ASIAN MAGAZINE FOR HUMAN TRANSFORMATION

IMPACT

July 2015
VOL 49 NO 7

Living *Laudato Si'*

IMPACT

ISSN 0300-4155 / Asian Magazine for Human Transformation Through Education, Social Advocacy and Evangelization / P.O. Box 2481, 1099 Manila, Philippines

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Published monthly by
AREOPAGUS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ASIA, INC.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

WHEN Cardinal Mario Bergoglio assumed the Petrine ministry and took the name of St. Francis, a Filipino archbishop already surmised that the new pontiff will pursue an agenda inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, namely: the poor, the environmen,t and peace. He was right.

During his inaugural address in March 2013, Pope Francis already outlined this when he said, "I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: Let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

It was no surprise then that his much-awaited encyclical on the environment, Laudato Si, would take prominence in the agenda of his pontificate. He spoke in behalf of the poor while bewailing poor governance and bad business for placing "speculation and the pursuit of financial gain" ahead of the common good. He pointed the "tragic rise in migrants," to escape poverty caused by environmental degradation. He chastised global inequality and called for a "true ecological approach" that will "hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor".

The encyclical points out how the poor have been seriously hurt by demographic segregation in modern society, which is partly due to "the fact that many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centers of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems." In the end "this lack of physical contact and encounter, encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can led to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality," (No. 49).

Both the environment and people, especially those in the peripheries, fatally suffer injury from the worsening structural evils proliferated by economic and political ends. Says the encyclical, "Human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation," (No. 48).

The root causes are, of course, not in the stars but in the human heart. n 1988, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines issued its first landmark pastoral letter on ecology, "What is happening to our beautiful land?" It said, "At the root of the problem we see and exploitative mentality, which is at variance with the Gospel of Jesus. This expresses itself in acts of violence against fellow Filipinos. But it is not confined to the human sphere. It also infects and poisons our relationship with our land and seas."

At the end of the day, the call to good stewardship of creation may actually be a call to conversion of the heart.

This issue is wholly devoted to the latest encyclical letter of Pope Francis, Laudato Si, on the care of our common home. Our cover story is penned by Robert Z. Cortes, a student of Social Institutional Communication at the Pontifical University of Santa Croce in Rome who opines that the "environmental theology" of Pope Francis is a manifestation of the Church's preferential option for the poor. Read on.

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QUOTE IN THE ACT

"To hear the Pope say that we are at the brink of consuming the earth's resources, but still a long way from eradicating poverty should be a wake-up call for all."

Yolanda Esguerra, National Coordinator of Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc., (PMPI); in a statement on the Pope's latest encyclical on environment and climate change, adding that the document "echoes and validates our desires and calls for effecting change in our society—from protection of the environment to uplifting the everyday life of our poor people."

"Violating the 'rights' of the environment means also violating the very rights of the poor."

Fr. Edwin Gariguez, Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines; commenting on "Laudato Si," the encyclical of Pope Francis on the care of our common home; saying that the encyclical "brings home the point that social justice is primordial in the climate change discourse."

"While we can continue to voice out our opposition against those who threaten marriage, a more effective defense of marriage and family would be our own marriages and family lives that are a living witness to a world that would rather listen to actions than words."

Jose Tale, Chairman CFC International Council; in a statement on the recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States calling the ban on same-sex marriage as unconstitutional

"The cross is a symbol of the Christian faith and some of the buildings are legally approved. It is unexplainable why it has to be forcibly removed."

Lianghui, the acronym of the leaders of the Catholic Patriotic Association and the Church Affairs Commission in China; in a joint statement demanding that the Communist leadership stop the forcible removal of crosses in Catholic Churches

"All of us are thieves. Hence, no one trusts each other anymore."

Atilano Fajardo, a Vincentian priests who heads the Public Affairs Ministry of the Archdiocese of Manila; in an emerging "Huwag Kang Magnakaw" (Do not steal) t-shirt campaign that battles to eradicate the culture of corruption in the Philippines.

Our Common Home?

By Joel Tabora, S.J.

I cannot say that I have completed my study of Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si, On Care for our Common Home" (LS). But sharing some preliminary reflections on this remarkable document may already be worthwhile, if only to invite my readers themselves to delve into the richness—and challenge—of this document.

Confronting the major socio-ecological problems of the world—pollution and climate change, the diminishing supply of fresh drinking water, the loss of biodiversity, global inequality, and the decline in the quality of human life—Francis rejects resignation and defeatism. "Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home," Francis insists. "The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know things can change" (LS, 13).

Our common home? "Home" itself may already be a concept which increasingly escapes the experience of many. "A house is not a home," the song goes. But what is home today when the culture of family life has become so generally amorphous, when breadwinners live abroad, and children grow up with grandparents or aunts or godparents? What is home when the conversation between parents and children is incessantly interrupted by the stressful demands of work and school, and communication in a world of social media more compelling than exchange that might occur between mother and son, father and daughter? What is home when the gap between generations is widened daily by addictive games on the Internet, silly entertainment on TV, and the perplexing things that the children bring home from school? The home that was the joy of the shared meal cooked by a mother or the treasured space of warmth and family to which one returns after a hard day's work has been largely sacrificed to new ways of doing things: being husband and wife on Skype, sitting around a table where celfons are more compelling than the twinkle in one's father's eye, the worry in the tone of one's son's words, or the excitement in a daughter's story of her day. Already on this level, where what is "mine" may be more important than what is "ours," and "going out" may be more life-giving than "being home," there may be a need to "bring the family together ... to protect our common home." When we talk about our common home, what is it today that we protect? And how do we protect what we no longer seem to have in common?

What happens then when we stretch this concept "home" beyond the walls of our house and into the borderless expanses of the globe? Are we not confronted by a perplexing world that is somehow "ours" because media makes us part of it, but mostly not ours because we can't do anything about it? This includes, in recent news, a beleaguered Greece flailing to assert itself against the tortuous disciplines of the gods of European finance ironically through a democratic vote; sectarian combatants of a religion of peace gunning down innocent worshippers of another sect of the same religion of peace in a sacred mosque in Kuwait; a jihadist's Kalashnikov gunning down innocent vacationers in Tunisia; a white man shooting nine black people in a South Carolina church followed by the burning of six African American churches; 500 hapless revelers engulfed in "hellfire" after colored powder accidentally ignites in Taiwan's Fun Coast water park, China bullying its way into the West Philippine Sea, and some 38 killed after a ferry carrying close to 200 passengers capsizes off Ormoc. This "home" is horrifying for have nots and perhaps even more for those who just have less, or just have not enough; it is alienating for those who believe that worship of the one almighty God "on the straight path" brings peace; it is unsafe for revelers and travelers. How much is this earth our common home, and what is it in it that we are called to protect?

Much needs to be said about environmental destruction in Mindanao and in Palawan, but perhaps Manileños—and the rest of the nation as well—may reflect on the quality of their environment and their "home." There was a time when traveling from Ateneo to Avenida Rizal simply to watch a movie was no big deal, when riding up the broad Taft Avenue was scenic, when between Rizal Theatre and the Intercontinental in Makati there was wide open space, and coming up Highway 54 there were broad fields that one could look on to with carabao still wallowing in mud. Free space, meanwhile, has been turned into private space, precious park space even in the environmentally sensitive Ayala development of Makati has been turned into building space, single story buildings into imposing skyscrapers, sunny thoroughfares de-

JACINTA VALERO

But what is home today when the culture of family life has become so generally amorphous, when breadwinners live abroad, and children grow up with grandparents or aunts or godparents?

meaned into the dark underbellies of dysfunctional transit systems and skyways, green space into pathetic "green walls" of plants that wither in the poisonous pollution of the city. The rationality of the city has been co-opted by the irrationality of our transportation vehicles, which hardly move, despite widened avenues and multilayered skyways, because regulating the infinite number of vehicles on the finite supply of streets is considered economically irrational. The nation—and not only Manileños—must take note because it is the taxpayer's money that funds this madness.

Pope Francis says: "we are conscious of the disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities, which have become unhealthy to live in, not only because of pollution caused by toxic emissions but also as a result of urban chaos, poor transportation, and visual pollution and noise. Many cities are huge, inefficient structures, excessively wasteful of energy and water. Neighborhoods, even those recently built, are congested, chaotic and lacking in sufficient green space. We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature." (44).

What have we done to our common home? Perhaps it is indeed time to pause from what Francis describes as the "rapidification" of our ways to consider the state of our home and the quality of our living.

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A Reflection on the Theological Method of Laudato Si'

By Fr. Reynaldo D. Raluto, SThD

Introduction

The methodology of see-judge-act has been attributed to Belgian cardinal Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967), the founder of the movement of Young Christian Workers. In 1961, Pope John XXIII creatively appropriated this methodology for the whole Church in his encyclical Mater et Magistra, which emphasizes that: "There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act." Subsequently, in an attempt to emphasize the eschatological dimension of the reality, many Latin American theologians felt the need to add the fourth moment of theological process: celebrate!

This preferred methodology, as well as the underlying epistemology it proposes, proves to be very fruitful and appropriate among Third World theologians, who prefer to approach the theological challenges from below—that is, from the perspective of those at the base of the ladder of human communities. Many of the Church documents since Vatican II were basically structured in this framework. The recent post-conciliar Catholic social teaching, as well as the official documents of the episcopal conferences, follows the same methodology. It can be shown that Laudato Si' (LS) perpetuates this usual process of exposing the social teaching. Let us briefly explain the phases of this methodology in our attempt to appreciate the framework of this new encyclical.

Awareness of the Present Ecological Crisis

Pope Francis begins his exposition by "briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis, with the aim of drawing on the results of the best scientif¬ic research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows." This is contained in the first chapter, "What is Happening to Our Common Home" (LS 17-61). This ecological awareness serves as material starting point, which is needed before moving to the formal stage of theologizing. As a critical way of looking at the negative reality, the metaphor of seeing has two interrelated meanings. One is to insert ourselves in the actual life-situation of the people in order to acquire "a direct knowledge of the reality." This sort of seeing challenges us to do an "actual solidarity" with the people in the local community. This is akin to the biblical sense of knowing that "implies loving, letting one-

self become involved body and soul." This also "entails direct contact with the anti-reality" —particularly the more stark and problematic side of the reality.

The other meaning of seeing has to do with perceiving the causes of the negative ecological situation. In the words of Pope Francis, it is an "attempt to get to the roots of the present situation, so as to consider not only its symp¬toms but also its deepest causes" (LS 15). In analyzing the negative ecological realities, the following questions may be asked: What made the situation as such? Who or what events or factors have contributed to this situation? To answer these questions properly, we need the analytical mediation of the sciences, which serve as "an obligatory detour" before embracing the formal content of faith for theological reflection. In this regard, chapter three of Laudato Si' explores "The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis" (LS 101136). This implies that we need to critically listen to the competent masters whose diagnoses of the ecological situation offer extremely valuable ecological insights for our theological understanding on creation. We need both ways of seeing to be able to make a sound judgment and well-discerned action.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Ecological Crisis

After acquiring an objective gaze and panoramic view on the ecological crisis, Pope Francis proceeds to "consider some principles drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition which can render our commitment to the environment more coherent" (LS 15). This is contained in chapter two, which uses "The Gospel of Creation" (LS 62-100) as hermeneutic mediation or normative tool for interpreting the negative reality of the ecological crisis. For Christians, the contents of faith serve as criteria for theological judgment and "constitute an obligatory and constitutive theoretical resource of any theological process." In this light, Laudato Si' affirms that the negative ecological state of the planet is a theological question and moral issue, insofar as it denies the historic realization of God's design.

Vatican II pushes us to be alert in discerning the cry of the poor and the groaning of creation, as we "labor to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the events, exigencies, and desires in which it has a part." (GS 11). Along this line, Pope Francis builds on the ecological teachings of Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and the numerous documents of Episcopal Conferences from all continents. This allows him to develop a new paradigm of an integral ecology, "which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings" (LS 15). He also dialogues with philosophers, theologians, and mystics whose valuable ecological insights critically support the Church's rejection of the misguided anthropocentrism and duly recognize the intrinsic value of non-human creatures. This creative synthesis of the best available knowledge from diverse sources makes this ecological encyclical significantly different from previous papal documents.

Without pretending that the Church could "settle scientific questions" or "replace politics," it is imperative to discern the specific contribution of Christian faith to the transformation of unsustainable practices...

Proposal for Transformative Action

In Laudato Si', Pope Francis advances "some broader proposals for dialogue and action which would involve each of us as individuals, and also affect international policy." He also offers "some inspired guidelines for human development to be found in the treasure of Christian spiritual experience" (LS 15). This is contained in chapter five which offers some "Lines of Approach and Action (LS 163-201). Without pretending that the Church could "settle scientific questions" or "replace politics," it is imperative to discern the specific contribution of Christian faith to the transformation of unsustainable practices, as we believe that a theological reflection on praxis that does not lead to transformative action is "pointless." Indeed, our Christian faith is dead (cf. Jas 2:26), unless we enable it to contribute to the desirable transformation.

Pope Francis attempts to go beyond the mere theoretical understanding of the ecological issues. This is crucial as he invites us to come down from the exalted place of the spectator's point of view and puts our feet on solid ground where we can experience the "concrete, fleshy, vibrant," and colorful elements of people's praxis. The task of applying the theories of change to actual reality enables us to understand "the truth of practical experience" and to feel the "urgency" to transform the negative ecological situation. This allows the praxis from below to challenge the top-down presumptions and bring to light the limits of the dominant ideologies. This tension is crucial because it allows us to discern whether or not our theories would work in the actual situation on the ground. If theories do not work on the ground, they are mere "disabled" ideas. Following Bishop Francisco Claver's liberative approach, we need to enable the people themselves to "participate freely and consciously in the process from beginning to end," thus, treating them as active agents of change and simply passive beneficiaries.

The Symbolic Moment of Celebration

The moment of celebration expresses our grateful recognition of the partial yet concrete realization of

In this light, Laudato Si' affirms that the negative ecological state of the planet is a theological question and moral issue, insofar as it denies the historic realization of God's design.

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God plan of salvation in history and our hopeful disposition in the midst of the present experience of negative realities. Chapter six of Laudato Si', particularly the section on "Sacramental Signs and the Celebration of Rest" (LS 233-237), is devoted to this purpose. Reading these paragraphs gives us a more positive vision of the future. This eschatological hope is ritualized in our community liturgical and sacramental celebrations. The Eucharistic celebration, being the "source and summit" of Christian life, does not only join heaven and earth but also "embraces and penetrates all creation." For this reason, this sacrament serves as "a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation." (LS 236). Thus, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist becomes truly a participative offering of our struggles, hopes, and dreams for a transformed and renewed creation.

Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff explains why the moment of celebration is extremely important in the context of our journey as God's people. For him, the imperative to celebrate is "a decisive dimension for faith, for it is here that the more gratuitous and symbolic side of liberation emerges." He adds that the celebration signifies "the anticipatory signs of the goods of the Reign, the advent of divine redemption, embodied in actual liberations in society, the moment when the utopia of integral liberation is anticipated in frail signs, symbols, and rites. ... [Faith] sees the Reign taking place as process within the history of the oppressed. All this is uncovered in celebration and transformed into material for praising God." Thus, the process of Christian theologizing should properly culminate in a joyful celebration.

Conclusion

It is significant that Laudato Si' concludes by offering two prayers: one is A prayer for Our Earth, which "we can share with all who believe in a God"; the other is A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation. These prayers creatively express our affective capacity to worship God, which can never be satisfied by our limited rational and cognitive approaches. This theological process continues spirally. And when everything that can be said has been said, all that is left for us to say is a resounding Amen, followed by a respectful silence before the unspeakable Mystery.

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i John XXIII, Mater et Magistra: Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress (15 May 1961), nos. 236-37; available from http://www.vatican.va/ holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater_en.html (accessed: 14 September 2010).

ii Francis, Laudato Si' [LS]: On Care for Our Common Home (May 24, 2015), no. 15; available from http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf (accessed: June 18, 2015).

iii Clodovis Boff, "Methodology of the Theology of Liberation," in Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria, eds., Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 1-21, 10.

iv Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, translated by Paul Burns (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 9.

v Leonardo Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, translated by Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 109.

vi C. Boff, Theology and Praxis, 63.

vii C. Boff, Theology and Praxis, 133.

viii L. Boff, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, 110.

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An Ecological Life: Living Laudato Si'

By Br. Jaazeal Jakosalem, OAR

TIM MCCABE

"THIS sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 2)

Beyond the walls of Vatican Across the globe, the encyclical Laudato Si' opens an air of freshness. Accepted not only by Catholics, but also by other faiths and beliefs, environmental activists, scientists, atheists, among others with an open heart, as Pope Francis encourages. Laudato Si' is a contemporary document revealing and underlining a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 14), valuable than any other resource materials and scientific papers about the climate crisis.

"The encyclical will send a strong message to every Christian to take a collective action in solving the greatest ecological crisis we ever have," said Lou Arsenio, Program Coordinator of Ministry on Ecology, Archdiocese of Manila.

Defining Climate Change by Understanding the Common Good

In this encyclical, Pope Francis speaks from the heart, close to the language "in the margins." An ordinary person can read the encyclical just like reading a novel, a manual or clear instructions; simple words of wisdom from a once doctrinal-laden chair of St. Peter. A pastoral letter with the purpose: "I will point to the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 16).

In discerning the unimaginable effects of the climate crisis, Pope Francis re-affirms the assessment of his predecessors that "Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades. Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 15) The end-game is clear and simple, the Church cares for our common home—our common good.

Destroying the Earth, Oppressing the Poor

Ecological stewardship is inseparable with social justice. "We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 53)

Undeniably, the poor are the victims "we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 49)

He criticized existing political, economic and technological structures – stop talking, act now! "It is remarkable how weak international political responses have been. The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the

common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 54)

The encyclical by itself articulated the vision of a Church of the People, where Liberation Theology failed to communicate, Laudato Si' did present a clear understanding - a new manifesto close to the hearts of the people who made up the 99%.

"We hope this call to action reaches beyond the Catholic Church and into the hearts of everyone who understands the moral obligation we have to protect our resources and those most afflicted by climate change," as manifested by a statement from Al Gore's The Climate Reality Project.

A Gospel of Creation

Pope Francis proposes a new approach of addressing the climate crisis: dialogue of faith & science, where the manifestation of greed in the areas of economics and technology were proven; faith and science thus far proved to conscienticize our global citizens.

It is through re-examining our faith-beginnings, from convictions along with the living experience of the gospel of life, lived in the written pages of witnessing. "The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 83) From here, our praxis of caring for our common home is grounded on the formative development of our faith-experience - that values the sacredness of everything that exists. "Love the environment, it is from God and love others because your fellowman is the summit of the Lord's creation," said Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop of Manila.

Integral Ecology: towards Conversion, Formation & Action

Quality of life in all elements of ecology: environmental, economic, social, cultural, behavioral, and 'structural.' In each, Pope Francis creatively examined areas of failure and proposed growth that will "seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 139). Pope Francis highlights our 'human ecology" by emphasizing "the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 155)

"Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 161) Thus, Pope Francis demands an ecological transformation:

The need of a global consensus, "Such a consensus could lead, for example, to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 164)

The need of a space for Dialogue for the sake of the Common Good among Believers, Sciences, Ecological movements, "the majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us from confronting environmental problems effectively. An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered. The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that 'realities are greater than ideas.' (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 201)

The need for immediate action: "we believers cannot fail to ask God for a positive outcome to the present discussions, so that future generations will not have to suffer the effects of our ill-advised delays." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 169)

The need for environmental education, for the first time, the Church offers a comprehensive module that is both formative and holistic: "It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 210) Thereby, creating an "ecological citizenship" (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 211)

The need for ecological faith, in the lights and shadows of our climate action "may our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope." (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 244) "God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him! (Pope Francis, Laudato Si', no. 245)

This encyclical is for all of us, Praise be to him!

The Love that Saves the World

By Fr. Shay Cullen

If we really love someone or something for its beauty and goodness and not for personal gratification, then for sure, we will cherish, admire, and protect that person or entity from all danger, harm, damage, and sickness. We will support and enhance that life and contribute to its growth and well-being. That is love.

The history-making encyclical of Pope Francis, "On care for our common home," presents this ideal. "The ideal of a 'civilization of love' ". [157] Social love is the key to authentic development: "In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life—political, economic and cultural—must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity."

It takes moral training, value formation and education to reach a level of unselfish love for people and for the planet. And it is this educated and enlightened love that Pope Francis is saying we must have to protect and nourish each other and all life on this planet, and to protect the environment that sustains life itself.

It is the care and commitment to help the poor, downtrodden, exploited, the abandoned, and the sick people that are at the heart of love. That's the love we need to save people, family, friends, community, the poor, and the environment. This is the life-giving resource of nature.

We can be prosperous and have material things for a decent life of dignity but not at the cost of obsession with money, losing the love of people who love us, and destroying our environment. It is the bounty of nature that gives us life and it is unselfish love that will sustain it.

Presently, the bonds of people's unity with each other and with nature are broken. We, humans, are the pillagers of the earth, the polluters of the air and land, have lost a love for nature. We can only serve God, not materialism that destroys people and the earth.

In the opening paragraph of the encyclical it is clearly stated what we have become to the planet and each other. It reads: "We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor."

The reason it is so necessary to challenge all people in the world to look for such a universal experience of love is because we humans have lost it. The more prosperous and materialist we are, the less loving we become is what Pope Francis is saying.

We are killing and polluting plant and animal life; we have poisoned the water; people have filled the air with death-dealing fumes and toxic chemicals; many have heated up the climate; and we stupidly wonder why so many people are dying from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and preventable diseases.

We fall far short of having a caring and loving relationship with each other and with nature. We live in violent urban jungles and commit more acts of violence, abuse, and exploitation than acts of care and love. What we learn from the encyclical is that human industrial activity using technology and machines that cause massive environmental damage and harm overwhelms the healing and recovery powers of the planet. The evolutionary process nature is slow. We, humans, the species with the biggest brains but with less intelligence, are creating great unhappiness and endangering the future of the next generations by causing irreversible climate change.

That alone affects everything else. Witness the melting ice caps, the rising ocean levels, the severe frequent droughts on one side of the globe, and massive flooding on the other; extreme weather conditions are becoming the norm. The destruction of the rain forests, the over fishing of the oceans, the privatizations of food production and natural resources are plunging the poor into famine and early deaths. We choke on our garbage and turn the planet into a filthy pile, Pope Francis says in paragraph 21.

"Account must also be taken of the pollution produced by residue, including dangerous waste present in different areas. Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive, from homes and businesses, from construction and demolition sites, from clinical, electronic and industrial sources."

The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish. Industrial waste and chemical products utilized in cities and agricultural areas can lead to bioaccumulation in the organisms of the land.

Food production is massively affected and malnutrition and impoverished living conditions in slums and famine-like conditions kill millions of poor people annually, while obesity and self-poisoning with smog and toxic chemicals in unhealthy food is killing the rich. There is so much more in this magnificent document that strengthens the campaign against fossil fuels like the excessive burning of oil and coal.

As Francis says, "The idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology ... is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry at every limit."

"Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start."

PPCRV chair: Politics and politicking different

MANILA, July 18, 2015—A lay leader is not impressed with the argument that Church people should not meddle in politics, saying people who subscribe to this belief do not really know what politics really means.

Not necessarily dirty

"Engaging in politics is not the same as politicking," said Henrietta "Tita" T. de Villa, who currently chairs the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), a Church-backed, volunteer-run, and non-partisan poll watchdog, in a recent episode of Catholic show "Know The Truth."

"Politics is not necessarily dirty. Granted it may appear dirty at times, but it is all the fault of dirty politicians, not politics itself," she added.

Henrietta "Tita" T. de Villa, chairperson of Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) *RAYMOND SEBASTIAN*

Common good

And precisely because of elected officials who misuse and abuse their power, the former Philippine ambassador to the Holy See stressed this is reason enough why Filipinos, especially the ones active in their parishes, must get involved in political affairs to ensure the election of office leaders who are God-fearing, competent, honest.

"We have to take part ... Everyone has to take part, because what is at stake here is the common good. Politics should be founded on moral values, that is why we have our priests, our shepherds to guide us, their flock, in this matter," she explained.

Responsible voting

"Responsible voting is a Christian deed, a Filipino duty," she added in Filipino.

Moreover, De Villa enjoined baptized Filipinos to let their Christian values influence their choice of candidates in the forthcoming May 2015 elections.

Quoting the Prophet Micah, she shared. "You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). ***(Raymond A. Sebastián/CBCP News)***

CBCP on K-12: Don't forget poor

MANILA, July 15, 2015— The Catholic bishops have called on education authorities not to forget the poor as the country gears up for the full implementation of the K-12 program.

In a pastoral letter, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) again voiced its concern that many students will drop out of school as a consequence of the whole program.

However, they said, "we do not yet see this issue being addressed in the program."

Issue of dropouts

"There should be means to help out these dropouts," the letter, signed by re-elected CBCP president Archbishop Villegas, reads in part.

The bishops also called on Catholic schools to go beyond merely preparing for the program and turn their eyes and affection to the poor.

They said the fate of the indigenous people, the children in conflict with the law, the street children, and the persons with disabilities should particularly be of utmost concern.

The CBCP plenary assembly gathers twice a year, in January and in July. *ROY LAGARDE*

"Catholic schools must always have a place for them, not merely as outreach but as part of their education ministry, and members of their learning community," Villegas said.

They also cautioned that the K-12 should not lead to the teachers and school personnel losing their jobs, saying "no one should be make to unjustly suffer" in the program.

No to contractualized teachers

The bishops said personnel affected by the transition should be consulted and their views and suggestions "be given serious consideration."

"Teachers are not to be considered just as expenses but as partners in the noble mission of education. May this not lead to the contractualization of the teaching personnel," Villegas said.

The bishops also called on for "solidarity and subsidiarity" in the implementation of the K-12 program in the service of the common good.

It is not the time for "unbridled competition" among schools of who can offer the best education, they stressed.

Instead, the bishops added: "It is the time to activate communion through solidarity and subsidiarity."

"We call everyone to enter the table of fellowship and engage in 'appreciative conversations' regarding the education of our youth. Let us listen to one another bare their worries, concerns and misgivings. Let us all walk towards enlightenment and allow charity to permeate our dialogue," they said. ***(Roy Lagarde/CBCPNews)***

Faith alliance backs teachers from 'red-tagged' schools

MANILA, July 14, 2015—The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) has assured Save Our Schools Network (SOSN) it will support its teachers who fear persecution after they decried military moves to tag their schools as "NPA schools."

SOSN made headlines recently when it was revealed that the Department of Education (DepEd) ordered many of its schools to close due to accusations from the military that they are breeding grounds for rebels.

Committed to formal and non-formal education of indigenous peoples (IP) in Mindanao, the SOSN teachers expressed sadness over the closure of the schools.

'Not allowed to open'

In a statement, Rex R. B. Reyes, Jr., NCCP general secretary, shared that representatives of the learning centers are now in Metro Manila to make the rounds of various government agencies where they hope to find willing ears to listen to their plight.

In order to bring to the attention of partners and agencies worldwide their condition, the interfaith coalition went on to call for an international campaign which will uphold the rights of Mindanao IPs.

The education department denied the news, saying it "did not close the schools (but) were simply not allowed to open."

Harassment

Meanwhile, at a forum held recently, SOSN representatives detailed how they experienced harassment, threats, and intimidation at the hands of the military.

They expressed disappointment that even the DepEd and the local governments in the area were helpless to stop the military from closing the learning centers.

Moreover, they lamented that while they complied with the requirements of the DepEd, some of which were unrealistic, permits were still not given.

Human rights

The teachers also pointed out the link between the plight of the schools with the human rights violations in IP communities.

They maintained that all these human rights violations are a result of the indigenous people's resistance to development aggression in their areas.

To date, SOSN has more than 50 learning centers in many IP communities all over the country, particularly in Region II. ***(Raymond A. Sebastián/CBCP News)***

Catholic Climate Petition campaign launched

MANILA, July 13, 2015—Inspired by the encyclical "Laudato Si'," the Catholic Church in the Philippines, led by Manila Archbishop Luís Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle, spearheaded the Catholic Climate Petition campaign recently, and called on all Filipinos to take action now for the sake of what Pope Francis describes as "our common home."

75 parishes and counting

"A first round of 75 parishes have already received the campaign materials and will start collecting signatures in Sunday masses," said Lou Arsenio, coordinator of the Archdiocese of Manila (RCAM)'s Ministry on Ecology, as well as of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) in the Philippines, in a press release, noting that the launch was just the first step towards a massive mobilization of the Philippine Church backed by her leaders.

The first petition events are currently ongoing, and are addressed to diocesan leaders from the regions of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Nationwide drive

Meanwhile, on July 10, the Permanent Councils of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) hosted a presentation of the petition campaign, which is expected to be followed by a series of GCCM events throughout the country.

Leaders of the Church in the country have responded to the Holy Father's latest encyclical by supporting the petition which aims to collect at least one million signatures to convince world leaders who will be present at a climate summit in Paris, France in late November about the pressing issue of environmental degradation.

Global campaign

The Catholic Climate Petition is a global campaign led by the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM), a coalition of over 140 Catholic organizations from all continents working for climate action.

Pope Francis endorsed the petition campaign in May when he met with representatives of the movement at the Vatican.

Everyone's issue

In an earlier CBCP News post, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick S. Pabillo pointed out the environment is an issue that should concern not only scientists and specialists, given that its conservation or destruction has implications that can directly affect the future of all, especially the poor.

"Does the Church have a right to teach on environmental issues? Yes! Our Father in heaven created nature ... and He created it good. And since we are all children of God, it is only our duty to care for all that our Father had created," he explained.

Charity

He said caring for the environment is one of the many ways the faithful can concretely express charity to their neighbors, particularly the "poorest of the poor," whom he laments are the ones often most affected by flash floods, landslides, and other hazards like the greed of policy-makers and industrialists bring about "in the name of progress."

Pabillo further bemoaned that many capitalists, particularly those involved in irresponsible mining, see the environment and its resources merely as something to be exploited for profit. ***(Raymond A. Sebastián/CBCP News)***

Bishops back a BBL rooted in 'social justice'

MANILA, July 14, 2015 – The Catholic bishops did not make a categorical endorsement of the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law, but said they want a BBL that is based on and guided by "social moral principles."

In a statement, the bishops said that like everyone else, they want just and lasting peace. And for this reason, "we want a BBL that is rooted in social justice and promotes social justice".

"We want a BBL that effectively addresses the injustices suffered by the Bangsamoro as well as the injustices suffered by indigenous peoples and various religious minorities within the proposed Bangsamoro area," they bishops said.

Locals of Marawi city attend a public consultation on the Bangsamamoro Basic Law (BBL) in March 2014. *BANGSAMORO TRANSITION COMMISSION*

Self-determination is key

"We want a BBL that concretely achieves the self-determination of the Bangsamoro in an identified area that remains part and parcel of the territorial integrity and under the national sovereignty of the Philippine Republic," they said.

The bishops issued the statement on Monday after the three-day CBCP plenary assembly held at the Pius XII Center in Manila.

The statement was originally made by the Mindanao bishops and was later adopted by the CBCP.

Qualities of an ideal BBL

The bishops said the BBL should also be the following:

• A BBL that effectively addresses the injustices suffered by indigenous peoples and various religious minorities within the proposed Bangsamoro area

• A BBL that concretely achieves the self-determination of the Bangsamoro in an identified area that remains part and parcel of the territorial integrity and under the national sovereignty of the Philippine Republic

• A BBL that promotes harmonious relationships between peoples of various ethnic groups and of different faiths.

• A BBL that effectively protects universal human rights, particularly that of the IPs and the rights of Christian minorities who fear harassment and further marginalization

• A BBL that responds concretely to the concerns, hopes, and aspirations of all stakeholders, of various Bangsamoro groups, and of non-Moro citizens within the new Bangsamoro autonomous region.

• A BBL whose provisions are clearly Constitutional, without betraying the intent and spirit of peace agreements

Interfaith harmony

"That is the BBL we envision on the basis of social moral principles of social justice, harmony and peace. It is a vision that goes beyond the proposals now being discussed in our legislature," the bishops added.

As moral teachers, CBCP president Archbishop Socrates Villegas, clarified that they do not intend to endorse or oppose any draft of BBL because they "stand on common moral ground issues."

"The moral imperative to lasting peace is this: Christians, Muslims, Lumads and members of other faiths have to begin trusting in one another," said the bishops.

"Continuing mistrust is the road to continuing violence and unrest in Mindanao. Trust is a moral pre-requisite for justice, harmony and peace," they said. ***(CBCPNews)***

Catholics in Singapore celebrate 50 years of nation's independence

SINGAPORE, July 15, 2015–Anticipating this autumn's 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence from Malaysia, the nation's Catholics gathered earlier this month to celebrate a Mass pledging the Church's support for the city-state.

While Singapore achieved independence from Great Britain in 1963, it was first a state of Malaysia. It achieved full independence in 1965, when it was expelled following political turmoil and troubled race relations.

"It is the jubilee year, it is a year of rejoicing because God is restoring all to wholeness," Fr. Derrick Yap, OFM, chairman of the Singapore 50 celebration committee, told CNA.

Fr. Yap said: "We are called to sanctify the nation and this event is to celebrate what we have done but to propel into the future with a renewed vigour and hope – Let the light of Christ shine forth to the nations!"

Some 10,000 people gathered at the Singapore Indoor Stadium July 4 for a Mass of thanksgiving, joined by the apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli; the prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong; and representatives of other religions.

The Mass paid tribute to the missionaries who first brought the faith to Singapore and who sacrificed their lives serving the people and building the nation.

Fr. Yap said, "Joy captures all the dynamics of the occasion as we celebrate the nation's 50th anniversary," the priest reflected. "As a Church, it is also an event for rejuvenation, restoration, and healing, where needed, and of looking forward with hope. The occasion not only serves as a platform for the Church to celebrate her share in nation-building, but also to bring together Catholics here to forge stronger bonds with each other."

Archbishop William Goh Seng Chye of Singapore in his opening address praised the untiring zeal of the pioneer missionaries in proclaiming Christ and stressed that "they have been true to their mission."

The prelate, noting the Church's distinctive pastoral role in the areas of education, healthcare, social services, and integral human development, said, "The Church had always stood as a voice of the poor, the marginalized, and those who are very close to the heart of God."

He further added, "She continues in the mission to unity to recognize the new poor in our midst who are vulnerable to … relativism , individualism, materialism, consumerism, and the negative impact of the internet and social media, particularly youth and families, which form the building blocks of society."

Archbishop Goh's homily also echoed Pope Francis' recent encyclical Laudato Si' and he urged: "We need to care for the environment so that generations to come can continue to enjoy the fruits of the earth."

Archbishop Goh emphasized that the Church will work closely with the Singaporean government "to prevent moral decadence, to strengthen institution of marriage, to promote justice, peace, and harmony … and to form us as responsible citizens."

Prime minister Lee addressed the faithful, lauding the Church's immense pastoral work and saying, "the Church has been a responsible, reliable, and sensitive partner, helping us to strengthen our multiracial and multireligious society."

Lee went to a secondary Catholic school, and added a word of "thanks to the pioneers who secured our future, including the pioneers in the Church who built it up."

He noted that Church has been a "light and hope nurturing the young, moulding people into upright citizens, uplifting the downtrodden, succoring the needy, ministering to the sick … building a community with sound values and a sense of social responsibility, duty, and obligation to one another."

In his homily, Archbishop Goh noted the "greater need for formation" of the laity, adding that "until the laity takes part in the mission of the Church, we have not grown."

He urged the faithful to promote s culture of life from conception to natural death, especially through a strengthening of marriage and the family.

Archbishop Goh also examined four pillars which brought Singapore from the third to the first world, enumerating self sacrifice; justice and equality; economic development; and moral and spiritual development.

Among its preparations for the jubilee, the Archdiocese of Singapore encouraged the faithful to offer five pledges of faith and works for the intentions of the nation – to attend a daily Mass, to recite the rosary, to offer a fast, to share a meal with the poor, and to partake in Eucharistic adoration.

Fr. Yap explained that "the five pledges were meant to provide some challenge for the pledgers, because a rosary or a weekday mass just doesn't seem challenging enough; so we invite Catholics to perform five different acts of love and hope that they will actively pursue feeding the poor … this is catechesis and faith formation in action."

"This event for me is to help build bridges within the various organisations of the archdiocese. Relationships are very important … if the Church is to move forward in Singapore for the next 50 years and beyond, we will all need work together."

"If we are united with one heart, and united with the Lord, we can bring the Gospel farther than we'd ever imagined," Fr. Yap said. ***(CNA)***

POPE FRANCIS' 'GR

By Robert Z. Cortes

Pope Francis's comprehensive and beautifully-written encyclical on ecology is out and is entitled "Laudato si'". Its title is from the first line of a prayer of St. Francis: "May you be praised, my Lord." From beginning to end, the encyclical indeed, is an act of praise to God.

For my part, I would praise it for having foiled both the "conservative right" and the "progressive left" in their assumptions of both the encyclical and Pope Francis.

In the time leading to the publication of the encyclical, the former

had expressed consternation that the Pope was writing on something "out of his reach." The latter, for their part, had expected his radical, revolutionary side to finally appear. Well, Pope Francis was quite radical, all right, and the encyclical some sort of a "Green Revolution": but not the sort that they were expecting.

As an article in The Atlantic (an American magazine) succinctly

summarized it, "what this encyclical is not is a love letter to Greenpeace—Francis is embracing environmental stewardship as a Catholic theologian, not a liberal activist."He does so by contextualizing the topic squarely within his proper ambit: care for humanity in general, but especially the poor. Indeed, his "environmental theology" here is a manifestation of the Church's preferential option for the poor. It's also a continuation and development of his predecessors'—from St. John XXIII to Benedict XVI—whom he quotes a lot in the document.

Yet, the encyclical is revolutionary. It is the first that ever had ecology as its main theme. It is radical unlike any document on the environment because it gets to the real root of the problem—he mentions sin early on—and its solution.

In the first part the Pope discusses pollution, climate change, water

shortage, and the loss of biodiversity. But he does so not for their sake, but to highlight the ultimately more important consequences of dodging them: the suffering of human beings. It is they who are truly important. No wonder Pope Francis moves on swiftly from environmental to economic, social, and cultural ecology.

Yet he goes further to the "ecology of everyday life." Here the Pope brings down ecology to its most central purpose and its most radical source: the human person and his immediate community. Logically, in this very section of his encyclical, Francis recalls Benedict XVI's affirmation "that there exists an 'ecology of man...Man also has a nature that he must respect and which he cannot manipulate at his own pleasure.'"

He echoes that statement in probably the one statement that could

summarize his entire encyclical. "The integral ecology requires openness to categories that transcend the language of the exact sciences or biology and is tied to the essence of the human being."

This is to say that the radical answer to the problems of the

EEN REVOLUTION'

environment goes beyond considerations of biodiversity and water shortage. It requires a return to acknowledging and respecting human nature. Only then can environmental problems be seriously addressed; without this, everything would be cosmetic and ineffective. Now there's a radical solution, if I've ever seen one.

Unfortunately, recent events have shown that society is going the wrong direction.

For example, instead of acknowledging and respecting the original design of human beings, assisting it where it needs support, it has hailed as "brave" and "honest" decisions that attempt to minimize, short-circuit, or even totally eradicate the reality of human nature. I refer specifically to Bruce Jenner's celebrated transgender surgery and the big Irish mistake in the last referendum.

To these, Pope Francis does not say in this encyclical, "Who am I to judge?" Rather quite plainly, he says, "It is not a healthy attitude that claims to delete the sexual difference because he cannot deal with it more." And rightly so, because these are reductionisms of man to his feeling, willing, or body.

In an era where there's such a vehement demand for the re-construction of man's environment it is incomprehensible that anyone would encourage this destruction of the human being.

In this confusion, the appeal Pope Francis makes in this encyclical is clear: promote life, respect the human person, preserve the family. "But I desire to underline the central importance of the family… Against the so-called culture of death, the family constitutes the seat of the culture of life." By speaking only about the family for months in his past Wednesday audiences, he has made the message here unmistakable.

This encyclical on the environment, then, comes at a very timely moment. It has come not only when the physical world is suffering from the effects of human abuse, but also when the moral and spiritual realm of man is reeling from the effects of human hubris. It has come to remind governments, international bodies, and scientific organizations of their real raison d'être—the human person—and to be sincere in their efforts of developing a truly human society.

But above all, it has come to tell each one that the real solution begins with the individual. "The ecological crisis is an appeal to a profound interior conversion." Highlight that word: individual. Because it is as individuals that we make decisions—whether alone or in a group—for better or for worse for the environment.

In this sense, Pope Francis is a genuine radical, seriously promoting his version of a "Green Revolution." But it isn't as green as it is human.

(Robert Z. Cortes is a PhD student in Social Institutional Communication at the Pontifical University of Santa Croce, Rome. He has an M.A. in Ed. Leadership from Columbia University, N.Y.)

IAN BURT

"Unity in diversity, diversity in unity"

(Inspired by "Laudato Si"—an encyclical letter of Pope Francis on the care of our common home)

By Sr. Maureen Catabian, RGS

MARTIN PETTITT

"BAHAY kubo, kahit munti, ang halaman doon ay sari-sari, singkamas at talong, sigerilyas at mani, sitaw, bataw, patani. Kundol, patola, upo't kalabasa at saka mayroon pa, labanos, mustasa, sibuyas, kamatis, bawang at luya, sa paligid-ligid ay puno ng linga. . ."

So our favorite Filipino rhyme song goes. It is a song capturing diversity, differentiation, a variety of vegetables in a backyard of a local home community. A garden, or as we translate it in our language "halamanan" is a parcel of land teeming with life. It depicts of "diversity or differentiation" that becomes a source sustenance for each and every one. A life of abundant blessings shared in community. This is a nourishing reality in the Philippines until the onslaught of Neoliberal Globalization, an economic system which imposed itself in the global market and made everything look the same. From an indigenous principle of sharing and "sapat" or living with just enough to a "globalized" culture of "eat –all-you-can" restos, "bottomless" thirsts and "unlimited" freebies.

From the Book of Genesis 2: 4 – 17, "In the Day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet spring up- for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole face of the ground- then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground, the Lord made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

And so we learned the conclusion of this creation story- that the "curious woman, the seeker of knowledge, the tester of limits – is to be quintessentially human."

The Genesis, the "beginning", any beginning is about "a movement from a fixed and unchanging world to a new non-static order. The second chapter of Genesis describes the way in which a sterile world is replaced by one teeming with life. The world after Eden, (where woman initiated and actively participated in bringing it about), is clearly one of birth and death, whereas the garden had been an in-between world, in which no human had eaten from the tree of life but in which no one had yet given birth. Woman the one who will house life within her, helps to generate this new, active, challenging life beyond Eden."

So, women who possess the womb which generates and bears life have a very important part in sustaining these movements toward diversity and differentiation. From the womb of the earth is a potentiality for differentiation and biodiversity which sustains life and enhances the beauty and wonder of our world. "The first Trinitarian Principle of the Universe is diversity or differentiation. It is the primordial manifestation of the Universe. From the cosmic egg to the elements, it manifest an astounding variety of qualities. From the vast galactic systems to our solar system, we find our planet Earth as the most highly differentiated being in the entire Universe. Life has an overflowing variety of expressions. Thomas Berry and Bri-

anne Swimme wrote, 'We know of no other place in the universe with such gorgeous self-expression as exists on Earth. The exuberance of life we see especially in the tropical rainforest with its unnumbered species of flowering plants and colorful insects and the full spectrum of living creatures of every kind.' Indeed, we are so blessed and privileged to live in a tropical country like the Philippines."

From the latest findings, there are new marine species found in this country particularly in Verde Island Passage between Batangas and Mindoro, declared by Marine Scientists as the "center of the center of marine shorefish biodiversity in the world." "During a recent seven-week expedition to the Philippines, researchers from the California Academy of Sciences uncovered more than 100 new species of marine life lurking in the coral reef of the Passage. The Philippines is jam-packed with diverse and threatened species--it's one of the most astounding regions of biodiversity on Earth," remarked Terry Gosliner, PhD, who led the expedition." However, this biodiversity is threatened as Verde Island Passage is considered a marine-biodiversity hotspot due to pollution, overfishing, illegal and destructive fishing, etc.

In a Unity Statement issued in 2014 by *Peasants and Scientists in Forging A Strong Partnership towards Genuine Rural Development*, they declared that "corporate agriculture has taken over Philippine agriculture and the food industry. Developing countries such as ours have become exporters of high-value cash crops like pineapples, bananas and cut flowers, replacing the domestic production of rice, vegetables, and root crops. Food processing and manufacturing are now concentrated in the hands of a few big foreign and local corporations, while the storage and distribution of rice, which is traditionally the role of government, has become privatized. The takeover of Third World farming by First World corporate agriculture is a clear illustration of the onslaught of imperialism on backward economies, jeopardizing the food security of developing nations".

A garden is an in-between world. It is a sacred space where we shall plant new seeds, tend new ideas and experiences, water new passions and commitments, celebrate and feast on new harvests which hopes to provide nourishment to a still hungry world of 795 million people. The Church in the world is our garden which commits to support and promote advocacies and transformative actions in behalf of millions who are impoverished and vulnerable, hungry for food, security, health, education, peace and justice. Our gardens are interior spaces of communion as well public arena for discussion, deliberation and solidarity, where our spirits are nourished and refreshed by abundant harvests of love, compassion, mercy and justice. The unity of the Church "finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity" : The Source of All Being and the Eternal Word in the Holy Spirit, one God". From this Trinitarian relationship, we draw the life giving energies of mercy and compassion which is our unity in diversity, our diversity in unity. With the recent encyclical letter of Pope Francis addressed to All of Humanity on the issue of the environment entitled "LAUDATO SI" – On Care for our Common Home, the global community becomes our garden. A garden to challenge the culture of "disconnectedness" and to inspire a compassionate solidarity with our groaning planet earth. The time to act in global solidarity is NOW!

> From the vast galactic systems to our solar system, we find our planet Earth as the most highly differentiated being in the entire Universe. Life has an overflowing variety of expressions.

Our Living God loves gardens. Gardens tell the story of our faith and salvation. From the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Olives. The Garden of Gethsemane. The Garden of the Resurrection. "The earth and its goods will thus be a permanent reminder to it of the love of God and of His fidelity to His covenant. He or she who possesses land also possesses God." Genesis 2:15 call us to "keep" the garden. We are the gardeners given the task of ensuring diversity. Locally, we shall cultivate a garden of FAITH (Food Available In The Home). Collectively we resist and say: No to mono-cropping! No to GMOs! No to Monsanto's! No Landgrabbing! No to demolitions! No to wars and displacements! No to Large Scale Mining! No to Human Rights Violations! Only New Life!

Jesus' resurrection has taken place in a garden. Mary Magdalene is the first witness and disciple of the Risen Christ who becomes the apostle to the apostles. We celebrate this good news for all of us women who are called to be missionaries of mercy and compassion for the sake of our common home.

(A REFLECTION written and shared in the opening liturgy of the ecumenical "Asian Women Theological Educators and Women in Theological Movements Conference" last June 2015 at UCCP Shalom Center, Manila, Philippines)

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2 Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, The Women's Bible Commentary (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 13.
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5 http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/protecting-verde-island-passage/
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7 Conference Proceedings of the 2nd National Peasants-Scientists Conference: RESIST AGROCHEM TNCs (2014) , 21.
8 United Nations 2015 data from www.wfp.org.
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Nature and nurture

By Fr. Roy Cimagala

KATE DIXON

It should be nature and nurture together and in conformity with each other, not nature vs. nurture, as those of the gender ideology would often invoke. What is obvious is that we are not our own creator, and our nature is not self-generated. It has its own law, independent of how we understand it, and we should just try our best to respect and follow it.

I remember Pope Benedict in his encyclical, Deus caritas est, saying that nature is one and indivisible, which includes not only our physical environment, or our biological make-up, etc., but also the spiritual and moral dimensions of our life.

It's good that we are witnessing a growing sense of ecology, or care of the environment, but we should realize that that ecological sense should extend all the way to include our spiritual and moral life and environment, which actually is its most crucial aspect.

And just as what happens in our physical environment, we, too, have the choice either to respect, enhance, and develop this spiritual and moral ecology, or distort or even destroy it. Sad to say, it seems that many of us are concerned more with the physical ecology than with our spiritual and moral ecology.

Nature is what is given to us by God, our Creator and Father, through our biological and genetic make-up, courtesy of our parents, the procreators. And nurture should build on it, not go against it.

We all know that one is conceived and born either as male or female. This is basic biology, not bigotry. That there sometimes are hermaphrodites is the exception, a rare phenomenon, which proves the rule.

It's an anomaly that simply shows that nature, too, has its limitations, which often is also caused by us, much like why we have typhoons. Still, such anomaly is not the end of the world for the person concerned. Something can always be done to address that predicament.

And so when one is born as a boy, he should try his best, with the help of everyone, to develop and nurture his manhood as fully as possible, actualizing his manly qualities and properties as shown by Christ Himself and reflected and mediated in a homogeneously evolving way by our cultures and civilizations through the millennia.

The same when one is born as a girl. She should cultivate her femininity as fully as possible. There is supposed to be complementarity between the two sexes.

This is, of course, easier said than done. We know that for one reason or another—physical, hormonal, emotional, psychological, environmental, etc.—there can be confusion between the two genders. This should be acknowledged humbly as an anomaly for which some solution has to be sought. It should not be considered as normal, much less, natural.

Clarifying and resolving issues as to what is to be masculine and what is to be feminine, I suppose, would be a dynamic affair up to the end of the world. But this concern should have some consistency and homogeneity.

What is clear is that while some commonality can be observed and is ok in many aspects of our human sexuality, i.e., in the relation and distinction between male and female, the sharpest distinction between the two can be observed in the venereal level, when the direct use of our sexuality as in the conjugal act or sexual intercourse is involved.

In this aspect, the male has to be male and the female has to be female, since the act, to be wholly human, has to be an act of love, of total self-giving that is open to life.

In that act, the whole person is involved, in the totality of one's spiritual and bodily dimensions. That is the very nature of the act, the moral object of the act. We should not pervert it by not respecting the very nature and purpose of that act.

If animals that are driven simply by instincts would know how to do the act and with what partner—we call it mating—we, human beings, who are persons with intelligence and will, should know better.

But then again, since we have a wounded nature, there's always a possibility that instead of doing things according to our nature, we can choose to do things against our nature.

In fact, of all the creatures, we are the only ones, together with the purely spiritual angelic creatures, that can contradict our nature, and thus become inhuman or subhuman.

We have to be more aware of our grave responsibility to put nature and nurture together, not nature vs. nurture.

The Youth and Climate Change

By Bernardo M. Villegas

In the text of the speech that he did not deliver at the UST Campus on Sunday, January 18, 2015, Pope Francis suggested three key areas where the Filipino youth can make a contribution to Philippine society. The second he mentioned was to show concern for the environment: "This is not only because this country, more than many others, is likely to be seriously affected by climate change. You are called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens but also as followers of Christ...." One concrete way in which the millions of school-going Filipino youth can contribute to a sustainable environment is to join in the advocacy for the schools in which they study to be part of what has been referred to as the "solar power bandwagon."

The pioneer in this move to solar power is the University of Asia and the Pacific in Pasig, Rizal that installed a photovoltaic power system in its Parking and Sports (PSB) Building which can generate up to 300 kilowatts of electricity, making it the first campus in the country to implement the use of solar energy. If this move snowballs among the hundreds of schools even in Metro Manila alone, the Department of Energy estimates that up to 270 MW of power could be generated, lowering power costs of the schools. Already, Manuel L. Quezon University, Mapua Institute of Technology and La Consolacion College-Manila, among others, are following the example of UA&P.

Solar power is the conversion of sunlight into electricity. This can be achieved either directly, using panels made up of solar cells acting as semiconductors to produce the photovoltaic effect or indirectly, using mirrors and lenses to focus a large area of sunlight into a small beam that converts the heat into electricity employing a conventional generator. In 2008, the Government enacted Republic Act No. 9513, which essentially promotes the development, utilization, and commercialization of renewable energy resources such as biomass, solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, and ocean energy sources, including hybrid systems in order to reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels, thus minimizing the exposure to global fuel price fluctuations and the environmental impact of global warming, which affects all sectors of the economy.

One of the institutional goals and ideals contained in the Statement of Principles of the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) is to be always sensitive to social problems and open to opportunities to contribute to understanding and cooperation. It was recognized that threats to the environment and their consequential impact can lead to social as well as economic problems for the country. The construction of the Parking and Sports Building in 2013 created the opportunity to install a photovoltaic solar power system for the building at the suggestion of one of the alumni of UA&P's executive education program called the Strategic Business Economics Program (SBEP). Mr. Ericson Maquinto of TBS Industrial Services, Inc. proposed to install a solar system with a total of capacity of 300 kilowatt (KW). The proposal included a mutually beneficial financial arrangement for its acquisition.

The aesthetic and structural contribution of the solar panels covering the steel roofing sheets would significantly reduce the cost for the roof's heat insulation. Additionally the solar panels would significantly minimize the noise of raindrops during heavy rains and even provide better protection from water levels. It is estimated that, once fully operational, the PSB would only need 60 KW of power to provide for its lighting, air-conditioning, elevator and other electrical loads. The balance of 240 KW solar power capacity would be fed on-grid for the power requirements of the other campus buildings in tandem with the power supply from Meralco. After ten years of full operation, the system will provide the university with free 300KW of electricity. When the system was switched on last May 28, 2014, Meralco charged about Php 12.80 per kwhr, a rate that had been historically increasing depending on the generation charges by their power suppliers. If the pending application for a Php4 rate increase were to be granted by the Energy Regulatory Commission, the resulting price Meralco would be charging would be Php16 per kwhr. Given these figures, UA&P would be saving up to an estimated Php 230,000 per month or Php 2.76 million annually using solar power.

In addition to the installation in the PSB of the solar power system, the PSB has also been constructed to reuse water, avail of a state-of-the-art fire protection system, and extensively utilize energy-efficient LED lights. These environmental initiatives are included in the international agency recognition that UA&P has received from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) based in Amsterdam. This agency, which is a private initiative that makes sustainability reporting a standard practice worldwide, is helping organizations manage their economic, environmental, social, and governance performances consistently at high global standards. UA&P was the first university in Southeast Asia to be granted a sustainability disclosure level check in 2013. UA&P is the second building in the Ortigas center to be solar-powered. The first was the Asian Development Bank.

The solar power system of UA&P was installed by TBS Industrial Services Inc. Schools and other institutions interested in being part of the "solar power bandwagon" may get in touch with Mr. Ericson Maquinto at the email address ebmaquinto@tbsindustrial.com or celfone number +63920 962 7567. For comments, my email address is bernardo.villegas@uap.asia.

Praised by the Lord…. An Encyclical on the Environment

Vatican City - June 18, 2015. Orthodox Metropolitan of Pergamo John Zizioulas (L) and Cardinal Peter Turkson (R) at a press conference on Pope Francis' newly released encyclical "Laudato Si" in Paul VI Hall on June 18, 2015. "Laudato Si" is taken from St. Francis of Assisi's medieval Italian prayer "Canticle of the Sun" and Pope Francis addresses the environment, climate change, abortion, embryonic experimentation, and population control. *CNA*

EVEN before Pope Francis released to the world his encyclical on the environment and on climate change, some thought he was venturing into a field best left to scientists.

But a Papal Encyclical is not teaching on science. To search for scientific explanations to phenomena—that is the province and the competence of science and of scientists, and while the Church takes keen interest in scientific discoveries and studies it is not a teacher of science.

This, however, is what Gaudium et Spes (of the Second Vatican Council) says: "The truth i that the imbalances under which the modern world labors are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man. For in man himself many elements wrestle with one another…The Church firmly believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all, can through His Spirit offer man the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny." (n. 10)

This is why the Pope's encyclical on the worrisome and truly pressing environmental and ecological issues should be truly EXCITING! We are still suffering from the sweltering heat of this summer, and hardly anyone will contest the claim that this was among the hottest of summers we have ever gone through. We are also warned about more erratic weather systems including more violent typhoons.

HOW DO WE RESPOND as human persons, and as sons and daughters of God? What should all of this mean for us? If, as scientists seem to allege, we are to blame to a large extent for ruining that delicate balance of our ecology, then how do we make up?

We are taught the science, and we are given various technologies to cope, insofar as coping remains possible. But the roots of our indifference to environmental and ecological concerns—which, in the ultimate analysis, are concerns for the good of all—and the sinful dispositions in all of us that make us contributors to the depredation of a world entrusted to our stewardship, these are what scientists cannot teach us. All this, the Encyclical promises to address. But the Pope's letter will remain nothing more than ink on paper until we all allow ourselves to be won over by St. Francis' exaltation of all of created reality…. Praised be God for brother sun, sister moon….praised be God for all that lives and moves…praised be God for grass and trees, flowers and plants in their myriad forms! It is this joy that breaks out into song—Laudato Si. And rejoicing in creation, we adore, in gratitude, the Creator of all and live his will to be wise and prudent stewards of His gifts!

From the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist, Dagupan City, June 18, 2015

+ SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan
President, CBCP

Message of His Eminence Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle to welcome the encyclical Laudato Si

THE Archdiocese of Manila welcomes with joy the encyclical letter of Pope Francis, Laudato Si, mi Signore (Praise be to you, my Lord) on the care of our common home, the earth. Addressed to all people of good will, the encyclical does not pretend to resolve scientific questions related to the environment and climate change. Rather it offers a pastoral analysis and appeal nurtured by the Bible, the Catholic Social Teachings, the pronouncements of Popes and a reading of the current ecological conditions we are facing.

With Pope Francis I invite the faithful, the religious and the clergy of the Archdiocese of Manila to study, enrich, discuss and meditate on the various points of the encyclical. We call on non-Christians, families, educators, politicians, business people, experts in science and digital technology, media, consumer groups, non-government and peoples´ organizations to study the encyclical and its proposals.

Pope Francis raised many items. I propose that we pay close attention to the following aspects of the Pope´s letter: 1) a restoration of a contemplative view of creation, 2) the importance of the belief in the Creator, 3) the rediscovery of the role of human beings as stewards and not as pseudo-owners of the earth, 4) the plan of God that the goods of the earth be shared by all, 5) the vital connection between the environment and human life and 6) a courageous review of political and economic policies, business practices, mindsets and lifestyles towards the changes needed to care for our common home, to uplift the poor and to give glory and praise to the Creator.

Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal G. Tagle *CNA*

+LUIS ANTONIO G.
CARDINAL TAGLE
Archbishop of Manila

Press statement on Laudato Si by the Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc.

THE Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI) celebrates joyously the release of Laudato Si, the Pope's latest encyclical on environment and climate change. The document highlighted that climate change is real; a global problem with grave implications, and one of the principal challenges facing humanity - the people in general and especially leaders in governments. Yet, the same document provided hope that the each one of us, are even more powerful when united, and can make a big difference in creating a better reality for our generation and the next.

"We are jubilant. We thank Pope Francis because the document echoes and validates our desires and calls for effecting change in our society - from protection of the environment to uplifting the everyday life of our poor people. To hear the Pope say that we are at the brink of consuming the earth's resources, but still a long way to eradicating poverty should serve as a wake-up call for all", said Ms. Yolanda Esguerra, National Coordinator of PMPI.

She further said that, "the Pope being a man of faith and integrity, lending a moral voice to combat global warming and the consequences of climate change can be a source of strength for people who are in the receiving end of the impact of climate change. Likewise, this pronouncement is timely and extra special in the light of the current negotiation of countries on climate change in Paris this coming November."

Fr Edwin Gariguez, Executive Secretary of the CBCP-NASSA and PMPI Co-Convenor said that, "'to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor,' as a new ecological approach is appropriate in dealing with the current ecological crisis. It brings home the point that social justice is primordial in the climate change discourse. Violating the "rights" of the environment also means violating the very rights of the poor. Worldwide, it is acknowledged that the poor (developing) and island countries like the Philippines are among the most vulnerable to climate change because they have extremely low capacity and resources to protect themselves from its adverse impact despite their minis-

cule contribution to climate change," Fr Gariguez added.

Ms. Baby Llavan, Executive Director of Antique Human Development of Panay and Co-Convenor from the Visayas said that the publication is very timely for the 2016 national election. Pope Francis is strongly challenging politicians across the globe to decisively put forward and implement policies that would help minimize, if not totally reverse, the impact of climate change. The Pope calls on the reduction of fossil fuel use, which is recognized as the main contributor to changes in climate and for rich countries to take on the responsibility of ensuring that poor countries can adapt to the climate's adverse impact. He boldly stated that leaders should put effort to protect and improve our world by transforming today's political and structural powers into something that will ensure sustainable development of human race and the environment.

Edel Garingan, PMPI Project Officer for Anti-Mining Campaign believed that the core of the environmental encyclical is the call for change in our perspective of the environment, our home. "To me this is a critique of how people, businessmen and world leaders have looked at the environment in a very utilitarian way – economics over ecology. Profit over Needs. Businesses over Communities." Garingan added. The papal encyclical is proposing a change in paradigm. Although not directly addressing the issue of mining, the Pope emphasizes that humans need to slow down in producing and use of technological products that require metals derived from mining. He calls for a change of lifestyle, consumption and production pattern that is more sustainable.

The encyclical is comprehensive and integrative. It drew heavily from the faith tradition, the social and political context, and even from the technical scientific perspective, Sr. Cres Lucero, of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) and PMPI Co-Convenor from Luzon said. She expressed gratitude when Pope Francis, despite the grave problem confronting the world, is able to recognize seeds of hope through activities like developing alternative energy sources and the efforts of many communities and civil society organizations to help reverse and soften the climate change impact. He calls unto everyone to make things better and as 'human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start'. "Moreover, he is telling the world upfront that there is power in each of us to make things better; that an individual can do so much," stressed Sr. Cres.

Laudato Si is definitely good news not only to organizations like us but also to the rest of world as taking care of the environment is everyone's business. It challenges the core of our beings and once more highlights the human's role as stewards of creation. Like what Pope Francis stated in his publication, "protecting creation is first and foremost a moral and religious issue. It is a response to God's ancient request that we as human beings should preserve, protect, and sustain creation," said Roldan Gonzalez, Executive Director of GITIB and PMPI Chairperson and Co-Convenor from Mindanao.

CBCP Statement on Torture

IT is troubling that notwithstanding the fact torture is now recognized as a crime jure gentium and international law increasingly moves in the direction of classifying the prohibition of torture as peremptory norm, there are documented reports that there still are victims of torture in the Philippines according to credible reports from Amnesty International.

Contrary to Fullness of Life

In one very prophetic line of Evangelium Vitae, Saint John Paul II wrote:

All who commit themselves to following Christ are given the fullness of life: the divine image is restored, renewed and brought to perfection in them. God's plan for human beings is this, that they should "be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29). Only thus, in the splendour of this image, can man be freed from the slavery of idolatry, rebuild lost fellowship and rediscover his true identity. (n. 36)

The Church lives by this fullness of life. The Church is its fullness. The Church is its servant. And so, in the face of the persistence of that culture of impunity by which law-enforcers take it upon themselves to torture their victims, we must speak out. We will also tend the wounds of the victims, even as I ask all priests and religious, and lay persons who have the means to do so, to take it upon themselves to extend every possible assistance to the victims of torture.

It has often been argued that there are urgent circumstances that call for the torture of suspects, especially in cases of the threat of terrorism – when the concealment of truth by principals and accomplices in criminal activity may make it impossible to save innocent others from unconscionable deeds of terrorism.

It is well to recall the words of Pope Benedict XVI, who wrote in Caritas in Veritate: As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures. It is not by isolation that man establishes his worth, but by placing himself in relation with others and with God. Hence these relations take on fundamental importance. The same holds true for peoples as well. A metaphysical understanding of the relations between persons is therefore of great benefit for their development. In this regard, reason finds inspiration and direction in Christian revelation, according to which the human community does not absorb the individual, annihilating his autonomy, as happens in the various forms of totalitarianism, but rather values him all the more because the relation between individual and community is a relation between one totality and another [130].

Savagery of Torture

We appreciate the earnest efforts of law-enforcers to keep the peace and to spare the population from the ravages of terrorists, but we cannot countenance the torture of suspects even when motivated by the noble end of ferreting out the truth and sparing innocent victims. The savagery of all acts of torture contradicts all noble deeds.

Not only the Government

We cannot end without calling attention to the fact that it is not only government agents who perpetrate torture. There are clear and undeniable reports of torture inflicted by rebels, insurgents, separatists and even bandit groups and organizations. The fact that they have taken up arms against the government constitutes no justification for the torture inflicted on others. Nothing justifies torture, more so when it is part of a scheme of lawlessness and sheer brigandage.

Christian Duty

Our Catholic laity must not only come to the aid of victims of torture. We can stomp out this scourge from our midst by vigilance and discernment. When, in the meetings of our basic ecclesial communities, torture becomes an issue, let witnesses muster the Christian courage to speak prophetically against it – even testifying in court against its perpetrators.

When we act with resoluteness against the perpetrators of torture, it is and should be the incomparable dignity of the human person that should be our end, and the criterion of the rightness of our advocacy and endeavors.

From the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, June 23, 2015

+ SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen Dagupan
President, CBCP

On the US Supreme Court ruling on same sex marriage

THE US Supreme Court was asked whether banning same-sex marriages was in accord with the Constitution. It has recently ruled that such a ban is unconstitutional. That is the gist as well as the significance of the ruling of the US Supreme Court. Its reference is the US Constitution.

Fortunately for human persons, there is so much more to us and to our dignity than what the law prescribes. While human positive law is the distillation of human experience of orderly and organized life, it does not exhaust human wisdom, nor does it have room for the wisdom of which God makes us participants.

The Church continues to maintain what it has always taught. Marriage is a permanent union of man and woman, in the complementarity of the sexes and the mutual fulfillment that the union of a man and a woman bring into the loftiness of the matrimonial bond. If there is an undeniable difference between man and woman, there is also an undeniable difference between the permanent union of a man and a woman.

This is the way the Church has always read Sacred Scriptures. This is the way it has live its faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in that living normative found called Sacred Tradition. We will continue to teach the sons and daughters of the Church that marriage, transformed by The Lord Jesus and by His Church into a sacrament—a means by which the Risen Lord encounters

U.S. Supreme Court *CNA*

his people — is an indissoluble bond of man and woman. There is much that the Church receives that is part of the "depositum fidei….the deposit of faith" of which she is not maker but guardian and steward.

As President of the CBCP, however, I reiterate our commitment to the pastoral solicitude of all, and no bishop, priest, deacon, religious or lay leader actively serving the Church will ever demand to know of a person his or her orientation before serving the person, as The Lord Jesus commands all his disciples to serve. All will continue to find welcome in the Church, while, under command from The Lord himself, will continue to teach what the Church has unceasingly taught.

The US Supreme Court decision will not go unheeded. We shall study it with assiduousness, and revisit our concepts and presuppositions, always with an eye to being faithful to the Gospel and to the mission of the Church.

June 27, 2015

+ SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan
President, CBCP

Ethics and politics

IN their respective elementary nature and consequent understanding: Ethics forward a Code of Conduct premised on Philosophy, which, in turn, is rooted in reason that affirms what is right or wrong. Politics on the other hand has relevance to the matter of governance, the administration of public affairs or the management of the affairs of the state.

In other words, Ethics points out what is proper or the right thing to do and what is the improper or wrong thing to avoid while Politics is on the matter of basically working for public welfare, providing the common good, promoting national interests.

The rudimentary conclusions from the above fundamental and wherefore basic natures, implications and finalities of Ethics and Politics are the following: Only individuals divested of rational functions would dare say that Ethics is irrelevant to Politics. Only those divested of even but plain logic would dare claim that Ethics is irrelevant to Politics.

Just for the record: Let it be noted that while Ethics is a conclusion of reason, a part of Philosophy, Morals on the others hand is the affirmation of faith, a conclusion of spirituality. The former is in the realm of earthly realities. The latter is in the sphere of spiritual truths. But when Ethics is objectively right and sound, such is rightfully affirmed by Morals. Conclusion: Those who think and act contrary to ethical principles cannot but also believe and live dissonant with moral norms.

Not too long since, with the presence and within the hearing of high-ranking government officials and diplomatic personalities, someone reported to a Head of State, as well as Head of the Universal Church, something to the effect that certain local clerics meddle with local Politics—even about his person and governance included. The assumptions behind such thinking and consequent reporting are the following: One, that there is a separation of Church and State in the Country such that the former should altogether shut up about the latter. Two, that being the highest standing public official in the Philippines, he should be in effect free of any critical observations from such lowly and miserable individuals as good-for-nothing clerics. Three, that Ethics is, in effect, irrelevant to Politics as it is in fact ignored by modern persons with modern thinking such as precisely the politicians of today, over and above whom the reporting stands and presides.

No wonder then that with such thinking and consequent acting, the present government is famous—or infamous—for customary graft and corrupt practices, for great self-admiration vis-á-vis popular disgust and lamentation, for diarrhea of words with misery in accomplishments, for much Pork and good Beef even to date—not to mention self-pride humbled by questionable if not miserable reality performance. If the same government—together with its chief-in-command and cohorts—even dare to think that politics is above ethics, poor Philippines!

Principle of the common good

TO say it clearly and briefly, the dignity, unity and equality of all people—it is hereon that the "Principle of the Common Good" squarely rests. In other words, the more people in society live with dignity, live in unity and live with equality, the more felt and manifest is their common good. The reverse is not hard to conclude. When certain individuals in society wallow in wealth and luxury while the rest suffer from hunger and want; when some powerful families look down at everybody else as miserable people with neither rights or rightful claims; when certain public officials lord it over the citizens practically treating these as one big composite inconvenience—then, there can't be anything in the society concerned but the common good.

While it is somehow understandable to say that the good of every individual equals the common good, it is however more proper and right to say that the common good is the opportunity for people to strive and benefit from the opportunities afforded them by public welfare. Equal opportunities, equal possibilities, equal chances—these are the premises of the common good. But then, while the same possibilities for the realization of the common good are present for everyone to accordingly sweat and toil and thus enjoy the fruits of their labor, not all individuals however have the same potentials to be duly benefited by it—for lesser talents and/or strength, for lesser education and/or possibilities.

The reality of the above-said phenomenon is precisely the basis for the admirable pronouncement of a known national leader, saying, "Those who have less in life, let them have more in law." If this proposition of concern and advisory were brought to fulfillment, then the Principle of Common Good for society in general would not only be right but also real, not merely an ideal but also a fact. At this writing and these times, the "Principle of the Common Good" appears to be unheard of and unknown even in some countries, the Philippines well-included—as proven by the following phenomenon: The so-called "Upper Class" of people has become fewer but richer. The "Lower Class" instead has become so distressed that it is not altogether wrong to say that it has become the "Lowest Class". And the socio-economic ID of so-called "Middle Class" seems to have been in effect dissolved and consequently disappeared.

More concretely speaking about the Philippine socio-economic situation, it is not a secret that there are people living by merely collecting and selling garbage, by looking for, picking and eating leftovers from streets to food stalls. This is not to mention families wearing rags, living under bridges, staring at nothing. No wonder then that there are even the phenomena of not only child labor but also child prostitution.

Meantime, a good number of public officials are feasting on public funds by nonchalantly engaging in enormous and repeated graft and corrupt practices, by making politics a great business, a very profitable dynastic venture. All these and other hideous egoistic actuations of a good number of people in government make the common good an impossible dream.

Garbage importation

We import rice although we are a rice-producing country with rice-eating people. We even import garlic, onions, etc., while we have thousands of hectares of good soil enough for our food requirements. But on the other hand, we export people. We also export drugs. And yet, we likewise import big gamblers. We import apparently throwaway military helicopters and downright rotting ships. But yes again, we export women in person for the pleasure of amoral men, as we also export girls via the internet for the joy of sick and sickening lusting men around the globe.

As some kind of climax to our strong and consuming importation spirit and drive, we had the callousness to import even garbage. Yes, rotting and rotten garbage from a foreign country. So it is that as of now, it is not even certain that the Philippines would not actually become an importer of even sickness to experiment with and import cadavers to bury in our land. What a sick and weird thought! But the way the country is going and the manner public authorities are acting, there seems to be nothing unthinkable, nothing undoable. Reason: Money, money, and more money. The health of the people—never mind. The goodness of the soil—never mind. The integrity of the people—never mind.

So it is that now we have nothing less than imported garbage in terms of some sizable 55 container vans from Canada. The Canadians have garbage and they dislike it. They even hate it and definitely want to get rid of it. But to their big surprise and great joy, they found out that there is a strange country—headed by a strange administration and controlled by strange individuals—where no less than big businessmen are also big importers of practically anything they can make money from. And so it is that nothing less than Canadian garbage was, in fact, imported and accordingly kept until it could be surreptitiously buried somewhere, somehow. The germs it will nurture and scatter in the soil and in the air, never mind. The possible deaths it could cause, never mind. The children it will infect and make sick, never mind. The possible deaths it could cause, never mind. After all, there is money and much money that will go from one pocket to another—among those directly and indirectly involved in the disgusting venture basically on account of avarice, covetousness.

The Canadians are not the culprits for having their own garbage, for hating their sight and smell, and for therefore wanting to dispose of it as much as possible, for desiring to get rid of it the sooner the better. And lo and behold! There came to the fore certain individuals from the Philippines who signified their readiness to haul it—for a fee. So it was that they eventually had the branded Canadian garbage loaded in big shipping containers, had it transported to a Philippine harbor, have it stored there no matter how long—until other individuals appeared ready to have it buried here and there, likewise for a fee.

Meantime, the government people concerned are still holding conferences on what to do with the imported garbage...Who are the local public officials willing to welcome the garbage for a fee, have them buried in their localities for a fee and thereafter keep quiet for a fee?

ILLUSTRATION BY BLADIMER USI

GONE VIRAL

I feel ridiculous blessing a Pope, but bless you sir. Pope Francis #LaudatoSi' - Norman Lear

Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future. #LaudatoSi' - Sr. Rose Agtarap

Riding your bike to work will help reduce carbon emissions. #LaudatoSi' ~ Alma Alvarez

What does upcycling and New Balance trainers have to do with #LaudatoSi'? Read on to find out what CAFOD designer Ivan told us. - CAFOD

Suportado rin ng inmates sa New Bilibid Prison ang enyclical ni Pope Francis na #LaudatoSi'. ~ GMA News

At the moment, while the bells of St. Peter's Basilica toll, I am looking at the dome through my window. But, lo and behold, I am also looking at the solar panels on the roof of Paul VI audience hall! So, on June 28, at exactly 12 noon, let's make noise through our bells and thank Pope Francis for making a statement through his encyclical #LaudatoSi. - Rodne Rodiño Galicha

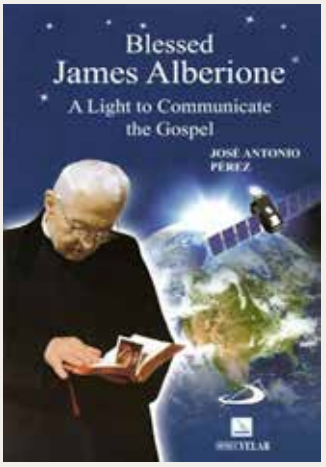
Have you had a chance to read #LaudatoSi yet? The Catholic News Service's Effie Caldarola says the papal encyclical is a "must-read" that she will be taking with her to the beach. - Trenton Monitor

Two weeks ago, on Sunday 28 June 2015, thousands of people of different faiths and goodwill marched in Rome to thank Pope Francis for his #LaudatoSi' ecology encyclical, and to campaign for #ClimateChange

The Global Catholic Climate Movement were there collecting signature for their petition which will be presented to world leaders asking them for positive action on climate change : https://youtu.be/3Kv786pPj6Y - McCrimmons

#LaudatoSi' is about more than climate change; it's about care for ALL of creation. ~ Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

If anything about the account presented in #LaudatoSi' is off, a meteorologist said, it is that Francis takes an "overly conservative" approach. - National Catholic Reporter

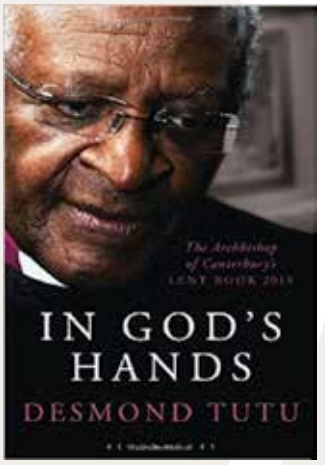


Blessed James Alberione - A Light to Communicate the Gospel

Jose Antonio Perez

WHO was this Italian Catholic priest whose life's work would give birth to several religious groups that now form the Pauline Family? This book by Jose Antonio Perez delves into the dynamic life and spirituality of Blessed James Alberione, the founder of the Society of St. Paul, the Daughters of St. Paul, The Pious Disciples of the Divine Master, The Sister of Jesus the Good Shepherd, The Sisters of Mary Queen of the Apostles, and other religious institutes animated by the Pauline spirituality.

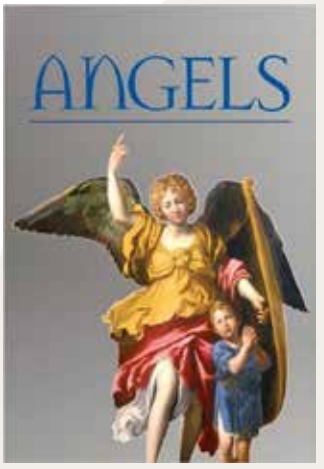
Alberione's charism was clearly bringing the Good News to a wider audience and his mission field was the entire world. The first two groups, which are best known for promoting the Catholic faith through various forms of modern media, now carry out this same passion into the 21st century.



In God's Hands

Tutu Desmond

APARTHEID and poverty. These two phenomena, which formed a common sight in South Africa, colored the life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu since childhood. Distilling wisdom gleaned from years of struggle becomes apparent when he enters the world stage in the glare of international media “and the long and agonising struggle for truth and reconciliation in South Africa.”



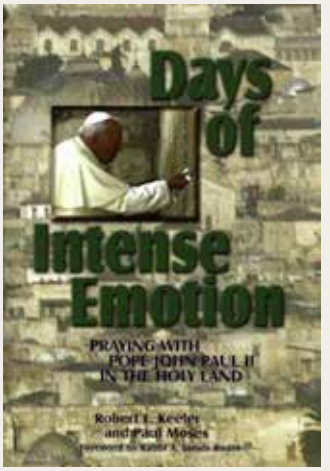
Angels

Marco Bussagli

As man's protectors and guides, angels have been present in Scripture, in humanity's consciousness, in everyday experience, not to mention in art. From the same series as Abrams' successful "Saints: A Year in Faith and Art" comes "Angels", with representations of these celestial friends from early Christian mosaics to the paintings of Marc Chagall.

Arthistorian-author Marco Bussagli presents the book following the chronology of significant Biblical events, beginning with the Creation in Genesis and ending with John the Evangelist's vision of Heaven on Earth in Revelation. And because angels cannot be understood apart from the Divine, each episode comes with the relevant chapter and verse, along with a brief explanation about how the work of art fits into the iconography of the period.

Works by masters such as Michelangelo's "Creation of Man in the Sistine Chapel", Lorenzo Ghiberti's "Gates of Paradise", and Rembrandt's "Sacrifice of Isaac" are featuerd in the work aside from lesser-known works. Here angels become assistants, messengers, punishers, soldiers, rebels and saviours, “assembled for the delectation and delight of both scholars and believers.”



Days of Intense Emotion - Praying with Saint John Paul II in the Holy Land

Robert F. Keeler & Paul Moses

SAINT John Paul II was many things, but he was first and foremost a man of prayer. During his seminal visit to Holy Land, then Pope John Paul II . Publicly, privately, this holy man prayed everywhere, anytime. In this 208-page book, the authors show how the then Pope ended many of his homilies and speeches by invoking God’s help and blessings. Mostly silent, he would tlak to God even as many looked on. And he prayed privately at the holiest places in the Holy Land. “This book is a journey in prayer with Saint John Paul II, re-living his dramatic pilgrimage of March 20-26, 2000,” reads a review.

“This volume is a ‘must read’ for all those who want to enter into the spirit of the historic Jubilee pilgrimage of Saint John Paul II to the Holy Land. Although I disagree with some of the author’s conclusions about the Holy Father’s policies, I commend their compelling account that prayerful pilgrimage and their clear exposition of his goals of spiritual renewal, reconciliation, and peace,” said Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore. Rabbi A. James Rudin calls it a “privilege” to have been present during the Pope’s historic visit, noting the “professional vigor and religious convictions of Keeler and Moses.”

Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

Mad Max: Fury Road

DIRECTOR: George Miller
LEAD CAST: Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Hoult
SCREENWRITER: George Miller & Brendan McCarthy
PRODUCER: George Miller, Dough Mitchell
EDITOR: Jason Ballantine & Margaret Sixel
CINEMATOGRAPHER: John Seale
GENRE: Action
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Brothers
LOCATION: Australia
RUNNING TIME: 120 minutes

Technical assessment: 4
Moral assessment: 3
CINEMA rating: V 18

The film begins with a brief prologue of apocalyptic future—a world that is turned into a wasteland with nothing left but rage and darkness. In Citadel, a ruthless leader, Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Bryne), reigns and all the people fear him. Until one of his priced warriors, Furiosa (Charlize Theron) rebels and kidnaps his slave wives and "breeders" (Rosie Huntington-Whitely, Zoe Kravitz, Riley Keough, Abbey Lee and Courney Eaton) out of Citadel. She heads east hoping to bring the women to a safer place—a place where she was born, they call—the green place. Consequently, Immortan Joe is outraged and sends his men to chase after her in the desert. There, Max (Tom Hardy), now a prisoner haunted by the ghost of his past and on the brink of insanity, finds himself in the middle of this mess created by Furiosa—he's reluctant at first but eventually decides to help Furiosa out.

Mad Max: Fury Road remains faithful to its original look and feel of madness but this time, with a much bolder, bigger and profound vision. The story can be considered simple—single tracked without unnecessary subplots and distractions. In its simplicity, there lies intelligence and intricate craftsmanship both reckless and controlled as it shows order in the midst of chaos. The film defies typical action-genre plotlines by putting premium on the meat of the message while providing above-average level of excitement and thrill. Mad Max: Fury Road is an achievement of technical excellence in itself and director George Miller never ceases to amaze Mad Max followers. Miller has once again outdone himself after almost two decades since the last Mad Max franchise. The acting is great and flawless from the lead actor Tom Hardy up to the ensemble of crowd characters. But the real gem of the film is Charlize Theron who exudes charm amid required toughness of her role without losing femininity. Her portrayal of Furiosa is such a remarkable achievement in her career given the demands of the complicated and complex character. She's every inch perfect fit for the role. Mad Max: Road Fury is such an enjoyable and unforgettable hell of a ride where madness is really everywhere in the film but not without a compelling story to tell.

Mad Max: Fury Road is a film about revolution and redemption. The film gives a clear glimpse of an apocalyptic future where humans will lose everything but still would hold on to life's essentials and to what would eventually remain—faith, hope and love. The women, as the source of life, are portrayed as the ones who have the ability to cling on to hope. In its entirety, Mad Max: Fury Road is a film about women. It shows how women rule in a male-dominated world. It questions status quo and stereotypes by showing equal physical strength of men and women. The resistance of women as being used and abused in reproductive coercion, and being treated as merely "breeders" of men and future warriors is very evident in the story. Amidst the chaotic and violent backdrop, humans' innate goodness springs eternal and good triumphs over evil in the end. Such messages both salient and loud are a rarity in action genres. However, it cannot be denied that given the core of the message, the film has to be consistent with its genre so there's violence, blood and gore and even a certain level of sexual theme and nudity (although done in context) here and there that might not be suitable to the very young audiences so CINEMA deems the film as appropriate only to audiences 18 and above.

SYRIA. Franciscan priest abducted in Syria set free by captors

The organization of Franciscan missionaries serving in the Holy Land announced that Father Dhiya Aziz, who had been kidnapped early this month in Syria, was liberated. "The Custody of the Holy Land thanks those around the world who prayed for a successful outcome to this trial that Fr. Dhiya endured, as well as the faithful of Yacoubieh, of which he is the pastor, his religious family and his family in Iraq," the group announced July 9. "The Custody does not forget that other religious are still missing in Syria and it invites everyone to continue praying for peace in this country." The group had lost contact with Fr. Aziz on July 4. He is a Franciscan priest of the organization, and was parish priest at Yacubiyeh, a village in Syria's Idlib province, more than 56 miles northeast of Latakia. He had been taken by suspected al-Nusra Front militants, which has a strong presence in Idlib province. However, "this group has denied any involvement in his kidnapping and allegedly led the police investigation in neighboring villages which led to his liberation," the Custody of the Holy Land stated. ***(CNA)***

SINGAPORE. Catholics mark 50 years of nation's independence

Anticipating this autumn's 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence from Malaysia, the nation's Catholics gathered earlier this month to celebrate a Mass pledging the Church's support for the city-state. While Singapore achieved independence from Great Britain in 1963, it was first a state of Malaysia. It achieved full independence in 1965, when it was expelled following political turmoil and troubled race relations. "It is the jubilee year, it is a year of rejoicing because God is restoring all to wholeness," Fr. Derrick Yap, OFM, chairman of the Singapore 50 celebration committee, told CNA. Some 10,000 people gathered at the Singapore Indoor Stadium July 4 for a Mass of thanksgiving, joined by the apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli; the prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong; and representatives of other religions. The Mass paid tribute to the missionaries who first brought the faith to Singapore and who sacrificed their lives serving the people and building the nation. ***(CNA)***

KOREA. Cardinal praises medics' courage in face of Mers outbreak

The recently-elevated cardinal of Seoul has expressed his gratitude to the doctors and nurses of the Catholic Medical Center for their service during the ongoing Mers outbreak in South Korea. "The medical team of CMC (Catholic Medical Center) has played a critical role in bringing an end to the MERS crisis," Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung said, during a July 18 visit to St. Mary's Hospital at the Catholic University of Korea. "You have shown real courage in dreadful situations and truly lived out the spirit of the hospital founded in respect for human beings." South Korea has had 186 confirmed cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (Mers) in the past two months and at least 33 people have died, according to the BBC. Hundreds of people remain under quarantine. Cardinal Yeom met with around 15 doctors, nurses, and staff who had direct contact with patients, giving a rosary to each of the medics and encouraged them to "always give their best effort with a prayerful heart." He also promised his prayers for the medical staff and their work. ***(CNA)***

PAKISTAN. Police save Christian couple from 'anti-blasphemy' mob attack

Police recently saved a Christian couple from a mob in Pakistan that attempted to kill them for allegedly committing blasphemy, the latest such violent incident in the country. "Muslims of the town gathered there and dragged the poor couple who didn't know what they had done. They were being beaten to death," local police chief Sohail Zafar Chattha said, according to Agence France Presse. The attack took place in the village of Makki in Punjab province June 30. The couple, who are both illiterate, used as a sleeping mat an advertisement awning that bore college slogans. These slogans allegedly included Arabic inscriptions from the Quran. A local barber and two clerics accused the couple of committing blasphemy, and a mob gathered in an attempt to lynch them. After the couple was rescued from the mob, the two were moved to Lahore and placed with a Christian community. ***(CNA)***

JERUSALEM. Patriarch calls lives of Middle East Christians 'bad' and 'less bad'

Christians in the Middle East are facing difficulties ranging from "bad" to "less bad," said Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal of Jerusalem. While describing the condition of the Palestinians in the West Bank as "bad," he said their situation is better than the challenges faced by Christians in Syria and Iraq, especially those who have been forced to flee homes in the fact of Islamic State militants. Patriarch Twal pushed again for an end to hostilities throughout the Holy Land and the Middle East. "We condemn those who sell (military) arms to help (maintain the war) in Syria," he said in mid-July. "It is a pity. We have never reached this level of violence. We preach, we hope, we weep. In all of the Middle East it is not a normal life." Although the patriarch normally calls the Catholic Church in the Holy Land the "church of Calvary," he said he sees the entire Middle East in a similar term because of the massive displacement of Christians from traditional homelands across war-torn countries. ***(CNS)***

NEPAL. Monsoon hampers quake relief work

Despite mobilizing financial support and procuring relief material to reach out to remote areas hit by April's earthquake, Catholic charities—like others—are facing problems caused by monsoon rains. "Our plan was to complete the first phase of relief work by the end of June. Now it has been extended to August's end," Father Pius Perumana, Caritas Nepal director, told Catholic News Service July 16. "Roads to several remote areas have been damaged or washed out in the rain," said Father Perumana, who is coordinating the Catholic relief work supported by Caritas agencies worldwide. The magnitude-7.8 earthquake that rocked Nepal April 25 claimed more than 8,800 lives. It destroyed more than 600,000 houses and damaged an additional 300,000. "Fear of landslides is also hampering the movement of relief supplies," said Father Perumana. He said distribution schedules have to be changed often due to rain and road conditions in the target areas. ***(CNS)***

ISRAEL. Priest says situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate

One year after a war with Israel that turned daily life here into a nightmare, a Catholic priest in Gaza said the situation in this besieged Palestinian territory has deteriorated even further. "Compared with a year ago, we're worse off. Although a truce stopped the war, the blockade of Gaza by Israel has grown more intense. This has direct consequences for the population," said Fr. Jorge Hernandez, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Parish in Gaza City. The priest said the war also served as a recruiting tool for Hamas, the Islamic party that has controlled Gaza since 2007. "The war generated new activism throughout Gaza. The number of people willing to fight has multiplied, whether on behalf of Hamas or Islamic Jihad or the Salafists, and now even with the Islamic State. Despite that, the great majority of the people of Gaza is not aligned with one party or another. They just want to live a normal life," Fr. Hernandez, an Argentine missionary of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, said. The 50-day war cost the lives of more than 2,250 Palestinians, 65 percent of whom were civilians, according to a June report from a U.N. investigation. The report said "the scale of the devastation was unprecedented." It said the Israeli military launched more than 6,000 air strikes, 14,500 tank shells and 45,000 artillery shells into Gaza between July 7 and Aug. 26, 2014. ***(CNS)***

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