

CBCP Monitor

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CBCP firm against Charter change

By Roy Lagarde

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

Speaking at a virtual press conference Jan. 28 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 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



Archbishop Romulo Valles, CBCP President, speaks during a virtual press conference on Jan. 28, 2021.

would you 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 lobby politicians to stop Charter change at this time.

For his part, Bishop Broderick Pabillo, administrator of the Manila archdiocese, said that what the country needs now are 'transformed leaders and citizens' and not Charter change.

He asserted that "it is the people that need to be reformed, not the

system".

"It will be transformed if we have transformed leaders and transformed citizens," Pabillo said in his homily at the Santuario de San Jose in Mandaluyong City.

"We all long for the transformation of our beloved Philippines. We believe that this transformation will not be brought about by any change of the constitution or by any foreign direct investment," he said.

The House of Representatives is hoping to finish the debates on the economic Charter change before the end of 2021.

Red-tagging incidents 'worrisome' — CBCP



Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan, CBCP Vice President, speaks during their virtual plenary assembly on Jan. 27, 2021.

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.

"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

Church renews commitment to abolish 'arancel' despite pandemic

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.

The document was also released as the Church marks this year the 30th anniversary of the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines, which



Arancel / A6 Parishioners attend Mass at the Saint Anthony of Padua Parish Church in Manila's Malate district on Dec. 18, 2020. CBCP NEWS

Bishops offer church facilities as vaccination hubs



Some of the more than 80 bishops who joined the CBCP's virtual plenary assembly on Jan. 26 to 27.

THE country's Catholic bishops on Thursday, 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

Vaccination / A7

Catholic schools to gov't: Go to roots of insurgency instead of red-tagging



The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines has joined in condemning the red-tagging by the military of some of its member schools. PHOTO COURTESY OF CEAP

A GROUP of Catholic educators called on government to address injustices and other roots of the insurgency problem rather than red-tag educational institutions.

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines said that continued red-tagging will not help but only "endangers the

Insurgency / A7

Red-tagging / A7

Venezuelan campaign focuses on lifesaving medication for the poor

A Lenten campaign launched by Caritas Venezuela is raising money to help poor and vulnerable people in the country buy lifesaving medication.

On February 17, Caritas Venezuela, the charitable organization of the Venezuelan Bishops' Conference, announced the start of the "2021 Sharing Campaign: Medicines to save lives." The initiative is in its 41st year and seeks to "strengthen diocesan and parish medicine banks" to care for the health and lives of the most needy Venezuelans.

Caritas noted that 9 out of 10 people in Venezuela are living in poverty, with limited access to basic services such as food, water, health care, and electricity.

For years, Venezuela has been marred by violence and social upheaval under the socialist administration of Nicolas Maduro, with severe shortages of food and medicine, high unemployment, power outages, and hyperinflation. Some 4.5 million Venezuelans have emigrated since 2015.

The coronavirus has now compounded that crisis, and the poor and sick are suffering, Caritas said.

"The deterioration of hospitals, the exodus of medical personnel, the shortage of medicines and their high cost are materializing into a real Way of the Cross for the dispossessed classes," the charitable organization said.

"We have seen how

patients with severe or chronic pathologies are left to their own devices; patients requiring chemotherapy, antiretrovirals such as those affected by HIV, kidney patients with the need for dialysis, diabetics or hypertensive patients who can't get their medications."

Over more than four decades, the Sharing Campaign has established itself in Venezuela as an "expression of a poor Church for the poor, whose missionary outreach shows the merciful face of the Father to all his sons and daughters, especially to those most in need," Caritas said.

Facing current needs, this year the bishops of Venezuela agreed that

the Share Campaign should highlight the "importance of universal access to medicines to protect the right to health of all Venezuelans."

Accordingly, the goal will be "to strengthen the various programs that the Church has, especially the parish medicine banks, to help the most underserved obtain the medicines they need to maintain or recover their health and even save their lives."

In addition to providing medicine, the initiative seeks to "engage in political advocacy" to ensure that the sick poor are prioritized and "to promote the structural changes that are urgent in Venezuela to overcome poverty, violence, exclusion and disease," Caritas said. (CNA)

Cardinal says Vatican employees could lose jobs for refusing COVID-19 vaccine

VATICAN— In a decree issued earlier this month, the cardinal who heads the Vatican City State said that employees who refuse to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when deemed necessary for their work could face penalties up to termination of employment.

The Feb. 8 decree from Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Pontifical Commission of Vatican City State, gave Vatican employees, citizens, and officials of the Roman Curia regulations to follow intended to control the spread of the coronavirus on Vatican territory, such as wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing.

Failure to follow the regulations could result in fines.

"The health emergency must be addressed to ensure the health and well-being of the working community while respecting the dignity, rights and fundamental freedoms of each of its members," the document, signed by Bertello and Bishop Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, states under article 1.

One of the measures included in the order is the Vatican's COVID vaccine protocol. In January, the city state began offering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to employees, residents, and Holy See officials.

The decree states that employees who cannot receive the vaccine for "proven health reasons" may be temporarily given "different, equivalent, or lacking that, inferior duties" which present less risk of contagion, while maintaining their current salary.

The order also says that "the worker who refuses to undergo, without proven health reasons," the administration of the vaccine "is subject to the provisions" found



A photograph provided by Vatican Media shows a room in the atrium of the Paul VI audience, ready for a Covid-19 vaccination campaign in the Vatican, January 13, 2021. VATICAN MEDIA

in article 6 of 2011 Vatican City norms on the dignity of the person and their fundamental rights regarding health checks in the employment relationship.

Article 6 of the norms says that a refusal can result in "consequences of various degrees that can go as far as the interruption of the employment relationship."

The Governorate of the Vatican City State issued a note on Thursday regarding the Feb. 8 decree, stating that the reference to possible consequences for refusing to receive the vaccine "in no case has a sanctioning or punitive nature."

It is "rather intended to allow a flexible and proportionate response to the balance between the health protection of the community and the freedom of individual choice without putting in place any form of repression against the worker," the note said.

The message explained that the Feb. 8 decree was issued as "an urgent regulatory response"

and "voluntary adherence to a vaccination program must, therefore, take into account the risk that any refusal by the person concerned may constitute a risk for himself, for others and for the working environment."

Other than vaccination, the measures contained in the decree include limitations on gatherings of people and movement, the requirement to properly wear a mask and to maintain physical distancing, and to observe isolation if required.

The fines for failure to observe these measures mostly range from 25 to 160 euros (\$30 to \$193).

If someone is found to have broken a legal order to self-isolate or quarantine due to either having COVID-19 or having been exposed to it, the fine ranges from 200 to 1,500 euros (\$242 to \$1,812).

The decree deputizes the Vatican Gendarmes to intervene when they see noncompliance with the measures and issue the fines. (CNA)

Catholic missionary priest nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

ROME— A Catholic missionary priest in Madagascar known for serving the poor living on a landfill has been nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

Fr. Pedro Opeka, 72, is a Vincentian priest from Argentina who has worked with the poor in Madagascar for more than three decades. He founded the Akamasoa humanitarian association in 1989 as a "solidarity movement to help the poorest of the poor" living on the site of a garbage dump.

Janez Janša, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, has announced that he nominated Opeka for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize for his dedication to "helping people living in appalling living conditions."

The Akamasoa association (meaning "good friend") has provided former homeless people and families with

4,000 brick houses and has helped to educate 13,000 children and young people.

Pope Francis visited Opeka's "City of Friendship" built atop a rubbish dump on the outskirts of the capital city of Antananarivo during his apostolic visit to Madagascar in September 2019.

Pedro Pablo Opeka was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1948. His parents were refugees from Slovenia who emigrated after the inception of the communist regime in Yugoslavia.

At the age of 18, he entered the seminary of the Congregation for the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul in San Miguel, Argentina. Two years later, he traveled to Europe to study philosophy in Slovenia and theology in France. He then spent two years as a missionary in Madagascar.

In 1975, he was ordained a priest at the Basilica of Lujan,

and in 1976 he returned to Madagascar, where he has remained to this day.

Upon seeing the desperate poverty in the capital city of Antananarivo, especially at the landfills where people live in cardboard boxes and children compete with pigs for food, he decided to do something for the poor.

With help from abroad and the work of the people of Madagascar, he founded villages, schools, food banks, small businesses, and even a hospital to serve the poor through the Akamasoa association.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Opeka has been working to help families who have fallen even deeper into poverty as a consequence of coronavirus measures.

"The situation is difficult for families, for the poor who have many children. We do not have rice. We do not have

water. We need water and soap," Opeka told Vatican Radio in April 2020.

Madagascar is one of the world's poorest countries. Opeka expressed his gratitude to Pope Francis for his appeal for rich countries to cancel the debt of poor countries in light of the pandemic.

"It is necessary if we want to live in dignity," he said.

This is not the first time that Opeka has been nominated for the peace prize. Slovenian Parliament representatives also nominated the priest in 2012.

Among the other nominees for the Nobel Peace Prize this year are the Black Lives Matter movement, the World Health Organization, Greta Thunberg, Donald Trump, Stacey Abrams, Jared Kushner, Russian dissident Alexei Navalny, and Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Vatican Briefing

Pope Francis honors sacrifice of medical workers who died in coronavirus pandemic

Pope Francis on Feb. 20 expressed his gratitude for the sacrifice of medical workers, especially those who have died in the coronavirus pandemic. "The example of so many of our brothers and sisters, who have risked their lives to the point of losing them, inspires deep gratitude in all of us, and is a cause for reflection," the pope said in a letter. "In the presence of such self-giving, the whole of society is challenged to bear ever greater witness to love of neighbor and care for others, especially the weakest," he added. Pope Francis' letter was addressed to Archbishop Vincent Paglia, who read it at a memorial service for health care workers who have died due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Pope Francis appoints new archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica

Pope Francis on Saturday named Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, O.F.M. Conv., to succeed Cardinal Angelo Comastri as archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica and vicar general for Vatican City State. The resignation of Comastri, 77, was also accepted by Pope Francis Feb. 20. Comastri had filled the posts since 2005. Gambetti, who was elevated to the position of cardinal in November 2020, was general custos, or head, of the convent attached to the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi from 2013 to 2020. With the positions of archpriest and vicar general, Gambetti was also appointed president of the Fabric of St. Peter, the office responsible for maintenance of the basilica. (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Pope Francis accepts Cardinal Robert Sarah's resignation from divine worship congregation

Pope Francis on Saturday accepted the resignation of Cardinal Robert Sarah as prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Sarah, who turned 75 in June 2020, was the most senior African prelate at the Vatican, appointed head of the liturgy department by Pope Francis in November 2014. He had previously served as the president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum and as secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The Guinean cardinal has written a trilogy of books read widely throughout the Catholic world: "God or Nothing" (2015), "The Power of Silence" (2016), and "The Day Is Now Far Spent" (2019). (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Cardinal says Vatican employees could lose jobs for refusing COVID-19 vaccine

In a decree issued earlier this month, the cardinal who heads the Vatican City State said that employees who refuse to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when deemed necessary for their work could face penalties up to termination of employment. The Feb. 8 decree from Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Pontifical Commission of Vatican City State, gave Vatican employees, citizens, and officials of the Roman Curia regulations to follow intended to control the spread of the coronavirus on Vatican territory, such as wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing. Failure to follow the regulations could result in fines. (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Pope Francis presented with historic prayer manuscript saved from Islamic State

Pope Francis was presented on Feb. 10 with a historic Aramaic prayer manuscript rescued from the Islamic State's destructive occupation of northern Iraq. Dating back to sometime between the 14th and 15th century, the book contains liturgical prayers in Aramaic for the season of Easter in the Syriac tradition. The manuscript was formerly kept in the Great Al-Tahira Immaculate Conception Cathedral, the Syriac Catholic cathedral in Bakhdida, also known as Qaraqosh. The cathedral was plundered and set alight when the Islamic State had control of the town from 2014 to 2016. Pope Francis is due to visit the cathedral in Bakhdida on his upcoming trip to Iraq on March 5-8. The book was discovered in northern Iraq in January 2017 by journalists—when Mosul was still in the hands of Islamic State—and sent to the local bishop, Archbishop Yohanna Butros Mouché, who entrusted it to a federation of Christian NGOs for safekeeping. (Courtney Mares/CNA)

Pope Francis asks people to pray for every victim of human trafficking

Pope Francis has asked people to pray Monday for every person who is currently a victim of human trafficking. "In times of crisis, human trafficking proliferates; therefore, an economy needs to be strengthened so that it may respond to the crisis in a way that is not short-sighted, in a lasting way, in a solid way," Pope Francis said in the video message published Feb. 8. "Dear brothers and sisters, let us put all this in our prayer, especially today, through the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita. Let us all pray together for every person who is a victim of human trafficking at this moment." Human trafficking is estimated to be a \$150 billion industry that profits off of 25 million victims worldwide, according to the International Labor Organization. (Courtney Mares/CNA)



Fr. Pedro Opeka in Antananarivo, Madagascar. AMICI DI PADRE PEDRO

A Catholic lawyer who helped found the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong has also been nominated to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Martin Lee Chu-ming, 82, has been demonstrating for universal suffrage in Hong Kong for nearly 40 years.

Lee was the founding chairman in 1990 of Hong Kong's first pro-democracy

party, the United Democrats of Hong Kong, and led the party's successor, the Democratic Party, while serving in the territory's legislature for more than two decades.

Last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner was the United Nations World Food Program. This year's winner is expected to be announced next fall.

Pope Francis on Ash Wednesday: Lent is a journey from slavery to freedom

THE 40 days of Lent are an opportunity to turn from the slavery of sin to the freedom found in reconciliation with God, Pope Francis said on Ash Wednesday.

"The journey of Lent is an exodus from slavery to freedom," the pope said Feb. 17. "These 40 days correspond to the 40 years that God's people trekked through the desert to return to their homeland. How difficult it was to leave Egypt!"

The Israelites had many temptations during the 40 years they wandered in the desert and "so it is with us," Francis added. "Our journey back to God is blocked by our unhealthy attachments, held back by the seductive snares of our sins, by the false security of money and appearances, by the paralysis of our discontents."

"To embark on this journey, we have to unmask these illusions."

To mark the start of Lent, Pope Francis offered Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica with about 50 cardinals and a congregation of around 100 people.

It has been the pope's tradition to say the Ash Wednesday Mass at the Basilica of Santa Sabina on Rome's Aventine Hill following a short procession from the nearby St. Anselm Church.

But due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, this year the Mass was offered at the Vatican.

In his homily, Pope Francis reflected on St. Paul's exhortation in 2 Corinthians to "be reconciled to God."

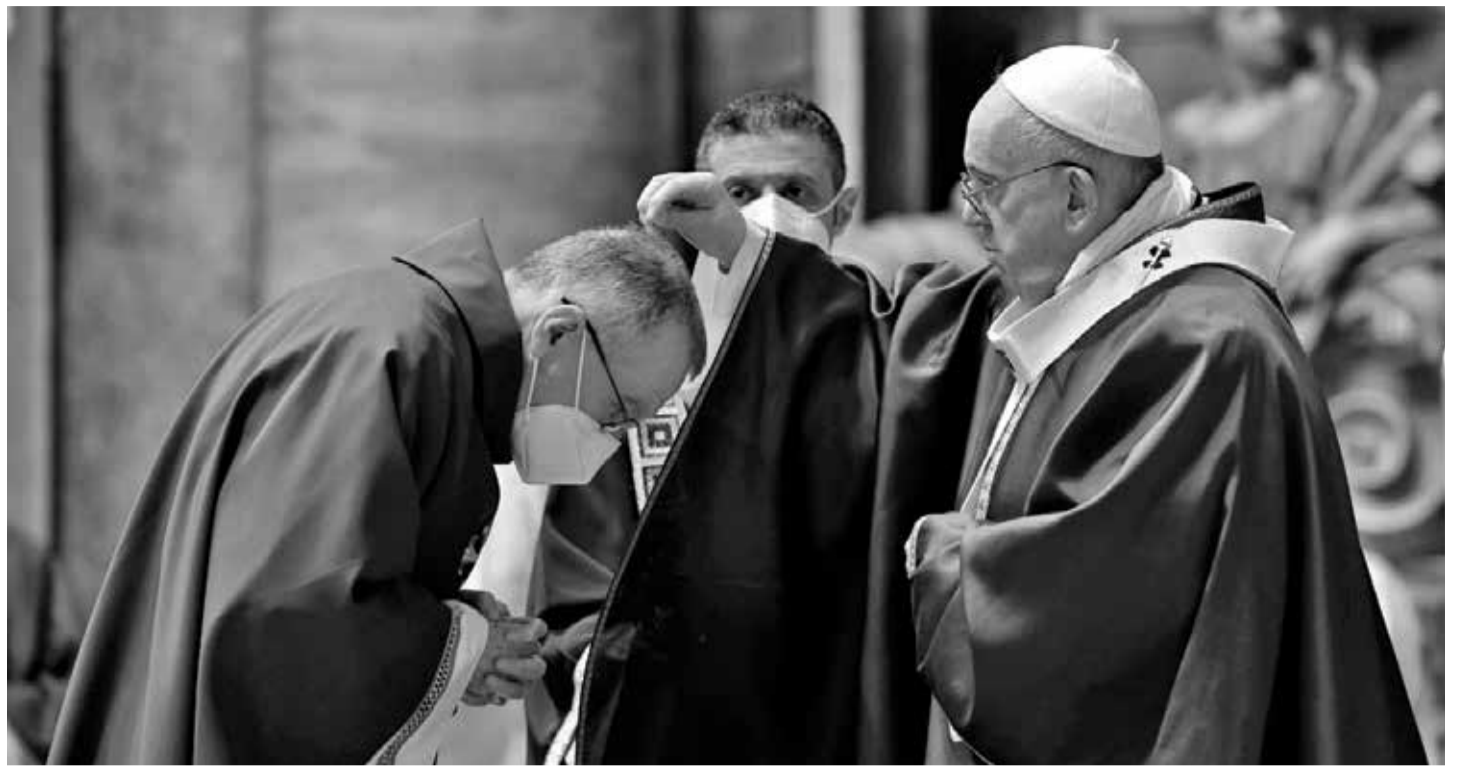
"Be reconciled: the journey is not based on our own strength," he said. "Heartfelt conversion, with the deeds and practices that express it, is possible only if it begins with the primacy of God's work. What enables us to return to him is not our own ability or merit, but his offer of grace."

"The beginning of the return to God is the recognition of our need for him and his mercy, the need for his grace. This is the right path, the path of humility," Francis said.

He also noted God's message through the Prophet Joel: "Return to me with all your heart."

"How many times, in our activity or indifference, have we told him: 'Lord, I will come to you later, wait... I can't come today, but tomorrow I will begin to pray and do something for others,'" he said.

"God now appeals to our hearts," the pope said. "In this life, we will always have things to do and excuses to offer, but now, brothers and sisters, is the time to return to God."



Pope Francis places ashes on the head of a cardinal during Ash Wednesday Mass in St. Peter's Basilica Feb. 17, 2021. VATICAN MEDIA

According to Pope Francis, Lent is about more than the little sacrifices we make, but about realizing where our hearts are oriented, and turning them back toward relationship with God.

"Lent is a journey that involves our whole life, our entire being," he said, advising people to reflect on stories of conversion in Sacred Scripture to know how to start the journey of the Lenten season.

The story of the Prodigal Son, for example, shows us that it is time to return

to the Father, he said: "We have fallen down, like little children who constantly fall, toddlers who try to walk but keep falling and need, time and time again, to be picked up by their father."

"It is the Father's forgiveness that always sets us back on our feet," he said. "God's forgiveness — Confession — is the first step on our return journey."

Another model to follow, the pope noted, is that of the leper who, healed by Jesus Christ from his illness, returned to him in

thanksgiving.

"All of us, all, have spiritual infirmities that we cannot heal on our own. All of us have deep seated vices that we cannot uproot alone. All of us have paralyzing fears that we cannot overcome alone," he said.

"We need to imitate that leper, who came back to Jesus and threw himself at his feet," he urged. "We need Jesus' healing, we need to present our wounds to him and say: 'Jesus, I am in your presence, with my sin, with my sorrows.

You are the physician. You can set me free. Heal my heart."

According to the pope, a part of Lent is lowering one's self, "becoming little."

"Today we bow our heads to receive ashes. At the end of Lent, we will bow even lower to wash the feet of our brothers and sisters," he said.

"Lent is a humble descent both inwards and towards others," he added. "It is about realizing that salvation is not an ascent to glory, but a descent in love." (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Burma's Catholic bishops call for peace and dialogue as 2 protesters killed

THE Catholic bishops of Burma have called for a "return to dialogue" as two protesters were killed during demonstrations over the weekend.

"The heartrending scenes of youth dying in the streets wound the conscience of a nation," the bishops said in a Feb. 21 letter.

"This nation has a reputation of being called as a golden land. Let not its sacred ground be soaked in fraternal blood," they said. "Sadness of parents burying their children has to stop. Mothers' tears are never a blessing to any nation."

The letter was signed by 10 bishops, including Cardinal Charles Bo, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, the country's official name.

The bishops' appeal came after two people died and at least 20 people were injured in clashes between police and demonstrators in Mandalay.

Demonstrators are protesting against this month's military coup and calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's elected civilian leader.

She was detained along with Burma's President Win Myint and other members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party when the military seized power on Feb. 1, alleging fraud during last November's elections, which the NLD won by a landslide.



People attend an interfaith prayer rally in Myanmar's northern town of Myitkyina on Feb. 22, 2021. PHOTO COURTESY OF RVA MYANMAR

Reports on Sunday said that some protesters in Mandalay threw projectiles at police, who responded with live fire and tear gas.

The bishops urged those in power to seek reconciliation and healing, beginning with the release of the detained leaders.

"Just a month ago, this nation held in her heart a great promise: dreams of enhanced peace and robust democracy," they wrote. An election was held despite the coronavirus pandemic and "the world admired our capacity for managing our differences."

"Today the world weeps with us,

shattered by the fragmentation of this nation once again. Our youth deserve better," the bishops wrote.

They said that if Burma does not learn to solve its problems peacefully, it could be wiped off the world map.

"Urgently, the recourse to violence has to stop. The past lessons warn us violence never wins. Seventy-two years after independence, those in power need to invest in peace," the bishops said.

"The peace dividend will heal this nation. Give peace a chance. Peace is possible, peace is the only way." (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

Knights of Columbus elect Patrick Kelly next Supreme Knight

PATRICK E. Kelly will be the next Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, the largest Catholic men's fraternity in the world. He succeeds outgoing Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson, who stressed Kelly's diplomatic and military background and his long service with the Knights, including leading their response to the coronavirus epidemic.

"I am honored, thankful and blessed. I am honored to be called to serve as Supreme Knight," Kelly said Feb. 5. "I am thankful to my wife and family, and to my brother Knights for affording me this honor and privilege."

"I look forward to continuing Carl's great work and will strive to guide the Knights of Columbus by the principles of charity, unity and fraternity according to the vision of Blessed Michael McGivney," Kelly said in his acceptance speech.

"These principles are as important today as they were almost 140 years ago at our founding," he said. "They are a proven path to deepen our Catholic faith, and build strong families, strong parishes, and strong communities that work together for the common good and recognize the dignity and worth of every human being. I ask for prayers as I endeavor to advance the great history and traditions of the Knights of Columbus in service to the Lord, his Church, our brother Knights and their families, our parishes and our



Patrick E. Kelly, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus.

communities."

Kelly has over a decade of experience in senior positions with the Knights of Columbus' charity and advocacy work and in managing their multi-billion-dollar insurance and investment businesses, the organization said.

The Knights of Columbus has over 2 million members in 16,000 councils worldwide. The order was founded in 1882 by a Connecticut parish priest, Blessed Michael J. McGivney, who was beatified in October 2020. It is dedicated to the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. In 2020

Knight / A7

Holy Week 2021: Vatican issues guidelines for Catholics amid ongoing COVID-19 restrictions

THE Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued guidelines on Wednesday for the celebration of Holy Week this year in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

In the note signed Feb. 17 by the congregation's prefect Cardinal Robert Sarah and secretary Archbishop Arthur Roche, the congregation said that bishops were called upon to make prudent decisions regarding the liturgy in line with the Vatican decree on Holy Week liturgies issued in March 2020, which will remain valid for this year.

"We therefore invite you

to re-read it in view of the decisions that bishops will have to make about the upcoming Easter celebrations in the particular situation of their country," it said.

"Many countries still have strict lockdown conditions in force rendering it impossible for the faithful to be present in church, while in others a more normal pattern of worship is being resumed."

The congregation noted that the use of social media has aided pastors in offering support to their communities during the pandemic, but it added that "problematic aspects were also observed."

In light of this concern,

the Vatican suggested that media coverage of the Holy Week liturgies offered by the local bishop are "facilitated and favored, encouraging the faithful who are unable to attend their own church to follow the diocesan celebrations as a sign of unity."

The guidelines also recommended the preparation of prayer aids for family and personal prayer that make use of the Liturgy of the Hours.

The decree issued in March 2020 by the Congregation for Divine Worship, which remains valid in 2021, included the following guidelines for the liturgies of Holy Week in areas where

there are restrictions on public gatherings from civil and Church authorities:

Palm Sunday: The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings; in cathedral churches the second form given in the Roman Missal is to be adopted; in parish churches and in other places the third form is to be used.

The Chrism Mass: Evaluating the concrete situation in different countries, the bishops' conferences will be able to give indications about a possible transfer to another date.

Holy Thursday: The

washing of feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted. At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the procession is also omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. On this day the faculty to celebrate Mass in a suitable place, without the presence of the people, is exceptionally granted to all priests.

Good Friday: In the Universal Prayer, bishops will arrange to have a special intention prepared for those who find themselves in distress, the sick, the dead. The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant.

The Easter Vigil: This will be celebrated only in cathedral and parish churches. For the "Baptismal Liturgy" only the "Renewal of Baptismal Promises" is maintained.

The new note from the Congregation said: "We are aware that the decisions taken have not always been easy for pastors or the lay faithful to accept."

"However, we know that they were taken with a view to ensuring that the sacred mysteries be celebrated in the most effective way possible for our communities, while respecting the common good and public health." (Hannah Brockhaus/CNA)

EDITORIAL

Changing the Charter challenge

AFTER a year of seriously grappling with the continuing health crisis brought about by the pandemic that the country, let's face it, has appallingly mismanaged, the issue of changing the Charter resurfaces. What has it to do with plummeting economy due largely to the seemingly endless lockdowns being the only simplistic solution to containing virus, not to mention other collateral consequences?

Two proposals have been forwarded to sugar-coat the need of changing the charter amid the global havoc caused by Covid-19. One was introduced by Senator Richard Gordon that largely consists in leaving to Congress by subsequent legislation the liberalization of certain restrictive provisions set forth by the fundamental law for such concerns as the advertising industry and the mass media. The other by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian through Resolution 1 of both Houses that empowers Congress to liberalize provisions on investments as well as the operation of public utilities.

Both are, of course, dismal and insignificant to approximate an urgency. By the simple looks of it, there is nothing in the proposal that cannot be done later or could not have been done earlier than the pandemic. One cannot help but suspect of a devious political agenda that seem always to hover whenever a Cha-cha initiative arises. Which is why since the time of President Fidel Ramos, people have always questioned the timeliness of the serious work of changing the charter. After all, as the late Archbishop Oscar Cruz has pointed out, it is not so much of the kind of Constitution but of the kind of people who run it. Besides changing the Constitution by whatever manner needs a thorough study and deliberation. But how can Congress do that now when the legislators cannot even meet except through zoom?

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines during its recent plenary assembly has reiterated its firm stand against changing the Constitutions, especially at this point in time. "Why would you be bringing in the agenda of Cha-cha when our focus and priority should be the pandemic?", said Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan and the current CBCP Vice President.

In a world of growing diversity

WE have to brace ourselves for the challenges of the world of growing diversity that we are living in. It's not only growing diversity that we have to contend with. It is also a complicated one. That's because aside from our natural differences which are already quite challenging, we also have to contend with our man-made, artificial differences and conflicts that are even more challenging.

We have to deal, for example, with our nature-provided differences in temperaments, in race and language, our cultural and historical backgrounds, our age and generational categories. In these areas alone, there are already difficult issues to tackle, like racism, generation gaps, tribalism and elitism, and the many other forms of discrimination, the clashes of social classes, etc.

Then we have differences and conflicts in opinions and beliefs related to business, politics and even religion, as well as to culture, lifestyles, mentalities, vested interests. And with the emergence of our powerful modern technologies, this diversification has become more rapid and confusing.

Before all this diversity, we should try our best not to feel so intimidated as to either freeze in helplessness or to react with wild or even violent attitudes and actuations. Things would just get worse either way. What we should rather do is to face this challenge calmly because only then can we see the good opportunities this diversity is actually presenting to us. This diversity is actually giving us new openings to discover new things about ourselves and everything else. It can be a stimulus for progress, growth and advancement in our own personal lives and, more importantly, in our collective life.

The basic attitude to have is to see where this diversity can lead us to initiate complementarity amid our differences. Yes, our differences and even conflicts need not be a force of division among ourselves. They can engender a greater and deeper sense of unity if we can only find a way of making these differences and conflicts play along the terms of complementarity. This would require that we should always have a positive attitude toward this diversity. And the basis of this positive attitude can be our Christian faith in God's omniscient providence that can allow this diversity to take place to derive a greater good.

Of course, without this Christian faith, we most likely would have a negativistic attitude toward anything that may appear to be outside our worldview. We would not be game and sport about the whole affair, and would fail to develop the art of creativity and inventiveness.

We should try to find a way of how through this diversity we can develop a sense of solidarity among the different and even conflicting agents and elements in a given situation or issue in order to achieve a certain common goal. To be sure, given the fact that we are all human beings, there must be some goals or good that we can share in common, even if these goals are low in the hierarchy of human goals. We can always start somewhere for us to work together not only in spite of but rather because of our differences and conflicts.

For this, of course, we should try to restrain emphasizing the differences and conflicts that divide us. We should rather focus more on how our differences and conflicts can somehow work in tandem, in solidarity, to attain a shared goal.



Living Mission

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

AS our local Church recalls the "500 Years of Christianity" in 2021, it is beneficial to clarify that although there were some baptisms and Masses in 1521, Christianity really did not take deep root at that time. The lasting implanting of the faith really begins in 1565 with the Augustinians who accompanied the expedition of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi. Succinctly stated, 1521 marks the "first arrival" of Christianity, while 1565 begins the "systematic evangelization" of the people through organized programs of propagating the faith. Some initial missionary efforts can be briefly identified.

PROMOTING JUSTICE. The early missionaries often sought to protect the natives from the abuses of the Spanish conquistadors and local encomenderos; they had a vigorous leader in Fray Domingo de Salazar, OP, the first bishop of the Philippines. The synod that he summoned in 1582 clarified many difficult problems regarding the conquest, settlement, and administration of the country in accordance with Christian ideals and

principles of justice.

The Philippine Church of the sixteenth century certainly took sides, and it was not with the rich and powerful nor with fellow Spaniards, but with those who were oppressed and victims of injustice. Philippine Church historian John Schumacher, SJ, notes: "Skeptics have often questioned the reality of the rapid conversion of sixteenth-century Filipinos. If one wishes the answer, it is to be found right here, that the Church as a whole took the side of the poor and the oppressed, whether the oppressors were Spaniards or Filipino principales."

MISSION METHODS. The Spanish missionaries in the Philippines employed a variety of approaches to evangelization. The scattered clan villages were gathered together into larger communities (pueblos, cabeceras); often this implied radical lifestyle changes and hence could only be accomplished gradually. Instruction was given in native languages, as few Filipinos outside the Intramuros area of Manila were ever able to read, write, or speak Spanish with any proficiency.

Initial efforts of the early missionaries

In most missions, primary schools supplied the new Christian communities with catechists and local officials. Religion was made to permeate society by substituting splendid liturgical and paraliturgical observances (fiestas, processions, novenas) for traditional rites and festivals; many pious associations of prayer and charity were formed and promoted.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES. These tasks were almost exclusively the concern of the Church during the entire period of Spanish rule. Before the end of the sixteenth century, Manila had three hospitals, one for Spaniards, another for natives, and a third for the Chinese. The first two were conducted by Franciscans, the third by the Dominicans. Later (1611) the Hospitallers of Saint John of God came to make hospital work their special field of activity. In 1595 the Jesuits opened a grammar school for Spanish boys that later developed into the University of San Ignacio and had attached to it the residential college of San José, founded

Living Mission / A6

My life verse

I TURN 70 in a few days. An age I so thank the Lord for. An age that makes me look back more and more, and in a special way, to my past and the way the Lord fashioned my years, with all His love, His lessons and forgiveness, and the wonders He has gifted me with to see and experience. For I can truly say, as I have a few times before, that it may be my life, but it is really His plans. With apologies to Frank Sinatra, for me, it has not been My Way, but His Way.

As I look back, the best things that happened in my life were not really my doing. I simply responded to the situation. But it was God who really set things up. I have

written about some of these, but I hope to write about it some more, to express my gratitude and give the glory to Him.

I am blessed immensely with the gift of a loving spouse and family, of community and friends, a network that transcends borders, age and cultures. I cannot ask for more. The Lord blessed me with good health, a superb education, job opportunities and means of livelihood that provided for my family's needs, and overall a meaningful life. Most of all, in CFC, the Lord blessed me with the privilege of sharing His goodness to many more, telling the world of His love.

I am truly grateful, and I pray that I will spend the rest of my life sharing the goodness of the Lord, not in a conceptual way, but as it has concretely affected my life.

A few years back, after having read and reflected on many bible verses, I have chosen as my life verse, Micah 6:8, a verse that is better appreciated if read together with the rest of the paragraph.

"What shall I bring to the Lord, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? Will the Lord be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my first-

born child to pay for my sins? No, the Lord has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God."

As can be seen in this verse, the Lord's guide for us on how to live our lives, including how to worship him, is actually very simple. It is us who makes things complicated.

Micah 6:8 is my life verse because it is the anchor verse that I have chosen to guide me for the rest of the years that the Lord will bless me with, and against which I will measure all my actions henceforth: "to do what is

Active Faith / A6

Active Faith

Joe Tale



Candidly Speaking

Fr. Roy Cimagala

FOR fun, people nowadays often make and trade jokes about marriage. Some of the recent ones that managed to tickle me are the following:

- I had some words with my wife, and she had some paragraphs with me. (Bill Clinton)

- There's a way of transferring funds that is even faster than electronic banking. It's called marriage. (Michael Jordan)

- A good wife always forgives her husband when she's wrong. (Barack Obama)

- When you are in love, wonders happen. But once you get married, you wonder, what happened. (Steve Jobs)

We obviously should not take these jokes seriously, although many people say that they contain some grain of

truth. Well, jokes will always have some grain of truth in them, otherwise they would not be funny. But that's because whatever grain of truth they have is taken out of context or is not referred to the over-all nature and character of marriage. The grain of truth should therefore be taken with a grain of salt.

We need to see to it that we understand the real nature and purpose of marriage and the means of how to live it properly. For this, we need to go to its creator who is God and not us.

Many of the problems that arise in marriage nowadays precisely spring from the fact the many people nowadays do not anymore refer things to God to know their true nature, purpose and the proper means to use and live them.

People seem to prefer to refer marriage

to their own ideas only, to their own consensus, which even in their best condition cannot cope with all the possible scenarios that marriage can occasion. They think that with their own ideas and their own powers alone or with the help of others only, they can make marriage work. With that mindset, it will just be a matter of time before they get disappointed and contradicted.

We need to understand that marriage is, first of all, a creation of God. It is not our own making, our own invention. As such, we need to go to God to understand it properly and to live it as it should be lived.

Marriage is meant for the proper development of humanity according to the designs that God has for mankind.

Candidly Speaking / A6

CBCP Monitor

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By the Roadside

Fr. Eutiquio 'Euly' Belizar, Jr. SThD

“It is a concrete expression of the Catholicity, the universality of our faith that we must proclaim it to others. We are the faith's best stewards when we share it in its best lights.” —Bishop Crispin B. Varquez, Diocese of Borongan

Ferdinand Magellan did not really discover the Philippines on March 16, 1521 when he and his companions landed on Homonhon Island, now an integral part of the Diocese of Borongan (Eastern Samar, this writer's province). Historians say that, more factually, Magellan merely re-discovered the Philippines. Our ancestors, of Indo-Malay extraction, ancient Chinese traders (some of them becoming integrated immigrants) and our own aborigines were previous discoverers of what we now know as the Philippine islands. More important than the rediscovery of the Philippines was the Filipinos' discovery of Jesus Christ through the Christian faith by way of the Spanish missionaries.

The Church in the Philippines is currently agog over programs and activities marking these 500 years of the Christian (Catholic) faith in the islands.

It is such a temptation to treat this celebration as another Church-sponsored happening, conceived and launched with much gusto, then, after all is said and done, slowly fading by a slow but sure descent into oblivion. For example, whoever remembers now the massive and lengthy catechetical preparations throughout the Philippines for the arrival of the third millennium? If there are any, they are not too many.

But like life itself, the (Catholic) faith is an undeserved gift. That among the whole of Asia only the Philippines can call herself (mainly) Christian makes her the odd man out in the region. Yet what makes her alien to her fellow Asians easily connects her with a lot more human beings in Europe, the US, the Americas, Australia, even with many parts of Africa that recognize Jesus Christ as center of their lives. When overseas-born Filipinos visit the Philippines to partly claim their “heritage” it is rare for them to include their faith as part of it; but it is. The Filipino as he or she stands in the present chapter of history cannot be considered apart from his or her Christian, and especially Catholic, faith.

I remember meeting a Vietnamese priest in San Diego, California who came

to America through the Philippines. He narrated how his group fled their home country by a rickety boat being preyed upon by many pirates. But, to his surprise, when Filipino fishermen came upon them, they did not harm nor rob them nor were their women raped. Instead they were brought to a safe place for food, rest and later a necessary access to international refugee agencies. Then the priest was quiet for a while and continued, “Maybe the Filipinos behaved differently because they are Christians.” I felt a lump in my throat when I heard this. Not priests, not the formally ‘Churched’ people but fishermen uncovered the Christ in the Filipino.

The late Pope St John Paul II, in a perspicacious address to Filipinos on his arrival in 1981, said:

“The Philippine nation is deserving of particular honor since, from the beginning of its Christianization, from the moment that Magellan planted the Cross in Cebu four hundred and sixty years ago, on April 15, 1521 (this year it will be 500 years ago), all through the centuries, its people have remained true to the Christian faith. In an achievement that remains unparalleled in history, the message of Christ took root in the hearts of the people within a very brief span of time, and the Church was thus strongly implanted in this nation of seven thousand islands and numerous tribal and ethnic communities.”

The next statement reveals the saintly pope's insight into the Filipino experience:

“The rich geographical and human diversity, the various cultural traditions, and the people's spirit of joy and sharing, together with the fruits of the missionary efforts, have successfully blended and have shaped, through periods which were sometimes not devoid of shadows and weaknesses, a clear national identity that is unmistakably Filipino and truly Christian. The attachment to the Catholic faith has been tested under succeeding regimes of colonial control and foreign occupation, but fidelity to the faith and to the Church remained unshaken and grew even stronger and more mature.”

The nature of the gift of faith is so much like that of light. It cannot be kept nor hidden. The celebration of 500 years of the Christian faith in the Philippines should serve to wipe away

the dust of excessive familiarity with this gift among Filipinos that they often take it for granted. If even a pearl has to be worn and displayed that it may not lose its luster, so is faith. This quinticentennial gift from God that Filipinos received carries with it an impulse that pushes its bearers toward proclamation.

Again St John Paul II's words on Filipinos' role as regards their Catholic faith are unforgettable:

“Due homage must be paid to this achievement of the Filipino people, but what you also create an obligation and it confers upon the nation a specific mission. A country that has kept the Catholic faith strong and vibrant through the vicissitudes of its history, the sole nation in Asia that is approximately ninety percent Christian, assumes by this very fact the obligation not only to preserve its Christian heritage but to bear witness to the values of its Christian culture before the whole world.”

Pope Francis himself on July 17-18, 2018, on the Philippine Conference on the New Evangelization, urged Filipinos to be “missionaries of the Gospel of joy.” He prayed that they be “challenged to a missionary discipleship and transformation, setting their vision not only within the Philippine archipelago but also to the vast continent of Asia and even beyond.”

Although this challenge is for all Filipinos, those who are now overseas are well-placed to answer this call. I remember looking at kababayans gathering for Mass on a Sunday in a Catholic Church in Rome. Like their compatriots in Hong Kong and many other places around the world they were gathered to worship together, rest, chat with people they knew and check on news from home to allay homesickness. But a Filipino with a little Italian girl she was taking care of caught my eye. The girl's mother was with them too. In Italian the mother told me (she saw my clerical and, I guess, thought I was safe to talk to) how grateful she was to God and her Filipino maid. “Why?” I asked. She smiled and said, “She catechized our daughter. And now our daughter has been dragging my husband and me back to the Church, to the Eucharist, to Confession and to praying again.”

I looked at my simple, now smiling kababayan. I never felt prouder of my Filipino heritage.

500 Years of the Filipino Catholic Faith: Heritage, Identity, Mission

Commentary

Shannon Roberts

The demographics of 2021

2020 was a year of record population lows. Newly released Census Bureau population estimates show record lows in United States population growth, both in 2020 and for the entire 2010-to-2020 decade. California's population shrank for the first time as far back as records go, with the Census Bureau estimates indicating that California's population decreased by about 69,000 residents in the year ended July 1, 2020.

The United States is not alone.

The population of South Korea, Asia's fourth-largest economy, also fell for the first time in its history in 2020. In fact, the working-age populations of Hong Kong, Japan, Mainland China, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand all peaked back in 2015 and will continue to decline at an accelerating rate in the coming decades. By 2050, the proportion of elderly in their populations is expected to increase to 27%—from just 7% in 1995.

Globally, no less than 23 countries are expected to see their populations halve by 2100, according to a study published in the *Lancet* in 2020 which made headlines around the world (despite the fact a number of important think tanks, such as the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Vienna, have been predicting similar for years). The researchers at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation project that the global fertility rate will fall below 1.7 by 2100.

What does this rapid decline in birth rates tell us about the world of 2021? It seems to indicate that something is going wrong with society's most basic building block—the family and parenthood. The decline of the family is likely a significant cause of increasing loneliness across all age groups and a lack of purpose and identity among young people. One of the fastest aging populations in the world, Japan, even has a name for dying alone, *Kodokushi*, literally the “lonely death.”

It is also important because demographics is at the heart of economic growth and therefore impacts on all areas of our lives. As financial professional Christopher Yates writes:

“Whilst the variables influencing economic growth are numerous and complex, there is a driver whose overwhelming influence has the final say—demographics.”

The significance of demographics in our economy is perhaps underappreciated, which is unfortunate given its impact can be found in almost all aspects therein; from economic growth and consumption, to interest rates and valuations, and even to the velocity of money and the balance sheets of the world's central banks.

Demographics is what ties it all together. What begins as a kickstarter for growth and prosperity ultimately ends up a headwind. Unfortunately, for the majority of developed economies this headwind has already arrived and is only getting stronger.”

It sounds a little clichéd, but it still rings true that 2021 will be brighter if we encourage and support stable homes, committed parents, families with children, and a community which cares for and supports us all. It is very likely that this is actually a large part of what makes us happy and brings us purpose.



Duc in Altum

Atty. Aurora A. Santiago

ALMOST all the Local Government Units or LGUs in Metro Manila conducted surveys about anti-covid vaccinations. They want to know if the people are willing to be vaccinated. If yes, will they take any vaccines? Or would they prefer the vaccine of their choice? What if their preferred vaccine is not available, will they take other available vaccine? Or will they wait until their preferred vaccine become available?

The consultation done by the LGUs is noteworthy because they wanted to know the pulse of the people. Why buy vaccines which the people will reject, which surely is a waste of taxpayers'

money. The constituents have the freedom to decide if they would be vaccinated. They have the right to choose which vaccine they will take, even if they need to wait for the vaccine that they want. They should not be forced to sign waiver. After all, these all redound to the fact that it is their health and well-being that is at stake. The government has the obligation and moral duty to protect the lives of the citizens and it cannot impose the vaccine that they do not want. No person should be left behind during pandemic.

The Diocese of Kalookan's

Public and Political Affairs Ministry (DPPAM), in cooperation with Blue Chips Research and Consultancy Company or Blue Chips conducted a survey on the “Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice toward the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and Opinion on COVID-19 Vaccines.” The online survey was conducted from January 19 to February 2, 2021. Respondents are from the Cities of Navotas, Malabon and Caloocan. The survey says: (1) 7 of 10 respondents will take Covid-19 vaccine if available now; 8 of 10 respondents will take the vaccine if proven safe and effective, available

and free. (2) 61.7% will take vaccine to protect themselves from covid-19 and 47.9% believed the vaccine is safe. On the other hand, among those who will not take the vaccine, 63.6% are concerned with its safety; and 40.9% thought of possible side effects. They also mentioned the changing decisions of the government about COVID-19 pandemic. (3) 1/3 of the respondents will choose Pfizer followed by AstraZeneca, then Moderna. (4) Family members/relatives (22%), doctors or medical experts (17%) and the church (16%) are the top influencers among the respondents. (5) Almost 6 out

of 10 respondents will take the vaccine if recommended by the Church; less than half will take it if recommended by their employer.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) held its January 2021 Plenary Assembly via zoom, first time in its history, due to travel restrictions during this pandemic. They invited Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, a Dominican priest-scientist, to explain how the covid-19 vaccine works. Fr. Austriaco has 2 doctorates - Molecular Biology and Moral Theology and his talk became viral in social media. It was made more understandable by Bishop Pablo Virgilio “Ambo”

David in one of his Homilies. “Until that encounter (the talk of Fr. Austriaco), I thought it was the vaccine itself that was supposed to fight the virus. Not the vaccine but our own body. The vaccine merely activates the human body to produce the antibody needed in order to fight the virus, by allowing the body to identify the enemy. To do that, the scientists extract the spike protein from dead viruses, those spikes that surround the SARS COV2 balls like little nailheads, or like the spikes around a rambutan fruit. They inject these dead parts of the virus into our bloodstream... How

Duc in Altum / A6

Why should we be vaccinated?



Whatever

Fr. Francis Ongkingco

I WAS, if I recall right, in my intermediate years that I first heard of the word scapegoat. Our teacher explained that it meant ‘putting the blame on someone else who was innocent’. It would only be many years later that the term's rich cultural content would enrich my imagination and personal examination.

The Jews, back in Moses' days, more than conjuring terms had a custom from where later generations would draw the term scapegoat. It originates from the deep awareness of every Jew, as well as any other man, of his sinful condition. He knew that sin had spiritual roots and was manifested in one's thoughts,

words and actions. And only God could forgive it.

This latter conviction made it impossible to remove this inner stain, the very experience of guilt and remorse, that haunted every man's heart. How can sin be removed, even at least in some symbolic manner? Scapegoating!

Scapegoating was basically done in the following way: Naturally a goat was selected (sometimes a sheep). The priests gathered the people and invoked God's name to forgive their sins. He would then, and this is important, make a gesture symbolizing the transferring of the all the people's sins upon the goat. The goat was released into

the wilderness—they hoped—to be devoured by any hungry wild beast.

This practice even continued in Jesus' days with some embellished prophetic tones: they draped the goat with a purple cloth and placed on its head a crown of thorns. The people, sighing with relief, assumed their sins hopefully died with the goat.

Today, we would perhaps consider all these passé. We may not realize it, however, that the art of scapegoating continues to prevail in greater frequency and magnitude down to our present days. It comes in a most unsuspecting form called gossiping.

There is no other piece of

indulgence, someone said, that is so delightfully digested over a meal or a cup of tea as long as you're not the one on the menu! But what I'm more interested about is why do we, despite knowing its social and ethical implications, gossip? What makes it so enjoyably addicting at the expense of someone or something?

An author reflects that gossiping has a socio-anthropological function allowing people to overcome their differences and tensions. This, Rolheiser reasons out, is why “it is easier to form community against something rather than around something, and why it is easier to define ourselves more by what we

are against than by what we are for. (Sacred Fire)”

And this is precisely what Christ became: a scapegoat! “Jesus takes away the tensions and sins of the community by absorbing them, carrying them, transforming them, and not giving them back in kind. (...) He took in hatred, held it, transformed it, and gave back love; he took in bitterness, held it, transformed it, and gave back graciousness; he took in curses, held them, transformed them, and gave back blessings; and he took in murder, held it, transformed it, and gave back forgiveness. Jesus resisted the instinct to give back

Whatever / A6

Leave your comfort zone, Manila bishop tells priests



Bishop Broderick Pabillo, administrator of the Archdiocese of Manila, delivers his homily during Mass at the Manila Cathedral to open the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines on Feb. 6. The celebration also marked the 442nd anniversary of the elevation of Manila as a diocese. PHOTO BY FATIMA LLANZA/RCAM-AOC

BISHOP Broderick Pabillo of Manila told priests to leave their comfort zone and reach out to the margins of society or else risk becoming just under “maintenance mode”.

As the archdiocese opened its celebration of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines, he told parishes to continue on their “missionary mode” especially to the “peripheries”.

“Being in a state of mission is not optional,” Pabillo said in his homily during Mass at the Manila Cathedral on Saturday, Feb. 6.

“It is the necessary condition if we want to be renewed as a living church, and not just be a museum that is visited once in a while but could not change lives,” he said.

The celebration also marked the 442nd anniversary of the elevation of Manila as a diocese, the first in the Philippines, having under its jurisdiction the entire country.

In 1595, Manila was raised to an archdiocese with Nueva Segovia in Ilocandia, Nueva Caceres in Bicol and Cebu in the Visayas as its suffragan dioceses.

But even with deep historical roots, Pabillo warned of “the danger

of becoming monument”.

“We may have these, but let us not, as church, be just antiques, museums and artifacts whose main concern is preservation and conservation,” he said.

Reflecting on the Jubilee year’s theme, “Missio ad Gentes,” he asked the parishes to continue this “expanding mission of Manila to which we are all heirs to”.

While acknowledging that leaving the “cozy and familiar situation” is difficult, Pabillo said that the Covid-19 pandemic “has pushed us out of our comfort zones, whether we liked it or not”.

The health crisis, he said, also pushed the archdiocese to poorer communities to distribute aid and at the same time formed a sense of solidarity among parishes.

“Now that we have the initial push to get out of our comfort zones and to reach out to the peripheries, let us continue on this missionary mode,” Pabillo added.

“Yes, let us be bold in striking out new grounds. There will be expenses. We will make mistakes. There will be criticisms but move on,” he said. **(CBCP News)**

Living Mission / A4

in 1601 and today the San José Seminary.

The year 1611 saw the beginnings of the Dominican University of Santo Tomás, which continues today as a vibrant educational center. In 1640 the Dominicans also took charge of the College of San Juan de Letrán, started about a decade earlier by a zealous layman for the education of orphans. Various religious communities of women established themselves in Manila; frequently, they undertook the education of girls. Among these sisterhoods, that begun by Ignacia del Espíritu Santo, a Chinese mestiza, in 1684 and today known as the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM), deserves special mention as the first locally founded religious institute, specifically for

indigenous women.

MISSION SUPPORT. The considerable funds required for these mission works of schools, hospitals, and charitable works came from pious donations, called obras pías; these were often invested in the galleon trade or in large agricultural estates, the so-called friar lands. These arrangements led to conflicts of interest and resentment of the Church as landlord. This background must be borne in mind for a balanced understanding of the anticlerical reaction in the latter nineteenth century. Yet, despite these limitations, the ordinary people remained deeply and sincerely Catholic—all by God’s grace and the presence of the Holy Spirit!

Duc in Altum / A5

do you expect the body’s immune system to fight an enemy that it cannot recognize? Without vaccination, when the alien virus infects us, the body does not even know that it has been penetrated and that this intruder is already causing a lot of damage inside. It is unable to mobilize the army of soldiers that it needs to deploy in order to fight the invader, which the scientists call “pathogens”. In some instances, it may be too late by the time the immune system is able to recognize it and fight it.”

Pathogens are disease-causing microorganisms. They could be viruses, bacteria, fungus, and parasites. They could be found in the air, food and the surfaces that you come in contact with. “The antibodies destroy the pathogen which is then engulfed and digested by white blood cells which are integral part of the immune system that can produce chemicals called antitoxins that destroy the toxins or poisons that some bacteria produce when they invaded the body.

Bishop Ambo emphasized that

the Church supports the vaccination program. He said “I think the tendency to be swayed towards an anti-vaccine thinking on the basis of fake news, conspiracy theories and anti-science rhetoric is also part of the strategy of the evil one, so that it can cause more damage in our lives. Like Jesus, we should be intelligent enough to name our fears, our suspicions, biases and prejudices if we want to be able to exorcise our society from the attacks of the evil one.” Now, we know why we should be vaccinated.

Happy Birthday to February Celebrators in our family – Romarico Santiago who turns 7 years old during this pandemic. He is the eldest son of my brother Dr. Roy and wife Jinky. Also the birthday of my niece frontliner Dra. Ria Edeliz S. Imperial, daughter of my sister Flordeliza and brother-in-law Bobbie. Also my sister-in-law Leonisa Santiago, wife of my brother Nito.

Whatever / A5

in kind, hatred for hatred, curses for curses, jealousy for jealousy, murder for murder. He held and transformed these things rather than simply retransmitting them. He took away the sins of the world by absorbing them, at great cost to himself. (Ibid.)”

This is the lesson and path that Christ invites you and me

to follow if we truly want to be His fruitful disciples: to become scapegoats—removing the tensions, anxieties, depressions, divisions and unforgiveness—within our own families, workplace and other engagements. This is, as St. Josemaría put it, invites us to our daily mission of becoming sowers of peace and joy wherever we are.

Experts’ report shows Masses are not super-spreaders, says bishop



Devotees wear masks and face shields during Mass to celebrate the Feast of the Black Nazarene at Quiapo Church in Manila on Jan. 9, 2021. CBCP NEWS

THE latest report by experts that there was no spike in Covid-19 case in Metro Manila after the holidays and the Black Nazarene feast shows that church services are not super-spreaders, a Catholic bishop said.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo, administrator of the Manila archdiocese, said this also means that health protocols in churches are strictly implemented.

“Churches are not (coronavirus) spreaders because the management of services is good,” Pabillo said.

Latest OCTA Research report showed the holidays did not result

in a surge of Covid-19 cases, refuting previous fears that Christmas church services and the “Traslacion” could be super-spreader events for the virus.

Pabillo said that Masses and other religious services are nothing to be afraid of when proper mitigations are followed.

He said the latest report may also be used as a basis for government authorities to increase seating capacity in places of worship.

“If they claim that they are science-based, they should consider it,” the bishop added.

The seating capacity for churches in areas with the general community quarantine remained at 30 percent, while those in the modified GCQ are allowed at 50 percent attendance.

The Diocese of Tarlac in the north of Manila said the report also showed that the observance of safety measures in churches is effective in containing the spread of coronavirus.

“What is important is to carry on in solidifying our efforts to end the pandemic through unity and self-discipline,” it said. **(CBCP News)**

Archbishop to new priests: Put the ‘spotlight on Jesus’

ORDAINING three men to the priesthood, a Catholic archbishop told them that their mission is not to be in the “limelight” but to be the “spotlight” on God.

Priests are called to nourish the faithful, Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan said, so they must shine the spotlight to where it should be—Jesus Christ.

And if time comes when light is pointed at them, the archbishop asked them not hesitate to withdraw and fade away if needed.

“You are not called to be celebrities; you are not called to be in the limelight. You are called to be a light pointed to Jesus because you are only a sign,” he said.

It was Villegas’ first ordination with the

Society of the Divine Word community since becoming a bishop in 2001, and held at their seminary in Tagaytay City on Feb. 6.

To further his point, he told the ordinandi—two of them are Filipinos and the other a Vietnamese— that they are only disciples and not the master.

“You are only a symbol; you are not the symbolized. You are only a pupil, not the teacher,” Villegas said. “You are only a sign and nothing more.”

As someone older in the ministry, he reminded the new priests who will be soon sent as missionaries to Japan, Mexico and China, that ordination is only the beginning of a journey, not its end.

According to him, there



Three men lie prostrate for their ordination as priests for the Society of the Divine Word on Feb. 6, 2021. PHOTO COURTESY OF SVD

will come a time that “the cross will be heavy,” to the point of even asking questions like, “Is this the life for me?” or “where are you, Lord?”

But even if God knows that they will stumble in the future, the archbishop said that “God whispers to you now, ‘it is forever.’”

“Wherever you go, keep in mind it is the Lord working in your life, living in your life, speaking through you, living in you,” Villegas said.

The newly ordained SVD priests are Fr. Dondon De Guzman, Fr. Thomas Nguyen, and Fr. Germone Tugadi. **(CBCP News)**

Arancel / A1

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)**

Candidly Speaking / A4

It is meant for man and woman to generate love and to keep that love going not only for themselves, but also for God and for everybody else. In fact, it is meant to reflect the very love of God for mankind, for the Church.

It is meant for the

establishment of a family, for the propagation of mankind, for the proper upbringing, education and formation of children, and for the good and welfare of the spouses and society in general.

More importantly, marriage has to be understood as a path

of sanctification and apostolate for the persons involved. As such, it will always be involved in the drama of human salvation. There will be light and shadows, successes and defeats, gains and losses, good times and bad times, but in the end, if we do our part by uniting ourselves

with Christ, we will also enjoy the victory of Christ. Christ always has the last word.

So, while we can make some fun about marriage, let’s see to it that we fully understand that marriage is no joke. It is a serious business about our relation with God!

Active Faith / A4

just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God”.

As I reflect more on the verse, however, I realize it is not only future oriented, something that will still govern my future actions. I believe I chose it also because it is a verse that have actually guided my years in the past, or at least something that I hope my life have been based on, whether I was already conscious of the verse or not. I know that I have failed many times, that I have sinned, that I have disappointed the Lord my God. But even with these weaknesses, I know that this prophecy of the prophet Micah is the life I have intended

to live.

What an ideal way to live or at least to aspire for. To do what is just - to seek what is fair in every situation; not just to ensure what is good for ourselves, but also with the others we interact with; creating and observing a level playing field for everyone. To show constant love - the core of every Christian attitude, action and culture; a caring and selfless attitude for the other; not only every now and then, but constantly as a way of life; Jesus preached it, and more importantly, showed it by his example. To live in humble fellowship with our God - to be connected with God our creator;

to be joyful in every moment we share with him; to know our place in the relationship; in humility, accepting he is God, and we are his creature, not the other way around, not playing God ourselves.

It is a simple guide, but difficult to observe consistently. My birthday prayer is that the Lord will bless me with the grace to so chart and live my life beyond 70 as closely faithful as possible to this verse. May it also be that many more will adopt and live out this verse for themselves too.

Then, aside from my own and others’ transformation, the result will also be that the world will turn for the better.

2 Cebu bishops test positive for coronavirus



Cebu Archbishop Jose Palma and Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus Antonio Rañola during the Ash Wednesday Mass with the members of the archbishop's residence household in Cebu City on Feb. 17, 2021. SCREENSHOT/CACSC

AS spike of Covid-19 cases in Cebu City continues, two Catholic bishops and a priest have tested positive for the disease.

Archbishop Jose Palma and retired Auxiliary Bishop Antonio Rañola were admitted to hospital following symptoms of Covid-19.

Palma was first to be diagnosed with Covid-19 on Feb. 18, while Rañola's condition was announced on Feb. 20.

In a medical bulletin issued Feb. 22, the archdiocese said that the bishops "are both on the road to recovery according to their doctors".

"The doctors are hoping that they start to develop anti-bodies in their blood system," it said.

The archdiocese added that one of its priests, Fr. Russel Sungcad, was also hospitalized for coronavirus.

Sungcad is currently assigned at the Alliance of Two Hearts Parish in the city's Banawa district.

"Let us continue to pray for the recovery of our bishops and brother priest," the archdiocese said.

The bishops contracted the virus as the archdiocese is busy preparing for the 500th year commemoration of the first baptism in the Philippines set to be held on April 14.

The event will also launch the archdiocese's quinquennial celebration of Christianity in the country. **(CBCP News)**

Tandag bishop urges 'communal' action to help flood victims



Tandag City in Surigao del Sur is swamped with floodwaters due to heavy rains brought by Tropical Storm Auring on Feb. 21, 2021. PHOTO COURTESY OF GOV. AVEC PIMENTEL

A CATHOLIC bishop has called on the public to join hands in helping those displaced by severe flooding in Surigao del Sur province.

Bishop Raul Dael of Tandag said that a calamity is a time to band together and let community spirit shine.

"In this time of calamity, we see before our eyes that we cannot just think of ourselves," Dael said in his homily during Mass on Feb. 21.

"Safety, protection is something that is communal," he said.

On the same day, he visited the evacuees in some evacuation centers in the city and assessed their needs and situation.

Thousands of residents were evacuated after tropical depression "Auring" brought heavy rains to Surigao del Sur.

The country's first storm this year made landfall in Laoang, Northern Samar on Feb. 22.

While it weakened into a low pressure area after landfall, it continued to rain over land, affecting the Bicol region, and the provinces of Quezon, Marinduque and Romblon.

In his appeal for help, Dael added that any crisis is "an opportune time to fortify our bond as brothers and sisters".

"This is the best time to care for one another," he said.

Basilan prelate won't allow desecration of chapels to derail peace efforts

A CATHOLIC bishop condemned the desecration of some chapels in the southern Philippine island of Basilan but said it should not derail peace-building efforts in the area.

Bishop Leo Dalmao of Isabela prelatry said the recent attacks will in no way distract their works to promote interreligious dialogue.

"I remind everyone to be vigilant and refuse any opportunity for these bad elements to succeed in sowing division and hatred among us," Dalmao said in a statement issued Feb. 18.

"We will not allow ourselves to be dictated by the agenda of these people and we don't want to dignify their actions by giving them and their actions undue attention and publicity," he said.

Religious statues in two chapels in Lamitan City were found destroyed by unknown assailants on Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent for Catholics.

An attempted theft of religious icons in another chapel in the city on Feb. 16 was foiled by some residents.

Dalmao asked the faithful to



Bishop Leo Dalmao of Isabela celebrates Mass at the Sta. Isabel Cathedral in Basilan province's Isabela City on May 24, 2019. PHOTO BY JOHN LUIS GUADES, CMF

pray intensely that their efforts of a peaceful and progressive province will be sustained in spite of the recent incidents.

"We may fix our gaze on what brings us together as a province — Christians, Muslims, indigenous

peoples — rather than on what divides us," he said.

"Take care of our places of worship and watch over them. Take care of one another as one community of God," Dalmao added. **(CBCP News)**

Red-tagging / A1

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".

Insurgency / A1

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 group made the statement after the military accused some of its member schools as breeding grounds for communist rebels.

The military has earlier identified 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.

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Vaccination / A1

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)**

Knight / A3

members of the Knights performed over 77 million reported service hours and gave over \$187 million for charitable causes.

The Knights' accompanying insurance program has \$114 billion in life insurance in force. Its asset advisors program provides Catholic social teaching-compliant investment services to individuals and manages over \$26 billion in assets.

Anderson said Kelly is "extraordinarily well-qualified."

"Patrick has dedicated his life in service to the Church, his country, and the Knights of Columbus," said Anderson. "He has served as Deputy Supreme Knight for four years and is a well-rounded public servant with diplomatic and military

experience. He is ideally suited to carry on the work of the Knights of Columbus as we enter a new era, faithful to our principles of charity, unity and fraternity, and in close collaboration with the Holy See and the bishops throughout the world."

"Most recently, Patrick led the Knights' grassroots response to the COVID-19 pandemic titled 'Leave No Neighbor Behind'," Anderson continued. "Through this initiative, brother Knights around the world are serving those isolated and alone in quarantine, supporting food banks and blood centers in need of vital supplies, and providing other essential services. Patrick has the experience and strong faith necessary to lead the Knights into the future."

Kelly joined the Knights of Columbus in 1983 as a university student in Wisconsin. He has a law degree from Marquette University Law School and a master's in theological studies from the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family at The Catholic University of America. He spent over 20 years in the U.S. Navy, retiring as a Captain from the Judge Advocate General's Corps Reserve. He specialized in international and operational law and was Commanding Officer of the international law unit at the Naval War College.

He has served as an advisor to the Department of Justice and to Congress, including work as the legislative counsel to the U.S. House of

Representatives' Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He was a senior advisor to the Ambassador-At-Large for International Religious Freedom at the U.S. State Department. In that role, he was the State Department's principal interlocutor with the Holy See and other countries on issues of religious freedom. He also helped provide policy guidance on religious freedom in Iraq, Iran and Israel, according to his biography at The Catholic University of America's Center for the Study of Statesmanship, where he has served on the Council of Advisors.

In 2006 Kelly was named vice president for public policy of the Knights of Columbus. He has been an executive director for the Saint John Paul II National

Shrine in Washington, D.C., and he served as State Deputy of the District of Columbia from 2012-2013. In 2013 he was elected to the Knights of Columbus Board of Directors and in January 2017 he was elected Deputy Supreme Knight. In that position, he played a leading role in the Knights' international religious freedom efforts, its pro-life ultrasound initiative, and in developing the fraternal order's new public initiation ceremony.

He will be the 14th Supreme Knight on March 1.

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, Supreme Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, said he has worked with Kelly for over a decade.

"Patrick Kelly is a devoted husband, father of three young daughters, and a man

of deep faith with many years of experience as a public servant," Lori said. "He possesses the knowledge, experience and commitment necessary to carry the Order forward in service to our brother Knights, their families, our parishes, and our communities."

Carl Anderson retires on Feb. 28, upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70. He has served as Supreme Knight for over 20 years.

Kelly said he was "blessed" to have worked with Anderson, saying he has done "so much to strengthen the Knights of Columbus and fulfill our mission through acts of love, kindness, compassion and prayer that have helped countless people here at home and around the world." **(CNA)**

Bishops will consecrate nation to St. Joseph on May 1

PHILIPPINE Catholic bishops will consecrate the nation to the patronage of St. Joseph on May 1, his feast day, a church official said.

Bishop Broderick Pabillo said the episcopal conference approved the national consecration and assigned the bishops' Commission on the Laity, which he chairs, to organize the event.

To make sure the devotion is understood well and practiced properly, the Laiko laid out a 33-day "spiritual preparation" for the consecration that starts on March 30.

They are also facilitating the distribution of the book "Consecration to St. Joseph" by Marian Fr. Donald Calloway to dioceses and for those joining the consecration.

The event is one of the highlights of

the Philippine Church's celebration of the current "Year of St. Joseph".

Pope Francis has declared the special year in honor of the 150th anniversary of the saint as patron of the Universal Church.

The Laiko on Feb. 13 organized a virtual conference with Calloway on "how to make the Year of St. Joseph more meaningful and life-changing".

In his talk, the American priest lauded the national consecration as the world continues to face the ongoing effects of the global coronavirus pandemic.

"I know the Philippines is having a difficult right time now... We can go to him for everything, for hope, for peace, for conversion to bring us closer to Jesus and Mary," Calloway said.

"And when you do it in the Philippines, the fruit is not only

going in the Philippines because I know that Filipinos are going to spread this everywhere," he said.

According to him, St. Joseph will help "increase" one's virtue and holiness "because that's what a good father does".

"We are going to know the comfort of such a good father because that's what he did for Jesus and Mary, and that is what he wants to do for us," Calloway added.

"It is important to remember that we have the Virgin Mary as our spiritual mother, and we have St. Joseph as our spiritual father," he also said.

The national consecration falls on International Workers' Day, also known as Labor Day in most countries like the Philippines.

St. Joseph is the patron of many things including workers, fathers and families. **(CBCP News)**



Image of St. Joseph and the Child Jesus. VATICAN NEWS

500 Years of Christianity: Dioceses to designate 'jubilee churches'

CATHOLIC dioceses across the country will designate "jubilee churches" for the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines.

Archbishop Romulo Valles, president of the bishops' conference, said dioceses will kick off the jubilee year by opening the pilgrim churches' "holy door" on April 4.

"The jubilee year would open on Easter Sunday, remembering on this day the first recorded Eucharist celebrated in our land," Valles said.

The year-long celebration, he said, will then close on April 18 to 22 next year to coincide with the 2nd National Mission Congress, which is set in Cebu City.

The designation of pilgrim churches was among the key topics of the recent bishops' virtual plenary assembly.

Valles said this year's activities would go as planned but with some modifications to follow health guidelines.

"On the liturgical side of the celebration, we will celebrate it according to the



The National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Makati City is one of the designated pilgrim churches in the Archdiocese of Manila. PHOTO COURTESY OF NSOLG

present health protocols," he said.

This also means, according to him, that parishes will have to be more creative in their celebrations for people who cannot be accommodated in churches.

"The bishops are very concerned about the possible participation of many people... I hope the time will not come that authorities will

say the public cannot attend," he added.

In Manila, the archdiocese has already released the list of its 10 pilgrim churches to be the "centers of prayer, forgiveness, and charitable works".

These include the Manila Cathedral, Quiapo Church, Archdiocesan Shrine of Nuestra Señora de Guia, Archdiocesan Shrine of Sto. Niño de Tondo, and San

Pablo Apostol Parish, all located in the city of Manila.

Two churches are in Makati City — the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Sts. Peter and Paul Parish.

The San Felipe Neri Parish in Mandaluyong City, San Clara de Montefalco Parish in Pasay City and St. John the Baptist Parish in San Juan City are also declared as jubilee churches.

Nominations open for Catholic Social Media Awards



NOMINATIONS are now open for the 2020 Catholic Social Media Awards, to be presented at a virtual ceremony on March 20, 2021.

The Catholic Social Media Awards, which began in 2015, aims to honor individuals and institutions who have contributed to the spread of the "Good News" through social media.

Among its primary objectives are to motivate and encourage parishes, dioceses and church organizations to deliver Catholic content and to stand against online disinformation.

Now on its fifth year, the initiative is in support of the Church's call to use social media as a platform for evangelization, especially now in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

CSMA is a project of Youth Pinoy, a group of young Filipino Catholics, in partnership with Areopagus

Communications, Inc., and the Media Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

CSMA is accepting nominations in the following categories until February 25, 2021:

- Best Parish Facebook Page
- Best Facebook Public Group
- Best Parish Website
- Best Catholic Blog
- Best Twitter
- Catholic Song of the Year
- Female Social Media Influencer
- Best Catholic Vlog
- Best Instagram
- Male Social Media Influencer

Nominees will be ranked based on their content's impact, relevance, as well as their page's responsiveness and engagement rates, among others. **(CBCP News)**

Fr. Toledo, former AMRSP secretary, dies at 37

FRANCISCAN Fr. Dexter Toledo, former co-executive secretary of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP), died on Monday, February 8.

His confrere Fr. Angel Cortez said the priest was found unconscious in his bedroom at around 11:00 a.m.

He said that Toledo

was immediately brought to a nearby hospital but was pronounced dead on arrival.

The priest was 37 years old.

At press time, it is still not known what caused Toledo's death but Cortez said the priest had histories of "seizures".

"He (Toledo) used to experience seizures

when he is stressed or overexcited," Cortez said.

Toledo served as AMRSP co-executive secretary from 2014 to 2018.

At the time of his death, he was serving as the secretary general of the Order of Friars Minor – Philippine Province of San Pedro Bautista and director of Franciscan

Communications Office.

He was also one of the co-hosts of "Barangay Simbayanan" over Radio Veritas with Angelique Lazo.

Toledo was laid to rest at the La Loma Catholic Cemetery on Feb. 12, following a funeral Mass at the Basilica Minore de San Pedro Bautista in Quezon City. **(CBCP News)**



Fr. Dexter Toledo, OFM (1983-2021). SCREENSHOT/FRANCISCAN COMMUNICATIONS

Webinar on Philippine Catholic Church history launched

A WEBINAR series on the history of the Catholic Church of the Philippines was recently launched by the History Department of the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P).

The "Philippine Church History Webinar Series" was launched Feb. 13 and to be held every Saturday, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon, until April 17, 2021.

The UA&P said the event is their contribution to the nation's celebration of the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines. The series is open to people who are interested in the history of the Church in our country.

The webinar series will examine and analyze the challenges and responses that the Church encountered as it expanded and developed throughout the Philippines.

The series will tackle the historical beginnings of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines from the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century, the spread of the faith throughout the archipelago, the attempts of the Church to establish footholds in neighboring

territories and see how the Church faced various challenges in the local setting all the way until the 20th century.

The organizers said the speakers will use Jesuit Fr. John N. Schumacher books titled "Readings in Philippine Church History" and "Growth and Decline: Essays in Philippine Church History" as discussion material for the webinar.

Excerpts of the webinar will be made available soon in the CBCP Media Office YouTube channel, Faith Watch. **(Rommel F. Lopez/CBCP News)**

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PHILIPPINIANA Sacra, the official publication of the University of Santo Tomas' Ecclesiastical Faculties, has announced special issues for the 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines.

The journal has dedicated its first three issues this year to talk about the early years of religious missionaries in the archipelago.

"The works, collected here, present an in-depth scholarly understanding of the missionaries' collegial efforts in evangelizing the so-called 'bastion of Christianity' in Asia, which started in the 1500s," said its editor Fr. Jesus Miranda, OP.

The topics range from key historical figures, missionary approaches, the establishment of centers for evangelization, the arts, and the development of educational institutions.

Miranda, who is also the UST's secretary general, said the special editions are their contribution to mark the quicentennial jubilee.

Also serving as guest editor for the issue is Dr. Jorge Mojarro, a professor in the UST Graduate school.

Mojarro specializes in global Hispanic literature, and teaches and researches on transpacific studies and early Iberian accounts about Asia.

As 2021 also marks the 800th death anniversary of St. Dominic, the journal is also releasing a special issue to honor the founder of the Order of Preachers.

The UST's Center for Theology, Religious Studies and Ethics is working on the second volume, which bears the theme "The Dominican Way of Building the Church". **(CBCP News)**

Lent: A time for renewing faith, hope and love

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for Lent 2021



Pope Francis presides at the Stations of the Cross outside St. Peter's Basilica on Good Friday evening, April 10, 2020. VATICAN MEDIA

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (Mt 20:18)

DEAR Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus revealed to his disciples the deepest meaning of his mission when he told them of his passion, death and resurrection, in fulfilment of the Father's will. He then called the disciples to share in this mission for the salvation of the world.

In our Lenten journey towards Easter, let us remember the One who “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). During this season of conversion, let us renew our faith, draw from the “living water” of hope, and receive with open hearts the love of God, who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. At the Easter vigil, we will renew our baptismal promises and experience rebirth as new men and women by the working of the Holy Spirit. This Lenten journey, like the entire pilgrimage of the Christian life, is even now illuminated by the light of the resurrection, which inspires the thoughts, attitudes and decisions of the followers of Christ.

Fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as preached by Jesus (cf. Mt 6:1-18), enable and express our conversion. The path of poverty and self-denial (fasting), concern and loving care for the poor (almsgiving), and childlike dialogue with the Father (prayer) make it possible for us to live lives of sincere faith, living hope and effective charity.

1. Faith calls us to accept the truth and testify to it before God and all our brothers and sisters.

In this Lenten season, accepting and living the truth revealed in Christ means, first of all, opening our hearts to God's word, which the Church passes on from generation to generation. This truth is not an abstract concept reserved for a chosen intelligent few. Instead, it is a message that all of us can receive

and understand thanks to the wisdom of a heart open to the grandeur of God, who loves us even before we are aware of it. Christ himself is this truth. By taking on our humanity, even to its very limits, he has made himself the way—demanding, yet open to all—that leads to the fullness of life.

Fasting, experienced as a form of self-denial, helps those who undertake it in simplicity of heart to rediscover God's gift and to recognize that, created in his image and likeness, we find our fulfilment in him. In embracing the experience of poverty, those who fast make themselves poor with the poor and accumulate the treasure of a love both received and shared. In this way, fasting helps us to love God and our neighbour, inasmuch as love, as Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches, is a movement outwards that focuses our attention on others and considers them as one with ourselves (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 93).

Lent is a time for believing, for welcoming God into our lives and allowing him to “make his dwelling” among us (cf. Jn 14:23). Fasting involves being freed from all that weighs us down—like consumerism or an excess of information, whether true or false—in order to open the doors of our hearts to the One who comes to us, poor in all things, yet “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14): the Son of God our Savior.

2. Hope as “living water” enabling us to continue our journey.

The Samaritan woman at the well, whom Jesus asks for a drink, does not understand what he means when he says that he can offer her “living water” (Jn 4:10). Naturally, she thinks that he is referring to material water, but Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit whom he will give in abundance through the paschal mystery, bestowing a

hope that does not disappoint. Jesus had already spoken of this hope when, in telling of his passion and death, he said that he would “be raised on the third day” (Mt 20:19). Jesus was speaking of the future opened up by the Father's mercy. Hoping with him and because of him means believing that history does not end with our mistakes, our violence and injustice, or the sin that crucifies Love. It means receiving from his open heart the Father's forgiveness.

In these times of trouble, when everything seems fragile and uncertain, it may appear challenging to speak of hope. Yet Lent is precisely the season of hope, when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 32-33; 43-44). Saint Paul urges us to place our hope in reconciliation: “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). By receiving forgiveness in the sacrament that lies at the heart of our process of conversion, we in turn can spread forgiveness to others. Having received forgiveness ourselves, we can offer it through our willingness to enter into attentive dialogue with others and to give comfort to those experiencing sorrow and pain. God's forgiveness, offered also through our words and actions, enables us to experience an Easter of fraternity.

In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with “speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 223). In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be “willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference” (ibid.,

224).

Through recollection and silent prayer, hope is given to us as inspiration and interior light, illuminating the challenges and choices we face in our mission. Hence the need to pray (cf. Mt 6:6) and, in secret, to encounter the Father of tender love.

To experience Lent in hope entails growing in the realization that, in Jesus Christ, we are witnesses of new times, in which God is “making all things new” (cf. Rev 21:1-6). It means receiving the hope of Christ, who gave his life on the cross and was raised by God on the third day, and always being “prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls [us] to account for the hope that is in [us]” (1 Pet 3:15).

3. Love, following in the footsteps of Christ, in concern and compassion for all, is the highest expression of our faith and hope.

Love rejoices in seeing others grow. Hence it suffers when others are anguished, lonely, sick, homeless, despised or in need. Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion.

“Social love” makes it possible to advance towards a civilization of love, to which all of us can feel called. With its impulse to universality, love is capable of building a new world. No mere sentiment, it is the best means of discovering effective paths of development for everyone” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 183).

Love is a gift that gives meaning to our lives. It enables us to view those in need as members of our own family, as friends, brothers or sisters. A small amount, if given with love, never ends, but becomes a source of life and happiness. Such was the case with the jar of meal and jug of oil of the widow of Zarephath, who offered a cake of bread to the prophet Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 17:7-16);

it was also the case with the loaves blessed, broken and given by Jesus to the disciples to distribute to the crowd (cf. Mk 6:30-44). Such is the case too with our almsgiving, whether small or large, when offered with joy and simplicity.

To experience Lent with love means caring for those who suffer or feel abandoned and fearful because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In these days of deep uncertainty about the future, let us keep in mind the Lord's word to his Servant, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you” (Is 43:1). In our charity, may we speak words of reassurance and help others to realize that God loves them as sons and daughters.

“Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 187).

Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father.

May Mary, Mother of the Saviour, ever faithful at the foot of the cross and in the heart of the Church, sustain us with her loving presence. May the blessing of the risen Lord accompany all of us on our journey towards the light of Easter.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 November 2020, the Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours

FRANCISCUS

Importance and obligatory nature of ecclesiastical attire

The Binding Force of Art.61 of the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (New Edition)

By Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD

An Old Issue with Renewed Relevance

Something in the new version of the *Oratio imperata* moved me to revisit this old issue, which has appeared in this column twice in the past. It read:

May our concern and compassion for each other see us through this crisis and lead us to conversion and holiness.

In fact, aside from the addition of St. Joseph as one of the intercessors (right after Our Lady and before the other four intercessors), I consider this the most remarkable change in the revised version of the prayer, putting a spiritual focus to the whole pandemic. It is a call to conversion and holiness. Again, while conversion and holiness are perennial themes of the Church—after all, the Church is *Lumen gentium* and should precisely remind all men of God's salvific will for them—this pandemic has created an environment which is propitious for conversion. The word *crisis* leaps out of the prayer verse cited, a term which in its deepest sense means the reconsideration of a position hitherto peacefully accepted; it is the questioning of the *status quo* lest it becomes a comfort zone that is less than what is demanded by Christ's call at the Sermon on the Mount: *Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect* (Mt 5:48).

The issue of priestly garb or clerical attire is an old one, which some might even despise as an unimportant one—one of those details that in Latin is referred to as *peccata minuta* (little faults) or matters of no consequence. However, since we are being invited to conversion and holiness—the latter meaning *perfection* in Christ and the former meaning *change* towards that ideal—then every little imperfection, especially those which are easily corrected, constitutes what one of my favorite business pages columnists is fond of referring to as *low-lying fruits* that are easy to pick, provided one has the good will to do so. It is like

the issue of church improvement: perhaps now is not the time to carry out major reconstruction (no budget for that, especially with reduced collections due to limited church attendance), but minor cosmetic changes are definitely within reach: e.g., replating sacred vessels and acquiring new vestments, repainting some sections, revarnishing pews, detailed cleaning of altars and images, repair of broken windows and even upgrading the sound system. A general overhaul of the clergy might be a tall order—e.g., let them have more studies to improve their homilies (as Pope Francis has pointed out in his *Motu Proprio Aperuit illis*, n.4 (30.IX.2019) that instituted the *Sunday of the Word of God*, or enforce serious monthly days of recollection and yearly closed retreats as well as regular spiritual direction and updating seminars in the ecclesiastical sciences. But cosmetic changes—like improving their libraries so they upgrade at reasonable expense, or improving their own rectories so they can do their work better—are definitely within reach, especially in this time of pandemic. *Omnia cooperantur in bonum* (“All things work together unto good”)—St. Paul had written to the Christians of Rome—but that verse is preceded by the condition: *Diligentibus Deum* (“For those who love God”).

And there is the rub: for the person in love, there is no such thing as an insignificant detail, if that can make the beloved happy. The matter of priestly garb is a matter of obedience to ecclesiastical authority and to the identity of Jesus Christ, which is the identity that every priest must strive to attain. It is not really a mean thing; but so easy to do on the other hand: It is a low-lying fruit, ready for the picking.

The Juridic Structure of Priestly Attire

The matter of priestly garb is not just a matter of being advise.

It is not even just a desire of the Pope (for not to say of most of the faithful—i.e., to see their priests dressed as priests and not cross-dressing as teen-agers). It is a matter of law: Canon Law stipulates it, and no less than two recent Popes have reminded bishops to enforce it.

Firstly, it is clearly stipulated in the Code of Canon Law (CIC), forming part therefore of the universal law of the Church, to which all in the Church—but specially the sacred ministers—are obliged: “Clerics are to wear suitable ecclesiastical garb in accord with the norms issued by the conference of bishops and in accord with legitimate local custom” (CIC, c.284).

On the other hand, the CBCP (the conference of bishops of the Philippines) has approved the proper clerical attire as follows: (Cf. CB Prot.n. 35/84).

Cassock or religious habit;
Clergyman's suit;
Trousers of dark one-tone color or white, and a shirt of one-tone color, with the clerical collar. The shirt may also be either *polo-barong* or *barong tagalog* with a distinctive cross.

Secondly, the Holy See issued the **Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests**, dated 3.I.1994 and signed on the authority of St. John Paul II by our very own Card. Jose Sanchez, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy. In Canon Law, a *directory* belongs to the category of *general executive decrees*, which do not legislate new norms but are rather addressed to those in executive offices reminding them to enforce established norms. In this case, the **Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests** constituted a veritable *vademecum* (handbook or manual) for any priest to be reminded of what constitutes his identity and ministry and the practical means for him to be faithful to them.

Article 66 of that Directory reads: “The clergy should wear ‘suitable ecclesiastical dress, in accordance with the norms established by

the Episcopal Conference and the legitimate local custom’ (c.284). This means that the attire, when it is not the cassock, must be *different from the manner in which the laity dress*, and conform to the dignity and sacredness of his ministry. The style and color should be established by the Episcopal Conference, always in agreement with the dispositions of the universal law” (italics added for emphasis).

Furthermore, to forestall any false appeal to local usage, the Directory expressly stated: “Because of their incoherence with the spirit of this discipline, contrary practice cannot be considered legitimate customs and should be removed by the competent authority.” In other words, rather than giving in to contrary local custom, the CBCP is enjoined to remove such custom.

Thirdly, the 1994 Directory was re-edited and an enhanced and slightly enlarged version was issued—this time around by authority of Pope Benedict XVI—by the Congregation for the Clergy on 11.II.2013, nine years after the original version. In the 2013 edition, Art. 66 of the original version was reformed into Art.61, with a subheading that expressly stated: *The Importance and Obligatory Nature of Ecclesiastical Attire*. Salient points of that article are (italics added for emphasis):

“*The priest must be recognizable above all through his conduct, but also by his attire, which renders visible to all the faithful and to each person his identity and his belonging to God and to the Church. Clerical attire is the external sign of an interior reality: Indeed the priest no longer belongs to himself but, because of the sacramental seal he has received, is the property of God.*

“*For this reason, the priest, like the transitory deacon, must wear either cassock or suitable ecclesiastical dress, in accordance with the norms established by the Episcopal Conference and legitimate local customs; when other than the cassock, the attire must be different from the way*

laypersons dress and consonant with the dignity and sanctity of the minister; the style and the color are to be determined by the Conference of Bishops.

“Because of their incoherence with the spirit of this discipline, *contrary practices* are bereft of the rationality necessary for them to become legitimate customs and *must be absolutely eliminated by the competent authority.*

“*Moreover, in its form, color and dignity the cassock is most opportune, because it clearly distinguishes priests from laymen and makes people understand the sacred nature of their ministry.*”

“*Outside of specific exceptional cases, the non-use of ecclesiastical attire may manifest a weak sense of one's identity as a pastor dedicated entirely to the service of the Church.*”

The Binding Force of Art. 66 of the Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests

The next issue to be settled is the binding force of the above-mentioned norms on ecclesiastical attire. This question was raised to the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, the highest authority in the Church as regards the authoritative *interpretation* of legislative texts other than the Pope himself, who is the final interpreter of any law that he himself has given. The query was raised as regards Art. 66 of the original version of the Directory (1994). However, in what refers to the point in question (specific details of the ecclesiastical garb), there is absolutely no difference between what is laid down in Art. 66 of the original version, and Art. 61 of the new version of the Directory. We can quote extensively from the Explanatory Note issue by the aforementioned dicastery on 22.X.1994 (cf. **Communicaciones**, 27 [1995], 192-194):

1. “**The Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests**, published by the Congregation for the Clergy on assignment and with the approval of the Holy

Ecclesiastical / B7

One prayer over the offertory gifts

(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:)



Photo: Pixabay

Q: I have a question with regards to the offertory of the gifts. I have been in a parish in Spain where the prayer over both gifts are merged together and said as one by the priest, while I have also seen another in which the deacons have to wait for the priest to pronounce the prayers over the host before he prepares the wine and the water.

Can the deacon prepare both gifts before the priest says the prayer? Is it right for both prayers to be merged into one? Can the deacon recite the inaudible prayers of the rubrics that comes with mixing the water and the wine? — V.N., Vitoria, Spain

A: I have noticed this practice of

uniting the prayers over the gifts as something particular to Spain. Not that it is everywhere, indeed most priests follow the missal faithfully, but I have seen it several times on visits to Spain over the years and in different regions and have not noticed it in other countries that I have visited.

As far as I am aware there is no

special permission to do so, and the Spanish bishops' conference translation of the missal makes no mention of such a practice.

It must be pointed out, however, that the Roman rite is somewhat unusual in presenting the gifts of bread and wine separately. Most other Catholic rites have prayers over both gifts. However, they also

tend to have other moments in which the gifts are prepared, often with elaborate ceremonies, before the Mass proper has begun. Indeed, according to some experts, the moment of the preparation of the gifts is one of the factors that constitute the shape or structure of the world's major Eucharistic rites.

Given this importance to the structure of the Mass itself, priests should not follow what might seem to be, in their opinion, more practical or pragmatic solutions.

Since our reader specifically asks about the deacon's role, we can see this in part of the Mass is described in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal regarding Mass with a Deacon:

“178. After the Prayer of the Faithful, while the priest remains at the chair, the deacon prepares the altar, assisted by the acolyte, but it is the deacon's place to take care of the sacred vessels himself. He also assists the priest in receiving the people's gifts. Next, he hands the priest the paten with the bread to be consecrated, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly: *Per huius aquae* (By the mystery of this water), and after this presents the chalice to the priest. He may also carry out the preparation of the chalice at the credence table. If incense is used, the deacon assists the priest during the incensation of the gifts, the cross, and the altar; afterward, the deacon himself or the acolyte incenses the priest and the people.”

I believe that the above passage clarifies our reader's queries. The deacon is not required to wait until the priest finishes presenting the paten, and he can, and indeed should, recite the corresponding silent prayers.

Vatican II fifty-five years after

How to Interpret the Council

By Fr. Daniel Franklin E. Pilaro, CM

ON January 30, 2021 Pope Francis said that there should be no concession to those who deny the teachings of Vatican II. "You can be with the church and therefore follow the council, or you can not follow the council or interpret it in your own way, as you want, and you are not with the church," the pontiff said in a meeting with a group of catechists connected to the Italian bishops' conference. "The council is the magisterium of the church," said the pope. "On this point we must be demanding, severe. The council cannot be negotiated."

In order to place things in perspective, it might be good to revisit the background of this controversy by reposting what I wrote in November 2012 (at the National Convention of Religious Treasures in the Philippines). This debate on how to interpret the Council in fact fires some fierce mudslinging in high places among Cardinals and bishops and is the reason of the present anti-Francis fever among ordinary Catholics in some countries, especially the US.

Let me start in the halls of Vatican II in 1962. Already from the beginning, there were real debates, some of them very dramatic leading to walk-outs, between the so-called "progressives" and "conservatives". On the one hand, those who wished to preserve the status quo were a minority but they held crucial positions in the Curia (the present Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith [CDF] then called "The Holy Office"). They prepared the drafts for discussion (schema) and controlled the Council agenda.

On the other hand, the bishops who wanted change were influenced by the brewing renewal movements then (liturgical, biblical, ecumenical, patristics) and listened to emerging theologians during that time (Rahner, Congar, Schillebeckx, Ratzinger, etc.). They were not many but they were able to slowly rally the majority.

Colorful anecdotes abound on the clash of these two contending paradigms in the Council (Rynne 1963-1966). The first encounter already started on the first day – October 13, 1962. The Council



The statue of Saint Peter in the Vatican. VATICAN MEDIA

fathers were asked to vote on a pre-selected list of bishops to head the different commissions. Most of the names in the list were members of the Roman Curia.

Cardinal Liénart of France rose up and, in a prepared speech, proposed that they first meet in caucuses as bishops' conferences in order to select their own candidates. It was seconded by Cardinal Frings of Germany – whose theologian-consultant was the young priest, Fr. Joseph Ratzinger. This suggestion was greeted with a long applause indicating the sentiment of the assembly – of which a vote is no longer necessary. After barely 15 minutes of session that first day, the moderator adjourned the meeting to give in to the proposal.

In the words of the young Fr. Ratzinger: "a decision of great moment had here been made. The Council had shown its resolve to act independently and autonomously, rather than be degraded to the status of a mere organ of the preparatory

commission" (Ratzinger 1966).

In 1985, however, Cardinal Ratzinger (the future Benedict XVI) wanted to re-read that same event and said that Pope John XXIII was quite angry with that first day coup. However, Louis Capovilla—the long time secretary of the John XXIII—said that the Pope was delighted that the Council was reasserting itself (Sullivan 2002, 28).

This revisionist reading is very much alive in our times—fifty-five years after the Council. Truth to tell, many of us have not read all the documents ourselves. But those who have, those who are studying it closely and even those who have been there—could not agree how to read it. There are at least three existing interpretations: for want of a better name, we call them the traditionalists, the progressives, and the reformers (Faggioli 2012). It might be good to lay down their positions vis-à-vis Vatican II since their differing interpretations make our reading of Vatican II a bit confusing but also more exciting.

1. THE TRADITIONALISTS.

From the minority conservative wing of the Vatican II debates emerged the 'traditionalists' who rejected the Council itself. They could not swallow the change that Vatican II teaches—from its tinkering with the liturgy, religious freedom, relationship with other religions, etc. They think that what happened there was a maneuvering of some northern European bishops, thus, could never be a work of the Holy Spirit. This group is also called the 'sedevacantists' since the Papacy should have been vacant (sede vacante) from the time Pope Paul VI promulgated the acts of the Council. According to this group, by adopting Vatican II, the Church has become heretical or schismatic and Paul VI formally ceased to be a Pope. Spread all over the world—in blogs, movements, internet groups, periodicals, etc.—this group's foremost representative is the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

Lefebvre's group continued celebrating the Tridentine Mass, rejected Vatican II and thinks that the Catholic Church has been infiltrated by liberals, communists and freemasons. When Lefebvre consecrated four bishops to succeed him in his Congregation without permission from Rome, John Paul II excommunicated him and the bishops he ordained. The plot becomes more complicated when Pope Benedict XVI lifted the excommunication of these bishops in 2009, allowed the celebration of the Tridentine Mass for all Catholics and opened the way for their rehabilitation – to the uproar of many European Catholics who knew all along that one of those bishops (Richard Williamson) was openly anti-semitic and denied that the holocaust happened to the Jews.

2. THE PROGRESSIVES. The second group carries the 'progressive' line of interpretation. This group tries to advance the

Vatican II/ B7

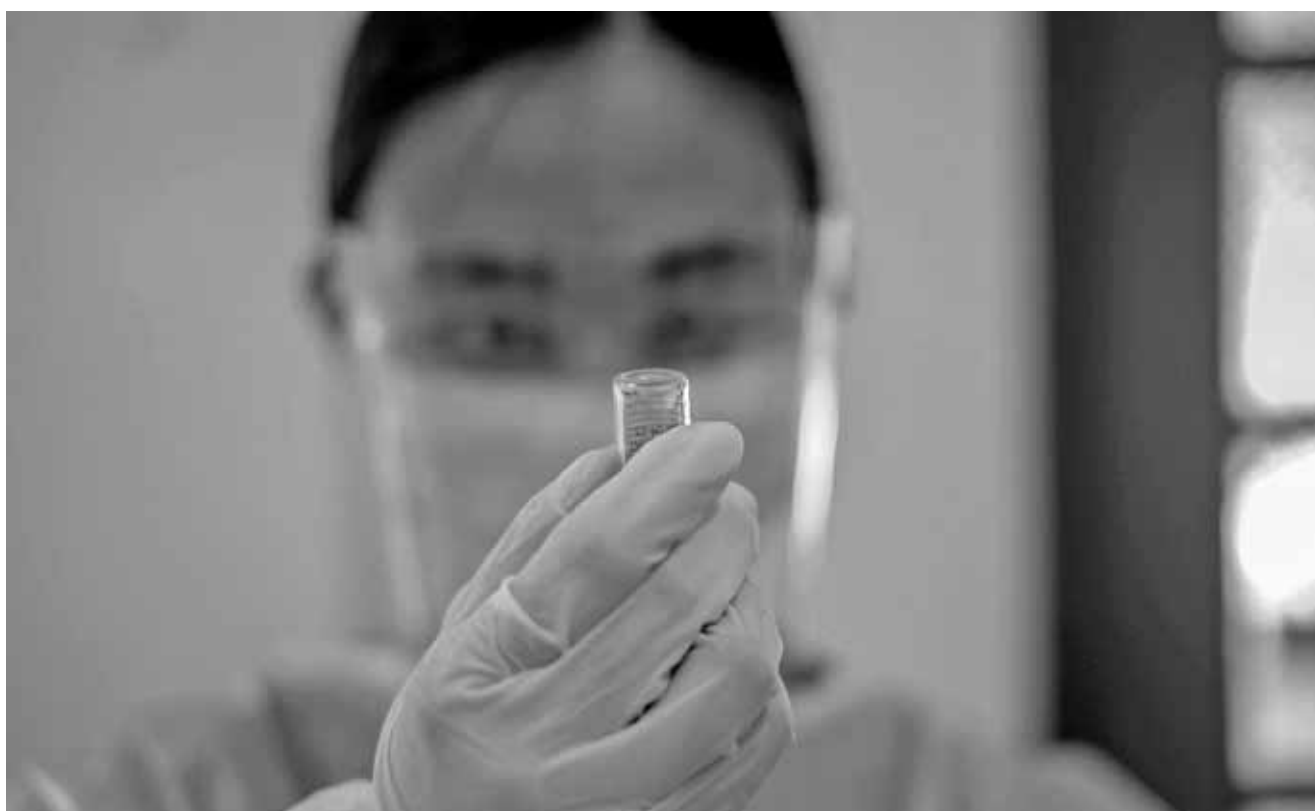
A vaccine for all

by Bro. Jaazeal Jakosalem

ALMOST a year in this pandemic, still hoping a cure for the dreaded COVID-19. We have almost 2.5 million deaths (as of February 19, 2021, approximately 2,448,188 deaths), and it is increasing. And yet, the vaccine war is creating instability in the approach of addressing the pandemic—solutions can hardly be achieved in our global fight against the pandemic, global recovery is still elusive. During the UN Security Council Meeting last February 17, 2021, António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General said: "Yet progress on vaccinations has been wildly uneven and unfair... The world urgently needs a Global Vaccination Plan to bring together all those with the required power, scientific expertise and production and financial capacities".

Solidarity call for equity

Who gets vaccinated first? The rich or the poor? It is from these questions, that Pope Francis offered a powerful message aiming to address the emerging greed for vaccines: "Today, in this time of darkness and uncertainty regarding the pandemic, various lights of hope appear, such as the discovery of vaccines. But for these lights to illuminate and bring hope to all, they need to be available to all. We cannot allow the various forms of nationalism closed in on themselves to prevent us from living as the truly human family that we are. Nor can we allow the virus of radical individualism to get the better of us and make us indifferent to the suffering of other brothers and sisters." (Urbi et Orbi, Christmas 2020 Message) As countries are now starting to purchase the



A nurse preparing to administer the Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine in Manila. CBCP NEWS

available vaccines, richer countries are on top of the list. There should be an equitable distribution, sans 'nationalism' and 'individualism,' if there is none we will not be solving the pandemic. "Thirty-six of these are high-income countries and six are middle-income countries, so there is a clear problem that low and most middle-income countries are not receiving the vaccine yet... vaccine nationalism hurts us all and is self-defeating," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Likely so, business runs into this merchandise war for COVID-19 vaccines. That aside from looking for the most effective and safest, some countries are bargaining sovereignty

and even taking billion-dollar loans laden with corruption and at the expense of the people's money.

Poor nations should not be forgotten, "Vaccine nationalism is self-defeating and will only delay global recovery. Together, we must keep our promise to leave no one behind," a message from António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General (2021 session of the Special Committee on Decolonization, February 18, 2021).

The other pandemics

The COVID-19 pandemic rippled into more social diseases, disastrous ones. We have seen how governments addressed the economic side of the impact, by bailing-out corpo-

rate giants instead of rescuing small businesses and of providing sustainable support to families especially the low and non-income families. This has wrecked havoc and more damaging impacts to societies. Currently, economic poverty is increasing, and during this pandemic—immeasurable!

The lockdown became opportunities of repressive political measures; armed conflicts, political arrests, and killings continue to happen even in the midst of the pandemic. "Our island awaits the day when the blood from the pandemic of violence stops flowing... When our priests in the diocese end burying victims of these orchestrated acts of terrorism," said Bishop Gerardo

Alminaza of the Diocese of San Carlos, Philippines in protest of the killings in his diocese even in the midst of the pandemic. Similar experiences are happening in Latin American countries.

Finding the other vaccines

Our common enemy is not just COVID... We have created more dreaded social diseases. We need to find a better cure of our vulnerabilities—public health, economic, social and psychological problems. As the pandemic provided us opportunities to see and admit not just the fragilities, but more so, the brokenness of our health systems and the incapacities of our politically divided government structures.

The other vaccines can address the added social suffering resulting from the impacts of the continuing pandemic. Pope Francis speaks of solidarity, as our efficient medicine of the pandemic, "... 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 neighbour. 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 neighbours and members of our one human family," said Pope Francis in his Message for the 29th World Day of the Sick 2021. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: "The COVID-19 crisis has shown above all the urgent need for human solidarity."

Ending the pandemic rests on our commitment to care through solidarity.*

Supplement to the recommendations for Holy Week and Paschal Triduum celebrations 2021 in time of Covid-19

“Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” Faith begins when we realize we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God’s strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

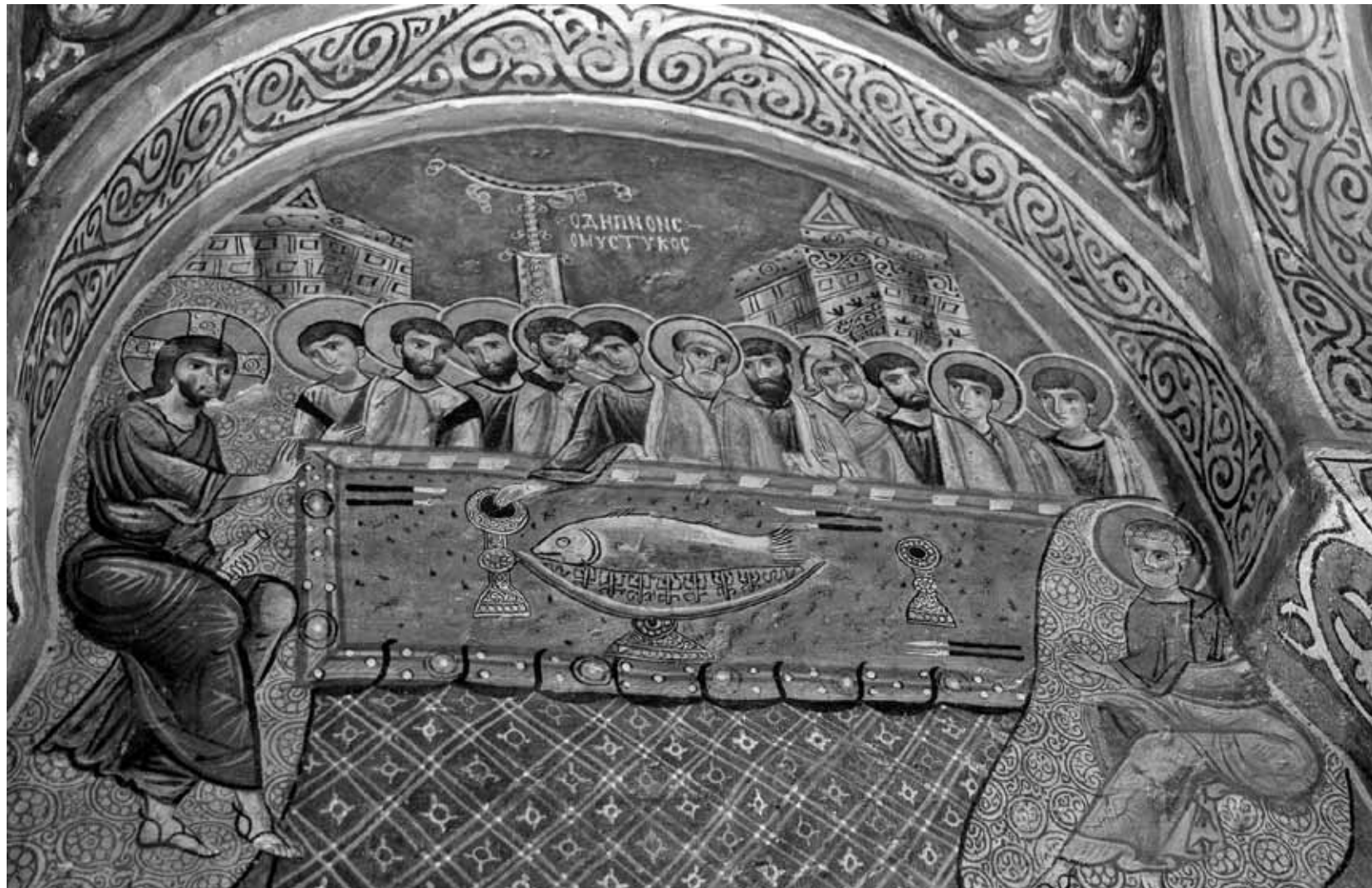
The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side. The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled. (Pope Francis, March 27, 2020)

This present instruction is a supplement to our previous instructions on liturgical celebrations in the time of the pandemic. At the same time, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments also has released series of instructions and decrees relevant to the pandemic caused by Covid-19.

All these instructions on the liturgical celebrations of the Church during this time of world crisis should help us find the balance between the worthy celebrations of the Paschal Triduum, the heart of our Christian faith and life, and the call of our health and civil authorities to help stem the rapid transmission of the virus. These instructions are updated both from the universal Church and from us here in the CBCP. After one year from the start of the Pandemic, the whole country has been put into different quarantine regimens. Today, church attendance is allowed but in a limited scale so as to implement social distancing. This will modify our Holy Week and Easter Triduum celebrations this year. We continue to follow the safety Protocols of the IATF and the Guidelines we issued on the Resumption of Liturgical celebrations in Time of Covid-19

We are offering all the Bishops and Diocesan Administrators updated guidelines for the celebrations of the Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum:

1. The Episcopal Commission on Liturgy is preparing a **Holy Week and Paschal Triduum Family/Home celebrations**. Since many of our faithful will still be unable to attend our celebrations, it is best to offer our faithful a Home/Family celebration that they can use even if they cannot be physically present in all our liturgical



celebrations. These family/home liturgies can be used after the family has followed the liturgical celebrations of the Church through online streaming. These Family/Home celebrations can be led by the father or any of the elders of the household. We will send you the PDF copy of these liturgies so you can translate these to your native language and eventually disseminate to your parishes and their parishioners. This way our faithful can be united in prayer and reflection on the great mystery of our salvation, in the Paschal mystery of our Lord and Savior.

2. We abide by the stringent policy of the Government on “Social Distancing”. Our suggestion for the presider of the celebrations to go around the parish after every celebration whether to bring the Blessed Sacrament or the Cross should be considered with great caution, taking great care not to give an opportunity for our faithful to congregate outside their homes. These suggestions can be omitted where strict lockdown is enforced. Whenever it is possible to have a motorcade of the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday, or of the Cross on Good Friday, or the Resurrected Christ after Easter Vigil, these should be prepared in consultation with the local government leaders and the Barangay officials.

3. The schedule of the online transmission of these celebrations should be made known to our faithful so they can follow, in spirit, these celebrations. Please be reminded that these need to be LIVE telematic broadcasting not recorded.

4. Palm Sunday:

A. “The Commemoration of the Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within the church, the sacred building.” (Decree, March 25, 2020).

B. It is recommended that we use the “Second Form: The Solemn Entrance” but in a modified way. Since the blessing of the Palm branches is in this form, it may be used at the Entrance rite when the presider is already in the sanctuary. The faithful must be in their places before the start of the celebration.

C. When the faithful follow this celebration through online streaming, the blessing of their Palms or any leaf branches is imparted by the Scriptural reading and the prayer of blessing during the celebration. There is no need for holy water for the blessing of their palm branches.

D. For the proclamation of the Passion Narrative, it is enough that there are two Lectors, and the priest-presider, each given the proper roles of the characters in the Gospel narration.

5. The Chrism Mass:

A. After thorough assessment of the situation of the diocese in the face of the threat of Covid-19 and in compliance with the call of the Government to postpone gathering of the people, each bishop may transfer this to another day before the Holy week.

B. The Oil of the sick may be blessed by each priest during the celebration of the anointing of the Sick, as the need arises. The prayer of blessing is provided in the Rite of Anointing of the Sick.

6. The Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper:

A. The celebration follows the instructions given to us in the Missal. The presentation of the Holy Oils can be done here.

B. A simplified form of the washing of the

feet may be done during this celebration. The number of the persons whose feet are to be washed need not be 12. There can be less than 12 but not more than twelve.

C. To prevent our people from congregating in numbers for the *Visita Iglesia*, we can instead bring in motorcade the Blessed Sacrament around the parish after the celebration of the Lord’s Supper Mass. Therefore, there will be no altar of repose that will be set up in the Church for this year. After the celebration the Blessed Sacrament will be reposed in the sacristy in silence. The church will be closed from then on till the next celebration.

D. Another option, if the parish decides to have the Altar of Repose, is to open the Church for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for a short period of time, e.g., 1 hour, then the church is closed and public adoration is ended.

E. Each Diocesan Bishop / Administrator needs to discern what can be pastorally possible and helpful for the faithful in their local Church.

7. Good Friday:

A. The liturgy is the usual Liturgy of the Friday of the Passion of the Lord found in the Roman Missal.

B. The Presider alone will do the kissing in veneration of the Cross. The faithful will be asked to make a common gesture of adoration of the cross together.

C. A special intention for the Covid-19 victims, doctors and nurses, health workers, the front-liners and those who have died may be added to the Prayers of the Faithful.

Holy Week / B7

DECREE

on the celebration of Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus in the General Roman Calendar

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments



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

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 traditional uncertainty of the Latin Church about the identity of Mary—the Magdalene to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection, the sister of Martha, the sinner whose sins the Lord had forgiven— which resulted in the inclusion of Martha alone on 29 July in the Roman Calendar, has been resolved in recent studies and times, as attested by the current Roman Martyrology, which also commemorates Mary and Lazarus on that day. Moreover, in some particular calendars the three siblings are already celebrated together.

Therefore, the Supreme Pontiff Pope FRANCIS, 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, and accepting the proposal of this Dicastery, has decreed that 29 July be designated in the General Roman Calendar as the Memorial of Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

The Memorial must therefore appear under this title in all Calendars and Liturgical Books for the celebration of Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours; the variations and additions to be adopted in the liturgical texts, attached to the present decree, must be translated, approved and, after confirmation by this Dicastery, published by the Episcopal Conferences.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 26 January 2021, Memorial of Saints Timothy and Titus, Bishops.

Robert Card. Sarah
Prefect

+ Arthur Roche
Archbishop Secretary



Archbishop Jose Romeo Lazo of Jaro sprinkles ashes on churchgoers' heads in last year's Ash Wednesday at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Candles in Iloilo City, Feb. 26, 2020. PHOTO COURTESY OF VINCENT P. VALENCIA

CBCP Lenten Message 2021

WITH our celebration of Ash Wednesday, we begin the holy season of Lent. Every year we have this sacred time to prepare our hearts and minds to enter worthily into the annual liturgical recalling of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus our Savior. This is the heart of our salvation history—the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus to gain for us eternal life.

One of the underlying liturgical themes during Lent is in fact the reexamination or revisit of our baptismal gift, that is, our being configured into Christ in baptism.

Thus, my hope and prayer during these very trying times because of the pandemic

and its multifaceted negative consequences affecting all of us, is that we come to a deeper appreciation of our being configured to Christ. To be reconfigured to Christ concretely means to do deeds of mercy and compassion, simply carrying our own cross and helping and inspiring others to carry theirs. During Lent we are inspired and reminded to carry our cross with confidence and with hope that we will triumph in the end. In this way, during Lent we treasure again our baptismal dignity, and if we experience that, we are well disposed to meet the risen Lord in our celebration of the Paschal Triduum. Together with our prayers, our fasting, and

our participation in the solemn liturgical celebrations, we also exert earnest effort at doing works of charity and solidarity with those who are most suffering among us in these difficult days of the pandemic.

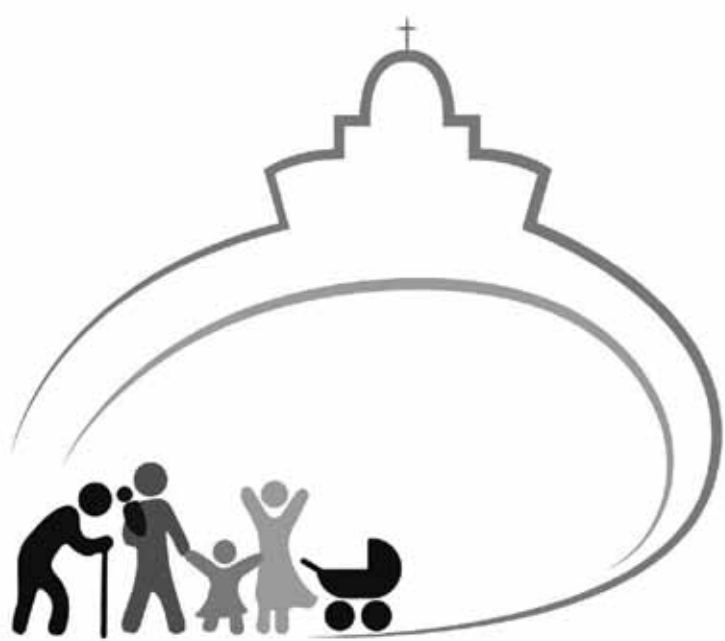
Our Holy Father, in his Message for Lent 2021, even said, that in the simplest way, we can do this: “In Lent, may we be increasingly concerned with speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement, and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn”. In order to give hope to others, it is sometimes enough simply to be kind, to be “willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile,

to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference”. (no. 2, par. 3)

This Lent, when we prepare ourselves to celebrate meaningfully the Paschal Mystery—the Death and Resurrection of Jesus—may this very mystery become the pattern of our lives. We are not afraid to carry our cross because we are confident of our own resurrection, because Jesus has risen from the dead. (Mt. 28:6)

+ROMULO G. VALLES, D.D.
Archbishop of Davao
CBCP President
16 February 2021

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the participants in the Online Meeting “Our Daily Love,” for the opening of the “Amoris Laetitia Family” Year



Amoris Laetitia Family Year 2021 - 2022

Dear brothers and sisters!

I greet all of you who are taking part in the Study Conference on the theme “Our daily love”. My thoughts go in particular to Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, to Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, Vicar for the Diocese of Rome, and to Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family.

Five years ago, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* on the beauty and joy of conjugal and family love was promulgated. On this anniversary I have invited you to spend a year re-reading the Document and reflecting on the theme, until the celebration of the 10th World Day of Families which, God willing, will take place in Rome on 26 June 2022. I am grateful to you for the initiatives you

have undertaken for this purpose and for the contribution that each of you offers in your own field of work.

In these five years, *Amoris Laetitia* has outlined the beginning of a journey, seeking to encourage a new pastoral approach to the family situation. The main intention of the Document is to communicate, in a profoundly changed time and culture, that today there is the need for a new outlook on the family on the part of the Church: it is not enough to reiterate the value and importance of doctrine, if we do not become protectors of the beauty of the family and if we do not take compassionate care of its frailties and its wounds.

These two aspects are at the heart of all family pastoral care: the frankness of the proclamation of the Gospel and the tenderness of accompaniment.

Indeed, on the one hand we

announce to couples, spouses and families a Word that helps them to grasp the authentic meaning of their union and of their love, a sign and image of Trinitarian love and of the covenant between Christ and the Church. It is the ever-new Word of the Gospel, from which all doctrine, even that on the family, can take shape. And it is a demanding Word, which seeks to free human relationships from the slavery that often disfigures them and renders them unstable: the dictatorship of emotions, the exaltation of the temporary that discourages lifelong commitment, the predominance of individualism, fear of the future. In the face of these difficulties, the Church reiterates to Christian spouses the value of marriage as God's plan, as a fruit of his Grace, and as a call to live fidelity and gratuitousness to the fullest. This is the way for relationships, even by way of a path marked by failures, falls and changes, to open up to the fullness of joy and of human fulfillment, and become a haven for fraternity and love in society.

On the other hand, this proclamation cannot and must never be given from above and from the outside. The Church is embodied in historical reality, as was her Master, and even when she proclaims the Gospel of the family, she does so immersing herself in real life, knowing first-hand the daily struggles of spouses and parents, their problems, their sufferings, all those small and large situations that weigh down and sometimes hinder their journey. This is the real context in which daily love is lived. Your conference is entitled: “Our daily love”. This is a meaningful choice. It is about the love generated by the simplicity and the silent work of life as a couple, by that daily and sometimes arduous commitment

carried out by spouses, mothers, fathers and children. A Gospel presented as a doctrine that fell from on high, and that did not enter into the “flesh” of this daily life, would be at risk of remaining a fine theory and, at times, of being experienced as a moral obligation. We are called to accompany, to listen, to bless the journey of families; not only to chart the direction, but to make the journey with them; to enter homes with discretion and love, to say to the couples: the Church is with you, the Lord is close to you, we want to help you safeguard the gift you have received.

Proclaiming the Gospel by accompanying people and placing ourselves at the service of their happiness: in this way, we can help families to journey in a way that responds to their vocation and mission, aware of the beauty of the bonds and of their foundation in the love of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

When the family lives in the sign of this divine Communion, which I wished to make explicit in even its existential aspects in *Amoris Laetitia*, then it becomes a living word of God-Love, spoken to the world and for the world. Indeed, the grammar of family relationships — that is, of conjugality, motherhood, fatherhood, filiality and fraternity — is the way through which we transmit the language of love, which gives meaning to life and human quality to every relationship. It is a language made up not only of words, but also of ways of being, of the way we speak, of the looks, gestures, times and spaces of our relationships with others. Married couples know this well; parents and children learn it daily in this school of love that is the family. This is also the sphere in which the transmission of faith between generations takes

place: it passes precisely through the language of the good and healthy relationships that are lived out in the family every day, especially when facing conflicts and difficulties together.

In this time of pandemic, amid so many psychological, economic and health-related difficulties, all this has become evident: family ties have been and are still being severely tested, but at the same time they remain the most steadfast point of reference, the strongest support, the irreplaceable safeguard to maintain the whole human and social community.

So let us support the family! Let us defend it from what compromises its beauty. Let us approach this mystery of love with wonder, discretion and tenderness. And let us commit ourselves to safeguarding its precious and delicate bonds: children, parents, grandparents.... We need these bonds to live and to live well, to make humanity more fraternal.

Therefore, the year dedicated to the family, which begins today, will be a propitious time to bring forward our reflection on *Amoris Laetitia*. And for this I thank you from the bottom of my heart, knowing that the John Paul II Institute can contribute in many ways, in dialogue with other academic and pastoral institutions, to the development of human, spiritual and pastoral attention in support of the family. I entrust you and your work to the Holy Family of Nazareth; and I ask you to do the same for me and my ministry.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 19 March 2021
Solemnity of St Joseph, beginning of the Amoris laetitia Family Year

Francis

Jesus the new Adam

1st Sunday of Lent, Year B (Mark 1:12-15)
February 21, 2021

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD



THAT the forces of wickedness seem to prevail is an impression we get from observation of what happens in the world. Corruption, for example, is endemic in many countries. One eats stories of corruption in the country for breakfast. But the problem of corruption in these countries is not simply that it has seeped into the psyche of many people in governments; the bigger problem is that it has become institutionalized.

This is how the power of sin works. Whereas the sin of the fall affected Adam, it continues to affect not only individuals but also institutions. Indeed, sin has become institutionalized that even if a new comer in a government office begins with good intention and good behavior, he ultimately becomes like the rest—a basket of bad eggs. Because of the power of sin, every day there is a reenactment of the experience of Adam—we succumb to temptations. The effect of this seeming triumph of evil is that wicked acts seem to go on with impunity, and doing good seems to go without reward. This observation is reflected in the Scripture itself: “It is vain to serve God, and what do we profit by keeping his command, and going about in penitential dress in awe of the Lord of hosts? Rather must we call the proud blessed; for indeed evildoers prosper, and even tempt God with impunity?” (Mal 3:14-15).

Today’s Gospel (Mark 1:12-15), however, asserts that God has begun to bring to an end the triumph of the forces of wickedness. It began with the Spirit sending Jesus out toward the desert (Mark 1:12). That the Spirit seizes someone and drives him to a certain place is common in

the Scriptures (1 Kgs 18:12; Ezek 8:3; Acts 8:39). In Mark, the evangelist portrays God sending Jesus into the battle with Satan. This harks back to the battle which began in paradise. During the battle with the Serpent, Adam was defeated. He believed in what the Serpent said about God’s command of not eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:6). Because he succumbed, the result was devastating: man, whom Adam represented, was not only at enmity with his fellowmen (Gen 2:8-16), but also with the environment (Gen 3:14-15).

Unlike Adam, however, Jesus was victorious in the battle with Satan in the desert. He was the righteous man who triumphed over the forces of evil. As a consequence, he was not harmed by the animals in the desert (Mark 1:13b), and was protected by the angels (Ps 91:11-13). As the Testament of Nephthali says, “The devil shall flee from you, and the wild beasts shall flee from you, and the angels shall cleave to you” (TestNaph 8:4). It appears therefore that, in Mark, the evangelist presents Jesus as the righteous man who undid the fall of Adam.

Because in Jesus the power of goodness has begun its triumph over the forces of wickedness, we are assured that the peace of God will achieve its victory on earth. In fact, early in his preaching, Jesus claimed that the Kingdom of God was making an advance (Mark 1:15). Today, we continue to claim territory on behalf of the Kingdom of God, because we have the power given us by Jesus. That power was given to us in baptism. In the second reading, which advises the

early Christians to suffer nobly in imitation of Jesus, Peter preserved for us a creedal formula: “he was put to death insofar as fleshly existence goes, but was given life in the realm of the spirit. It was in the spirit also that he went to preach to the spirits in prison... He went to heaven and is at God’s right hand, with angelic rulers and powers subjected to him” (1 Pet 3:18.22). According to this confession of baptismal faith, the death of Christ, which we share in baptism, produces life.

That is to say, when we are baptized, we participate in the paschal mystery: we share in his suffering, we continue to battle with the forces of evil, but because Christ triumphed over death, and in fact angels, authorities and powers are subject to him, we are assured that in being one with his new life, we will also be victorious against the forces of wickedness. The new life that began in the resurrection will have such an effect that, ultimately, we will see the Kingdom of God established among us. On account of this, we need not despair about evil in our midst. Thus, for instance, if only the laity make use of their power that God gave them in baptism, they would have enough resources to fight corruption in the country, because they have the assurance that the spirit of Jesus will triumph over it. They will be provided with sufficient courage to reject bribes or grease money because the spirit of Jesus will lead them to honesty, dedication and integrity. What they need to do is to cooperate with his Spirit; this done, they can claim a territory for the kingdom of God in our midst.

Eternalizing Peter’s experience

2nd Sunday of Lent, Year B (Mark 9:2-10)
February 28, 2021

By Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, SThD

IT may be recalled that in Mark, from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (Mark 1:14) until the episode in Caesarea Philippi where Jesus asked the disciples who he was (Mark 8:27-29), nobody seemed to know the mystery of Jesus. Even Peter who described him the Messiah (Mark 8:30) seemed ignorant of the title he gave him. He could not understand a crucified Messiah (Mark 8:31-32). But in today’s Gospel (Mark 9:2-10), Peter had a glimpse of the mystery that shrouded Jesus. He was overwhelmed with awe by what he saw—a transfigured Jesus—and he wanted to eternalize his experience. So he said, “Rabbi, how good it is for us to be here! Let us erect three booths on this site, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (Mark 9:5).

But there is more to this. When he saw Jesus, Peter recognized that his Master acquired a new kind of life which the Jewish people have been longing for. That life is symbolized by the white garment—“his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than the work of any bleacher could make them” (Mark 9:3)—which is a symbol of the life of resurrection (Rev 3:4; 7:9). Because that has dawned on Jesus, Peter seemed to think that the new age has dawned for all. For this reason, he offered to build three tents as a way of saying that he wanted Jesus to anticipate the future when God will dwell with men. This object of hope is echoed by Paul: “Indeed, we know that when the earthly tent in which we dwell is destroyed we have a dwelling provided for us by God, a dwelling in the heavens, not made by hands but to last forever. We groan while we are here, even as we yearn to have our heavenly habitation envelop us” (2 Cor 5:1-3; see also Rev 21:1-3).

But God did not allow Peter to eternalize his peak experience at the mountain: it was not yet the parousia, but simply its foretaste. Thus, speaking from the clouds, he said to the disciples, including Peter of course, that they have to listen to Jesus (Mark 9:7). And what words of

Jesus they are to listen to? In Mark’s theology, it is this: “If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow me. Whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will preserve it. What profit does a man show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process? What can a man offer in exchange for his life? If anyone in this faithless and corrupt age is ashamed of me and my doctrine, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes with the holy angels in his glory... I assure you, among those standing here there are some who will not taste death until they see the reign of God established in his Father’s glory” (Mark 8:34-9:1). But in listening to Jesus, we have to do so like Abraham, who gave up human assurance (Gen 22:1-2) because we can rest assured in God (Rom 8:38-39).

What assurance? It is that if we wish that God dwell with us, if we wish to be dressed in white, then we have to follow Jesus in his suffering (Mark 8:34-35). The sharing and the eternalizing of Peter’s experience at the mountain is given to those who deny their very self, and take up their cross. Indeed, if we do, we will not even taste death, and we shall attain that experience even here on earth (Mark 9:11).

In view of this, and in the light of the transfiguration of Jesus, the sufferings and failures in our life with Jesus are thus given a new perspective. If we suffer and fail with him, we do not experience simply bad moments that we could have avoided all the better. No, they are rather part and parcel of Christian life, of discipleship. They are, so to speak, constitutive elements of the experience of God’s glory (1 Pet 4:14). In our sufferings and failures for and in Christ, God is already pitching his tent among us, and we are already wearing the white garment, even as Jesus himself was recognized as the Messiah as he hung on the cross (Mark 15:39).

Transfiguration: the call to bring out the best in us

2nd Sunday of Lent, Year B (Mark 9:2-10)
February 28, 2021

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

THE transfiguration was a momentous event in the life of Jesus and his disciples because it revealed to them his divine identity as well as a very important aspect of his mission.

All those who had met him, but especially the closest among his disciples were the first to realize it. They had begun to wonder who that man could be who had the power to quell storms and cast out devils. (See Mk 4:31 and 1:27.) In the episode of the Transfiguration, the radiant aspect of Jesus’ whole person revealed the divinity hidden in him, and the voice of the Father confirmed that visual revelation: “This is my Son, my beloved.” (Mk 9:7)

The Voice revealed that Jesus was no ordinary man. He was not just an extraordinary man. He was not just another Moses or the greatest of the prophets Israel had ever known. He was no less than GOD’S BELOVED SON!

But that time, the Voice added another important message: “Listen to Him!” That short command was full of meaning and implications, for it concerned not only Jesus’ MISSION but also the way his disciples should relate to him: they should listen to his teaching and learn from his example, and thereby bring out the best in us.

The world is like an immense “learning center.” All of us are learners because we have plenty

to learn, both from formal and informal teachers. But the best and most trustworthy of them all is JESUS CHRIST, the only one who deserves the title TEACHER. (See Mt 23:10.) He is the teacher given to us by the Father, to teach the truths that really matter in life. His teaching is a call to bring out the best in us as a constant aspiration.

Jesus, the Teacher of all men, is different from all other teachers. He is different in what he teaches, and in the way he teaches it. Being the only one who knows the Father perfectly, he has come to reveal Him to all men. (See Jn 1:18.) Jesus’ words are filled with divine wisdom, a wisdom he wants to share with us to make our joy full. (See Jn 16:24.) That is why the Father enjoins his disciples: “Listen to him!”

Jesus is also different from the teachers of his time who “bind up heavy loads on people’s shoulders, while they themselves will not lift a finger to budge them” (Mt 23:4). Jesus is a teacher who teaches by example, even before teaching by words. His whole life is his most impressive lesson.

Through it and through his preaching, Jesus introduces us to the mysterious wisdom of the cross and injects in us the hope of the Resurrection. His message is essentially one of love and life. How fortunate we are to be numbered among his disciples!

The call to repent and start living a new life

1st Sunday of Lent, Year B (Mark 1:12-15)
February 21, 2021

By Fr. Sal Putzu, SDB

LENT is a long journey with a clear purpose and a wonderful destination: sharing in the life of grace, the fruit of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. It is a quest for a fuller life, or – for those who have lost God’s grace—a repentance reaching out toward a renewed experience of God’s friendship.

In order to achieve such a purpose, we need to be properly guided. We all need a wise, knowledgeable, and trustworthy guide. People setting out on a journey in unfamiliar regions feel the need for maps and a guide – someone who knows the way and can lead the travelers safe and sound to their destination.

In our effort to regain or experience more fully the vibrant life of divine grace, we Christians can find no better guide than the WORD OF GOD. All the three readings for today hint at a new beginning: after the purification wrought through the Flood, God makes a new Covenant with mankind; St. Peter reminds the faithful of the newness of life brought about by baptism; Jesus calls all to conversion and to live a life according to the Gospel.

Many books written by great writers and novelists may be more attractive in their typographical presentation; more intriguing in their plots and sparkling in their language. But no piece of literature can match the truthfulness and perennial relevance of the Gospel. Wrapped in the simple words of men who lived almost twenty centuries ago, the Gospel contains a message which is the Word of God, the Word of Christ, the Man of the Good News, our Way, our Truth, our Life . . .

This Lenten Season will be a golden opportunity for us to get acquainted with the content of the Gospel and listen to its heartening message. We can do so individually or with the other members of our family, group, class, or community. That will be the first stage in our becoming disciples of the Lord.

But reading it will not suffice. We shall have to assimilate its spirit through a work of prayerful reflection and internalization. We should also be constantly open to the action of the Holy Spirit, who is at work in us through the

teaching of the Church, as well as in the “signs of the times” and the experiences and insights of communities and individuals. This is the second stage of discipleship.

The Gospel, as the divinely inspired guide, deserves to be trusted to the full for it bears the hallmark of truth on every page. Its author is no apprentice; its authentic interpreter, no amateur.

The Gospel also bears the hallmark of life, not only in the sense that it promises and leads to eternal life, but also in the sense that its truth has to become part of our life. We are expected to live out its message consistently, constantly, and bravely – the third stage in a life of discipleship. The Gospel, more than any other trusted guide, has to be obeyed at all times. All this is not easy. Often, it may demand that we change our way of thinking, or the way we relate to God and others. It may demand a radical and constant conversion. Such is the spirit of Lent. Such is the call of Christ, addressed to each one of us, today. Such is the cost of discipleship!

The virus that rules the world

By Fr. Shay Cullen

THE human species thinks that it the smartest that ever evolved on this planet. We think we are smarter and more powerful than all other species. Have we now met our match by non-living entities, pathogens no less? They need a host to replicate and so they invade the cells of plants, animals and humans. Once inside the cell, the virus will devastate the organism and it is a fight to the death or to survive. There are more than a quadrillion viruses on this planet, more than all the billions of stars in the universe. So we are outnumbered in this battle against the killer virus.

The Covid-19, as we call it and its variants, is an almost invisible species of virus that has invaded our society, infected our bodies, devastated families, brought much human suffering and loss having taken 2.32 million lives and crippled our entire economy. One hundred six million people have been infected and most are grievously sick, according to the Johns Hopkins University. The infections and death still continue as you read this. There is no known effective medication for Covid-19.

One year ago, this great shock hit our once impervious and proud world and what a humiliation that was to the human species. Not only did we humans not understand how to protect and cure ourselves, but millions of people still go about in gross ignorance of the danger and ignore the protective measures, such as masks, distancing and lockdowns, needed to protect ourselves and our neighbors to stop the virus from spreading. Many humans still lack respect for this deadly killer virus and they are giving it free rein to replicate and kill more people. Hospitals in many countries are overwhelmed.

A small number of virologists, scientists who study the nature of a virus, have come to the rescue in super quick time to invent vaccines. Many were already halfway there, having worked on developing a vaccine for previous relatives to Covid-19. After the last pandemic of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that was first identified at the end of February 2003 during an outbreak that emerged in China and spread to four other countries, research continued expecting the next mutation.

It seems that many governments and societies have ignored the



Fr. Hans Magdurulang of San Felipe Neri Parish visits and prays for the medical frontliners against Covid-19 at the VRP Medical Center in Mandaluyong City April 17. PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIC PAUL GUANLAO

dangers poised. It has now been established by the latest investigation by the World Health Organization (WHO) that the virus passed from animal to animal and to humans. It is established that it first emerged at the Wuhan wet food market where exotic animals were kept and slaughtered for food and that is where it made its transition to humans.

Bats and pangolins are potential candidates for transmission. Cats and minks are also likely carriers. The traders in illegal capture and sale of wild animals are to blame above all as the source of this and secondly, the buyers of such wild animals and the government officials who allowed it to thrive.. The empty belief that animal parts are effective traditional medicine just has to change. The demand of rhino horn is insatiable, it seems, and has devastated the rhino populations and one species is now extinct.

That invasion of the natural world by us humans to plunder,

devastate and laid waste the natural worlds is at the root of the problem. Scientists and researchers know that the destruction of the rain forests everywhere make animals live in closer proximity to humans and infections is likely. The HIV and Ebola were suggested as having come from humans eating ‘bush meat,’ that is, monkeys and forest pigs, perhaps.

The rain forest destruction is also eliminating thousands of other species. We are a very violent and destructive species to walk this planet to the point that the human species, us with the big developed brains and so called intelligence, are acting in a very unintelligent way.

Destroying the Amazon rain forest to replace it with pasture for 200 million cattle to supply beef for the western world, cattle-ranching has taken over 75 percent of all destroyed forest in the Amazon. Incursion of outsiders into the forest lands of the indigenous people has brought death and

sickness to them. They are in a dire state with the Covid-19 for which they have no resistance. The indigenous people face extinction.

Climate change by global warming and an excess of CO2 and methane in the environment is one more self-destructive behavior of the human species. We are living in such an extravagant way that we are stupidly destroying and damaging the environment that we actually depend on to continue healthy living. There are about 989.03 million head of cattle in the world, as of last 2019. That is a reduction from over one billion cattle in 2014. Yet the methane gas they produce contributes greatly to global warming.

So, people are eating less beef perhaps and hopefully that trend will continue with a corresponding reduction in people dying from cholesterol-driven heart attacks. Eating more plant-based foods such as vegetables and fruit is the healthy and more natural friendly way to live.

The truth of that dangerous impact of global warming is coming home to us now as some nations are buried in excessive snow storms while in other regions of the planet forests are burning and killing millions of animals. The oceans are acidified, crops wither and die because of droughts and yet in other parts of the world crops are destroyed and hundreds of animals and people are drown in massive floods and landslides.

What a challenge we face, we need to change faster, to adapt and turn more quickly to non-fossil fuels, use renewable sources for electric power, drive electric cars, practice recycling on a massive scale and elimination of plastic. Eating plant-based food is something we can start with and go on from there. The vaccine has brought hope for survival for millions and may we learn important lessons on how to change our lifestyle. Live with respect for the natural world and the creatures of the earth. I suggest we give the viruses a pass.*

Ecclesiastical / B2

Father John Paul II, is certainly pervaded, in its entirety, by a deep pastoral spirit. However, this does not detract from the *prescriptive value of many of its rules, which are not merely exhortation in nature but are legally binding.*” (n.1)

2. “With regard specifically to Article 66 of the **Directory for the Ministry and Life of priests**, it contains a general supplementary rule of c.284 CIC, with the specific characteristics of the Implementing General Decrees (see c.31). It is therefore a rule which has clearly been assigned legal liability, as can also be deduced from the very wording

of the text and the place where it was included: under the title *Obedience.*” (n.4)

3. “Diocesan Bishops are also the competent authority to urge obedience to the aforementioned discipline and to *remove* any practices contrary to the use of ecclesiastical dress (cf. c.392, §2). To the Episcopal Conferences correspond helping the individual diocesan Bishops fulfill their duty.” (n.7)

Conclusion

In the end, it is a matter of fidelity, which is always in the little things. A husband who takes off his wedding ring when he goes

out of the house or enters the office, or a wife who does the same, cannot possibly be justified with reasons of naturalness or fitting in. As the later version of the Directory stated: “Outside of specific exceptional cases, *the non-use of ecclesiastical attire may manifest a weak sense of one’s identity* as a pastor dedicated entirely to the service of the Church.”

Either the Law is observed—be it civil law or canon law—or it is not a law at all. And if there is no law, then how different are we from the creatures of the wild? At least even they follow their own laws of nature.

Vatican II/ B3

direction that the Council took as it was passed by the majority of bishops in the Assembly. As you well know, all the 16 documents were approved with very large majority of votes. After the Council, these bishops and theologians set to implement Vatican II’s liturgical reform, push structures of collegiality, open the church to dialogue with the modern world and other religions. There was euphoria after the Council. Vatican II was considered a decisive “event” (Komonchak), a “rupture” from the previous councils, “the beginning of the beginning” (Rahner), “new Pentecost” (John XXIII, Ratzinger), etc.

But there was also so much to do: to adapt liturgical celebration and formulate new norms, to systematize the new theology, etc. Leading theologians that belong to this group were also the theologian-consultants (periti) of the Council—Karl Rahner, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar, Edward Schillebeeckx, Hans Küng, etc. This group started a journal called Concilium in 1965 in order to theologially reflect “and continue the work of Vatican II”. Today, Concilium is translated into 6 languages and serves thousands of subscribers all over the world. Ratzinger was among its first editors. Later, Ratzinger parted ways with them (Ratzinger 1985, 1987).

3. THE REFORMERS. The third group is sometimes called the “hermeneutics of reform” (Faggioli 2012; O’Malley 2012). While the progressives are said to advance the hermeneutics of rupture or discontinuity, this group calls for the hermeneutics of reform or continuity. According to them, Vatican II is not a rupture but is in fundamental continuity with the whole tradition of the Church. Belonging to this group is another

set of theologian-consultants of Vatican II—Henri de Lubac, Jean Danielou, Hans Urs von Balthazar and Joseph Ratzinger.

While the second group has Concilium, this group also founded a journal in the 1970s—Communio. Some authors define the debate between these two camps as rooted from their different theological pedigrees. While the progressives are neo-Thomists; the members of the third group are neo-Augustinians (Komonchak 2009; Faggioli 2012). They also differ in method: while the second group reads Vatican II as a challenge to fully engage the modern world and its challenges (aggiornamento), this third group argues for a renewal of the church by going back to the sources (ressourcement). Crucial to the present debate is that Pope Benedict XVI and the Roman Curia favors the hermeneutics of continuity—an affirmation which he made public months after he became Pope in 2005 and now forwarded as the authentic hermeneutics of the Vatican II.

This makes the reading of Vatican II today more complex—but also more exciting—than usual. It is good to distinguish these different readings in order to understand the challenges of Vatican II as it is played out in the complex theological debates and pastoral movements in our times.

The questions that I will raise in future posts are meant to better appreciate Vatican II in our context in response to Pope Benedict XVI’s invitation to healthy debate and “initial goodwill without which there can be no understanding” (Ratzinger 2007). It is also an invitation for the Church to honestly read the signs of the times, and respond accordingly to the voices of the poor on the rough grounds of history.

Holy Week / B4

D. For the Proclamation of the Passion Narrative, please refer to number 4D.

8. Easter Vigil:

A. This is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches.

B. This can be celebrated not earlier than 6pm, depending on the curfew implemented in the region or place.

C. The “Lucernarium” can be celebrated within the building of the Church.

D. The Baptismal liturgy during this time can be done either to adults or children, but the number of candidates must be limited to two.

E. We retain the blessing of water and the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises”.

F. In place of the “Salubong”, a motorcade of the statue of the “Risen Lord” may be brought around the

parish, again in strict coordination with the Barangay officials so as to implement social distancing.

9. The Sacrament of Reconciliation:


A. We remind our clergy that we make available the sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance throughout the season of Lent. Our faithful should be informed of the days and the time for Confessions. This will prevent them from coming to the sacrament in great numbers during the Holy Week. We also urge our priests to follow the guidelines we issued for Confessions in the time of the Pandemic.

B. The faithful should be instructed on the issue of **Confession when no priest is available** during this time. Pope Francis has made this clarification as he echoes here the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “I know that many of you go to confession before Easter... Many will say to me: ‘But Father...I can’t leave the house and I want to make

my peace with the Lord. I want Him to embrace me... How can I do that unless I find a priest?’. Do what the catechism says. It’s very clear. If you don’t find a priest to go to confession, speak to God. He’s your Father. Tell Him the truth: ‘Lord. I did this and this and this. Pardon me.’ Ask His forgiveness with all your heart with an act of contrition, and promise Him, ‘afterward I will go to confession.’ You will return to God’s grace immediately. You yourself can draw near, as the catechism teaches us, to God’s forgiveness, without having a priest at hand.” (Homily, Pope Francis, March 20, 2020).

10. The Episcopal Commission on Liturgy is preparing the modified Paschal Triduum Celebrations, to guide the clergy and our Christian Communities. We will send you these in the coming days.

11. All these instructions are implemented only during this extraordinary period of the Quarantine due to Covid-19.



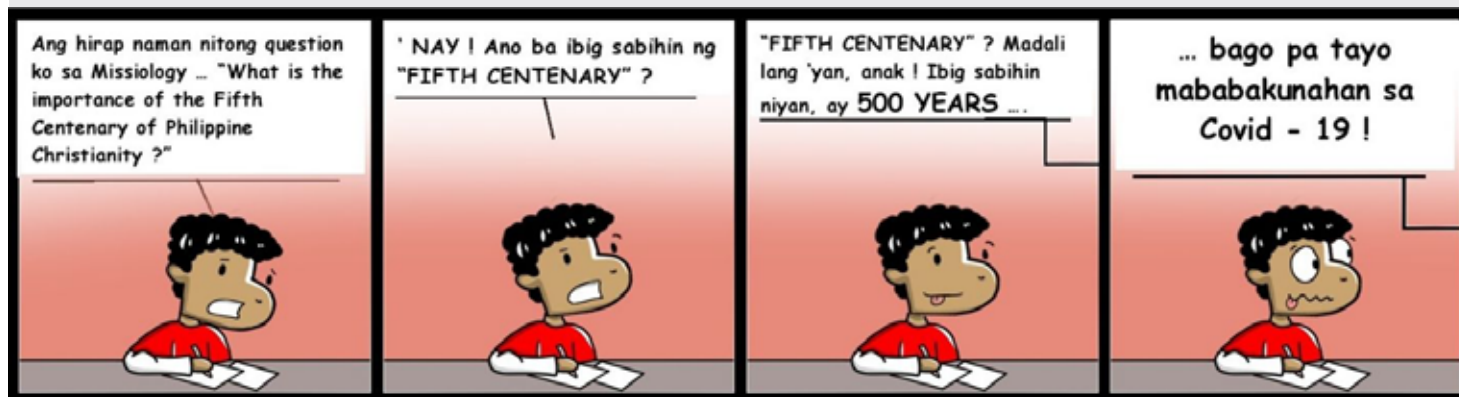
TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT **MORAL ASSESSMENT**

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



The Missing



DIRECTOR: Easy Ferrer **LEAD CAST:** Ritz Azul, Joseph Marco, Miles Ocampo, Joe Ishikawa **SCREENWRITER:** Easy Ferrer **PRODUCERS:** Lily Monteverde, Roselle Monteverde **EDITOR:** Renewin Alano **MUSICAL DIRECTOR:** Jessie Lasaten **CINEMATOGRAPHER:** Marvin Reyes **GENRE:** Horror **DISTRIBUTOR:** Regal **LOCATION:** Philippines **RUNNING TIME:** 1 hr 45 min

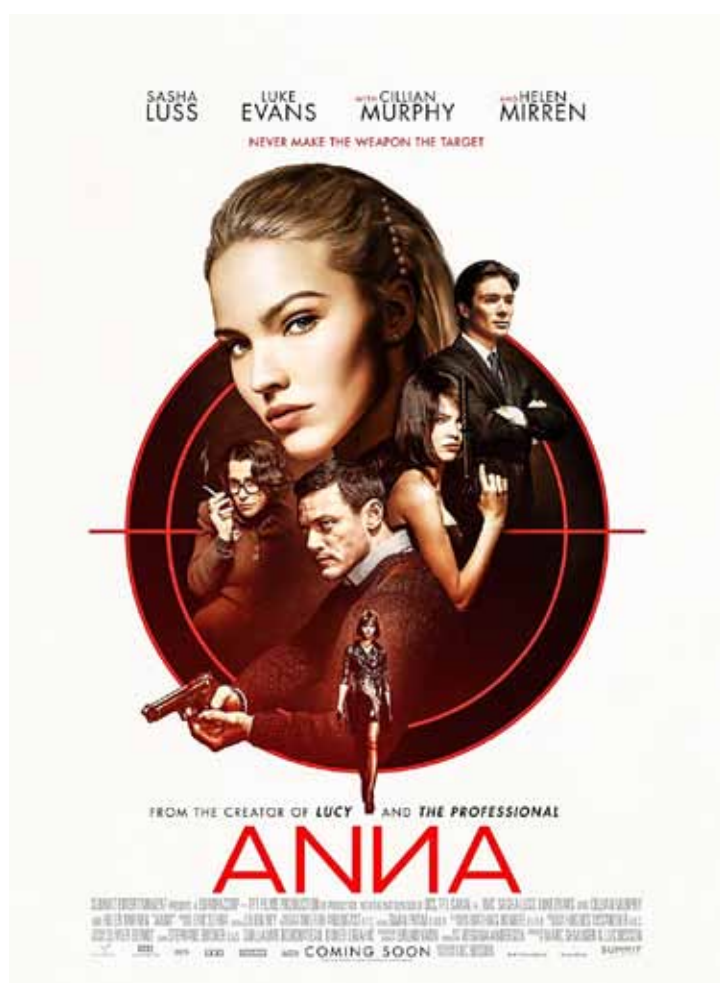
Technical assessment: 2.5 **Moral assessment: 3**
CINEMA rating: V 14 **MTRCB rating: PG**

DATING magkasintahan si Iris at Job (Ritz Azul, Joseph Marco). Pero dahil sa epekto sa emosyonal at mental na katayuan ni Iris nang makidnap ang kanyang kapatid, naghiwalay ang dalawa. Lumipas ang taon, nakabase na si Job sa Japan. Bumalik siya sa Pilipinas para hikayatin si Iris, isa nang arkitekto, na sumama sa Japan para sa restoration ng isang ancestral house na [ag-aari ng pamilya ni Riku Watanabe (Joe Kanikawa), Si Riku mismo, dati nilang propesor, ang may gustong mapasama si Iris sa proyekto. Sa Japan, makakasama ni

Iris at Job sa proyekto si Len (Miles Ocampo) na isang intern, at makikila din nila ang anak ni Riku na si Aki. Madaming mga kababalaghang mangyayari sa bahay, makikita ni Len ang dokumentong pruweba na ang nawawala niyang kapatid ay dati palang titser ni Aki, at malalaman ng grupo ang totoong dahilan kung bakit sila kinuha ni Riku: para ialay si Iris sa mga espiritung naniningil sa isang kasunduang di tinupad. Dahil may pandemya at para iwas-COVID, sa Upstream.ph sa internet nanood ang CINEMA ng mga pelikulang kasali sa Metro Manila Film Festival. Alam naman natin na kasama sa epekto ng pelikula sa manood ay nanggagaling sa gagahitang imahe sa screen at dumadagundong na tunog sa loob ng madilim at malamig na sinehan. Walang ganito sa laptop, mobile phone, at maliit na bluetooth speaker. Gayunpaman, naging kaakit-akit pa rin ang The Missing. Para kasi itong isang pintuang nag-aanyaya. Pagpasok mo, una mong tatanungin, sino ang cinematographer nito? Ang ganda ng kuha ng mga eksena, sa loob ng bahay at lalo na sa labas kapag ipinapakita ang mga bundok na hitik sa puno at tinatakuban ng mahamog na ulap sa Saga, Japan. Si Miles Ocampo bilang Len ay di nagkulang sa kanyang mga eksena kapag nangungulit, nagtataka, at natatakot. Pero para sa isang pelikulang horror, di ito nakakatakot. Sumablay sa editing. Putol ang mga eksenang puede sa nang pandagdag sa suspense; halimbawa'y nung di makita ang dalawang

trabahador o nung hinahanap si Len. Bitin. Maganda ang istorya, may konteksto ng kultura, pamilya, pag-ibig, at pati pa nga kalusugan. Pero di ito nagamit mabuti para makuha ang ating simpatya, galit, o gulat man lang sa mga pangyayari. Di rin tayo nakumbinsi ni Ritz Azul at Joseph Marco na samahan sila sa kanilang mga pinagdadaanan. May mga pagkakamaling nagpapasalin-salin sa mga henerasyon, mga pagkamuhing naipapasa ng ama sa anak. Ganyan ang tema ng The Missing, na naipakita kung paanong nagdudusa ang kasalukuyang henerasyon sa pagkakamali ng mga ninuno, at di ito matutuldukan kung di itutuwid ang pagkakamali at magpapatawad ang bawat isa. Dagdag sa aral na ito, at kulang man sa teknikal na elemento ang pelikula, thumbs up tayo sa pagpapakita ng galing ng Pilipino bilang propesyonal. Arkitektong eksperto sa restoration si Iris, kaya inimport pa siya sa Japan para sa isang proyekto. Si Job naman ay sa Japan na talaga naka-base, may pangalan na. Si Len ay nag-aaral sa Japan, at titser doon ang kanyang kapatid. Pero nagkulang pa rin ang istorya na iangat ang dangal at katauhan ng Pilipino. Dahil sa huli, walang katarungang nakamit o naipaglaban man lang sina Iris at Len para sa tangkang pagpatay na ginawa sa kanila. Basta pinutol na lang ang istorya. Nasapian pa si Job ng masamang espiritu. Kalabisan bang humingi ng hustisya? Puede bang humiling ng mga pelikulang magpapalakas sa atin bilang tao at bilang Pilipino?

Anna



DIRECTOR: Luc Besson **LEAD CAST:** Sasha Luss, Helen Mirren, Luke Evans, Cillian Murphy **SCREENWRITER:** Luc Besson **PRODUCERS:** Artemio Benki, Luc Besson, Blanche Neumann, Marc Shmuger **EDITOR:** Julien Rey **MUSICAL DIRECTOR:** Éric Serra **CINEMATOGRAPHER:** Thierry Arbogast **GENRE:** Action, Adventure **DISTRIBUTOR:** Netflix **LOCATION:** Serbia, Italy, France, Russia **RUNNING TIME:** 1hr 58min

Technical assessment: 2.5 **Moral assessment: 2**
CINEMA rating: V 18 **Netflix rating: 18+**

Anna Politova (Sasha Luss) is bruised and oppressed, pushed to a life of drugs and crime by an abusive partner. Between that and an equally treacherous life as a KGB agent, she chooses the latter with the help of recruiter Alex Tchenkov (Luke Evans). Now a trained assassin, she gets the attention of the CIA and is recruited as a

double agent by the agency's Leonard Miller (Cillian Murphy). Both men become Anna's lovers. Leading a life of freedom and anonymity is what Anna wants more than anything. Conniving with her superior Olga (Helen Mirren) who thirsts for the top KGB post, Anna assassinates the current head of the Russian spy agency so that Olga can take over. In exchange, Olga helps fake Anna's death and Anna escapes to freedom. Anna sashays as if on a runway, definitely unlike the ferocious assassin Scarlett Johansson in Lucy (by the same director) or Charlize Theron in Atomic Blonde. The action scenes are way too polished, like a finely choreographed dance of pure savage where the sound effects take the full responsibility for creating suspense. Good thing the script injected quotes from Chekhov, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky — they added a bit of humanity in the

movie. The scenes jump from one setting to another and editing of the flashbacks is muddled. Evans' Russian accent is forced and painful to hear, but Dame Helen Mirren delivers in her role, thanks to her. Every assignment is a perfect hit, executed with mechanical precision, with no room for pain, hate, or fear. Sex is routine, engaged between persons to relieve anger or manipulate the other. One is inclined to ask: where is humanity in all this? The prolonged fight scenes can be desensitizing, pleasurable even, so we don't recommend this for malleable minds. The insatiable thirst for freedom cannot be extinguished, and the desire to start anew with a clean slate and relying on one's courage and grit — this is our takeaway. But actions have consequences, choices affect us and those around us. These are buried in the movie, and we caution against this disvalue.

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.

FAITH WATCH

- Your Catholic Channel -

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