Butuan

FR. ANTONIO E. LABIAO, Jr.
Executive Secretary, NASSA/Caritas Philippines
Vicar General, Diocese of Novaliches

Official Statement on the untimely death of our brother Rev. Fr. Rene B. Regalado (Diocese of Malaybalay)



Fr. Rene Regalado of the Diocese of Malaybalay. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

THE Diocese of Malaybalay with its Clergy, Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful especially the Regalado Family in San Jose Parish, Sinayawan, Valencia City are deeply wounded and saddened with the news of the untimely passing to eternal life of one its clergy, REV. FR. RENE B. REGALADO.

We express our deepest sympathy to his immediate family and supplicate to the Lord of Life that justice will be served to the perpetrators of this heinous crime without compromising the Lord’s gift of mercy.

Initial information gathered revealed that at around 7:30 in the evening of January 24, 2021, gunshots were heard at the road near the Malaybalay Carmel Monastery in Pal-ing, Patpat, Malaybalay City which prompted the

priest at the Monastery to call for police assistance to verify what had happened. Fr. Regalado’s car indicated that he was going back to the St. John XXIII College Seminary where he was staying. He was in the city in the afternoon, meeting someone whom he did not indicate when he informed his companions at the seminary before he left at around one o’clock in the afternoon. Between 8:30 - 9:00 in the evening, the 1st responders from the Malaybalay City Police Force arrived at the scene and conducted an initial investigation. At around 12:00 midnight, the Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) arrived. At around 1:10 in the morning of January 25, 2021, the body of Fr. Regalado was picked up by Villanueva Funeral Homes for attention to avoid decomposition and to be ready for the needed autopsy. The SOCO Regional Office will conduct the autopsy today. Meanwhile, the car that was used by Fr. Regalado was brought to the Philippine National Police Headquarters in Malaybalay City for further investigation, gathering and securing of evidence. The official investigation to the case is on-going. We are waiting for further official findings and details.

After the needed autopsy, Fr. Regalado will be laid at the San Isidro Labrador Cathedral, Malaybalay City for the wake before he will be buried at the Malaybalay Catholic Cemetery on the date to be decided both by the Diocese of Malaybalay and his immediate family. For those who want to visit him and his family at the Cathedral as soon as the wake is ready, we request that the pandemic protocols be

strictly observed.

Fr. Rene Regalado was ordained to the Priesthood on October 18, 2007 with the laying on of hands of the Most Rev. Honesto Ch. Pacana, S.J, D.D., now our bishop emeritus. He finished his baccalaureate degree in Theology at San Isidro College and his pre-college and college seminary formation at St. John XXIII Pre-College and College Seminaries in Malaybalay City. He finished his theological studies at the St. John Mary Vianney Theological Seminary in Camaman-an, Cagayan de Oro City.

We request everyone to offer prayers for the repose of the soul of Fr. Rene B. Regalado, for the consolation of his immediate family and the Clergy, for the immediate results of the investigation and that justice will be served to whom it is due.

We put our full trust on the Divine Mercy, the loving intercessions of Our Lady of Mercy and that of our patron, San Isidro Labrador. May the soul of Fr. Rene rest in peace and that God’s peace will continue to be with us.

Prepared by:

REV. FR. VIRGILIO H. DELFIN
Official Spokesperson
Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul

January 25, 2021

Approved by:

REV. MSGR. NOEL P. PEDREGOSA, STL
Diocesan Administrator

Hear the cry of the people

THE Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas stands in opposition to the current moves in both houses of Congress to change the constitution.

Clearly, this is not the opportune time to deal with Cha-cha! We are in the midst of a pandemic with millions of our countrymen suffering from lack of food, shelter, job, education and a decent and comprehensive health care system. This is our priority! The whole exercise posed by the resolutions advocating for charter change is a sheer waste of our precious time, energy, effort and money! With the 2022 elections just about a year and a half away, who will not suspect other underlying political motivations?

We cry out in a loud and categorical manner that we oppose these moves! We urge our countrymen to be Vigilant, Pray, Discern and Speak Out!

We call on our lawmakers: address the needs of the people now. They need your attention.

Hear the cry of the people!

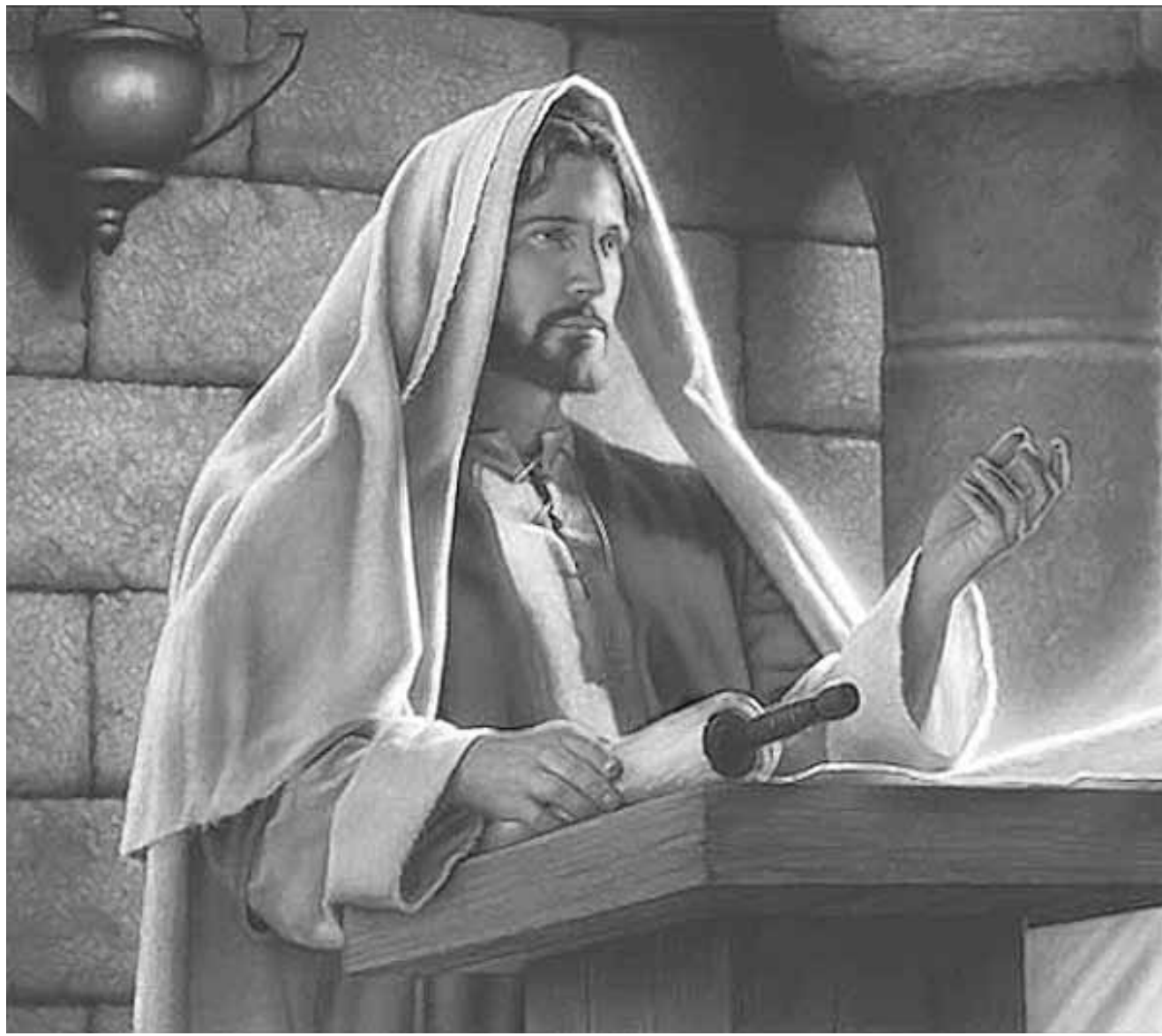
For the LAIKO Board of Directors,

ROUQUEL A. PONTE
President
18 January 2021

Jesus, the prophet powerful in words and deeds

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (Matt 1:21-28)
January 31, 2021

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB



FOR centuries, the Jews had been waiting for “the prophet like Moses” who would be for them what the great leader and legislator had been for the Israelites during and after their liberation from Egypt. Nobody knew, however, what that “prophet like Moses” would do.

Jesus Christ was the one sent by God the Father to fulfill the expectation of the Chosen people and far beyond. When he began his public ministry, it was not easy for the people to see in him the fulfillment of the prophecy/promise uttered by Moses some twelve centuries earlier, for their views were too much conditioned by their political and social situations obtaining at that time. Their concerns and expectations were still temporal (limited to earthly hardships), and nationalistic (limited to the Israelite nation).

Jesus had to crack that mold and bring his own people to realize that there is a harsher form of servitude than that imposed by the Roman power—the servitude/enslavement imposed by the Devil not only on the Jews but also on all mankind.

His behavior and message

contained in today’s Gospel passage mark only the beginning of the revelation of his identity and mission. Everything in what he said and did left his audience wondering. . . . Jesus spoke with all the authority that divine wisdom and truth possess. He was not one of the many interpreters of the law, nor a “commentator” like so many teachers who could be found throughout Palestine. He was showing himself to be a “Master,” actually “The Master,” “The Teacher,” par excellence.

Authority and majesty radiated from all over Jesus’ person. In him was the moral power of the Holy One, who commanded respect even of the devil. And with good reason. For the first time in human history, Satan was afraid of man – of that Man.

Things had been different up to that moment. Men had been living in continuous dread of “evil spirits.” Not a few had become their victims, “possessed” and tortured by them in frightful ways. Out of fear, entire nations had tried to keep demons quiet through sacrificial offerings . . . the perversion of idolatry that had sadly marked the history of mankind.

Jesus’ behavior in today’s Gospel episode shows that he is a LIBERATOR greater than Moses, for he sets people free not from the enslavement to an earthly ruler, but from the tyranny of the EVIL ONE. He has come to wage a war of liberation against the devil and his allies. With Jesus, fear of Satan and compromise with him are over. He comes to proclaim that the Reign of God is at hand and that the reign of Satan is gone.

Today’s account of the liberation of the possessed man spells out who is going to be the winner in this most “unconventional war.” Powerful in his words, Jesus is also powerful in his deeds, unlike the people of his time; indeed, unlike the people of all time, unlike all of us. He is braver and more powerful than any simple man can be, for the saving power of God is at work in his words and in his actions.

As followers of Jesus, we share in his prophetic and liberating mission. We also share in his strength if we cling to him in our struggle against Satan. Knowing who will be the winner, shall we still wonder on whose side to stand and fight?

Healings and zeal unlimited

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (Matt 1:29-39)
February 7, 2021

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

ONE does not need to be pessimistic to conclude that there is so much suffering in the world. It is a reality as old as mankind itself; a reality as varied as the gradations of gray We are afflicted by moral, emotional, spiritual, and physical suffering All these forms of suffering make life miserable—a veritable “Way of the Cross”! Job had all the reasons to complain. (See today’s First Reading.)

Of all types of suffering, the most striking is usually the physical one. It is always a pitiful sight to see cripples, lepers, persons devoured by cancer, people who are blind, maimed, or immobilized for life on their beds or mats In spite of all the progress of modern medicine, all those struck by sickness still experience a feeling of helplessness and humiliation. The many forms of suffering are still with us, and for all we know, they are here to stay, in ever-renewed and baffling forms

When he came to share our human condition, Jesus accepted suffering as a natural consequence of the Incarnation and thereby he showed that he was a human being through and through. But he was “a man with a mission”—the mission to redeem and save every human being from all that degrades, oppresses and disfigures him or her. That was why, part of his mission was to relieve as many as he could from any suffering, and especially the one inflicted

by demonic possessions. Jesus knew that the ultimate cause of all suffering was the devil. That was why, he cast out devils as an integral part of his healing and saving mission.

But suffering is still with us, even after the coming of Jesus, as a perpetual reminder of the frailty of the human condition in the world. It is also a sign that the Reign of God has not yet come in its fullness. It is only in the New Jerusalem that “there shall be no more death or mourning, crying or pain . . . (Rv 21:4).

The healings performed by Jesus are signs that the Reign of God has already been inaugurated and that the salvation that Jesus proclaims will surely come in its fullness when God’s Kingdom reaches its completion.

As Christians, we are not only people who have been mercifully healed by Jesus. We are also sharers in his mission as “the healer” of humankind. As such, we, too, are called to show concern for the ailments afflicting mankind, and to do our best to reduce them. It is also our mission to cast out the devil from our own lives and the lives of others. This commitment of ours will be one of the most effective proclamations of the Good News. It will be one of the clear signs that the Kingdom of God is ever more making inroads in this pain-ridden world of ours.

Jesus, the leprosy buster

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (Matt 1:40-45)
Pro-life Sunday, February 14, 2021

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB



AIDS is the terror of so many people these days. Those affected by it are often avoided and condemned to isolation. This rejection by society makes the suffering of the AIDS victims even bitter. And one can only wish that such a terrible illness never existed

In the time of Jesus, leprosy was one of the most dreaded misfortunes that could befall a person; it was the AIDS of those days! While other types of patients were pitied and attended to, lepers were avoided even by their own relatives. They were forbidden to approach a healthy person. If they ever tried to do so, they were chased away with stones They had to live in caves and ravines, away from ordinary human settlements, cut off from any form of social life. (See today’s First Reading.)

Leprosy meant hell already in this life. A person in an advanced stage of leprosy was a terrible sight. People turned away their sight from them in horror.

Jesus did not follow the prevailing attitude toward lepers. He wanted everyone to have life, and life to the full. (See Jn 10:10.) He had come in a special manner for the sick and the outcast, and he remained faithful to his mission. Even when the most outcast of all—the lepers—approached him, he did not back off in horror. Not only did he welcome them, but even “stretched out his hand and touched them.” (See today’s Gospel

passage.) The merciful love that Jesus felt for the man featured in today’s Gospel passage was stronger than the horror which the purulent limbs most likely aroused in him as a man. Jesus’ power, pity, and love had their day. Thanks to them, a man was cured. A man was saved. And he and all the others gave praise to God.

Leprosy is no longer so widespread and dreaded in our time. Modern medicine has done a lot to curb and cure it. But another type of leprosy—the spiritual leprosy called sin—is still with us. It affects not only a few but all humans. It affects all of us. Its effects in us are even more destructive than leprosy or AIDS.

Surprisingly—and sadly so—many seem to be unaware of its devastating effects. Others simply deny the existence of sin or call it by other “sanitized” names. Pope Pius XII lamented that one of the tragedies of our times was the loss of the “sense of sin.” But ignoring or denying it does not prevent its spread or its destructive effects. If anything, it makes things worse Such is the “strategy” of the devil!

Who will save us from such a plague? No progress in science or technology can offer the cure. Only Jesus can. We, the spiritual lepers of our time, have only one hope: JESUS. The only cure is his merciful LOVE and his GRACE. Our humble prayer is the one of today’s Gospel: “Lord if you will to do so, you can cure me!” (Mk 1:40)

Can we create a society that accepts everyone, including social outcasts?

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (Matt 1:40-45)
Pro-life Sunday, February 14, 2021

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

IT MAY BE unkind to say it, but in our unkind contemporary society, probably no one is more unfortunate in the eyes of many people than a person with the Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). One may steal billions from the government, have more than one wife and make erroneous decisions that affect the life of our people; but one can still be acceptable and even perceive oneself as respectable. To be known as a person with AIDS, however, is to invite ridicule and ostracism. It is to be banned from one’s social circle and suffer loneliness; it is to die before one goes to the grave. No wonder that save for a few, those who have AIDS keep their misfortune to themselves. But how would AIDS victims feel should the government legislate, for

instance, that those who contracted AIDS are to wear distinctive clothing, identify themselves whenever other people are in their vicinity, and be confined in an island between Jolo and Palawan?

One may not be inclined to believe it, but a lot almost similar to this befell on one who has leprosy in the Jewish society at the time of Jesus. (We may assume that in this particular case, the man had Hansen’s disease, though one should bear in mind that the biblical term covers any repulsive scaly skin disease, like psoriasis and seborrheic dermatitis.) As the first reading and the Gospel today indicate, the leper had an appearance that easily distinguished him from others, and gave him a bad identity: his garment was rent, his head bare, and his

beard muffled (Lev 13:45a). He was ostracized, and unable to talk with others who were unlike him. He had to shout from a distance, “Unclean, unclean!” (Lev 13:45b), as a warning for people not to approach him. Wretched and ritually unclean as he was (Lev 13:46a), he could not participate in religious activities. He lived as an expellee from the normal community (Lev 13:46b; Num 5:2). Of course, all these stipulations served to protect the community, and considering that medicine was primitive, they were justifiable. Still, these could not hide the pain which the victims of Hansen’s disease felt. Indeed, they suffered not only physically, even as their bodies rotted away. Even more painful for them was their

Society / B7

Discovering human dignity



This undated photo shows children behind bars. PHOTO COURTESY OF PREDA FOUNDATION

WHEN I see the newly arrived children—all victims of human right violations and sexual abuse— healing and recovering in our Preda Foundation home and striving to be “good,” to be a “better person”, somehow thinking they are “bad,” I and the Preda staff continuously tell them in Filipino that: “You are good children and youth. You have done no wrong, you are innocent victims of bad people who trafficked and abused you.”

It takes a long while for them to understand this. Then, the day arrives when they have had their fifth or sixth session of Emotional Release Therapy. That is where they dramatically confront their abusers in the padded therapy room and fight back at their rapist. They shout his name, cry and scream at him and pound the cushions as if beating him. They are tearing free from the fear and subjugation they endured. In time, they have a new self-understanding. It is an emotional resurrection, the greatest moment of liberation in their lifetime.

They come to realize that they are good persons and have been exploited and abused. Sandra, a 13-year-old, who was repeatedly raped and beaten by her biological father, told how she felt in a group session after her therapy, “I feel free from them, I can live on my own, I see now what is true, I have my dignity”.

The children have broken free from the culture of servility and domination and being downtrodden, and discovered the most important of all. They discovered they have that vital and all-important inherent value

of all humanity— human dignity. They have been brainwashed and told all their lives in the slums, living in poverty, without proper education, that they are of little worth, of no value and are better out earning money with their bodies. The younger ones are abused and threatened to tell no one of the sexual abuse. They are told that they did a bad thing and are made to feel guilty and dirty and are wrongly made ashamed of themselves. But from open emotional expression comes freedom and a sense of self-confidence and self-worth and empowerment from knowing that they have dignity and that their dignity has imbued them with inalienable rights.

Human dignity is the greatest value in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It was neglected, ignored and lost for thousands of years. In fact, the word itself was lost until recent history. The idea, concept or belief in human dignity as an ‘inherent or unearned worth of humans’ was not even used in any official or government document, researchers say, until it appeared by chance in the Mexican Constitution of 1917. Then, it was a vague reference to human value. The word only appeared in 1948 when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified by the United Nations. In the introduction, the word is used twice to justify why humans have inalienable rights. That humans have these rights is an idea, a concept, based on the belief that the human species has an ‘inherent or unearned worth of humans’ above all other creatures and species on the planet.

Until the Universal Declaration of Human Rights came in to force in the membership nations that made up the United Nations, many countries without a fair and human rights-based legal system frequently treated people as disposable items by those in power and authority. That authority was absolute, unquestionable, and every person was at its mercy without respect or recourse.

The abominations, atrocities and genocide of World War II gave rise to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as humanity realized that without the recognition of the dignity of the human person, and their rights arising from it enforced in law and practice, they didn’t have a chance to survive the rise of fascist authoritarian regimes.

The principles and the rights laid out by the Declaration has been universally accepted and recognized by most nations, on paper at least. Many regimes ignore the rights and dignity of their citizens that must be treated with respect, equality, and human value as enshrined in the Declaration and to be enforced and implemented by Rule of Law.

There is international action, condemnation and protest when the violations of human rights and human dignity are violated. Protests, demonstrations, marches, social media campaigns raise their voice to denounce the violations although much more has to be done.

The imposition of UN sanctions and the deployment of peace-keeping troops and the indictments of the International Criminal

Court of Justice are some ways the world community can bring an erring regime to accountability and yet the massacres, child sexual abuse, violations and trampling on human dignity and rights continue unabated. Just as corrupt politicians, criminal gangs, drug cartel leaders and mafia bosses are the killers and trampling of human rights, so too are the many individuals who abuse children and their enablers and protectors. It is only in our generation in the last twenty years that there has been an outcry and movement to condemn child sexual abuse and human trafficking and enact strict laws to bring abusers to account and to jail. Tolerance, apathy, indifference, secret approval of child abuse was the custom and in many places it still is. In the Philippines, life sentences are frequently handed down to child sex abusers and human traffickers. The strict laws, driven through congress by civil society, are most important in doing justice for the victims of these heinous crimes against children.

Let us not forget where human dignity, respect for human rights of children and women, were first announced and taught. It was by that inspired man, the prophetic Jesus of Nazareth, who constantly championed the rights of children and declared the child as the most important in his planned society of justice, equality, dignity and peace. To accept and respect the child was to accept him. That is a strong endorsement of human dignity of the most vulnerable in society.*

Sunday / B2

(Evangelii Gaudium, 142). (...) . Consequently, sufficient time must be devoted to the preparation of the homily. A commentary on the sacred readings cannot be improvised. Those of us who are preachers should not give long, pedantic homilies or wander off into unrelated topics. When we take time to pray and meditate on the sacred text, we can speak from the heart and thus reach the hearts of those who hear us, conveying what is essential and capable of bearing fruit” (n.5)

3) *Role of catechists:* “Catechists, too, in their ministry of helping people to grow in their faith, ought

to feel an urgent need for personal renewal through familiarity with, and study of, the sacred Scriptures. This will help them foster in their hearers a true dialogue with the word of God” (5).

Theological Conclusions

The first half of the document concludes with a series of theologico-pastoral considerations, which one may still consider as guidelines for pastoral action:

1) *Unbreakable bond between Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist:* Referring to the Gospel account of the encounter of the disciples from Emmaus with the Risen

Christ on Easter Sunday, the Holy Father points out: “The journey that the Risen Lord makes with the disciples of Emmaus ended with a meal. (...) They sit down at table, and Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and offers it to them. At that moment, their eyes are opened, and they recognize him (cf. v. 31). This scene clearly demonstrates the unbreakable bond between sacred Scripture and the Eucharist. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, ‘the Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she has venerated the Lord’s body, in that she never ceases, above all

in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the word of God and the body of Christ’ (Dei Verbum, 21). Regular reading of sacred Scripture and the celebration of the Eucharist make it possible for us to see ourselves as part of one another” (n.8).

2) *Devotion to the Bible a year-long event:* “A day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a year-long event, for we urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the

community of believers. For this reason, we need to develop a closer relationship with sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, struck as we are by so many forms of blindness” (n.8).

3) *Unity between Sacred Scriptures and the Sacraments:* “Sacred Scripture and the sacraments are thus inseparable. When the sacraments are introduced and illumined by God’s word, they become ever more clearly the goal of a process whereby Christ opens our minds and hearts to acknowledge his saving work” (n.8).

Society / B6

being unwanted, their loneliness, since, social outcasts as they were, people avoided them. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of them would have felt themselves worthless.

However, the experience of such pain and suffering is contrary to God’s will. Far from wanting that they live in misery, he wills that men be saved from all forms of evil (cf 2 Pet 3:9). It is not his desire that anyone be lost; rather, it is his plan that all form part of the community of the saved, where there is acceptance, togetherness, wholeness and happiness. Which is


why Jesus was angry at the misery (pain, loneliness, ostracism [Mark 1:42]) which accompanied the disease, and took pity on the leper. He healed him of his leprosy. The consequence was of course more than just the restoration of the sick man’s health. Even more important to Mark was the fact that he was socially and religiously made whole again. He returned to his family, to his circle of friends, and was restored to the normal religious community. People could now associate with him, and he could participate of the sacrifice in the Temple .

Of course, today, we have few lepers, but we have a number of modern counterparts whom our unkind society normally rejects. We can think of moral lepers: prostitutes, guest relation officers, calls girls and criminals. We also have physical lepers: HIV and AIDS victims, tuberculars, neurotics and psychotics. And to some extent, we have social lepers: dockworkers, squatter settlers, barkers, hold-uppers and small-time thieves (big-one ones, ironically, are often honored in high places). In many ways, they are the alienated, the unwanted in our contemporary

world. We normally discriminate against, if not exclude, them from the respectable society. We erect various walls to keep them out, in much the same way that the Jews put barriers between those within and those outside the respectable Jewish society.

But if the Gospel (Mark 1:40-45) has any lesson, it is that we are invited to accept such people to the Christian community where no one is excluded on the basis of money, morality, and gender: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free person, there is not male and female; for you are all

one in Christ Jesus”(Gal 3:27), for our vocation is to be one: “to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body, one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all...” (Eph 4:3-6). So as Christians, we have to make every effort that all people, no matter the kind of leprosy they have, should have a place in our Christian community, where humanity, justice and dignity are restored, and where they will be accepted, and treated as fellow Christians. We have to make every effort to support them, and uplift them from misery through our love and concern for them.



TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT **MORAL ASSESSMENT**

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

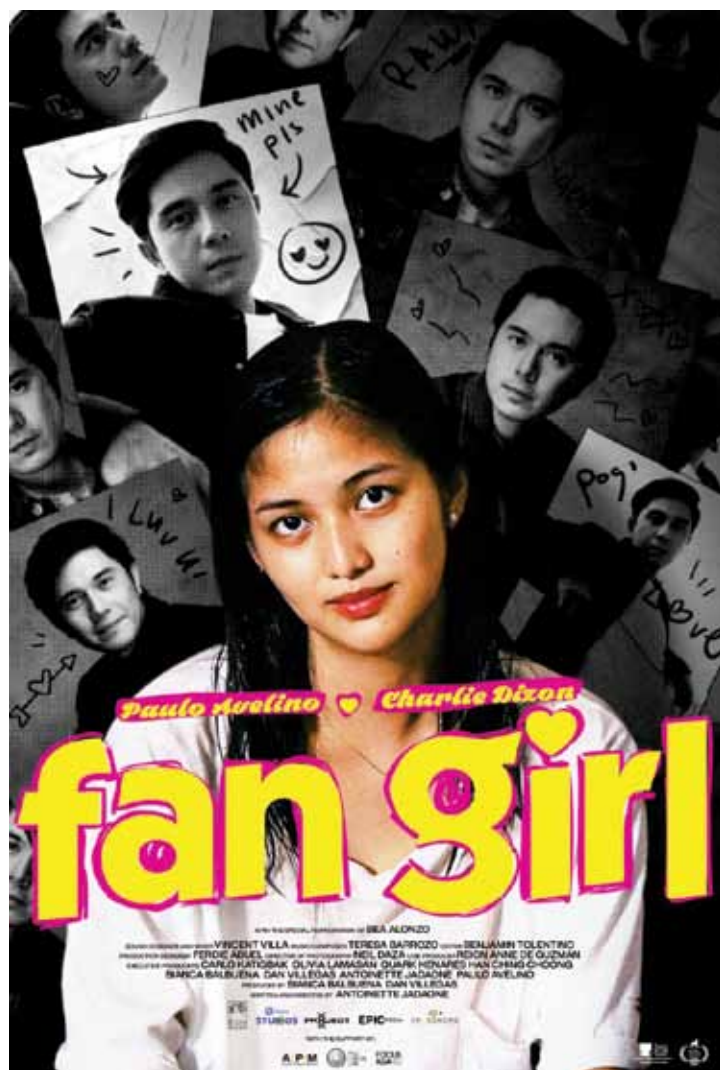
CINEMA RATING

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

Buhay San Miguel

<p>Ang hirap naman nitong subject ko sa Scriptural studies ... hindi ko maintindihan ang REVELATION I</p> 	<p>"NAY I! Ano ba ibig sabihin ng "END OF THE WORLD" ?</p> 	<p>"END OF THE WORLD" ? Madali lang 'yan, anak ... alam na alam ko 'yan I</p> 	<p>Hindi pa tayo nababakunahan sa Covid ... kaya "END OF THE WORLD" na I</p> 
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Fan Girl



DIRECTOR: Antoinette Jadaone **LEAD CAST:** Charlie Dizon, Paulo Avelino, Sheenly Gener, James Fajardo, Mina Cruz, Joshua Cabadiles, Bea Alonzo **PRODUCER:** Bianca Balbuena, Dan Villegas **SCRIPTWRITER:** Antoinette Jadaone **GENRE:** Drama **CINEMATOGRAPHER:** Neil Daza **EDITOR:** Benjamin Gonzales Tolentino **MUSIC:** Teresa Barrozo **PRODUCTION DESIGNER:** Ferdi Abuel **SOUND:** Vincent Villa **PRODUCTION COMPANY:** Epicmedia Productions, Inc., Project 8 cor San Joaquin, Black Sheep, Globe Studios, Crossword Productions **COUNTRY:** Philippines **LANGUAGE:** Tagalog, English **RUNNING TIME:** 101 minutes

Technical assessment: 3.5
Moral assessment: 2
CINEMA rating: V 18
MTRCB rating: R16

Hindi lamang basta idolong si Paulo Avelino nahuhumaling ang high school student na si Jane (Charlie Dizon) sa kanyang (Paolo Avelino); nalululong na siya kaya't ang artista na ang nagsisilbing sentro

ng kanyang isip at gawa. Ipinagmamalaki niya na alam niya ang kaliit-liitang detalye sa buhay ni Paulo, at ang puno't dulo ng karera nito bilang artista. Patay na patay siya sa kaguwapuhan ng kanyang idolo, sa husay nitong umarte (o lumuha sa harap ng kamera), at sa galing nitong mangiliti sa mga manonood. Hahantong ang kanyang pagkalulong sa punto kung saan — sa isang mall, matapos ang isang promo event ni Paulo at ng katambal na artistang si Bea Alonzo (Bea Alonzo) — aangka si Jane nang palihim sa pickup ni Paulo para lamang masundan ang idolo. Ni wala sa kanyang hinagap na dadalhin siya ng kahangalan niya sa isang malayong barrio sa probinsiya kung saan sa isang lumang bahay niya makikilala ang tunay na pagkatao ng artistang sinasamba.

Umani ng walong gantimpala ang Fan Girl sa nakaraang Metro Manila Film Festival 2020, kasama na ang Best Film, at Best Director (Antoinette Jadaone). Sadyang natatangi ang husay ng pagdirirhe dito ni Jadaone. Bukod sa nakuha niyang palutangin ang galing sa pagganap nila Avelino at Dizon, nagawa din niyang nakakasabik ang daloy ng kuwento — sa pagsasalitan ng mga sandali, hindi mo masisiguro kung sino ang magiging biktima o kontrabida sa dalawa. Impressive ang pagsasalarawan ng 23-anyos na si Dizon sa 16-anyos na si Jane — malaking tulong sa sariwa niyang mukha ang suot niyang school uniform para maging kapani-paniwala ang karakter na ginampanan niya at makuha nito ang simpatiya ng manonood. Sa kabilang dako, kahanga-

hanga din naman ang ginawang pagtaya ni Avelino sa kanyang reputasyon nang pumayag siya na pangalan niya ang gamitin sa papel ng idolo — hindi lang iilan sa mga nakapanood ang nagtatanong kung ang papel ba niya ay tunay niyang buhay. Nagbunga naman ang kanilang hirap at pagod nang tanghalin silang MMFF 2020 Best Actress at Best Actor.

Batay sa pamagat na "Fan Girl", maaaring akalain ng mga manonood na isang karaniwang romantic comedy lamang ang pelikula. At gawa na rin ng umugong na balitang dito magpapakita diumano ng kanyang "hinaharap" si Avelino, maaaring nangibabaw ang pagkausoso ng mga manonood sa halip na naman ang idinudulot ng katanyagan at kayamanan sa mga artista? Ano ang wastong pananaw upang maiwasan ang kaakibat nitong banta sa katinuan at kinabukasan ng mga artista? May pananagutan ba ang mga artista hinggil sa ikabubuti ng kanilang mga fans — tutal, malaking bahagi ng kanilang kayamanan ay nanggagaling sa mga ito. Ang daigdig ng pelikula ay mapang-akit, at madalas ay mapang-linlang. Ngunit maaaring maging isa rin itong makapangyarihang kasangkapan tungo sa ikabubuti ng tao at lipunan.

Mang Kepweng, ang Lihim ng Bandanang Itim



DIRECTOR: Topel Lee **LEAD CAST:** Vhong Navarro, Barbie Imperial, Jaclyn Jose, Joross Gamboa, Benjie Paras, Ryan Bang, Ritz Azul **SCREENWRITER:** Rod Marmol **PRODUCER:** Carlo Katigbak, Olivia Lamasan **EDITOR:** **MUSICAL DIRECTOR:** **GENRE:** fantasy, comedy **CINEMATOGRAPHER:** **DISTRIBUTOR:** Star Cinema **LOCATION:** Philippines **RUNNING TIME:** 101 minutes

Technical assessment: 3 **Moral assessment: 3**
CINEMA rating: V14

Isang arbularyo si Mang Kepweng (Vhong Navarro, Mang Kepweng Returns, 2016) na yayaman mula sa paggagamot sa mga taong may iba't ibang uri ng karamdaman. Pero kalaunan, lalaki ang ulo niya, magiging maramot at matapobre — sa halip na magpatuloy sa paggagamot ng mga maysakit na lumalapit upang humingi ng tulong sa kanya, mas gugustuhin pa niyang dumalo sa mga pagtitipon kung saan siya ang bida at pinapupurihan. Darating ang panahong haharapin niya ang engkantong si Maximus (Joross Gamboa) na nagbabalak sumakop sa daigdig ng mga tao. Hawak ni Maximus ang bandanang itim, na nagiging sanhi ng paghina ng kapangyarihan ng bandanang pula na hawak naman ni Mang Kepweng. Sa tulong ng kanyang mga kaibigan, hahanapin ni Mang Kepweng ang mga sangkap na makapagbabalik sa kapangyarihan ng

bandanang pula upang magapi si Maximus. Dito na magsisimula ang umaatikabong adventure ng barkada at ang pa-init ng ng kanilang misyon.

Malaman mo lang na ang mga sangkap na kailangan upang manumbalik ang kapangyarihan ni Mang Kepweng — nagbabagang tabako ng kapre, kuko ng manananggal, at luha ng sirena—ay mahuhulaan mo na kung ano ang aksiyon na ihahain ng pelikula. Siyempre, tulad ng dati, kabulastugan, pagpapatawa, pantasya, kalabisang mga eksena, at disimuladong kabastusan na dapat lunukin na lang nang may isang kurot na asin. Si Navarro ba naman ang bida eh, atsaka, ikalawa na itong kwento ng arbularyo. Parang nakakapanghinayang lang na ang kakayahan ng batikang artistang si Jaclyn Jose ay hindi nahahamon ng papel niya bilang ina ni Mang Kepweng.

Kung tutuusin, pasable

ORATIO IMPERATA

(For Protection Against the Covid-19 Virus) as of January 2021

Merciful and compassionate Father, we come to you in our need to seek your protection against the COVID 19 virus that has disturbed and even claimed lives.

We ask you now to look upon us with love and by your healing hand, dispel the fear of sickness and death, restore our hope, and strengthen our faith.

We pray that you guide the people tasked to find cures for this disease and to stem its transmission. We thank you for the vaccines developed made possible by your guiding hands. Bless our efforts to use these vaccines to end the pandemic in our country.

We pray for our health workers that they may minister to the sick with competence and compassion. Grant them health in mind and body, strength in their commitment, protection from the disease.

We pray for those afflicted. May they be restored to health. Protect those who care for them. Grant eternal rest to those who have died.

Give us the grace in these trying times to work for the good of all and to help those in need. May our concern and compassion for each other see us through this crisis and lead us to conversion and holiness.

Grant all these 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.

We fly to Your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our petition in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

Our Lady, health of the sick, pray for us.
St. Joseph, pray for us.
St. Raphael the Archangel, pray for us.
San Roque, pray for us.
San Lorenzo Ruiz, pray for us
San Pedro Calungsod, pray for us.

na ring komedya ang Mang Kepweng, na nagbibigay ng pahinga mula sa takot ng marami sa pandemyang Covid. Wala namang pagkukunwari ang pelikula bilang isang seryosong panoorin — gusto lang nitong magbigay-aliw sa mga nababagot sa paraang sanay nitong gawin. Pagdating sa laman ng kuwento,

malinaw naman nitong nailahad na ang kasamaan ay masama at ang kabutihan ay mabuti. Ipinakikita din dito ang kahalagahan ng kooperasyon ng mga mabubuting tao upang magapi ang kalaban. May hatid din itong aral tungkol sa masamang epekto ng pagkakaroon ng labis na kapangyarihan ng isang tao.

FAITH WATCH

- Your Catholic Channel -

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



THE CROSS

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KofC Family... Our Concern

Vol 24, No. 23

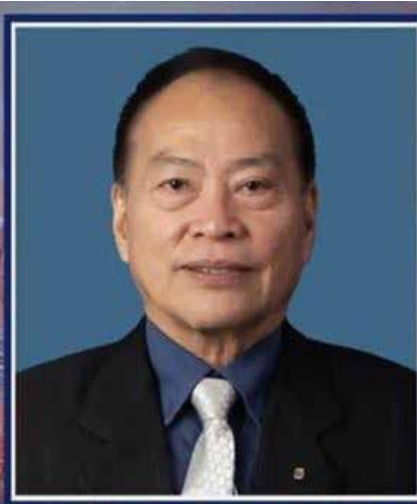
K of C Jurisdictions hold Mid-year District Deputies' Meeting



Jose C. Reyes, Jr.
Supreme Director



Rene Sarmiento
Luzon North



Bonifacio Martinez
Luzon South



Teofrido Lagria
Visayas



Gerry Eutemio Mission
Mindanao

NO Pandemic can dampen the unwavering commitment and fraternal love of the Brother Knights of the Order of the Knights of Columbus in the Philippines. Despite the challenges of the current situation, the Brother Knights moved forward with their Annual District Deputies' Meeting following the prescribed restrictions of the national and local government to ensure all attendees' safety.

The Luzon North Jurisdiction with the leadership of Worthy Luzon North State Deputy Bro. Rene V. Sarmiento started their Mid-Year meetings as early as December 12, 2020 held at the Cathedral Shrine and Parish of the Good Shepherd for the Districts under the Diocese of Cubao and Novaliches and Prelature of Infanta followed by the meeting at Dambana, Cabanatuan City for the Districts under the Diocese of Alaminos, Cabanatuan, Lingayen-Dagupan, San Jose, Tarlac and Urdaneta. They ended the year with the meeting with Districts from the Diocese of Malolos at DJ Paradise Resort, City of Malolos. Last January 9, 2021 they held their meeting at

Santiago, Isabela for Districts within the Diocese of Iligan followed by a meeting last January 10, 2021 for the Districts within the Diocese of Tuguegarao and January 23, 2021 for the Districts under the Diocese of Balanga, Iba and Archdiocese of San Fernando held at St. Joseph Parish Olangapo City. Their last batch of Mid-Year meeting will be held in Baguio for Districts within the Cordillera Administrative Region. The theme of the series of meetings in their Jurisdiction is "2020: An Extraordinary Year for the Knights".

Meanwhile, the Luzon South Jurisdiction headed by Worthy Luzon South State Deputy Bro. Bonifacio B. Martinez had 3 separate sessions held last January 9, 2021 via Zoom for Districts within Boac, Masbate, Puerto Princesa, Taytay, Palawan and Romblon; January 16, 2021 at Tryp Hotel in Pasay City for Districts within the National Capital Region, Rizal and Cavite and last January 23, 2021 at the Jet Hotel Lipa City for Districts within Batangas, Quezon, Mindoro and Laguna. Their last session for Districts within Naga City-CamSur,

Cam Norte, Albay, Legaspi and Sorsogon held their meeting on January 30, 2021 at the Villa Caceres Hotel, Naga City. Their theme for this year is "Leave No Neighbor Behind".

Visayas Jurisdiction headed by Worthy Visayas State Deputy Bro. Teofrido B. Lagria held their annual Mid-Year meeting last January 9, 2021. The meeting was done in 4 different locations blended with virtual meeting rooms for those who were not able to physically attend due to the pandemic. The in-person meetings were held at the Diversion 21 Hotel, Iloilo for the Archdiocese of Jaro, Diamond Hotel in Cebu for the Archdiocese of Cebu, JJ's Seafood Resort in Tagbilaran for the Diocese of Talibon and Tagbilaran and Haiyan Resort Hotel in Tanauan, Leyte for Eastern Visayas. Their theme for this year's meeting is "Knights of Columbus, Knights of Fraternity".

Lastly, the Mindanao Jurisdiction, headed by Worthy Mindanao State Deputy Bro. Gerry Eutemio T. Mission, had their Mid-Year meetings with the theme "Knights

of Columbus, Knights of Fraternity" were spread out to different dates by location and Diocese. The schedule of jurisdiction are as follows: December 30, 2020 – Davao South at the Waterfront Insular Hotel, Davao City; January 9, 2021 – Archdiocese of Cotabato at Alnor Hotel, Cotabato City; January 10, 2021 – Cagayan Central West and Malaybalay North at the Grand Caprice, Limketkai, Cagayan de Oro City; Diocese of Butuan North at Almont Inland Hotel, Butuan City; January 16, 2021 – Diocese of Pagadian at the Three Guest House, Pagadian City; Davao North at the Dusit Than Hotel Lanang, Davao City; Marbel East and West at the Family Country Hotel, General Santos City; Marbel North and Cotabato South at Paraiso Verde Hotel and Resort, Koronadal City; Diocese of Butuan South at Mabe's Savory Place, San Francisco Agusan Sur; January 23, 2021 – Diocese of Iligan at the Chamber House of Council 3343, Iligan City; Osamis City at the Elemento Residence, Osamis City; Dipolog City at Kamalig Resort, Dapitan City; Zamboanga,

Basilan, Sulu and Ipil (Zabazuli) at the Astoria Hotel, Zamboanga City; Diocese of Tagum and Mati at the Dusit Thani Hotel, Lanang Davao City; Diocese of Kidapawan at Boylyn Hotel and Resto, Kidapawan City; and January 24, 2021- Diocese of Tandag at Shacene KRV Bar, Tandag City; January 31, 2021 – Gingoog City (Cagayan East) at the City Engineer's Office, Gingoog City; Diocese of Digos at the Dusit Thani Hotel Lanang, Davao City.

The Mid-Year Meeting of District Deputies is an opportunity for the leaders of the Knights of Columbus in the Philippines to discuss their programs in Life, Faith, Family and Community. They also tackle topics about membership growth and retention and all jurisdiction activities for the Columbian Year. Lastly, awards were also given to outstanding members and councils for their performances for the year. One of the highlights of these meetings are the messages from the Supreme Knight, Carl A. Anderson; Supreme Director Bro. Jose C. Reyes, Jr. and speeches of the Worthy State Deputies.

KCFAPI and K of C launches online Christian Formation Program

THE Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. (KCFAPI) - Fraternal Benefits Groups in collaboration with the Knights of Columbus Philippine Jurisdictions initiated an online Christian Formation Program for all the members of the Order featuring the twelve video episodes of the Into the Breach produced by the Supreme Council. The topics were lifted from the book, Into the Breach, an Apostolic Exhortation to Catholic Men, written by Most. Rev. Thomas J. Olmsted, Bishop of Phoenix.

According to the author, the World is under attack by Satan, as our Lord said it would be. This battle is occurring in the Church herself, and the devastation is all too evident. Since 2000 AD, 14 Million Catholics have left the faith. Parish religious education of children, Catholic school attendance, infant baptism, adult baptism and sacramental Catholic marriages have all dropped.

One of the key reasons that the Church is faltering under the attacks of Satan is that many Catholic men have not been willing to step into the breach - to fill the gap that lies open and vulnerable to further attack. A large number have left the faith, and many who remain

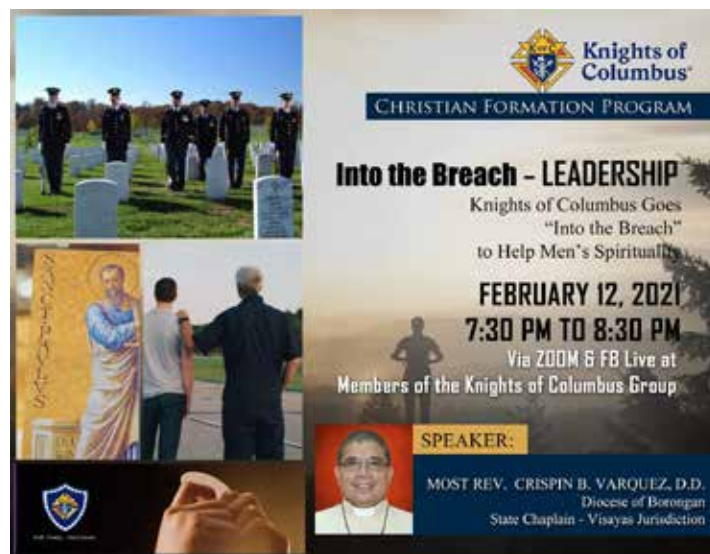
Catholics practice the faith timidly or are only minimally committed to passing the faith on to their children.

Several years ago, the Supreme Council launched the initiative, Building the Domestic Church. The objective of which is to strengthen the family as the sanctuary of the Church. As members of the Knights of Columbus, we have a shared responsibility in the mission to evangelize our family. Every Catholic family must stand on a solid ground, enforced by a strong foundation of faith.

Today, the family is subject to various forms of challenges. Many families are separated from their homes due to the necessity of working abroad or due to the demands of their jobs. The children are growing up without seeing their parents as their role models who can mold their values and morals.

In order to prepare more men and fathers on the challenges that our Church are facing today, the Supreme Council came up with this Christian Formation Program to serve as a guide to our spirituality.

Here in the Philippines, Into the Breach was officially launched last December 11, 2020 using Zoom and simultaneously broadcasted on Facebook Live under



the group, Members of the Knights of Columbus in the Philippines. It will regularly run every second Friday of the month at 7:30 PM to 8:30 PM. Each episode comes with a deep reflection and sharing from our invited Bishops who are our resource speakers.

As of today, we have shown online two episodes, Masculinity and Brotherhood. We invited Most. Rev. Gerardo Alminaza, D.D., Diocese of San Carlos and Immediate Former State Chaplain of the Visayas Jurisdiction and Most Rev. Midyphil Billones, D. D, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Cebu and KCFAPI Scholar, as our resource speakers on the aforesaid topics. The past two events were successful, hitting the average of 1,300 views from facebook live.

The third episode, Leadership, will be broadcasted on February 12, 2021 at exactly 7:30 PM. Most Rev. Crispin Varquez, D. D., Diocese of Borongan and State Chaplain of the Visayas Jurisdiction will be the resource speaker.

The nine other episodes and topics are: Fatherhood, Family, Life, Prayer, Suffering, Sacramental Life, Spiritual Life, Evangelization, and The Cornerstone. We have lined up several Bishops who will share their thoughts and reflections on each of the episode.

Join us every second Friday of the month at 7:30 PM to 8:30 PM. Make this a regular date with your family as we reflect on our journey as members of the Knights of Columbus. (APNazario)

KCFAPI prexy sees optimism for 2021

ALTHOUGH 2020 took a sharp turn with the Covid-19 pandemic, the head of the Knights of Columbus' insurance arm in the country is looking forward to a progressive 2021.

Bonifacio Martinez, President of the Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, hopes that this year will be one of great successes for the KCFAPI.

Over the last 10 months, the country's insurance sector has faced significant pressure on underwriting growth and profitability amid the ongoing health crisis.

However, Martinez said that innovations and progress have stood the KCFAPI in good stead even as the pandemic continues.

"Despite this year being a year full of mishaps, it is but a heart's prayer that we survive this, and thankfully with God's guidance, we did

it," he said.

While tough decisions have to be made, the KCFAPI head stressed that everyone's well-being and health "was never compromised".

"No retrenchment made, no deduction of working days to mention a few," Martinez said.

As challenges continue, he said that what is important is for the company to keep track "of everything that keeps us going— our beloved clients, employees, our families, our goals, and objectives".

"We have to be kept abreast with all of the changes, not just for our association to survive and thrive but for all of the people who believe and trust our advocacies," Martinez added.

"We shall conquer the year 2021 and that we hope and pray that the upcoming year will be full of love, growth, and positivity," he also said. (Roy Lagarde)



(L-R) Ms. Mary Magdalene G. Flores, VP-Treasury, Bro. and Hrc; Rev. Fr. Reynaldo V. Romero from the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan; Ms. Gloria O. Alegre, Manager-Bro Department and Bro. Arvin Dapula, Claims Assistant last January 18, 2021 during the loan availment of Fr. Romero from his benefit certificate from KCFAPI. (KAYngco)

Bonifacio B. Martinez

President's Message



2021, A Year Of Hopefulness

RECHARGING our energies as we take on the upcoming chapter is the best thing we can do especially that this year poses to be a challenging one. We cannot wait for the last year to end hoping that this year will be better. Thank God that last year can go and that we have a new year to start all over again.

Reflecting on the things that we have done and went through the last year will help us refocus on where we are headed. As a fraternal organization that truly cares for our members—our beloved brother knights, it is an honor to be able to serve your needs in every possible way we can. KCFAPI does not only care for you, dear brother knights, but also for all your loved ones.

Thus, in this change of our lives' chapter, you can expect more from us - more programs that will truly enrich and more programs that make our lives worthwhile. While we face the pandemic that we have been battling since last year, we are mostly assured that the financial institution where we belong truly cares for us.

Of course, this will never be possible without the utmost cooperation, help, and support of our beloved management, employees, and all our stakeholders. As we once again showcase to all of our stakeholders the spirit of brotherhood, may we continue to inspire and device more programs and platforms that are in line with what our brother knights and their families need the most, especially now.

Continuous improvement in our processes and consistency in our workmanship is what we will remain to offer. This is the least that we can do, being the trusted financial institution of our brother knights and their families. May this serve as a reminder that we are here to fulfill our founder's lifelong advocacy.

As I end this message, I would like to thank all our brother knights and their families for the undying support and trust. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate the management and employees of KCFAPI for a job well done as far as last year is concerned and I challenge you to make this year more memorable and life-enriching for all of our stakeholders.

Vivat Jesus!

Arsenio Isidro G. Yap

A Brother's Insight



Retreat Houses

WHAT is a spiritual retreat? Well, basically it is a few hours of getting away from it all as in a whole day only, an overnight, a weekend or several days to even a week or so. A retreat is reconnecting with God through prayers, reflection and reassessing one's commitment to one's faith. There is always a specific purpose for the retreat; specific topics to discuss wherein one would strengthen spiritually his potential weaknesses. Whole day spiritual retreats would be best done in your parish. It's convenient, no hassle and very cheap. The only cost is the food for the retreatants and the facilitator's fee which is normally very affordable and at times free if given by your parish priest. It can be continued the following day if there are many topics to be discussed making it impossible to finish in one day. If such is the case, participants are asked to return the following day to continue with the retreat. Overnight retreat cannot be done in most parishes as they have no facilities for such.

However for an overnight, weekend or a several days to a week's retreat or longer, the best place to do it would be somewhere outside the city where you are from. It's not normal that one would attend a two nights retreat in his parish. If a retreat's program requires two nights/three days stay, away from the hustle of everyday life, then the best place would be outside the city. I think Tagaytay would be the best for two nights/three days retreat as it is still quite near and affordable for those in Metro Manila. However for weeklong retreats, Baguio would be the most ideal.

Tagaytay and Baguio would be my top choice for several days' retreat, where one can have peace and quiet, a place where one can disconnect from everything even electronically if the participants would turn their devices off. In such a serious retreat, one needs a place where one can also commune with nature to complete his rejuvenation, spiritually, mentally and physically.

Have you ever noticed that all retreat houses are owned and managed by the religious orders? They have their own regular clients, the members of their very own congregation who also needs to be renewed. Their contacts from the different dioceses where they have a house requiring a venue for spiritual renewals away from the very city they are in. Most of them have also very large compounds sparing the participants

Brother's Insight / C3

Jose C. Reyes, Jr.

Chairman's Message

Blessed To Bring Blessings To Others

THIS year 2021 is a very significant year for us Catholic Filipinos because we are celebrating the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines in the year 1521. A Portuguese Explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, discovered and landed on our shores 500 years ago. The first holy mass was celebrated by Fr. Pedro De Valderama in Limasawa, Leyte and many people were baptized.

The theme of this year's celebration

Karlo Serviento

Pondering the Words

Philippine Knights with Mary on the Road to 500 years

MARY, the patroness of the Order of the Knights of Columbus, plays a big part in the deepening of faith of the brother knights as under her maternal protection we commence and entrust our advocacies. Every January 1, we commemorate with great joy her solemnity, as the Mother of God. We are all God's children and with this, she is our persistent and ever-loving companion and co-journeyer that will lead us to eternity.

What is Mary's role as the Philippine Knights are about to celebrate the 500 years of Christianity in the country?

In the logo of the Order, behind the dagger, the sword and the anchor reflect the blue shade that ecclesiastically

symbolizes the mantle of Our Lady who hugged the Savior from his birth unto his death. It also pertains to hope that founts the assurance she said at Guadalupe at the time of her apparition, "Am I not here, your Mother?"

"Do whatever He tells you. (Jn. 2:5)" These were the words we should be reminded of as we enter the great feast for our country. Mary reminds us to heed her Son's words. What is Jesus telling us? He prompts us that we are the Church. Being the body of the Church and members of the Order at the same time, our vocation is to follow Christ Jesus, as Archbishop Socrates Villegas once stated, "Live Christ, Share Christ."

As we open another chapter

of Christianity in the country, we also renew our vow of faithfulness and integrity to the Order. We transcend as brother knights founded in charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism in service to one and in service to all. We are the Church and the Church needs us. We should work hand in hand in order that this year's celebration would not end the day after, the week after or the year after. Rather, have its rebirth and renewal for the good of the Holy Mother Church in the country and worldwide.

GIFTED TO GIVE. We are God's gift. Mary is God's gift. Your response to the Order is a gift. The Order is gifted to have a heavenly intercessor, Our Lady. From the time of



first of all, thank God for all the blessings He has given. Then, let us ask Him to give us the grace to always be alert in responding to the needs of others. We have been blessed and in turn, let us be a blessing to others. In this way, we can also evangelize other Catholic gentlemen to be a part of our Order. Let them see our acts of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism in ways that Jesus himself has shown us.

Vivat Jesus!



our conception, we are gifted by the Lord, and are to be gifts to our fellowmen.

Mary will serve as the beacon of love, hope and peace in the midst of uncertainties we are facing in the real world. Brother knights will be bearers of these as we continue to imitate the life of Mary in our own lives. On the road to the 500 years of Christianity, we continue to live Christ and share Christ by following the example of Mary who piously lived for the fulfillment of God's plan to mankind.

Entering the days of great jubilation, we walk together in harmony and veracity with Mary, the obedient Mother of God, that in our mission as Catholic Filipino Faithful we will fully give our YES!

Erwin John Mallari

EJ's Corner

Saint Paul The Apostle



ACCORDING to history, St. Paul was born between 5BC and 5AD. He first appears in the bible in the Acts of the Apostles under the name of Saul. He was a Roman citizen by birth and is part of a devout Jewish family from Tarsus. He made a living by being an artisan of leather and making tents. While he was still young he was sent to Jerusalem to study in a school of Gamaliel, one of the most noted rabbis in history. He believed that the law should be followed by himself and all Jews. Saul was very upset with the early Christian church since he believed that they had broken away from their Jewish traditions and he actively persecuted the church in Jerusalem. Saul was present when the 1st Christian martyr, Stephen, was stoned to death.

Saul then travelled to Damascus to further persecute Christians. On the road going to Damascus, he encounters the Risen Jesus Christ, who asks him: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" he asked: "Who are you Sir?" to which Jesus replied: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Saul was then blinded after the incident and had to be led into

Damascus by hand. Saul was blinded for 3 days and he spent all those 3 days in prayer to God and he didn't eat nor drink. When Anianus of Damascus arrived he laid his hands on Saul saying: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou came, hath sent me, that thou mightiest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." With this, Saul regained his eyesight and he got up and was baptized. As a result of this experience, Saul became a follower of Christ. He had become convinced that fellowship with the risen Jesus Christ, not the strict observance of the law, was needed to receive God's promise of Salvation.

Saul, whose name now became Paul, went to Jerusalem to consult with Peter. After his 1st missionary journey, Paul was called by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles. He spent the rest of his life going on missions, establishing local churches, and writing to them when he heard of their accomplishments and failures. Paul's letters are the earliest record of the life and history of the early church

and are an invaluable record of the expansion of Christianity.

As inspired by the Holy Spirit, St. Paul's letters are part of the Canon of the New Testament. All in all, there are 13 epistles that bear Paul's name but scholars believe that he did not write all of it. Among the 13, Saint Paul authored the first and second Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, first and second Corinthians, Romans, and Philemon. The epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Titus, and first and second Timothy were believed to be written by the apostles of St. Paul who wanted to continue his teaching.

The most profound day in St. Paul's life was his encounter with Jesus Christ. He was well respected in the Jewish community but gave it all up for Christ. He realized that the Father sent Jesus Christ as Salvation for all and teaches us that we are united with Christ through faith and baptism. The feast of the conversion of St. Paul is celebrated every January 25. Let us follow the example of Paul in being open to change and realizing the error of our ways.

Atty. Luis Voltaire D. Formilleza

By the Reading Lamp

O Niño Dios

EVERY January, the predominantly Catholic Philippines commence a month-long veneration to Jesus Christ through a series of feasts for almost each week of the month. The first in the calendar is the feast of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila with the famous Traslacion which is replicated in various parts of the country. While it is considered massive in scale due to the thousands if not millions of devotees that observe the yearly tradition, this author reckons that this is eclipsed by the more festive, cheerful and celebratory mood imbibed in the various feasts dedicated to the infant Jesus or the Sto. Niño. From Cebu, to Tondo, to Pandacan, Iloilo, Cotabato and Bulacan-

devotees mark the occasion of the feast of the infant Jesus through a series of street dancing and grand solemn processions.

While these festivals have been marked as iconic to the point that it had been likewise considered tourism destinations, a small number of devotees of the infant Jesus whose image is somewhere in the heart of Manila, likewise hold their own. Although smaller in scale and less popularly known, it is as remarkable, notable and timeless as Sinulog in Cebu or Dinagyang in Iloilo. This is the Feast of Sto. Niño de Praga in the Abbey of Our Lady of Monserrat, which coincides with the celebration of Frolics in the campus of Benedictine

run San Beda University.

Before he passed on, famous Benedictine monk and musical legend Fr. Benildus Maramba OSB. (and once this author's boys choir conductor) had chronicled about the devotion to the Holy Infant of Prague: "On December 13, 1903, the Benedictine Community in Manila agreed to establish the Confraternity of the Infant Jesus for the students of the Colegio de San Beda. The following day the students presented to the Rector a formal petition for the establishment of a Confraternity. In January 1904 the hymn O Niño Dios was composed by Fr. Jaime Bofill, OSB, who taught music at the Colegio. On January 17, 1904, the monks and students

celebrated the feast of the Sto. Niño at San Beda for the first time. Since no statue was available, they used a framed picture of the Holy Child. On November 4, 1904, the Community installed a wooden image of the Sto. Niño de Praga at the Benedictine Chapel in Tanduay. Maximo Vicente, a known sculptor who maintained a taller for religious images and paraphernalia in Quiapo, made this image of Sto. Niño. The story is told that the same image is a copy of the image venerated in the Church of Salesian Sisters in Barcelona, Spain. On December 28, 1904, the Archbishop of Manila, Archbishop Jeremias Harty, gave permission for

By the Reading Lamp / C3



THE CROSS

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Our Pro-Life Commitment

The Order has long stood at the forefront of the movement to protect human life — and that legacy continues

by Supreme Knight
Carl A. Anderson

I TAKE THIS OCCASION to recount how, for the past five decades, the Knights of Columbus has been a leader in the pro-life movement. In 1974, Knights helped organize the first March for Life in Washington, D.C. The next year, we provided \$50,000 to the U.S. bishops to support their pastoral pro-life efforts. We continue our partnership with both the March for Life and the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities to this day.

In 1976, Supreme Knight John McDevitt said that "killing innocent human life is so monumental an injustice" that we must not be "lulled into acceptance of this evil," and instead must work to reverse the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. The Knights of Columbus has consistently called for

that "exercise in raw judicial power" to be overturned, and we have supported both the Hyde Amendment to limit tax dollars to pay for abortion and the Mexico City Policy to stop promoting abortion in U.S. foreign aid programs.

For many decades, we have had a three-part strategy to defend unborn children: mobilize nationwide support through the annual March for Life; support the pastoral ministry of our bishops; and work to restore legal protection to unborn children in our courts and legislatures.

More recently, we added several initiatives essential to building a culture of life.

"The defense of the unborn is a preeminent priority for the Knights of Columbus because abortion is the killing of innocent children on a massive scale."

The first began with the Sisters of Life. In 1998, their founder, John Cardinal

O'Connor, hoped that one day the sisters would have a retreat center that would be "a place of peace, a place of tranquility, a place of light and refreshment, a place of love." That dream became reality in 2004 when the Knights of Columbus established Villa Maria Guadalupe in Stamford, Conn. The center, operated by the Sisters of Life, is a source of healing for many, including women experiencing the aftermath of abortion. Thousands of lives have been changed and many saved by the Sisters of Life, who help courageous women choose life despite all odds.

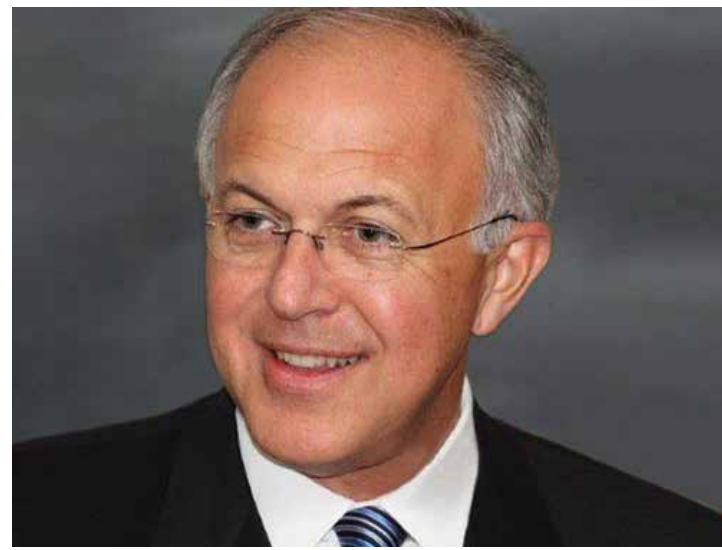
Second, in 2008, we began an annual national survey on abortion with the Marist Poll to understand public attitudes on abortion and help shape the national debate. In a series of groundbreaking findings, our polling showed that, among other things, 3 out of 4 Americans — including

6 out of 10 of those who describe themselves as "pro-choice" — want significant restrictions on abortion. The conclusion: The unlimited abortion mandate of Roe v. Wade is not supported by the majority of Americans.

Then, in 2009, we began our Ultrasound Initiative to place new ultrasound machines in pregnancy resource centers. We have since placed more than 1,300 ultrasound machines worth over \$60 million. Through this program, we have helped save hundreds of thousands of unborn children. Our program is building the culture of life one heart and one child at a time.

The defense of the unborn is a preeminent priority for the Knights of Columbus because abortion is the killing of innocent children on a massive scale.

Roe v. Wade will ultimately fail because it is based on the



falsehood that we do not know that the child before birth is a human being. And because it is false, we have worked to overturn it; to mobilize national protests against it; to educate the public about it; to help women heal who have been hurt by it; to help keep more women from being hurt; and to rescue unborn children from its deadly consequences.

Pope Francis writes that the "defense of the innocent unborn needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred" (Gaudete et Exsultate, 101). Encouraged by his words, we will continue to build a culture of life in all the nations where we are active. Vivat Jesus!

The Gentle Warrior

By James B. Reuter, SJ

CHAPTER FIVE

Bert Cruz wrote, in 1945:

"Father Willmann received, from no less than General Douglas MacArthur, a donation consisting of 100 cots, 100 mosquito nets and 100 blankets, to replace the slabs of plywood which had been improvised to serve as the soldier's resting places.

"Father Smith, Chaplain of the G.I.'s, gave a generator to brighten the social hall during the dances every Thursday and Saturday.

"Later, the military band of the United States Army in the Philippines was providing music for the dances."

The Espiritu Santo Club was turned over to the USO — actually to "the Manila Committee of the United Service Organization". It became the first home of the Manila U.S.O.

In the Pacific Stars and Stripes for Thursday, August 28, 1969, it was recorded:

"The USO has honored Father George J. Willmann, S.J. with the organization's 25th Anniversary Award, for his dedicated service to the American servicemen for over two decades."

In the end, his work was recognized, even by General MacArthur!

CHAPTER SIX

Building an Army

George appreciated the value of the work for military men, and he was proud of the Knights who were doing it, but he knew when a job had reached the point of diminishing returns. In his article: "The Knights Stayed On the Job!" he writes:

"The clubs were a landmark in the city until the end of 1945. At that time, some months after V.J. Day, demobilization of the soldiers in the Philippines began on a large scale and thousands were shipped back to the United States. Ironically enough, as soldier population in the Philippines decreased, soldier clubs conducted by other organizations increased. So we felt that the crisis no longer existed, and turned back to peace-time activities."

The master of the civilian internees at the Los Baños concentration camp, the Japanese Officer whom George knew as "Konichi", was executed for war crimes. His chief offense was starving the prisoners in the camp, but he was also found guilty of massacring innocent Filipino civilians because they were accused of helping the internees.

Konichi had escaped from the camp when the paratroopers of the Eleventh Airborne dropped on it, on February 23, 1945. But he was taken prisoner later, and tried. He was sick with tuberculosis, and for most of his trial he was lying on a stretcher. George saw pictures of this. The prosecution attorneys were wearing medical masks over their mouths and noses, so that they would not contract the disease. And the report was that the Americans were hurrying the trial a little, so that Konichi would not die before it was over. They did not want him to die a natural death.

During the trial, Konichi asked to be instructed in the Catholic Faith. An American chaplain did instruct him. Konichi asked to be baptized.

He was convicted of war crimes, and sentenced to be hanged at Los Baños, the scene of his crimes. At four in the morning he was carried down to the gallows, which were specially built for him. He was baptized, lying on the stretcher, at the base of the gallows. He received his First Holy Communion.

They brought him up to the wooden platform, put the black hood over his head, put the rope around his neck, and released the trap door.

The priest who baptized him was waiting on the ground level, below the platform; behind the gallows. He was holding the Holy Oils. While Konichi was still kicking on the rope, the priest anointed him, on his hands, which were tied behind his back.

Baptism remits all sin, even without going to confession. Konichi received the last sacraments. So — as far as George could make out — he was safe in heaven, with Old Joe Mulry, with Ramon Cabrera, and with the Pan-American flyer whom he shot through the head.

To George, the whole conversion of Konichi seemed absolutely reasonable, because the Sisters were praying for him! Many of the male prisoners said very harsh words about Konichi. One prisoner said: "I would gladly give my life for his! I'd gladly die if I could kill him!" But the nuns in Barracks 20 prayed for Konichi. Sister Ruth prayed for him.

George said: "The prayers of the Sisters are very strong! And it was beautiful, to have it happen that way!"

Father Henry Greer, S.J., became the close friend of a young Captain from the religious section of the Japanese Army. This was the Officer who came to the



Ateneo, early in the Occupation, when Father Hurley was being beaten for defending the maid of Mrs. Lippe.

The Captain helped the priests and nuns in Manila, in many ways. And continued to help them, when they were interned at Vatican City, in Los Baños. He told Father Greer that he was the only Catholic in his family. He had married, and his wife became a Catholic to marry him. He showed a picture of his wife to Father Greer, and gave him the address of his family in Tokyo. They hoped to remain friends, when the war was over.

But the Captain was killed in Manila, when the Americans re-took the city. Father Greer was re-patriated to the United States in a troop ship, the Eberle. There he was assigned to work in Washington, D.C., for two years, on the war claims of the religious congregations in the Philippines.

On his way back to Manila, in 1947, Father Greer resolved to find the family of the Japanese Captain in Tokyo — because the Captain had been so good to the Catholic internees. In Tokyo, he found the area indicated in the address — but it had been destroyed in the great Tokyo fire. It was an empty space — flat.

Father Greer sounded around, among the Japanese in the area. One old man remembered. He said: "Ah, yes! They used to live here! But they moved!" He gave Father Greer a new address. It was all the way across town, and Father Greer did not know Tokyo. But he worked his way across the city, and — hours later — found the new address. It was a store.

(to be continued in the next issue)

Prayer for the Beatification of the Servant of God Father George J. Willmann

Blessed are You, Almighty Father, source of all goodness and wisdom. Look down upon us Your children, who are trying to serve You with all our heart. Deign to raise Fr. George J. Willmann to the honors of the altar.

He was the prayerful, strong, dauntless model that we all need in this new era, he was a pastor in the care

and formation of the youth; the relief of victims of war and violence; the alleviation of the suffering of the poor and the preservation and promotion of the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.

Make him the lamp on the lampstand giving light to all in the house. Make him the city set on the mountain which cannot be hidden, so

that all of us may learn from his courage, his integrity, his indomitable spirit in propagating and living the Gospel.

Through his intercession, bestow on us the favor we ask You in faith (pause here and silently entrust to the Lord your petitions). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.



Brother's Insight / C2

from the prying eyes and ears of an immediate neighbor. There's more privacy in religious compounds. These factors make them an ideal venue for retreats.

These retreat houses managed and operated by the religious are very cheap as they are not operated for profit but for spiritual renewal of the faithful. There are hardly any privately owned retreat houses as they cannot compete with those being run by the religious communities. And besides, all retreatants would prefer to have their retreats in centers that are run by the religious as they also have the resources for different programs required by the faithful. It is also an indirect support for the religious programs in their ministries in all places where they are in. On top of that, it is their expertise and no privately owned retreat house could ever compete with those managed by the religious.

Personally, I do not want to participate in an overnight retreat if it will be done within the city where I live in. I also do not want to attend a retreat in a privately owned retreat house as there could be distractions, facilitators might not be available and programs could be inadequate or not in conformity with the Church teachings.

I also do not know of any retreat house that is owned and managed by a diocese? If there are, could they ever compete with those run and managed by the religious? Such a retreat house is doom

to failure as their target participants would always want their retreats outside of their parish, outside of their diocese.

The Diocese of Cubao is constructing a retreat and renewal center which leaves me to wonder if they have studied its viability? Quezon City has more than twenty retreat houses which are operated by the religious. Can the Diocese of Cubao be competitive enough? Is it being built because of an identified need or is it being built for legacy? Surely it cannot expect its parishioners to attend an overnight retreat within the city. Have any of the parishes within the diocese participated in a retreat in any of these retreat houses within the city. What is their expectation on this project? I hope the construction committee had done its math; otherwise it's a waste of money.

It is being constructed without a MOA with the parish pastoral council in the midst of a pandemic. The laity was not consulted and the last three parish priests are not included in its planning. Don't the parishioners have the proprietary rights on their parish property? Which leads one to ask, what then is the Santatlo? What does empowering of the laity mean? The voice of the laity is being ignored in this case. Is the voice of the laity limited to yes father, yes bishop? I certainly hope not. I hope and pray that the voice of the laity be heard and be given value?

By the Reading Lamp / C2

the establishment of the Confraternity of Sto. Niño de Praga. The Colegio held the first procession of the Sto. Niño with the image made by Maximo Vicente on January 20, 1905. Its route was from the Colegio de San Beda in Arlegui to the house of the Benedictine Community on Balmes Street. The Benedictine Priory in Manila gained the dignity of an Abbey in 1924, and in 1926 the Abbey and the Colegio moved to new buildings on Mendiola Street. Since then, the shrine of Sto. Niño de Praga has been in the Abbey Church of Our Lady of Montserrat. Since 1975, the Benedictine Abbey celebrates the Feast of the Sto. Niño de Praga as a Solemnity on the last Sunday of January. The

San Beda College Alabang school Community celebrates the same Feast in the third week of January. Students, alumni, administrators, faculty and staff pay homage to Jesus through festive activities and games, dances and music, exhibitions and renditions."

Having attended the yearly feast since grade school in the once exclusive boy's school to meet erstwhile acquaintances and lifelong friends in Mendiola, the event had evolved through the years from being an exclusive campus affair to a community gathering in the San Miguel district of Manila. Alongside throngs of alumni and their families are community members from neighboring campuses and barangays who attend the three-day

affair that is capped by the grand mass in the San Bea's Senior Football Field.

Surely, this pandemic that is upon us may change the landscape and color of how this feast or other festivities would be held. But what will not change is the unending devotion to the venerated Holy Infant Jesus uniquely found and practiced in this side of heaven. And so by the reading lamp of my room I pray the Hymn:

"O Niño dios de praga rey clemente el viador sosten solo de ti de gracia rica fuente dimana dimana todo bien solo de ti de gracia rica fuente solo de ti de gracia rica fuente dimana dimana todo bien".

A primer on Guaranteed Issue Offer (GIO) Plans

DO you want to leave your next of kin a small inheritance? Are you worried of not getting a life insurance because of your age and health? Are you worried your application might be turned down? KCFAPI can give you and your loved ones peace of mind without the hassle. KCFAPI introduces its own version of guaranteed issue life insurance in the form of three plans: GIO Defender, GIO Crusader and GIO Avenger.

These Guaranteed Issue Offer plans (GIO) provide insurance protection at your convenience. A GIO plan is a life insurance with no health qualifications, that is, without consideration of the medical history of the applicant. An applicant can avail of this plan without having to go through the process of medical examinations. GIO plans are the most accommodating or 'convenient' form of life insurance as nearly all applications are approved. These plans are available for insurance ages 18 to 49 with a minimum face value (FV) of one hundred fifty thousand (P150,000) up to one million pesos (P1,000,000.00) per life. These plans have a fifteen year limited payment period.

To compensate for the acceptance of all types of health risks, GIO plans have a graded death benefit, a refund of contributions if the applicant/Assured dies soon due to sickness after getting an insurance coverage. As a bonus, all contributions refunded will be credited three percent interest per annum.

All three plans come with a terminal illness benefit, which allows the Assured access to the death benefit equivalent to one half of the Benefit Certificate's face value, to cover medical treatment bills or outstanding debts, should he

fall victim to a terminal illness. A terminal illness is a medical condition diagnosed after the issuance of the benefit certificate and will result in the death of the Assured within twelve months from date of diagnosis.

The GIO Defender proposes a lifetime insurance coverage. The GIO Crusader provides insurance protection for twenty years. If the Assured survives the twenty year period, he gets a maturity bonus equal to the benefit certificate's face value. The GIO Avenger is an upgraded version of the GIO Crusader. In addition to the benefits presented, the Assured will collect twenty percent of the benefit certificate's Face Value on the fifth, tenth and fifteenth anniversary of the benefit certificate, if alive, or a total of one hundred sixty percent of the BC's face value.

Summary Table of Death Benefits, See Table 1.

***Refers to date of last approved reinstatement. Terminal illness benefit terminates at attained insurance age 81

With GIO plans, KCFAPI offers you the following guarantees:

Guaranteed protection that will never decrease regardless of your age.

Guaranteed contribution that will never increase during your lifetime. Guaranteed acceptance that your application will not be refused because of health reasons.

Guaranteed payment up to fifteen years only

Guaranteed benefits for insurance ages 18 to 49.

Guaranteed coverage from 150,000 up to one million pesos.

So, what are you waiting for? Contact your fraternal counselor and submit those applications now! **(AABala)**



KCFAPI President Bonifacio B. Martinez during the unveiling of the GIO plans held last January 19, 2021 at the KCFAPI Center, Intramuros, Manila.

Table 1

Date of Death	Cause of death	Death Benefits
Within two years from Effective Date	Accident	100% of Face Value
After two years from Effective Date	Accident	100% of Face Value

Date of Death	Cause of death	Death Benefits
Within two years from Reinstatement Date	Accident	100% of Face Value
After two years from Reinstatement Date	Accident	100% of Face Value

Date of Death	Cause of death	Death Benefits
Within two years from Effective Date	Sickness/not accident	ROC*
After two years from Effective Date	Sickness/not accident	100% of Face Value

*ROC refers to return of contribution paid from Effective Date plus 3% interest per annum

Date of Death	Cause of death	Death Benefits
Within two years from Reinstatement Date	Sickness/not accident	ROC**
After two years from Reinstatement Date	Sickness/not accident	100% of Face Value

**ROC refers to return of contribution paid from Effective Date plus 3% interest per annum

Summary Table of Terminal Illness Benefit

Period of availment	Age at Availment	Terminal Illness Benefit
Within two years from Effective Date	Before age 81	None
After two years from Effective Date	Before age 81	1/2 Face Value
Within two years from Reinstatement Date***	Before age 81	None
After two years from Reinstatement Date	Before age 81	1/2 Face Value

Summary Table of Plan Benefits

Plan of Insurance	Death Benefit as % of FV	Living Benefit as % of FV
GIO Defender	After two BC years but before age 100: 100%	At age 100: 100%
GIO Crusader	After two BC years but before Twentieth BC Year: 100%	Twentieth BC Year: 100%
GIO Avenger	After two BC years but before Twentieth BC Year: 100%	Fifth BC Year: 20% Tenth BC Year: 20% Fifteenth BC Year: 20% Twentieth BC Year: 100%

KCFAPI Ready for 2021

THE year 2020 affected the Filipino people in many ways because of the pandemic which made us approach life differently with the dawn of the "New Normal". However, these challenges did not become a hindrance for the Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. (KCFAPI) in remaining committed in their mission provided optimum fraternal benefits to all its members and their immediate families.

In order to cater to the needs of its growing

market, the Fraternal Benefits Group reinforced its Salesforce through recruitment initiatives to ensure that there are sufficient field representatives to provide services by offering KCFAPI's insurance products to our dear

Brother Knights and their immediate families.

At the start of 2021, the Association reassures its BC Holders that it has the capability to provide the needed services for their particular needs.

Apart from launching a new product, the

KCFAPI now has a total of 21 Area Managers and approximately 1,550 Fraternal Counselors across the Philippines who are very knowledgeable and well equipped in assisting current and potential BC Holders in offering insurance products according to their specific requirements.

This year will definitely be tough because of the lingering effects of the pandemic to the Filipino people but this will not stop the Association and its Field Representatives in relentlessly providing

the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in its service.

For your insurance needs, you may reach out to the assigned Area Manager or Fraternal

Counselors in your Council or you may get in touch with the Fraternal Benefits Group through their facebook account -

<https://www.facebook.com/kcfapi1958/>. You may also check their products through their website www.kofc.org.ph or call the through (02)8527-22-23 to 27.



The Luzon Area Managers together with FBG Luzon VP, Bro. Gari M. San Sebastian; KCFAPI President Bro. Bonifacio B. Martinez and OIC EVP, Bro. Ronulfo Antero G. Infante During the GIO Product Launch held at the KCFAPI Center, Intramuros, Manila last January 19, 2021. Area Managers from Visayas and Mindanao and VP VisMin, Bro. Anthony P. Nazario also joined the launch via Zoom and FBLive (JPDeGuzman)

NEW PRODUCT

GIO DEFENDER

Product Description
Permanent life insurance plan that provides family benefit protection and guaranteed living benefits during the lifetime of the Assured.

Living Benefits
Upon reaching maturity date at age 100, the plan will provide a cash maturity equal to 100% of the face value.

Family Benefits
In the Assured's untimely demise, the full (100%) Face Value shall be paid to the beneficiary

Issue Age
The plan will be offered to applicants whose issue ages within the age group 18 - 49.

Terminal Illness Benefits
Upon the request of the Assured, a Terminal Illness Benefit, available two BC years after Effective Date or two BC years from date of last approved reinstatement but before insurance age eighty-one (81), of not more than fifty percent (50%) of the Face Value but not to exceed five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000) less one annual contribution, shall be paid to the Assured.

NEW PRODUCT

GIO AVENGER

Product Description
Permanent life insurance plan that provides the Assured a guaranteed family benefit protection before the contract's maturity date and guaranteed lump sum payouts, if living, are paid on specified dates on or before the maturity date.

Living Benefits
Scheduled Cash Bonuses: 20% of the Face Value on the 5th, 10th and 15th year and 100% of the Face Value on the 20th benefit certificate year

Family Benefits
Family benefit is 100% of the Face Value given to the beneficiary in case of the BC Holder's untimely demise during the protection period (20 years)

Issue Age
The plan will be offered to applicants whose issue ages within the age group 18 - 49.

Terminal Illness Benefits
Upon the request of the Assured, a Terminal Illness Benefit, available two BC years after Effective Date or two BC years from date of last approved reinstatement but before insurance age eighty-one (81), of not more than fifty percent (50%) of the Face Value but not to exceed five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000) less one annual contribution, shall be paid to the Assured.

Pricing Assumption
The plan will be offered to applicants whose issue ages within the age group 18 - 49 as follows:

Below 150k	150k to 249k	250k to 499k	500k to 749k	750k to 999k	At least 1M
N/A	18 to 36	18 to 49	18 to 49	18 to 49	18 to 49

NEW PRODUCT

GIO CRUSADER

Product Description
Permanent life insurance plan that provides the Assured a guaranteed family benefit protection before the contract's maturity date and a guaranteed lump sum, if living, is paid on the maturity date.

Living Benefits
Upon reaching maturity date which available on 20th BC year the plan will provide a cash maturity equal to 100% of the face value.

Family Benefits
Family benefit is 100% of the Face Value given to the beneficiary in case of the BC Holder's untimely demise during the protection period (20 years)

Issue Age
The plan will be offered to applicants whose issue ages within the age group 18 - 49.

Terminal Illness Benefits
Upon the request of the Assured, a Terminal Illness Benefit, available two BC years after Effective Date or two BC years from date of last approved reinstatement but before insurance age eighty-one (81), of not more than fifty percent (50%) of the Face Value but not to exceed five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000) less one annual contribution, shall be paid to the Assured.

Pricing Assumption
The plan will be offered to applicants whose issue ages within the age group 18 - 49 as follows:

Below 150k	150k to 249k	250k to 499k	500k to 749k	750k to 999k	At least 1M
N/A	18 to 47	18 to 49	18 to 49	18 to 49	18 to 49



Sis. Orenca E. Perez, wife of Bro. Mario V. Perez+, claiming the Council Mortuary Benefit Plan (CMBP) Check last December 18, 2020 with the following testimonial "The proceeds have helped us recover all the financial losses due to his untimely death."

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FRATERNAL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC.

JOB OPENINGS!

Knights of Columbus Fraternal Association of the Philippines, Inc. (KCFAPI), the fraternal benefits arm of the Order of the Knights of Columbus in the Philippines is in search of the following qualified individuals:

- Corporate Audit Supervisor (must be a CPA)
- Training and Marketing Manager
- Investment Supervisor
- Actuarial Associate
- Underwriting Staff
- Service Office Staff - CDO
- Service Office Staff - Davao

Visit us at the KCFAPI Center, Gen. Luna cor. Sta. Potenciana Sts., Intramuros, Manila 1002 or call us at 0906-297-8303 for Globe, 0949-136-4105 for Smart and (02) 8527-2223 local 201. You may also send your resume to hrcc@kofc.org.ph