ASIAN MAGAZINE FOR HUMAN TRANSFORMATION

IMPACT

May 2015
VOL 49 NO 5

Looking at Trust Issues in the BBL

IMPACT

ISSN 0300-4155 / Asian Magazine for Human Transformation Through Education, Social Advocacy and Evangelization / P.O. Box 2481, 1099 Manila, Philippines
©Copyright 1974 by Social Impact Foundation, Inc.

Published monthly by
AREOPAGUS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ASIA, INC.

Editor
PEDRO QUITORIO III

Associate Editor
NIRVA'ANA DELACRUZ

Staff Writers
CHARLES AVILA
EULY BELIZAR
ROY CIMAGALA
ROY LAGARDE
LOPE ROBREDILLO

Sales & Advertising Supervisor
GLORIA FERNANDO

Circulation Manager
ERNANI RAMOS

Design Artist
RONALYN REGINO

COVER PHOTO BY RONALYN REGINO

Editorial Office: Ground Flr., Holy Face of Jesus Center & Convent, 1111 F. R. Hidalgo Street, Quiapo, Manila • Tel (632) 404-2182 • Telefax (632) 404-1612 • Visit our website at www.impactmagazine.net
For inquiries, comments, and contributions, email us at: impactmagazine2012@gmail.com

EDITOR'S NOTE

"WHOEVER lives the mission of Caritas is not simply a charity worker, but is a true witness of Christ, one who seeks Christ and allows Christ to seek him, one who loves with the spirit of Christ, a spirit of gratuitousness and gift. All our strategies and plans remain empty unless we carry this love in us." This was what Pope Francis told the over 300 Caritas delegates from across the world at the opening Mass of the 20th General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis held at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on May 12. Caritas Internationalis which is the main charity arm of the Catholic Church, was slated to meet on the theme "One Human Family, Caring for Creation" from May 12-17.

This certainly differentiates substantially the charity work of the Catholic Church from the humanitarian work of well-funded philanthropists. In Ecclesia in Europa, Saint Pope John Paul II already pointed out that serving the mission of the Church "by means of a charity that evangelizes is the commitment and the responsibility of everyone." (No. 33). With the values of the Gospel in tow, it is "caritas" that, more than anything else, evangelizes, especially by witnessing to the "joy of the Gospel" even in the midst of poverty, injustice, and suffering.

Pope Francis told the delegates that the source of the organization's global work "lies in the simple and docile welcome of God and neighbor… This is the root. If you cut this root, Caritas dies." It is in this spirit that even the social and organizational structure of these charitable institutions should manifest. "Let us ask the Lord for the grace to understand the true dimension of Caritas, for the grace not to fall into the deception of believing that well-organized centralization is the way, for the grace to understand that Caritas is always on the periphery, in every particular Church…The Caritas of each particular church, even the smallest, is the same. There is no big Caritas or small Caritas, all are the same."

For Pope Francis, belief in God and assisting others go hand in hand. Faith according to him is "to welcome God and express this in service to our brothers and sisters. Word, sacraments and service lead to and nourish each other… to wash the feet and bathe the wounds of the suffering and to prepare a table for them… All our strategies and plans remain empty unless we carry this love in us. Not our love but his. Or better yet, our love purified and strengthened by his love."

At the end of the day, it's all about faith, love and the spirituality of charity workers—and not simply about mobilizations and strategic social action work that even makes use of high-level corporate systems. And here comes the rub. If only to deliver and manage a most systematic charity work, some Catholic charitable institutions hire top-level workers sans the Catholic values cited by Pope Francis. Of late, for instance, an international Catholic charitable institution was accused of hiring workers that oppose fundamental Catholic moral teachings. Hereabouts, many are just too secular and too mainstream.

In this issue, find the full text of the talk of CBCP President, Archbishop Socrates Villegas, that was delivered at the Interfaith Dialogue held at the University of Santo Tomas on April 30. Our cover story on Muslim Filipinos is written by Fr. Joel Tabora, S.J., which very timely in the face of the prevailing discussion on the Bangsamoro Basic Law. Read on.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

27 | Economic Development
EDITORIAL

16 | Stregnth, But Not Without Shame
A Reflection on Our Trustworthiness vis-a-vis Muslim Filipinos
COVER STORY

ARTICLES

4 | The Many Names of God and the Blessings of Peace

6 | To Be Legal Is Not Enough

7 | First Trade and the Indigenous People

9 | Dreaming About Philippine Domestic Tourism

10 } Life in the Fringes *Living Among the Dead*

12 | *NEWS FEATURES*

21 | *STATEMENTS*

26 | *FROM THE BLOGS OF ABP. OSCAR V. CRUZ*

28 | *FROM THE INBOX*

29 | *BOOK REVIEWS*

30 | *CBCP CINEMA*

31 | *ASIA BRIEFING*

"QUOTE IN THE ACT

"I'm limited in my capacities but with all of you, with the loved that Jesus has poured into our hearts and in the name of all the poor people in the world, I accept this election."

Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, Archbishop of Manila; on his recent election as president of Caritas Internationalis, replacing Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga who use to be president of the Episcopal Conference of Honduras and Vatican's spokesperson with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on the issue of Third World debt.

"Let us act and respond with mercy and compassion to the suffering of millions—not to dole out crumbs but reform unjust structures."

Pete Montallana, a Franciscan priest who chairs Save Sierra Madre Network; bewailing government's failure to fully participate in the call of Pope Francis for the inclusion of the poor as the core of economic and social development.

"The determination of the Chinese side to safeguard our own sovereignty and territorial integrity is as firm as a rock."

Wang Yi, China's foreign minister; after talks with US Secretary of State, saying that Chinese claims over a collection of uninhabited reefs off the coast of the Philippine were "unshakable" and that Beijing has no intention of scaling back its island-building efforts in South China Sea—a claim that continues to aggravate tensions among neighboring governments.

"Almost one million children who were enrolled in school before the earthquake could now find they have no school building to return to."

Tomoo Hozumi, Unicef's representative to Nepal; on the tens of thousands of classrooms that have been devastated by the earthquake and by the continuing aftershocks, as the government hopes to finish constructing 7,000 temporary learning centers made from tents and bamboo in the next few months.

The many names of God and the blessing of peace

BY ARCHBISHOP SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS

TO kill in God's name—this is one of the most painful contradictions of our time! And it has turned many away from religion. In fact, whenever news networks flash reports on the deaths even of helpless civilians and innocent children resulting from religious conflicts – or at least from the violence of groups proclaiming one religious allegiance or the other – the question is often raised whether religion is part, if not at the heart, of the problem. This only strengthens secularist tendencies. Where religion is blamed for bloodshed and mayhem, the State endeavors to protect its population and to keep the peace by keeping demonstrations of faith and signs of religion to a minimum, if not suppressing its public display altogether. But enforced secularism only triggers religious militancy, and soon the cycle of provocation, confrontation and violence spins out of control, leaving in its wake the mangled bodies of victims who die, invoking Divine succor, slain by those invoking Divine commands.

Pope Francis has won the admiration of all, and continues to inspire. But it will not do for us merely to look up at him, and applaud. He means to show the way, and to prove to all that with a heart that is full to the brim with invincible love made possible only by as invincible a faith in a God of love, then one can sit peaceably at table with men and women who invoke God by other names and to break bread with them as brothers and sisters. It is not enough to beam at news of Pope Francis breaking barriers. We must join him in bringing forth the fruits of faith!

Tolerance is not good enough, for toleration is 'letting be', and is perfectly consistent with being indifferent if not secretly spiteful of the other. It is not tolerating the other that is the Christian precept, but a welcome of the other, particularly those that the Scriptures call the 'anawim…the poor of the Lord, they who have none else to defend them. In the Old Testament, God's people, particularly in times of difficulty, recognized that God could work through the hands even of pagan rulers. God, they understood, was far more generous than their pettiness, and presided in majesty high above all divisions that humankind set up between themselves. Jesus is the incarnation of the supreme welcome of the other. He did not only tolerate society's outcasts. He sought them out and sat at table with them. He did not only avoid picking a fight with Romans. He healed the centurion's servant after praising him for his faith. And the welcome he extended to the Greeks who sought him out as the fateful days of the Passover drew near gave him occasion to discourse on his mission and that of the community he was leaving behind. The Fathers of the Church ardently believed that the Logos of God was more than any category or class could contain, and they wisely thought of logoi spermatikoi…germs of truth that would be found beyond the visible confines of the Church.

The Philippines is large enough an archipelago for Christians and Muslims. There have been hurtful incidents, painful events for which Christians and Muslim alike must ask for each others' forgiveness. But all these years, we have managed to live not only side by side, but to deepen in our appreciation of each others' spiritual and cultural treasures. Many Muslims have attended schools and colleges run by Catholic religious congregations in the Philippines, and many Muslims have welcomed a partnership with Catholics in initiatives for the poor and the hard-pressed. We can still show the world what it is for us all who worship one God how he sons and daughters can live as one.

God is the ultimate motive for charity! Human goodwill is not enough; it is fragile, it is tossed about with changing moods, it is thoroughly afflicted by that deeply-rooted malady of the human condition called sin. Religion cannot be the reason for conflicts. It cannot justify in any way assaults against life, offenses against liberty, crimes against the dignity of others. "In the name of God, most gracious and most merciful…", an immensely powerful and beautiful invocation, well-known to Muslims all over the world, but not unfamiliar to Christians as well. In the Old Testament, as God passed by the prophet who had concealed himself in the cleft of the rock, he revealed his name: "The merciful, the compassionate." They who truly worship a merciful and compassionate God certainly blaspheme God when, in his name, they raise their hands against their brothers and sisters. Nothing should be more pleasing to God, no offering more acceptable than that all his sons and daughters should live together with the mercy and compassion by which He wishes to be known!

I return to Pope Francis' example – the prophet of our times truly sent by God. He seeks out every opportunity

to pray with persons of other faiths. He welcomes every chance to dialogue with them on issues that matter to the world. He is welcoming because he truly loves. And that is the key to it all. One of the ancient hymns of the Church captures it well: Ubi caritas et amor, ibi Deus est!...Where charity and love are, there God is! It should not matter as much that we call him by different names. And the narratives that are sacred to us may be different. We will respect these differences; we will rejoice in them and be enriched by them. But we must recognize that when we can live in love, dialogue in love, pray in love and make room for each other in love, there God's face is resplendent!

No, religion is not the cause of the misery the world suffers. It is rather because God's face is eclipsed by political and economic agenda, ideologies and affiliations that we have been scourged by hardly atrocities without precedent. It is because the men and women who make decisions allow the arrogance of office and the intoxication of power to dull the mercy and compassion by which alone God is worshipped and glorified.

What will save the world from all the cruelty and hatred, the destructiveness and the recklessness that have visited so much misery on so many is a return to religion, an earnest quest to seek the face of God my our brothers and sisters in genuine worship of that God who chooses to be known as All Merciful, All Compassionate.

(This piece was originally a talk delivered by Archbishop Socrates B. Villegas at the Interfaith Dialogue held at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila on April 30.)

To be legal is not enough

MICHAEL MCCARTHY

BY FR. ROY CIMAGALA

DURING a recent reunion with former college classmates and colleagues at work during my pre-priesthood years when I myself was active in the professional field, I was struck by one of the comments I heard in our conversations.

A friend who is also an economist mentioned that the different ways many Western governments took to tackle the global economic crisis that started sometime in 2008, taken from both the capitalistic and socialist models, could not adequately resolve the problem because they just relied on certain laws and policies prevailing in their respective countries at that time.

Many of these political and economic leaders are discovering that it takes more than just following purely economic and civil laws to resolve the problem in a way that could be considered most fair.

I have always believed that merely following articulated laws or man-made laws, whether in business or in our life in society in general, would not be enough, since these laws would always be in need of the proper spirit for them to be as they should be.

These laws, at best, can only give some kind of guideline. They dispose us to the ways of truth, charity, justice. But they cannot by themselves achieve those goals unless they are animated by the real source of truth, charity and justice which can only be God, our Creator and Father.

At best, they can somehow regulate the external aspects of a given problem or situation but are quite silent on the internal aspects. They can be good in sanctioning the macro dimensions of our economy or political life, but are again very tentative in the micro level.

These laws and policies cannot function on their own. They need a deeper foundation, a terra firma that in the end could only be God and his laws and standards. It's the hesitation or even aversion to put God in the core of our legal systems that would somehow pervert our laws and policies even if they are formulated with the best of intentions.

When crafted, developed and lived independently of God or when pursued outside a loving and faithful relationship with God, these laws can easily be manipulated to suit one's self-interest at the expense of the common good. They would miss the finer points of ethics and morals so crucial in our life, personal and social, here on earth.

And in that set-up, it would always be the more powerful, in terms of wealth, fame, talents, etc., who would dominate and tend to exploit the others. Their authority, which is supposed to be a sharing of the authority of God, would be used not to give glory to God and to serve others, but more to give glory to themselves and to be served by others. In short, there is always the tendency for people to abuse their authority.

In that set-up, what are often excluded, deliberately or unintentionally, would be the elements of mercy and compassion, the need for sacrifice, detachments from things and others that are necessary and at the same time, unavoidable in our life here on earth.

It is a set-up that is blind to these things and is prone to follow the law of the jungle or the law of Talion that usually caters to the baser instincts of men and hardly goes beyond them. The higher values of faith and morals are disregarded, if not frowned upon.

The requirements of our moral and spiritual life, so inalienable in us that even in our mundane activities like business and politics they are always relevant, are often unmet if not totally ignored.

It is a set-up that tends to give a knee-jerk reaction to things at the expense of a more comprehensive attitude. It is often taken up by the passion and the excitement of the here-and-now and is quite subjective at the expense of a longer and more objective view of things.

We need to overcome the fear or whatever bias we have regarding the need to involve God in our human affairs. We cannot say that just because what we are doing is purely business or politics, God should not be involved.

While it's true that there is a certain legitimate autonomy in our temporal affairs, it does not mean that God has nothing to do with them. Yes, we need to uphold that autonomy and should not unduly mix God and religion in living out those affairs, but it does not mean that God is not the beginning and end of these affairs.

Fair Trade and the Indigenous People

PREDA

BY FR. SHAY CULLEN

THE most recent discovery of a human fossil, a jawbone with four teeth in Ethiopia has amazed anthropologists because of its age. It strengthens the theory that the migration of the first humans out of Africa occurred about 1.5 million years ago.

Some of them moved through Asia and across land bridges into South East Asia and the Philippines. Their descendants could well be the Filipino indigenous people, the real survivors of an ancient past and the true owners of the Philippine ancestral lands. Marginalized as they are nowadays, their valid claims to ancestral land rights has been largely ignored by the dominating elite families that claim ownership and control 70 percent of the wealth of the country.

The goal of Preda Fair Trade is to help these indigenous people and the small mango and coconut growers. We call on all who respect human rights to support them in their lawful and rightful claims to their ancestral land. They need help to resist the incursions of mining companies and land grabbers into the last remaining lands that they have occupied for hundreds and possibly even for thousands of years. The rich, corrupt politicians have cut down the once magnificent rain forests. Fighting for social justice for the poor, the oppressed people is an important part of Fair Trade.

Juan and Maria De Los Reyes' clan is one of many families that are members of the Preda Mango Farmers' Association in the remote villages of the Zambales and Bataan mountains. They have four children, aged 5 to 16 years-old, and have lived in poverty all their lives. They are subsistent farmers growing their own food and selling the surplus to traders in far-off towns.

The market buyers cheated them out of the rightful price for their vegetables, banana, cassava, honey and wild mangoes. They remained impoverished like thousands of their tribal neighbors and their children never went to school beyond the fifth grade. They carried sacks of the Pico mango to the traders in the distant towns but received just a pittance for their produce. They were cheated and exploited. So they stopped harvesting the mangoes and what they could not eat they left to rot on the tree or on the ground.

That was before the Preda Fair Trade project developed a new tasty mango puree based on the Pico variety of mangos. The making of mango fruit juice, jam, and other products by the German importing partner DWP changed all that. The Pico mango is soon to be certified as organic and farmers are earning 200% more for their Pico mangoes. It is hard work to meet the many requirements of the organic certification organizations and it's costly, too, for Preda Fair Trade and DWP based in Ravensburg. The inspection fees are very high and approval can still be withheld.

For example, every mango tree has to have a plate number nailed on it and each one marked on a map. The Preda agriculturists and the farmers have so

far hiked the mountains and tagged as many as eight thousand mango trees.

The farmers have attended dozens of seminars and training sessions to learn organic farming methods even though the fruit is growing wild in remote areas where chemicals like pesticides are never used. The farmers are too poor to be able to afford to buy them.

This and the other Preda-assisted development projects in their village, like water pumps, solar lights and bonus payments are helping make an easier life for Juan and Maria taking them and many more out of dire poverty. The children now go to school to higher grade levels.

Honest trading and paying just prices for products are what overcome rural poverty. Consumers of products ought to learn about Fair Trade, buy Fair Trade products and not participate in the exploitation and oppression of the poor.

Juan and Maria are proud members of the Aeta people, the ancient indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines. They have strong moral values and have their own indigenous herbal medicines and traditional remedies to treat diseases and wounds.

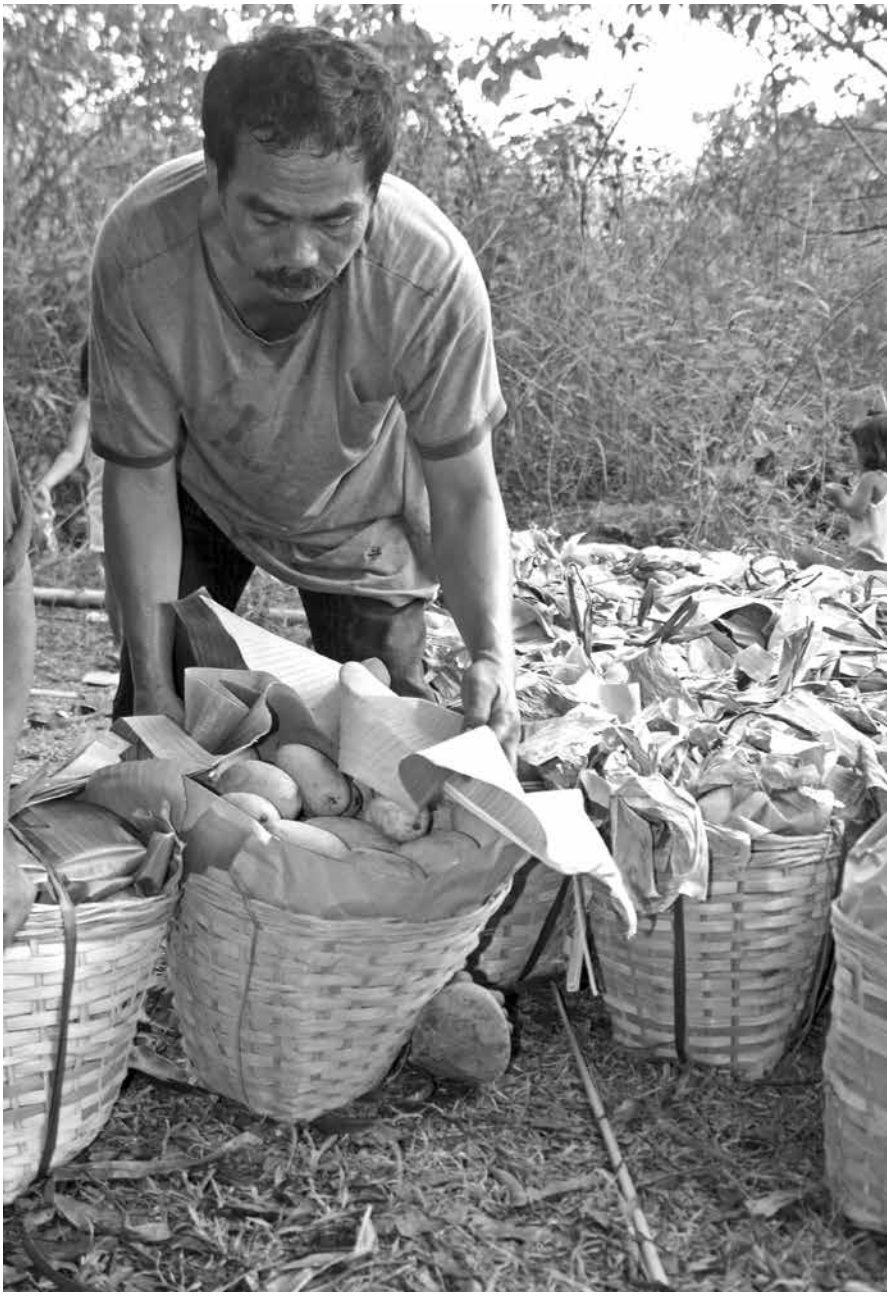
They are true survivors, their ancestors walked out of Africa hundreds of thousands. Like many indigenous tribal peoples, the newly arrived migrants from Malaysia and Indonesia gradually populated the islands and the Aeta were soon retreating from the coastal areas into the deeper forests where they lived a nomadic life as hunters and gathers in the forests.

They still live in harmony with nature and their culture is based on the love and respect for the natural world. They see and relate a greater higher power in nature.

They were wise and had a well-developed knowledge and practice of using herbal medicine and they survived the harsh life in the forest for thousands for years. Their community life was sustainable and enduring.

They are mostly a gentle and friendly, non-violent people and their DNA will lead directly back to their African ancestors.

But then came the Spanish invasion, the conquistadores, and colonial period and the Aeta and other hill tribes retreated deeper into the rain forests and mountains. But the onslaught of Western diseases with the Spanish was a devastating blow and many



died. They remained generally ignored and uneducated and lived outside the mainstream of modern society.

Their shelters were and are still today mostly rustic: simple bamboo and grass one-roomed homes. They became the poorest of rural poor. Now they are organizing themselves and Fair Trade is changing their lives for the better. But much more has yet to be done to help them. Buying the Preda Fair Trade mangs products in world-class shops and asking for them in supermarkets is a great way for consumers to help.

When the international volunteers and interns come to Preda they visit the indigenous people and some stay as welcome guests in their villages and experience the simple life of these people. They absorb the sounds, smells, and peace and quiet of these remote villages. They see the stars, some for the first time in their lives. They are far from electricity, the internet and cell phones and closer to the people for the first time and free from their gadget-obsessed lives.

They are part of something great, working for unselfish human development and for justice.

Dreaming About Philippine Domestic Tourism

BY BERNARDO M. VILLEGAS

FILE PHOTO

I DREAM of family-friendly forms of entertainment, whether in the movies, television or the internet—cleansed from sex and violence that stem from ideological colonization. Extrapolating into the future what is already a reality, the strongest engine of growth for the booming tourism industry is domestic tourism. Today, there are already 40 million Filipino citizens discovering the numerous tourist destinations spread out all over our thousands of islands. Most of them are married couples traveling with their children, the most morally sound form of tourism. I am not bothered that we do not have the tens of millions that other countries have of foreign tourists, considering that many of the these foreign visitors are back packers who can spoil the environment or, even worse, sex-hungry males who corrupt our women and children.

In addition, the booming domestic tourism industry will spawn numerous small businesses owned and managed by families, such as bed-and-breakfast facilities, transport services, restaurants, and travel websites. The strongest foundation of a healthy economy is the small and medium-scale enterprise (SME) sector, in which most of the business units are still family-owned. In fact, I also dream that even the larger corporations continue to be family businesses, following the European model in which the top corporations are still controlled by families. For these businesses to be sustainable and survive the test of time, it is important that the families that own and manage them do not disintegrate because of widespread divorces and marital infidelities. Keeping the family intact also has its healthy impact on a growing economy.

There is no question then that the future of Philippine society, nay, of the entire humanity, depends on the family. We can all dream that the following words of Pope Francis in his Message to the Family at the Mall of Asia will be accomplished, not only in the Philippines but all over the world: "Our world needs good and strong families to overcome these threats! The Philippines needs holy and loving families to protect the beauty and truth of the family in God's plan and to be a support and example for other families. Every threat to the family is a threat to society itself. The future of humanity, as Saint John Paul II often said, passed through the family (cf Familiaris Consortio, 85). So protect your families! See in them our country's greatest treasure and nourish them always by prayer and the grace of the sacraments. Families will always have their trials, but may you never add to them! Instead, be living examples of love, forgiveness and care. Be sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death. What a gift this would be to society, if every Christian family lived fully its noble vocation! So rise with Jesus and Mary, and set out on the path the Lord traces for each of you." For comments, my email address is bernardo.villegas@uap.asia.

Today, there are already 40 million Filipino citizens discovering the numerous tourist estinations spread out all over our thousands of islands. Most of them are married couples traveling with their children, the most morally sound form of tourism.

Life in the fringes

Living among the dead

BY SR. PINKY BARRIENTOS, FSP

….The worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care. (Pope Francis, EG 200)

FSP

These words of Pope Francis keep on ringing in my ears after a recent trek in a cemetery in Pasay City together with two sisters and collaborators to visit the families living there.

A group of sisters first visited the place about two years ago as part of the "Biblia sa Bawat Pamilya" (A Bible for every Family) project – one of the many activities that were launched in connection with the 75th foundation anniversary celebration of the Daughters of St. Paul in the Philippines – which aims to distribute Bibles to poor families. The project is still continued, this time as part of the 100th year foundation anniversary of our congregation which we celebrate this year.

That first visit was followed up several times. Sr. Evangelina, our intrepid sister who is in her 70s gathered a group of women (mostly mothers) whom she catechized, even as she encouraged them to read the Bible and taught them the lectio divina.

Every visit and meeting with the women and children would always cap with food distribution. That particular day we visited we brought food, bread and drinks to everyone through the generosity of our lay collaborators.

With us was Sister Dominique, our sister who was a missionary to Hongkong and Macau long before I entered the convent. It was quite a shock for her, to put it mildly. She could not reconcile the fact that there are families living in cemeteries.

A group of kids ran toward us as we entered Gate 4 of Cementina – that's how the cemetery is called.

Sr. Dominique and one lay collaborator took charge of a group of kids, who listened as the sister told stories about the Blessed Virgin Mary. She prayed and sang with the children. Meanwhile, I made acquaintance with Daniel, caretaker of some graves located inside Gate 4.

As the two sisters and lay collaborators became immersed with their groups I decided to see for myself how the families live inside. Daniel graciously offered to tour me around

I learned from Daniel that many of those living inside the cemetery are also caretakers of tombs. He told me he has 18 tombs under his care. Families hire them to keep the tombs of their loved ones clean and free from any form of vandalism. In turn, they are paid from P100 to P250 every month, payable annually during All Saints' Day.

Daniel, who is 65 years old, told me his family does not live inside the cemetery but outside its walls. He said he grew up in the vicinity and used to play in the cemetery as a child.

"The cemetery then was very small," gesticulating with his hands to show just how far it extends, "but a rich parishioner donated the adjoining parcel of land to the parish, and that expanded the cemetery," he explained.

No rent

Joey, his wife and four children are among those who take care of graves and use them also as a dwelling place.

A former construction worker, Joey stays "home" to look after his children, while his wife goes to work in a massage clinic. "Home" is an elevated grave with makeshift walls and roof made of tarpaulin. I peeked inside and saw a piece of wood on top of the grave, which serves as their bed, and some personal things. Joey's eldest is eight while the youngest is about six months. While looking after his children, Joey also tends a couple of roosters which he hopes to sell soon.

I learned that most of the men are

FSP

tending roosters for sale because the Pasay cockpit is located just beside the cemetery. In fact, I could see its towering dome dominating the Pasay skyline from where I stood as I spoke to Joey.

Joey said they have permission from the owner to stay on the gravesite, as long as they keep the tomb clean and vacate the premises when the family comes for a visit.

On All Saints Day, when people flock to cemeteries to visit and honor their dead, the cemetery dwellers take their meager belongings with them to give way to the families who usually stay for a day.

"Where do you go on All Saints Day?" I asked Joey.

"We just stay nearby. We come back as soon as the family leaves," he said.

How could people choose to make their dwelling in the cemetery, literally living among the dead?

As if reading my thoughts, Joey told me he does not want his children to grow up in the cemetery but right now he has no other options but to stay there. Renting a house would be impossible because they do not have money for that. At least in the cemetery, they do not have to worry about rent and they have a roof on their head.

Perhaps better than sleeping in the streets, I reassured myself.

While going around the graveyard, I noticed not only families but also animals. A man was looking after his fighting cocks tethered on the roof of a mausoleum. I was amused to see a cat sleeping peacefully on top of a marble tomb. But I got jolted when a not-so- friendly dog fiercely barked at me as I passed by his master's humble dwelling. Clothes hung to dry provide a colorful backdrop to the gravestones. Kitchen utensils are packed neatly in an organizer on top of a grave, while a cooking pot sizzles on a stove beside it.

Better deal

Some gravesites are enclosed with metal grating while some are open with flat spaces on top like a mini terrace with roofing. Others are elevated tombs without a fence or roof, like the grave where Joey and his family stay. Hence, he enclosed the area with tarpaulin to provide some kind of privacy and to protect them from the elements. Those who take care of mausoleum or graves enclosed with metal grating have bigger spaces for sleeping and storing their personal belongings.

Daniel said there are at least 10 families living in the area from where he cleans at Gate 4. Some are working at various jobs outside the cemetery, others have none. The overseer, hired by the parish, allows the people to stay as long as they keep the area clean, he said.

Trouble among families is almost non-existent according to him, although he sheepishly admitted that gossiping is very common among the women.

It is perhaps too incomprehensible for some to think that there are people who prefer to live in cemeteries, but for families who do not have enough money to pay for rent and utilities, living in cemeteries and to slumber "among the dead" is a better deal than to sleep in the streets.

Challenge

There is always that temptation in us to give priority to selfish pursuits and personal gratification over the good of another. But the words of Pope Francis challenge us to live our lives meaningfully, to seek the image of Jesus in the face of every poor person we meet who stares at us begging for understanding and compassion.

"...I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the sensus fidei, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them." (Pope Francis, EG 198)

We are challenged, especially this time that we celebrate the Year of the Poor in the Philippines, to see Jesus in every poor person who lives in the fringes of society. The challenge is also upon us Daughters of St. Paul as we celebrate the centenary of our foundation in this Year of Consecrated Life. The question to ask ourselves perhaps is not how much we have evangelized the poor, but rather how we ourselves have been transformed in the process of our evangelization.

Cardinal Tagle elected Caritas president

MANILA, May 15, 2015—Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle has been elected as the new president of Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of global Catholic charities.

He was elected by more than 300 Caritas delegates from around the world at the second day of their general assembly in Rome on Thursday.

The first Asian elected to head the confederation of worldwide Catholic charities will replace the agency's current president Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa after serving his second and last term.

Cardinal Tagle will become the global representative of the Caritas confederation of 165 members as its head when he officially takes office at the end of the assembly on May 17.

Strong support

Fr. Edu Gariguez, Caritas Philippines executive secretary, has lauded the cardinal's appointment, saying that Tagle "has the qualities of a good leader for the organization".

"I assured him of our support at Caritas Asia. And this is not for anything else but for our commitment and whole hearted service for the poor so we need him for this," he said.

Gariguez, who is also Rome for the assembly, said the "clamor" for the cardinal to be nominated was led by Caritas Asia when the process started early this year.

But it was only last week, he said, when he learned that Caritas agencies in Europe and other countries are also in full support of the Manila archbishop.

"The charism and reputation of the cardinal is not only here in the Philippines and it's because he remains much the same low-profile personality, he's not grandstanding but is making a huge impact," he said.

Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle of Manila at the Vatican Press Office **CNA**

'Darling for Europe'

Mr. Chacko Joseph, head of Caritas Internationalis' Solidarity Team for Emergency Preparedness (STEP) program in the Philippines, also said that Tagle has many supporters from most Caritas networks.

"I strongly believe that Cardinal Tagle is the darling for Europe. He is well-versed with everybody there and he is a down to earth person," Joseph said.

According to him, the cardinal will be "a huge advantage" for Caritas because of his close ties with Pope Francis "and they really understand each other".

"And for a Catholic country like the Philippines, that will be a huge advantage because he could bring the people's voice to Caritas," he said. ***(Roy Lagarde/CBCPNews)***

Quake hits Nepal again, more aid needed

MANILA, May 13, 2015—Caritas Filipinas will continue to send aid to Nepal after another major earthquake rocked the country yesterday, killing dozens of people.

Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo, former president of Caritas Filipinas, reiterated the agency's appeal for aid amid growing need of earthquake victims.

"Our appeal (for aid) is ongoing. We may not be able to help them all but we are part of the Caritas Internationalis (network) helping the people on the ground," Pabillo said.

"Let's continue to help them with whatever we can give to show our concerns including our prayers for them," he said.

Caritas Filipinas, also known as the National Secretariat for Social Action, is the advocacy, development and humanitarian arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

FILE PHOTO

Its local partner, Caritas Manila, also has an ongoing fund-raising campaign, including a second collection at Masses in churches under the Archdiocese of Manila last May 3.

Fr. Anton Pascual, executive director of Caritas Manila, said cash donations are now at around Php 300, 000, not counting those gathered in the second collections.

"The second collection will only be held once but we and our networks continue to accept donations," Pascual said.

At least 65 people were reportedly killed on Tuesday when a 7.4 magnitude quake hit Nepal, which is still reeling from a devastating quake nearly three weeks ago that claimed more than 8,000 lives. ***(CBCPNews)***

Priest to telcos: Follow law, install filters vs child porn

OLONGAPO City, May 5, 2015—Installing simple computer filters could mean more innocent lives saved from cyber pedophiles and sexual predators. But a child rights advocate has claimed local telecommunication (telcos) giants are ignoring this law-mandated task they have, even as news of sex crimes against minors shock the Filipino public daily.

PREDA

Non-compliance

"They [telcos] have made no statement of compliance with the law … Horrific crimes against children are being done and continue daily over the internet. Filters have not been set up or installed as the law says. The Internet Watch Foundation can prove that. Child and adult pornography is available to children daily on their pads and cell phones. The dirty work of Australian Peter Scully and his local helpers was possible because of uncontrolled internet access," shared Fr. Shay Cullen, an Irish missionary based in Olongapo City.

The priest, who also serves as founding chair of Preda, a foundation fighting for the protection of women and children from sex slavery since 1969, as well for the promotion of human rights, peace, and nonviolence in the Philippines, blasted telcos for allegedly refusing to comply with the Anti-Child Pornography Law of 2009.

RA 9775

He explained RA 9775 explicitly orders the Internet Server Providers (ISPs) to install software to block the transmission of child porn images and videos showing kids forced to do live sexual acts on camera, which are then sent through the internet to paying customers in other cities or countries.

"Criminal pedophiles pay to watch children being abused and raped. Some order they be tortured and killed," Cullen lamented.

'Looking the other way'

The Columban missionary expressed wonder why officials of the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) are "looking the other way" in their refusal to implement the law.

"The shareholders of the biggest company, PLDT, can be found on the internet. They are allegedly likewise in violation of the law most of whom are Filipinos and US nationals. Victims of child pornography should file charges against the telecommunication companies and individual stockholders that violate the law. If it is being obeyed, the victims and their families would not be suffering," Cullen said.

"Now, we see the likely result of this connivance and colluding between big business and government officials … The dirty work of Australian Peter Scully and his local helpers was possible because of uncontrolled internet access.They made videos of a screaming 18-month old child being tortured and murdered. You need to be of strong heart if you watch it," he added.

Duties of ISPs

Sec. 5 of R.A. 9775 enumerates the duties of an Internet Service Provider (ISP) as follows:

(a) Prevent access or transmittal of child pornography materials by any person and shall install a blocking system to prevent access to such materials;

(b) Within seven days, report the presence thereof, as well as the particulars of the person maintaining, hosting, distributing or in any manner contributing to the Internet address, to the proper authorities; and

(c) Preserve such evidence for purposes of investigation and prosecution by relevant authorities.

Cooperation

It further specifies that an ISP shall, upon the request of proper authorities, furnish the particulars of users who gained or attempted to gain access to an Internet address, which contains child pornography materials, adding that an ISP that will knowingly, willfully and intentionally violate the provision will be penalized accordingly.

In the same way, Sec. 6 of the same statute expressly forbids an internet content host to host any child pornography on its internet address, obliging it to report within a week the presence of child pornography, as well as the particulars of the person maintaining, hosting, distributing or in any manner contributing to such Internet address, to the proper authorities.

Upon the request of proper authorities, the law may also order an internet content host to furnish the particulars of users who gained or attempted to gain access to an Internet address that contains child pornography materials.

To read RA 9775 in full, visit http://www.chanrobles.com/republicacts/republicactno9775.php. ***(Raymond A. Sebastián/CBCP News)***

Bautista good choice as Comelec chair but...

MANILA, May 5, 2015—Former Commission on Elections (Comelec) chair Christian Monsod thinks President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino's choice of PCGG Chair Andres D. Bautista as the new poll head is "good", but has some reservations.

"While he is a good lawyer, he has not been an election lawyer," the former Comelec executive said in a CBCPNews interview at the sidelines of the FOCAP-Friends of Peace Forum on the Bangsamoro Basic Law at the Asian Institute of Management recently. He added he does not know how technology literate the new Comelec chairman is.

Monsod said Bautista has a good background in law as Dean of the Far Eastern University's Institute of Law and enjoys a good reputation as "an honest person", however, he believes being an election lawyer is critical qualification for his position.

Management job

He added he does not know if Bautista has sufficient management experience because being Comelec chairman "is primarily a management job."

Bautista will join six other lawyers in the Comelec, which faces a management problem rather than a legal, Monsod noted.

Asked if the new appointees would have enough time to "learn the ropes," Monsod said they will have a "very short time learning period."

The member of the Philippine Bar also offered unsolicited advice to Bautista, the two other new appointees and the current commissioners.

"They should immediately connect with their field organization because credible elections are delivered from the ground level," Monsod explained.

MELO ACUNA

Asked what Bautista should do with the controversial automated elections, Monsod said the Comelec commissioners should consult their field personnel and let them recount their personal experiences on automation and how people feel about it.

On watchdogs

The former Comelec chair said watchdogs should truly "act as watchdogs and not lapdogs."

"I think people know who I am referring to and I call on them not to agree

with everything that Comelec says," he further said. He explained watchdogs should train and empower people and promote structural changes for elections to be truly democratic."

Monsod said there is also a need to ban the use of money, specifically, government money, warlordism. According to him, ways should be found to address problems brought about by the rise of political dynasties that threaten democracy.

He concluded the coming national elections would have corruption as its "main issue" because the Philippines has turned into a basket case compared to Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan. The same holds true with other ASEAN countries, which have overtaken the Philippines.

Asked what led to the present sorry state, Monsod said the government has failed to implement the constitutional provisions on justice and social development, which is embodied in the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law. ***(Melo M. Acuña/CBCPNews)***

Tagle warns traders of political contributions

MANILA, May 4, 2015—Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle warned businessmen of making political donations for their personal gains.

With only a year to go before the 2016 polls, he said many traders would attempt to buy influence with political contributions.

"Please don't tell me it is altruistic. It is giving so I could get something in return," Tagle said. "In fact, some give and the giving violate the dignity of the recipient."

The cardinal made the statement at the annual business forum on corruption of the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals (BCBP) on May 2 in Pasay City.

In his talk "Rallying Christians toward morally upright inclusive growth," Tagle reminded business leaders to prioritize human dignity.

"The ethics of looking at others not in a condescending manner (but) seeing in others a neighbor, brother and sister, not simply as a client, not simply as a beggar who clings to my benevolence," he said.

Tagle also called on the businessmen to include the poor Filipinos in their growth and development plan.

He also said that businessmen should initiate "person to person encounter" with the marginalized sector "and realized they are just like us with feelings, dreams and heartaches but with a lot of goodness."

"It's not just a matter of giving them something but also learning from them. They possess wisdom that could make the country and our businesses grow," the cardinal said.

"If they are not included and not heard, I don't know what type of growth and for whom that growth is being proposed," he also said.

Tagle added: "Let not inclusive growth be a lofty idea. We are talking about human beings. It is human encounters that we get human insights from inclusive growth." ***(CBCPNews)***

Hanoi consults bishops on a new law on faiths that violates religious freedom

HANOI, Vietnam, May 4, 2015—The Vietnamese government's draft laws on "faith and religion" are in violation of "the right to freedom of religion", go against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, show that the purpose of government is "to profoundly interfere with religious affairs", continuing policies that encourage corruption and allows abuse by local authorities.

This is the harsh- and courageous—response of some Vietnamese bishops to the government request that the prelates comment on new rules proposed by the Committee for Religious Affairs. This—quite unusual—decision by the Government department to consult the bishops and the shortness of the time allowed for a response—13 days—feeds a suspicion of the government's attempt to "appear democratic" or an attempt to give officials who deal with religion means to "tighten their grip".

The Kontum diocese document, signed by Bishop Hoang Duc Oanh and bishop emeritus Tran Thanh Chung, points to the violation of the UN Declaration and the Constitution and states that the bills are also against the democratization of the country. "Developed countries do not need any agency in charge of religions". "Every religion—continues the text—has its canons and rules. It is absurd that 'non-believers' want to set the rules for people of faith". "This—continues the text—should be the job of the law makers who are religious or faith oriented and of those who truly are religious leaders, not of those "who are non-believers."

From his part, Msgr. Joseph Nguyen Duc Hieu, vicar general of the diocese of Bac Ninh, recalls that the Vietnamese Constitution affirms the right to freedom of religion and "recognizes, respects, protects and guarantees" the right of citizens to work in the political, economic, cultural and social sphere.

And echoing the bishops of Kontum, he repeats what the Bishops' Conference stated, in 2013 when it discussed the updating of the Constitution: " Everyone has the right to freedom of belief and religion, including the right to follow any religion or to follow no religion, the right to practice religious rituals, both individually and communally. None of religion or ideology can be considered mandatory for Vietnamese people. The government should not propagate negative views on religions nor interfere with the internal religious affairs such as formation, ordination, transfer of clergy, adjusting ecclesiastical borders... Religious organizations should have the freedom to engage in activities that serve the society in the areas of social welfare. "

Rome, Italy - Jul 15, 2011: Fr. Peter Nguyen Khai speaks to CNA about the plight of Catholics in Vietnam. **CNA**

"The current draft laws—he states—are against the right to freedom of religion and faith." "An an overall view of the draft bill indicates that it is going against The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam which was amended in 2013. We observe that the Draft Bills is a setback compared to the Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions in 2004". That was thought to be a limit to the freedom of religion. "Freedom of religion is a right, not a privilege. But the Draft Bills show many shortcomings and limitations on this right. All religious organizations and their dignitaries instead of enjoying the legitimate rights, have to be asking for them when they want to organize ceremonies, training, ordination etc...".

"The above are—he concludes—our sincere comments and suggestions. We wholeheartedly hope that the Law on faith and religion is indeed a legal document of progressiveness, for the happiness of people, where the biggest of all happiness is the freedom to practice their religious beliefs and live their spiritual life. Only then society can develop steadfastly and beautifully, when all are aiming for serving the people in harmony with the development of mankind including the people of Vietnam. ***(AsiaNews)***

OPAPP

Strength, but not without Shame

A Reflection on Our Trustworthiness vis-à-vis Muslim Filipinos

BY FR. JOEL TABORA, S.J.

IN presenting the report of the Peace Council on the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) to both the Congressional Committee on the BBL led by Congressman Rufus Rodriguez and the Senatorial Committee on Local Government headed by Senator Bongbong Marcos, there was a palpable resentment among the legislators for the message that both committees had perceived from the OPAPP and the representatives of the Peace Panel that the draft BBL as submitted should not undergo any changes in its legislation.

I am not sure how the committees got that impression. Certainly, the desire of those who had worked out this draft BBL through arduous negotiations that it not be mutilated is understandable. The draft is a negotiated attempt by both parties to translate the provisions of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) into law. The path towards the CAB was arduous and literally bloody, and even the process through which agreement was achieved on the draft BBL was troubled. So once that agreement was achieved, no one should be surprised that both the representatives of the MILF and the GPH are one in defending the provisions of the draft BBL before the public, and particularly the legislators. The draft BBL represents not the will of the MILF alone, nor the will of the GPH alone, but the worked-out shared will of both to overcome the armed conflict in Mindanao, including eventually the injustices which gave rise to the conflict, through an ongoing commitment to social justice and the common good in an autonomous Bangsamoro homeland. The draft BBL states how the parties in conflict have agreed they can move forward on the path to peace and prosperity.

At the same time, both the government and the MILF negotiators have submitted the draft BBL to the wisdom of the Congress, including the Senate and the House of Representatives. In fact, contrary to the perception of the legislators, they are not absolutely closed to change, since they have stated that they welcomed a thorough discussion on the draft and an improved BBL. What they do not want is that the BBL be watered down. Better no BBL than a bad BBL. By the latter, I presuppose they mean a BBL where the self-determination or the homeland for which they have struggled within the parameters of our Constitution is substantially compromised. Or, any change that would diminish, and not enhance, the autonomy that has already been achieved in the ARMM, which was a result of that struggle, even as it has been declared "a failed experiment." The justness of this struggle is at the heart of the BBL and the negotiations which led to it.

Trustworthiness of the MILF?

When the Mamasapano debacle occurred, and some people only saw the caskets of the 44 PNP SAF personnel who had fallen in pursuit of two international terrorists they presumed the MILF had been coddling, the question of the trustworthiness of the MILF as a partner-in-peace was raised. It was an understandable question

under the sad circumstances of Mamasapano. On the other hand, it is not as if countries such as ours have the luxury of choosing a partner-in-peace among many based on trustworthiness. One gains this status, partner-in-peace, because of an earlier state of belligerency, and a shared desire now to move away from the belligerency to peace. The shared movement away from war is necessarily based on trust. Absent the trust, the peace process makes no sense. Personally, understanding something of the injustice that Muslim Filipinos have suffered in Mindanao, I admire those who have been willing to risk comfort, property, and their own lives in an armed struggle to defend their religion, their way of life, their homeland, their rights, and to pursue the social justice they deserve. That this has pitted them against Armed Forces of the Philippines belongs to the pain of the state of belligerency and the imperative today to work out among Filipinos a just and lasting peace. As a Filipino in Mindanao, I am grateful that a peace process is ongoing. The peace negotiators on the side of the GPH negotiated for peace presumably also in my name, and with them I choose to trust them. I affirm the trust they repose in our partner-in-peace.

Our Own Trustworthiness?

While thinking of the trustworthiness of the MILF partner-in-peace, it might be a salutary exercise to consider our own trustworthiness as manifested by the representatives of the foreign colonizers or of the Philippine nation over the years, since I presume we might as Filipinos consider ourselves the heir of our colonial past.

In this exercise, one could recall the colonial government of Spain, which sought to conquer the Muslims and convert them to Christianity. They succeeded in neither. But the memory of the Moro-Spanish wars brought on the Muslims while the rest of the Filipinos were hispanized and Christianized is part of Moro consciousness today.

One could then recall the colonial government of the Unites States of America, which sought to conquer and "civilize" the Muslims. They succeeded in conquest through superior military hardware and ignominious military massacres (Bud Dajo and Bud Bagsak), but their manner of "civilizing" the Muslims was based on the model of the Filipino Catholic from Luzon and Visayas, the worthy "little brown brother" of the American Protestant rulers. They "integrated" the Muslims into the Philippine society by installing Filipino Catholics to govern them, failing to work with their Muslim leaders, undermining their Muslim traditions and leadership structures and by bringing Filipino Catholic settlers from the north to take over their lands.

Under the commonwealth government of the Philippines, the American colonization policy was continued, bringing in more settlers from the north who took over the lands belonging to the Lumad and the Muslims through use of a land registration scheme that was foreign and confiscatory in Mindanao.

Prior to the Government of the Philippines, Muslims were already not "Filipinos" because they were not Christian, or they were not "civilized" because they were not Christian. They were not recognized as leaders in their own homeland because they were not "Christian Filipino." They were deprived of their lands because of a land registration system which was foreign to them and alienated their lands to Christian Filipinos.

One must not be shocked when the Muslims of Mindanao are blocked in trusting the "Filipinos" from the north when they were treated in this manner.

Basis for Our Trustworthiness in History

From the viewpoint of the MILF leaders, however, and all the Muslims in the Philippines whom they presumably represent, what is the basis in history for putting trust in the Filipino People, including myself, who are presumably represented by such as the GPH or the President of the Philippines or the legislators of the Philippines? What is the record of the Philippine Government in dealing with the Muslims? Have their activities argued to the trustworthiness of the Philippine Government? Has the record of implementation of Philippine commitments to the Muslim community tended to build up or demolish trust?

Unfortunately it is not very good. The record does not argue for trust.

Beyond its long history of being discriminated against from the north, the contemporary conflict with the Filipino Muslims begins with the Jabidah Massacre in 1968. Unfortunately, many of our Filipinos are yet unaware of this. President Ferdinand Marcos was involved in extra-legal activities to advance the claim of the Sultanate of Sulu, and therefore of the Philippines, to Sabah. This included the clandestine Operation Merdeka (Freedom) to infiltrate and destabilize Sabah. When 48 Muslim operatives mutinied because they had not been paid their 50 pesos a month, or because they could not participate in attacking Muslim Sabah, all except one were executed in Corregidor. Jibin Arola survived by swimming back to Manila. Malacañang denied involvement in the affair. Instead, the Ilokano head of the operation, Capt. Martelino, gamely took the blame. But to date, there has been no formal investigation into this matter and no determination of blame. This already does not augur well for the trustworthiness of Manila in investigating actions which affect Muslims adversely and effecting justice for Muslims.

The Jabidah massacre eventually conditioned the development of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari, then eventually the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It continues to be a lingering source of mistrust among Muslims for the Philippine Government. For decent Filipinos it is a source of shame.

The Jabidah Massacre immediately preceded the call by Cotabato Governor for a Muslim Independence Movement (MIM), who had also been frustrated by the events in his family and his party which compromised his political standing. While the call did not result in an immediate secessionist uprising of the Muslim community against the Philippines, it sowed fear in the hearts of Christian settlers, who believed the Muslims would attack them and take over their lands. In fear, the Christian settlers organized strike groups called the Ilagas, the "rats," some Teduray, mostly Ilonggos, headed by the unassuming Feliciano Lupes from Upi, Cotabato, who as "commander Toothpick" turned into a monster. The Christian Ilagas launched a series of vicious and brutal attacks on Muslim communities whose battle signatures were cut off ears, hacked off nipples, gouged out eyes, and cross markings on the

OPAPP

slain bodies of Muslims. The Muslims eventually retaliated with the Iranun Blackshirts and the Maranao and Maguindanaon Barracudas; they showed the Ilagas held no monopoly on ferocity. In recalling these sad events which bloomed into the Muslim-Filipino war in Mindanao in the first half of the 70s, it is for our consideration to note that the national government under Marcos did not use the government's police or armed forces to quell the aggressor violence of the Ilagas and maintain the peace in Muslim communities, who were then not supporting a rebellion. Instead, it allowed the local government units to use and deploy the Ilagas as an integral part of their anti-Muslim campaign. In fact, it even used the Ilagas as special shock troops. Udtog Matalam's declaration of the MIM, but more so the violence fomented by the Ilagas tolerated, supported and exploited by Malacanang, became part of the pretext for Marcos' imposition of martial law in 1972. Martial law was imposed to quell the violence it itself encouraged, but then could no longer control; the war became the solution to the war it had itself fomented. It was warrant for the Moro National Liberation Front under the youthful UP intellectual-turned rebel, Nur Misuari; he organized the Bangsa Moro Army to provide military support for the call for Muslim independence from the Philippines in assertion of Muslim self-determination.

The war against the Muslims was perceived as persecution of the Muslim ummah (community) in Mindanao. If this was not perceived by Manila and the rest of the country, it was because of the peddled narrative that the Muslims had called for secession from the Philippines without warrant and the general ignorance of Mindanao affairs in Manila. But this was not the view of Muslim countries abroad. Misuari brought the Philippine case to the newly-founded Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC, now Organization of Islamic Cooperation) and won its support. While the Philippine government was not willing to listen to and negotiate with the Muslim rebels, the OIC was more than willing to listen. It extended it its support. In its perception, the persecutions of the Muslim ummah in the Philippines were real and constituted "Fitna," a state under which the defense of the Islamic faith even through killing and war was an obligation imposed on Muslims by the Holy Qur'an. With the support of the OIC the war in Mindanao was internationalized. The Philippine Government was forced to deal with the MNLF on pain of losing vital oil resources from the Islamic world. On the other hand, because of the distaste for secession of member countries of the OIC with their own ethnic problems and their respect for international law, the support of the OIC also entailed a revision of the call for self-determination through independence from the Philippines to a call for self-determination through autonomy within the Republic of the Philippines.

This led to the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 between the MNLF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. The agreement promised genuine autonomy to the Muslims in thirteen provinces and nine cities of Mindanao. Unfortunately, the Tripoli agreement would never be implemented. Ambiguous language was part of the problem. Soon after the agreement, Marcos held a referendum and declared that only ten provinces and their cities would be part of the autonomous region. Pro-

tests against the non-implementation of the Tripoli agreement under Marcos led to new military engagements. This non-implementation of what had been agreed was another mortal sin against demonstrating our trustworthiness to the Muslim community.

After Marcos was deposed, and Corazon Aquino took over the reigns of government, the atmosphere between the Muslims and the Philippine government improved. But Corazon Aquino, who presided over a re-birth of Philippine democracy, did not recognize the Tripoli agreement as binding on her. Instead, she presided over the Constitutional Commission which produced the Philippine Constitution of 1987. The new Constitution provided for an autonomous region for Muslim Mindanao. Today, 28 years later, that constitutionally mandated autonomous region has yet to be acceptably established. Meanwhile, the Muslims of Mindanao under Misuari and the MNLF still fought for implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. This was the internationally-mediated agreement for peace that had been established; there had been no agreement to abrogate it.

Maintaining this position vs. the provision of the Constitution for an autonomous region that might have fallen short of the Tripoli Agreement, the MNLF rejected participation in the ratification of the Organic Act for Muslim Mindanao (RA 6734). Apparently, this was the beginning of the "failed experiment" in establishing a meaningful autonomous region for Muslim Mindanao. The law of an autonomous region which was to establish the conditions of self-determination was determined in the north and imposed, rather than the project of negotiation and shared purpose. With RA 6734 peace had not been established.

Under President Fidel Ramos, new talks with the MNLF were entered into. The GPH-MNLF process was revived. Through the Jakarta Agreement of 1992, the GPH again committed itself to genuine autonomy for Muslim Mindanao based on the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. Now, despite the new Philippine Constitution, the provisions of the Tripoli Agreement accepted under Marcos were recognized and accepted. Peace was now to be worked out in two phases.

Phase One involved the creation of the Southern Philippines Council for Development and Peace (SPCPD) and the Special Zone of Peace for Autonomy and Development (SZOPAD). This would be the new autonomous region of Muslim autonomy and prosperity. There were development programs for the SZOPAD were planned; former Muslim warriors were now integrated into the Philippine National Police and in the Philippine Army.

Phase Two involved amendments to the Organic Act for Muslim Mindanao (RA 6734) by RA 9054, "An Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao…" to implement the Djakarta agreement, which agreed in turn to implement the Tripoli agreement. Ramos' "Final Peace Agreement" of 1996 implemented the Tripoli Agreement "to 99 percent." In this context, Nur Misuari was appointed chair of the SPCPD and governor of the SZOPAD. No less than 49 billion pesos were allocated for projects in the SZOPAD. However, from 1996-2000, only 2 billion was disbursed. This became another major component of the "Failed Experiment" of the ARMM. The structure of a autonomous region was set up, but the means to make it succeed were denied.

Meanwhile, in 1997, Ramos began talks with the MILF. A new Tripoli Agreement on Peace was entered into between the GPH and the MILF on June 22, 2001 under the supervision of Malaysia. This led eventually to the draft MOA-AD of Aug 5, 2008 under Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, whose draft and signing were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. This was yet another failure in trustworthiness for the GPH.

When Joseph Estrada became President of the Philippines, hope for the Muslim Community was high because he had signed an agreement with the MILF to work with the Muslim Ummah of Lanao. He also announced he would establish a Malacañan in Mindanao. In an Aide Memoire of April 27, 2000 it was agreed, among others, that there was need to pursue the ongoing peace process, that the civilian PNP would take over ensuring peace on the Narciso Ramos Highway, that the GPH (AFP) troops would remain in their current positions, and that police and military actions shall continue in Mindanao with continuing coordination between the GPH and the MILF.

Within 24 hours, the agreement was violated. Government troops attacked MILF positions on the Narciso Ramos Highway, allegedly for reasons of national security. The MILF countered by attacking other government positions. Here, another sorry example of the "trustworthiness" of the GPH position. Despite calls for ceasefire, Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado declared: "a military problem demands a military solution." It was the GPH declaration of war. It led to the "all out war" under Estrada against the Muslims. It contravened the constitutional renunciation of war as a vehicle of national policy. It brought thousands of Filipinos to their death.

Under President Benigno Aquino, the effort has been to find peace through the peace process and the Bangsamoro Basic Law. The effort involved the full participation of the MILF. Then, Mamasapano.

We may wish to deal with the MILF from a position of national strength. The strength we wield, however, must not be devoid of appropriate shame.

Decision to trust

Undergoing this exercise, one can really ask, why do they continue to trust us?

I think it is because in the pursuit of peace they have decided to trust us. We must also decide to trust them. This time, we must implement what we have agreed to in trust. We must work out a BBL within the parameters of the Constitution, which establishes an autonomy meaningful for the Filipino Muslim community. It is they who now undertake to lead their community to peace and prosperity as part of the Philippine nation. We must listen to them. All things being equal, the good of one possibility weighed against another, we must give the option proposed by our partners-in-peace not the benefit of the doubt, but the benefit of trust.

I hope finally all sides can prove themselves worthy of the trust reposed in this peace process—often admirably overcoming painful historical obstacles. Without trust, there can be no peace.

Do not be afraid of Pananabangan!

Pastoral Letter on Stewardship

WE have taken great strides together as a presbyterium in particular and as an archdiocese in general in pursuing Church renewal through the path of the stewardship spirituality which we have inculturated in Pangasinan as Pananabangan. I want to commend many parishes that have adopted the Pananabangan formation seminars as their primary parish formation program. I trust that the handful who are still planning to start will be inspired by the success of those who have started Pananabangan three years ago and are now reaping the rich harvest of the spirituality of Pananabangan.

FILE PHOTO

Reviewing Pananabangan...

Let us allow the Pastoral Letter on Stewardship issued by the bishops of the United States to guide us: "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pt 4:10).

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly are one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.

Pananabangan as has been repeatedly said is NOT about money. It is NOT a fund raising scheme. It is a way of life lived with gratitude, lived responsibly and shared generously.

The enemies of Church renewal are indifference, cowardice and loss of the sense of the sacred. The globalization of indifference must be fought with the compassion of Pananabangan. The cowardice and timidity so prevalent in crisis must be won over by the culture of courageous giving. We show our true colour when we are put in hot water. The loss of the sense of the sacred must end with the culture of communion and active social engagement.

Pananabangan helps us to face our "dragons" and conquer them. This spiritual program helps our people to get involved and come out from our sheltered piety. It helps us to understand that the parish office is not a venue for business transactions for the sacraments and sacramental but an encounter between fellow stewards. Pananabangan gives us courage to commit to the Lord and live by this commitment to love like Jesus without the fear of ever lacking. This spiritual program will open our hearts to the reality that everything is holy because everything is grace. The Beatitudes are our magna carta for Pananabangan. The life example of Jesus, the primary steward of the mercies of God, is our only model to follow.

Adopting Pananabangan...

The Word of God upon which we must always base our homilies during the liturgy has abundant references to stewardship. I encourage you our brother priests to look at the Word of God with the eyes of Pananabangan, to constantly "flavour" the homily with Pananabangan tones and repeat the three fold message of gratitude, responsibility and generosity (GRG) as the hallmarks of the stewardship spirituality. Without resorting to judgmental moralizing, let us prophetically speak against indifference, cowardice and the loss of the sense of the sacred.

The Pananabangan envelopes that we have made available to parishes and schools may be filled up also with commitments to give time and talents beyond the customary money pledges. I encourage our school directors to regularly talk to our academic communities on the spirituality of stewardship during school convocations, retreats and seminars. The Pananabangan manual of formation is ready and available for this purpose.

In the context of prayer and from your pastoral sensitivity, the Pananabangan formation may be adopted as an extended formation series. Candidly, if the Pananabangan module is reduced to a crashed half a day seminar, it will most likely not achieve its desired effect of becoming a lifestyle for Christ's disciples. It needs time for patient assimilation and pondered reflection. It needs to simmer and take roots. Haste is waste.

Implementing Pananabangan…

Although Pananabangan is NOT about money, it is the perennial issue about money that becomes the test if Pananabangan has indeed been taken to heart. One of the clear signs of our Pananabangan spirit is our fidelity to the abolition of the arancel or the fixed rates for the sacraments and sacramentals in the Church. It is our archdiocesan policy as indicated in the computerized parish accounting system that the parish office should not require the parishioners to make "fixed donations" for the services of the Church. The so called "fixed donations" violate the spirit with which we slowly abolished the arancel system of Church sustenance. It smacks of bad taste and intellectual dishonesty to say that we have no fixed rates for the sacraments and church services on one hand and yet insinuate softly later a certain amount to be "offered".

The Church will not get poorer with Pananabangan. The Church will become more credible, more prophetic and more Christ like with Pananabangan. The arancel system is both a painful scourge on the long suffering people and a shameful stain in the vestments of the Church's ministers. The arancel imprints an invisible and foul price tag on our priestly stole. It has been tolerated but in the beginning it was not so.

Giving to the Church must become a regular habit with or without the sacraments. It is certainly true that the sacraments and blessings of the Church are not a reward for a virtue nor a prize for being good. In the same way, the blessings and sacraments of the Church must not appear as religious services rendered in exchange for fees. It is the duty of the priest to offer them. It is the duty of every child of the Church to sustain their Mother diligently and generously.

Sustaining Pananabangan…

Every parish and Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Lingayen Dagupan must have a permanent Pananabangan Team composed of three to five persons with the capacity to conduct formation programs regularly and continuously. They may come from the pool of catechists, liturgical lay ministers or BEC coordinators. Their commitment to live Pananabangan is their first lesson for the other members of the community. They must possess the qualities of a good communicator so that they can facilitate formation seminars.

The Archdiocesan Director for Pananabangan should have a general archdiocesan listing of the Pananabangan Team for every school and parish. The Parish Pananabangan Team must also receive commissioning in the principal parish Mass on Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2015.

All the material offerings from the Pananabangan must be administered by the Parish Board of Temporalities chaired by the parish priest together with some trusted lay leaders in the parish. In the case of schools, the material offerings that may be generated from the school community must be administered by the School Board of Temporalities composed of students, teachers and the school director.

The Parish Pananabangan Team must not handle the material offerings from the Pananabangan program.

Do not fear Pananabangan…

We are at the threshold of seeing a Church renewed. Expectedly, there will be birth pains. We might be tempted to return to the fleshpots of our Egypt. The old system of Church sustenance is familiar and feels secure but that is the security of Egypt not the hope of the Promised Land. The arancel can give us better security but that that is the security of slaves not freemen. I know a few of us grumble and complain secretly wishing to return to the familiar and secure instead of the adventure of a new Church. Complainers end up defeated. When we allow our fears to guide our actions we lose our vision and get imprisoned by our griping.

God wants us all to have a vision, to pursue our vision. Our vision is ICTHUS—integration of faith and life, catechesis, thanksgiving, unity and service. It does not matter if we do not completely achieve it fast; what matters is we keep moving on, pushing forward to our Promised Land. Griping and complaining and worshipping idols in the desert were the greatest sins of the chosen people. Complainers are losers and they pull us backwards.

I plead with you. We have begun the journey of Pananabangan. There must be no turning back now. It might take our whole lifetime to achieve but let us not allow the generations following us to say later that we had a chance to change the destiny of Lingayen Dagupan but we did not do our duty when the challenge faced us. Many generations of Catholics will be grateful to us for the zeal that we show today.

Let us renew our commitment to Stewardship. Let us proclaim together.

I believe in the God of love,
the owner of everything who
possesses everyone.
I believe in the God of mercies who
has chosen me to be a steward of
Mother Nature and Mother Church,
in spite of who I am and what
I have done, and in spite of the infidelities He knows I will still commit.
I believe in the power of giving
and in the power of loving like Jesus; because love is the only way
to holiness; giving is the best proof
of loving; and perfect renunciation
leads to unlimited fruitfulness.
I believe that in freely giving my
time, in humbly sharing my talents,
and in generously sacrificing
my treasures, the Lord will always
provide. He will take care of all my
needs, and bless me with infinite
reward on earth and in heaven.
I will be the first to give.
I will not wait for the others.
I will keep on giving even if others
do not give. I will not be afraid to
have none. I believe that the best
time to share is now, not tomorrow,
for tomorrow is an excuse of
the greedy. I will keep my needs
and wants simple and few,
for I believe that in reducing my
selfishness, I will grow in happiness
and holiness. I am a steward of the
Lord. I will return all these to Him
with abundant yield! Much is asked
of me because much has been given
to me
I praise the Lord for His kindness
to me Now and forever. Amen.

From the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist, Dagupan City, May 1, 2015

+SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen - Dagupan

"Celebrating Christian Faith through our Devotion to the Child Jesus"

A Pastoral Letter on 'Kaplag'

Three-fold Augustinian Celebration

The Archdiocese of Cebu joins the Augustinian Province of Santo Niño de Cebu-Philippines in celebrating three significant events this year 2015—namely, the 450th anniversary of the Augustinian presence in the Philippines (1565-2015), the 450th anniversary of the discovery or finding ("kaplag" in Cebuano) of the miraculous image of the Child Jesus in Cebu (1565-2015), and the 50th anniversary of the elevation of the Santo Niño Church in Cebu City to the rank of a "minor basilica" (1965-2015).

The above-mentioned three-fold event is a manifestation of divine grace bestowed upon our people and an occasion to express our gratitude and thanksgiving to the Almighty God for the gift of faith and for having chosen our country to be a beacon of light in this part of the world, being a nation in Asia with predominantly Catholic populace.

Discovery of the Miraculous Image of the Santo Niño

Our people's devotion to the Child Jesus constantly reminds us of the humble beginning of our faith in God. The small image of the Santo Niño given as a gift by the Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan in 1521 to the local queen of Cebu on the occasion of her, her spouse and their subjects' baptism marked the start of the Christianization of our people. The same religious icon was rediscovered in 1565 by one of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi's men (named Juan de Camus) in a small hut spared from the conflagration that destroyed the village of our forebears dwelling in Cebu at that time.

A number of historical documents inform us about the events that took place during Ferdinand Magellan's expedition in 1521 and Miguel Lopez de Legazpi's mission forty-four years later. Of particular interest to us is the discovery ("kaplag") of the image of the Santo Niño on April 28, 1565. Thus we read in a notarized statement (dated May 16, 1565) sworn in before the official notary, Fernando Riquel, and signed by Legazpi himself: "Coming to a small house, which seemed to have not been entered into by anyone, he (sc. Juan de Camus) went into it and upon entering he found two native boxes tied together. He opened one and it had nothing inside except a bowl and a wild pig tusk. The other one seemed light to him and contained nothing. He went deeper into the house, found another box tied with Castilian sailing thread and Castilian cord made of hemp … and since it seemed heavy to him and to contain something, he cut the rope and opened it. Once opened, he found another box made of pine wood and a Child Jesus in it" (AGI Patrº 23 rº 16 folio 35).

The discovery of the religious icon was immediately interpreted as a sign of divine favor. The entire Spanish armada declared that God had rewarded the devotion that their leader, Legazpi, had for the Holy Name of Jesus and the ardent zeal with which he headed the expedition. For his part, Legazpi decided, first, to build a chapel on the very spot where the image was found, and, second, decreed the annual celebration of the said discovery. This explains, on the one hand, the prominence accorded to the present-day Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu, which is retained to correspond to the place where the icon was discovered, and, on the other hand, the annual cele-

bration of the "Kaplag." The Augustinian Province that sent the first missionaries to the Philippines was also named after the Most Holy Name of Jesus (Santísimo Nombre de Jesús), and a Cofradía was founded in honor of the Child Jesus.

Augustinian Mission in the Philippines

The first Augustinian missionaries arrived in the Philippines during the Legazpi expedition in 1565, with the explicit mission "to bring the natives of those regions to knowledge of our holy Catholic faith," as we read in a document dated September 1, 1564 (published in a collection of unedited documents entitled De las Islas Filipinas). While sailing towards our land, the religious missionaries attended to the spiritual needs of the members of the entire fleet, confessing them, administering the Holy Communion, giving advice, and so forth. When the expedition finally reached the Philippines in February 1565, aside from fulfilling their religious function, they were always present in all the negotiations between the natives and the Spanish colonizers; they set out to learn the local language; gathered information concerning their customs, conditions, mode of life, manner of worship, etc. It was to them that the miraculous image of the Santo Niño was entrusted right from the very beginning.

The initial attempt to Christianize our country in 1521 was abruptly interrupted with the death of Ferdinand Magellan and some of his men during the Battle of Mactan against the local chieftain Lapu-Lapu and his warriors. The rest of the fleet had to leave our shores to save their lives. Documents do not attest to the presence of Spanish colonizers in the Philippines until 1565 notwithstanding other attempts to claim the Philippine Islands for the Spanish crown (like the 1525 expedition under Fray García Jofre de Loaysa, that of 1526 under Sebastián de Cabot, that of 1527 under Alvaro de Saavedra, and that of 1542 under Gen. Ruy López de Villalobos). During the forty-four years that transpired between 1521 and 1565, we are informed that the people baptized during Magellan's time had apostatized and returned to their former beliefs.

The arrival of the Augustinians with the Legazpi expedition marked the resumption of the Christianization of our people. From 1565 onwards their mission to evangelize the Filipinos was never interrupted. Looking back at the past 450 years of the Augustinian presence in the Philippines, we realize how the early missionaries' work went well-beyond religious matters. The legacy they have bequeathed us, indeed, covered various areas of our culture, like education, politics, urban planning, foundation of towns and cities, literature, sciences, philology, and so forth. Fr. Martín de Rada and Fr. Juan de Quiñones—both of the Augustinian Order—were the first ones to write in the Bisaya and the Tagalog languages; the Augustinians were the ones who introduced the printing press to our country; they wrote grammar books, dictionaries, religious texts, etc. in many local languages and dialects; they pioneered researches in the fields of history and sciences (noteworthy is Fr. Manuel Blanco's Flora de Filipinas published in 1837); at the outbreak of the 1898 revolution, the Augustinians had under their care 2,320,667 souls, distributed among 231 parishes and missions in 22 provinces.

Cebu as Center of the Filipino Devotion to the Santo Niño

Today the Augustinians continue to promote the devotion to the Child Jesus wherever they work, both in the Philippines and abroad. Many representations of the Santo Niño were later introduced into our country, giving rise to a very rich multiplicity of expressions of popular religiosity. Thus we have, for example, the Santo Niño de Tondo in Manila, the Santo Niño de Arevalo in Iloilo, different images of Santo Niño in the guise of a fisherman, a farmer, a police man, a wandering boy, and many others.

The proliferation of the various images of the Child Jesus among the Filipino people bears witness to the continuous deepening and taking root of our faith and devotion to the Son of God in the form of a Child. However, the very center of all such devotions remains to be the city of Cebu, where the very first Santo Niño was brought in 1521 and given as a precious gift to our ancestors. It is in this city where the grandest celebration in honor of the Child Jesus is held annually every month of January. Millions of devotees worldwide flock to the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu for the said occasion.

The church that houses the image of the Santo Niño de Cebu is a significant part of our history as a nation and of our faith as a people. Its importance was duly recognized on many occasions. In 1941 it was accorded the title of a "national historical landmark." On April 1, 1965 Pope Paul VI, on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the Christianization of the Philippines elevated it to the rank of a "minor basilica with the Papal Bull Ut clarificetur nomen Domini. A year before that, the image of the Santo Niño was canonically crowned in virtue of the Papal Bull Cunabula religionis (dated February 27, 1964). Lastly, on August 1, 1973 Pres. Ferdinand Marcos, in virtue of P.D. 260 (sec. 2), declared both the church and the Augustinian convent adjacent to it as "national shrines and landmarks."

Conclusion

The giving of the image of the Child Jesus by Ferdinand Magellan to the local queen of Cebu in 1521, its finding forty-four years later by a soldier of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, the arrival of the early Augustinian missionaries to our shores, the honors accorded to the church where the Santo Niño de Cebu has been venerated throughout the centuries, are significant and closely intertwined events in the long history of the faith of the Filipino people. By the year 2021 we will be celebrating the fifth centenary of the arrival of Christianity to our nation. The celebration of the "Kaplag" this year 2015 is an occasion for us to prepare ourselves for that big event and, at the same time, an invitation for us to thank God for the countless blessings that He unfailingly showered us through our devotion to His only begotten Son who, in the fullness of time (cf. Gal 4:4), took the form of a man, becoming a small child.

May our Lord Jesus—"the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6)—continue to bless and guide our people. May He help us deepen our faith in and love for the Heavenly Father and teach us to remain obedient to Him at all times. We ask this through the motherly intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen.

Sincerely yours in the Santo Niño,

+ JOSE S. PALMA, D.D.
Archbishop of Cebu
Thursday of the Lord's Supper
2 April 2015

A betrayal to Mindoro

ATM Statement on the reinstatement of INTEX ECC

ALYANSA TIGIL MINDA

ALYANSA Tigil Mina (ATM), a coalition of more than a hundred environmental advocates and organizations along with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines-National Secretariat for Social Action (CBCP-NASSA) and Alyansa Laban sa Mina (ALAMIN), a Mindoro-based people's organization against mining, express their frustration and utmost disappointment with the reinstatement of Mindoro Nickel Project of Intex Resources' Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC).

In November 2009, hopes rose for the people of Mindoro when the DENR temporarily revoked Intex's ECC due to anomalies on how the company acquired the certificate in question. The people of Mindoro stood their ground and resisted the entry of the mining company for more than a decade. However, the Aquino administration opted to pursue corporate capitalist interest over the threat to peoples' lives and the environment when it reinstated the revoked ECC.

According to ALAMIN, "the people of Mindoro are now in rage because of this very unfortunate event. Intex's ECC reinstatement is a symbol of the Office of the President and the Depertment of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) undeniable betrayal of the Mindoreños welfare and trust."

Jaybee Garganera, National Coordinator of Alyansa Tigil Mina called on the Office of the President and DENR"to revoke the reinstatement of Intex's ECC as the action taken by the respective offices has no valid grounding and contrary to the position of the local government and the affected communities. He further stated that Malacañang and DENR should be ashamed of themselves for putting corporate business interest above the best interest of Mindoreños and the environment.

"Mindoreños are one in opposing mining in the province, as this will destroy our fragile ecosystem. The people of Mindoro does not deserve this kind of betrayal from the government, the very same that should be upholding and protecting our rights and our environment." Said Fr. Edu Gariguez, Executive Director of CBCP-NASSA

"We will not let this betrayal extinguish our fire of passion to protect our lands and mountains against corporate greed, pursued in collusion with our own government. Intex had long been trying to start their mining operation, with all their deceptive strategies and alleged bribery. They will never win. The Mindorenos will continue to heroically stand their ground to save and protect the province from outright destruction." Gariguez concluded.

14 April 2015

The BBL enigma

WHAT is intended to promote unity and harmony in the country is precisely dividing the people in general. What is envisioned to bring about peace and progress in Mindanao is not exactly making people in Mindanao jump for joy, neither pacifying the fears nor resolving the reservations of the people in Luzon and in the Visayas. Thus stands the enigma of the BBL proudly promoted by the present administration and fervently affirmed by its well-rewarded supporters.

It is anything but a secret that in Mindanao itself, there are non-friendly groupings such as the well-known MNLF, the fearsome ASG, the dangerous BIFF, plus apparently other newly-emerging militant groupings—in addition to MILF that precisely pushed the MNLF aside with the support and patronage of the incumbent administration. The above-said major groupings may not be exactly warring factions among themselves whereas one apparently simply comes from another—as a mother gives birth to a child. One thing however is definitely certain: there is more than but one armed group in Mindanao other than the MILF that has come to fore recently although the MILF remains the centerpiece of the BBL.

So arise some reasonable questions as the following: How come the ruling administration is trying to forge an agreement with but the MILF? Are other said gun-owning and toting groups expected to but humbly submit to the BBL MILF in the event that the latter rule in Mindanao with the patronage of the reigning administration? Will there really be peace in Mindanao when most of the people there are neither Muslims nor exactly MILF constituents or sympathizers? In other words and in the sphere of ground realities, is the BBL really the way to justice, peace and development in Mindanao?

It is a matter of record that the BBL envisioned blessed phenomenon was precisely accompanied by the SAF manslaughter that took place precisely with the deadly participation of some MILF and BIFF members. This is interesting – if not actually disgusting: Talking about peace here with killings going on at the same time somewhere. No wonder then that although the administration tries to lord it over, the legislators however are markedly divided on the pro and contra of the BBL – while the justices are on the watch about its constitutionality they will certainly be asked to pronounce upon in due time. Meantime, Mindanao is anything but in peace long since and up to now.

There is another nagging question—after the 2016 elections. If and when the BBL were eventually approved by all the branches of the Philippine government, if and when the coveted Peace Prize is eventually obtained by someone at all costs, what happens next? Will the in-coming administration continue to support and promote the BBL? Will there be true and lasting peace in Mindanao? Will this region be an example of social harmony, plus its accompanying socio-economic development? Interesting!

The Philippine Political Culture

THE adverse political scene in the Philippines cannot be but the eventual product of the Philippine political culture that is neither acceptable to sound reason nor according to the standard mandates of ethical norms. Following are some of the key lamentable and disturbing elements in the said culture:

1. In today's political mental framework, a political Office which is supposed to be a public trust meant for public welfare, has distinctly degenerated as a license for self-service, as well as family gains.

2. The greed for the tenure of power and the wealth that it brings about, has caused the deleterious transformation of social good into different social evils whose ultimate victims are the poor, weak and miserable citizens.

3. It is especially on the occasion of elections when political transactions are made, when popularity—neither honesty nor competence—is the prime consideration, when votes are bought and sold as a matter of course.

4. Elections in the Philippines is still nonchalantly associated with the infamous trio of Guns, Goons and Gold such that the commission of graft and corrupt practices in government becomes a matter of course.

5. In the national as well as political scenes, what really counts in having profitable government is political influence not personal ability, political clout not personal integrity.

6. The triumph of falsity over reality, the victory of injustice over equity, the presence of disunity instead of harmony, the phenomenon of amorality in contrast with ethical philosophy—these are politico-cultural realities.

7. So is it that a good number of both old incumbent and newly-elected public officials incite public disgust, alienate public confidence, hurt - if not altogether destroy – the hope of the general public for a better tomorrow.

No wonder then that the Philippines has long since remained a so-called "Third World Country", translation: The government remains incompetent. The phenomenon of poverty is a constant. The people live in patience. The socio-economic condition of the Country is stagnant if not progressively deteriorating even. Criminality is a matter of fact. Modem slavery—people is business, women are for sale, children already working—is a living fact.

So is it that the pitiful symbol of the "Three Monkeys" is no more in place, much less in order during these truly challenging times. The markedly adverse yet still standing Philippine political culture can only be gradually but certainly changed when the Filipinos begin again seeing, attentively listening , accordingly speaking and acting in their demand for integrity and industry among public officials, in their expectation of trustworthiness on the part of the government they, in fact, pay for in many different forms of taxes from birth to their death.

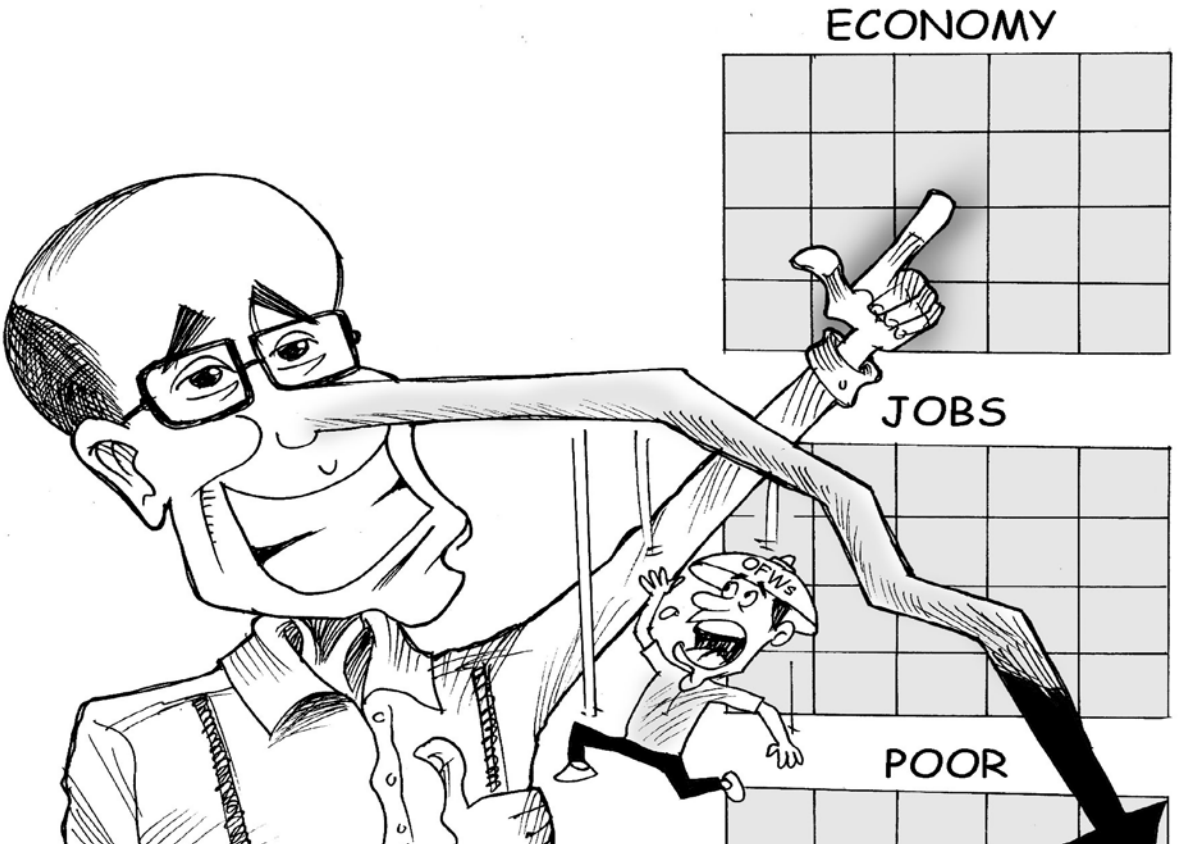


ILLUSTRATION BY BLADIMER USI

Economic development

IN formal and informal talks, in media and general public addresses, before, during, and after State of the Nation Addresses, especially in conferences delivered before foreign audiences, the present Malacañang resident—ignorantly or deliberately, jokingly or seriously, incompetently or decidedly—makes repeated claims of the big and fast economic development taking place all over the country, resulting in the eradication of poverty and other magical economic advancements all over the land. What remain interestingly unsaid are the following:

The biggest business of the government is the People of the Philippines—men, women and young individuals—who are sent abroad as OFWs, who earn their living even in the midst of mortal danger and who send their dollar remittances to the country. Never mind if they are imprisoned for one crime or another—whipped or killed even unless "blood money" is paid.

Another emerging truly profitable business in the country is the manufacture, distribution and sale of prohibited drugs not only for local use but to the extent that the same deadly items even become export quality products—such as through more and more so-called local and foreign "Drug Mules" on their own initiative or though innocent carriers.

And there is the detestable and shameful already established plus still being enlarged gambling industry—frequented by local criminals and foreign gangsters, money launderers included. Until this present administration is done away fast, unless the in-coming public officials are really for public service for the common good, Philippine Las Vegas is coming to fore.

Strange but true, there are indications to the effect that this administration with its subservient administrative KKK members, its questionable partisan political allies plus certain subservient judicial figures, also strangely and pitifully equates "Economic Development" with the number of bars around, plus "entertainment" districts in place plus women and young girls "for sale". There is the fact of "development" in all these. There is the undeniable "economic" reality in all these.

Never mind the public utilities that people pay for. Never mind a transport system that does not work. Never mind garbage all over the place. Never mind men, women, and children begging in the streets. Never mind families sleeping on sidewalks, living by the canals, having illiterate children. So what if the number of criminals is not only the same but even becoming more? So what if thieves rob houses, steal from supermarkets? It is alright if boys snatch and run away with the bags—money, cell phone, jewelries—of old and young women alike. All these are big signs of "Economic Development".

But most of all, so what if continuous big graft and huge corrupt practices are practically everywhere—particularly in government-owned and controlled corporations—not to mention the now infamous and nauseating DAP and PDAF fiasco. These are but signs of "Economic Development".

What Really Matters in Life?

A VACATIONING American businessman was standing on the pier of a quaint coastal fishing village in southern Mexico when a small boat with just one young fisherman pulled into the dock. Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish.

"How long did it take you to catch them?" the American casually asked.

"Oh, a few hours," the Mexican replied.

"Why don't you stay out longer and catch more fish?" the American businessman then asked.

The Mexican warmly replied, "With this I have more than enough to support my family's needs."

The businessman then became serious, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

Responding with a smile, the Mexican fisherman answered, "I sleep late, play with my children, watch ballgames, and take siesta with my wife. Sometimes in the evenings I take a stroll into the village to see my friends, play the guitar, sing a few songs..."

The American businessman impatiently interrupted, "Look, I have an MBA from Harvard, and I can help you to be more profitable. You can start by fishing several hours longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch. With the extra money, you can buy a bigger boat. With the additional income that larger boat will bring, you can then buy a second boat, a third one, and so on, until you have an entire fleet of fishing boats.

"Then, instead of selling your catch to a middleman you'll be able to sell your fish directly to the processor, or even open your own cannery. Eventually, you could control the product, processing and distribution. You could leave this tiny coastal village and move to Mexico City, or possibly even LA or New York City, where you could even further expand your enterprise."

Having never thought of such things, the Mexican fisherman asked, "But how long will all this take?"

After a rapid mental calculation, the businessman pronounced, "Probably about 15-20 years, maybe less if you work really hard."

"And then what, señor?" asked the fisherman.

"Why, that's the best part!" answered the businessman with a laugh. "When the time is right, you would sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions."

"Millions? Really? What could I do with it all?" asked the young fisherman in disbelief.

The businessman boasted, "Then you could happily retire with all the money you've made. You could move to a quaint coastal fishing village where you could sleep late, play with your grandchildren, watch ballgames, take siesta with your wife, and stroll to the village in the evenings where you could play the guitar and sing with your friends all you want."

The moral of the story is: Know what really matters in life, and you may find that it is already much closer than you think.

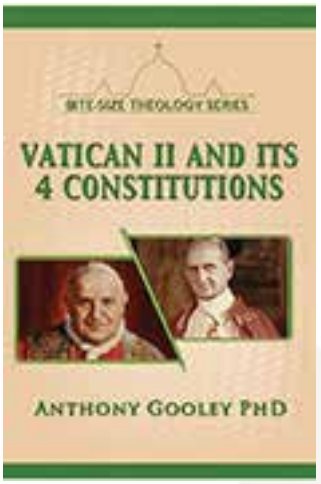
The Donkey In The Well

ADAO IBAG

ONE day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old, and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all his neighbors to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well, and was astonished at what he saw.

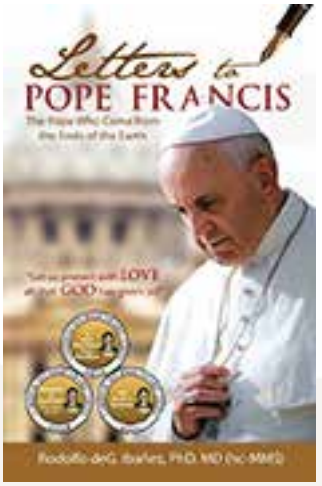
With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!



Vatican II and its 4 Constitutions

Anthony Gooley Ph. D.

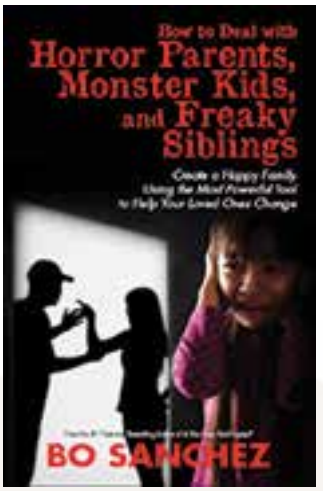
Vatican II ushered in a "new spring time" for the Church, but do most Catholics know about it? In this book that is being touted as "Bite-size Vatican II", Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane, considers this book a "welcome contribution" that is able to express complex and profound ideas in simple, day-to-day language. "These pages will inspire readers to learn more of the Catholic faith and to understand the gift which it is," the prelate added. The author, Rev. Dr. Anthony Gooley, a deacon in the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia, a husband, and father, is like a modern-day prophet, who is able to inspire "a better appreciation of the legacy of Vatican II and to understand more of what the Spirit is saying to the Church at this time." Even lay people seem to agree. "I wish Bite Size Vatican II had been available earlier in my life and faith journey!", said Marita Winters, Executive Secretary, Bishops' Commission for Evangelization. Written precisely for the busy yet serious Catholic, this 205-page work is like a sampler of one of the most groundbreaking developments and documents of the Roman Catholic Church.



Letters to Francis The Pope who came from the ends of the Earth

Rodolfo de.G Ibañez, PhD, MD

A recipient of the Jaime Cardinal Sin Best Book Award in Family Life, "Kuya Rudy" as he is fondly called by many writes this "pilgrim's book" from a depth of personal experience and reflection. Bishop Raul Martirez has this to say: "Kuya Rudy is one of those pilgrims who have opened new horizons for me." Not little praise for someone who marries his layman's eye for the ordinary and the wisdom of someone who loves the Gospel and lives it out. "Kuya Rudy has the gift of finding for a story he narrates an appropriate authoritative resource from philosophy or apologetics or Mariology or theology or history—even humor!"



How to Deal with Horror Parents, Monster Kids and Freaky Siblings

Create a Happy Family Using the Most Powerful Tool to Help Your Loved Ones Change

Bo Sanchez

Everyone has skeletons in their closet, not to mention the family closet of "shared horrors." In yet another funny yet insightful book, Catholic inspirational speaker Bo Sanchez tackles the painful cycle of brokenness and abuse that cripples many families today. Dealing with something truly relevant, Sanchez, one of the most sought-after lay preachers in the country talks about how to create truly healthy relationships with the people closest to us—parents, siblings, and children. The truth is, even the most beautiful bonds are riddled with dysfunctional and hurting patterns of relating. This honest book dares ask the question: How do I put an end to toxic patterns in my family? If you're willing to find out how, then this book is for you.

Hit Your Life's Reset Button! You Can Start Again Today

Marc V. Lopez

Reset. Re-boot. Restart. If only people could give themselves a new slate as easily as it is to restore a gadget to factory settings, there would be happier faces and not just because of fresh starts, but also because it means second chances promise change and rebirth. In this book by educator and Catholic lay preacher Marc Lopez, the reader discovers what holds him back and what he needs to do to break away from "old ways" of doing things, outdated habits of living. A founder of Lamblight Catholic School, the author in clear and simple language reveals the "simple secret of living life to the full". This also leads the curious Catholic to discover or re-discover his authentic Christian identity, which is the key to all Resurrection stories, personal and collective.

BIG GAME

DIRECTOR: Jalmari Helander
LEAD CAST: Samuel L. Jackson, Onni Tommila, Ray Stevenson, Victor Garber, Mehmet Kurtulus, Ted Levine, Jorma Tommila, Risto Salmi, Felicity Huffman, Jim Broadbent
SCREENWRITER: Jalmari Helander
PRODUCER: Will Clarke, Petri Jokiranta, Andy Mayson, Jens Meurer
EDITOR: Iikka Hesse
MUSICAL DIRECTOR: Juri Seppä, Miska Seppä
GENRE: Action, Adventure
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Mika Orasmaa
DISTRIBUTOR: Europa Corp.
LOCATION: Germany
RUNNING TIME: 110 minutes

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT: 3.5
MORAL ASSESSMENT: 3.5
MTRCB RATING: PG 13
CINEMA RATING: PG 13

Finn Oskari (Onni Tommila) faces what every Finnish boy dreams of on the eve of his 13th birthday: to prove himself a man by surviving a day and a night in the wilds, catch game, and do his father proud. It doesn't matter if he can barely bend his bowstring, let alone hunt for deer on his own. Meanwhile, Moore (Samuel L. Jackson), the President of the United States of America is on his way to a G-8 summit meet when Air Force One is suddenly attacked by missiles. He is promptly ensured safety through the escape pod by Morris (Ray Stevenson), head security officer, before the plane crashes on to the forest floor where Oskari is. The young boy finds the President and drags him along his solitary pursuit only to discover that Moore is being hunted by a psychopath with the help of his trusted security aid. Will Oskari prove himself and bag the biggest game of all?

Big Game opens with a spectacular and breathtaking sweep of what is supposed to be Finnish mountains and woods (it's actually Bavaria, Germany). The awesome opening sequence alone makes your movie ticket worth it. There is great chemistry between young Onni Tommila and Samuel L. Jackson who both wear their characters with a delightful and solid performance. The action sequences are well choreographed and the musical score heightens the thrill of the adventure. Some parts are ridiculous but the dialogue has wit and it has lots of fun. Plot holes and the war room scenes leave much to be desired. In spite of its flaws, Big Game is a great package of adventure, humor, and ingenuity that somehow works and manages to inject real inspiration without being preachy.

Big Game actually parodies current conceptions of what it means to be a man. It presents a bumbling president, a rich psychopath, a corrupt secret agent, an incompetent intelligence team, a well-meaning but unenlightened father, and a male community whose criterion for manhood is survival in the wild and a trophy kill. Instead the film shows man's greatness in the capacity to forget himself and his pursuits in order to help another human being in need. When he surrenders posturing to getting his hands dirty, and valiantly defies any thought for self-preservation to save another, then he becomes a man.

There's one poignant scene in the wilds when Oskari weeps not because his father made sure he'd be successful. He realizes that even his own father did not believe in him. He throws caution to the wind, and stands up to the challenge surprising even himself. As always, the temptation is to strive and struggle for power, possessions, prestige and position. Big Game teaches us, without any allusion to God or Jesus, the true measure of a man: "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as ransom for many."

CATHOLIC INITIATIVE FOR ENLIGHTENED MOVIE APPRECIATION

JERUSALEM. Israel downplays media flurry over Vatican agreement with Palestine.

Israel is downplaying the recent media flurry over reports the Vatican and Palestinian representatives have finalized the text of a formal agreement recognizing freedom of religion in the "State of Palestine" and outlining the rights and obligations of the Catholic Church, its agencies and its personnel in the territory. On May 14, the day after the announcement at the Vatican, the news did not make the front page of morning papers. No official statement had been released from the Israeli Foreign Ministry, although officials told journalists on the condition they not be named that Israel was "disappointed" by the terminology used. (CNS)

INDONESIA. Gov't to allow non-official religions on identity papers

Following long-standing demands, Indonesian authorities have decided to change the rules that govern religious affiliation on identity papers. Under existing regulations, Indonesians could only choose one of the country's six official religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism. After years of struggle by activists, pro human rights groups and representatives of minorities, the government has decided to change a regulation that has long been a source of controversy, abuse and marginalization. (Asianews)

NEPAL. Psychological problems more damaging than quake

Compared to the deaths and devastation caused by the earthquake, "psychological losses may be costlier. Almost everyone living in the affected areas is afraid to go indoors," this according to Mgr Paul Simick, apostolic vicar to Nepal, who remains concerned for the difficulties Nepalis still face. "I don't see people comfortable and confident even a month after the earthquake," he said. "It will take time to get back to normal life and counseling and spiritual assistance have become urgent in this situation. All religious leaders have a significant role to play and the Catholic Church is working with various organizations with this in mind." (Asianews)

SRI LANKA. For the first time, Tamils remember civil war victims

Despite some restrictions, for the first time Sri Lankan Tamils were able to remember their loved ones who died during the Civil War. This year, President Maithripala Sirisena allowed local communities to commemorate their dead on Remembrance Day (May 18), which marks the end of the war against the Tamil Tigers. Under the government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Tamils were not allowed to commemorate their dead on the ground that it would be condoning terrorists. (Asianews)

PHILIPPINES. Church says PHL has 'moral duty' to accept refugees

More than its international obligations to protect refugees, the Philippines has a "moral obligation" to help vulnerable migrants who will seek solace at the country's shores, the Catholic hierarchy said. After other Southeast Asian nations turned thousands of "boat people" from Myanmar and Bangladesh away, CBCP President Archbishop Socrates Villegas said there was a duty to treat the refugees with compassion. "There is a legal obligation not to forcibly repatriate them. And by all precepts of morality and decency, there is an obligation not to leave them to the mercilessness of the elements on the high seas," he said. (CBCPNews)

PAKISTAN. Court charges 106 over murder of Christian couple

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan yesterday charged 106 people with the murder of a Christian couple who were lynched after being accused of blasphemy in Punjab province last year. Shehzad Masih and his wife, Shama, who was reportedly pregnant, were beaten and burned to death in a furnace following rumors that two had burned pages of the Qur'an in the city of Kot Radha Kishan. The incident in November last year sparked international outrage. Some 400 people are believed to have taken part in the lynching. The 106 people charged on May 21 were produced before the court in Lahore amid strict security, local media reports said. (UCAN)

BANGLADESH. Attackers kill another atheist blogger in Bangladesh

An atheist blogger was hacked to death in Bangladesh's northeastern city of Sylhet on Tuesday, the third fatal attack on a prominent atheist writer in the country since February. Ananta Bijoy Das, 33, was killed near Sylhet airport by four masked attackers as he was making his way to work. Das, a banker by trade, was an organizer of the Sylhet-based secular forum Logic and the local unit of Public Uprising Square, a national forum of young secularists that campaigns for a secular Bangladesh. Two madrassa students have been arrested over Rahman's killing. (UCAN)

CHINA. Catholic history exhibit commemorate mission pioneers

The Exhibition of Historical Catholic Objects organized by the Diocese of Han Dan in the province of He Bei commemorated the work of pioneers of the mission in China on April 30 to May 12 at the Diocesan Formation Centre. Among the 350 historical objects on display, there were also the relics of 15 Saints of the Catholic Church, including St. Vincent de Paul and St. John Vianney. There were also manuscripts of missionaries, chalices, vestments, crosses, monstrances. The exhibition organized by the Diocesan Museum of Archaeology in collaboration with the Formation Centre aims to re-launch mission in the footsteps of the pioneers of evangelization, and to strengthen faith in the Church. (Agenzia Fides/UCAN)

SINGAPORE. Catholics have built the nation's future—archbishop

As Pope Francis pointed out in a homily at Domus Sanctae Marthae, "politics", according to the social doctrine of the Church, is "one of the highest forms of charity" because it is in "the service of the common good," said Mgr William Goh Seng Chye, in a pastoral message to the faithful. He writes that the world and society are "arenas for Catholics to express their faith in action, and evangelize in accordance with Gospel values". For him, it is a "Christian duty" to take part in "the work of nation-building." The prelate goes further noted that "the Church has been an instrument and architect in Singapore's development." "Even more important, the Church has helped shape the morals and values of our society," Mgr Goh explained. (Asianews)

CBCP NEWS
/cpcpnews
@cpcpnews
cpcpnews

A MUST READ FOR CATHOLICS...

GRAB YOUR COPY NOW!

PHP 20.00

PHP 20.00

PUBLICATION OF KCAPI AND THE ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

CBCP Monitor

May 11-24, 2015

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

H Catholics join Pope in fight
vs. indifference, secularism

xperts: BBL may pass with
'risky' transition period

Mindoro folk seek bishops' support vs. Intex mining

CBCP Monitor

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

Caritas launches aid
appeal for

SUPPLEMENT ISSUE UGNAYAN: THE NEWS SUPPLEMENT OF COUPLES FOR CHRIST

CBCP Monitor

VOLUME 19
NUMBER 11

May 25 - June 7, 2015

PROTAGONIST OF TRUTH, PROMOTER OF PEACE

CBCPMONITOR.COM

Church launches 'zero hunger bill' petition

By Roy Lagarde

CARITAS Philippines has urged President Benigno Aquino III to certify as urgent a measure that seeks to end hunger in the country in ten years.

Archbishop Rolando Tirona, president of Caritas Philippines, said Aquino should certify the "zero hunger bill" as urgent to expedite and ensure its passage before his term ends next year.

"The early passage of the bill could save many of our brothers and sisters from hunger and death, which is the number one cause of mortality," Tirona said.

Also known as HB 3795 or the Right to Adequate Food Framework Act of 2014, it aims to establish the right to food as a government priority that will entail a comprehensive program to address hunger.

"The right to food is a basic right that must be upheld and fulfilled by the duty-holders, our government," he said.

Signature drive

To show the church's scale of support for the measure, Caritas has also launched a petition to push for the passage of the pending bill in Congress.

The agency is tapping the help of all the dioceses in gathering signatures in their respective parishes in support of the bill.

Tirona said they are also coordinating with other civic-minded groups for the passage of House Bill 3795 or the Right to Adequate Food Framework Act of 2014.

Hunger Bill / A8

Newly elected Caritas Internationalis president Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle speaks during "Caritas Day" where delegates embraced the "One Human Family, Food for All" campaign to end hunger, at the Expo 2015 world's fair in Milan, Italy on May 10. "We are one human family united by hunger," said the first Asian to head the confederation of Catholic charities. "It is not just about food but it is the same hunger that unites us."

CBCP exec links climate change to poverty

WHAT'S

Church says PHL has 'moral