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EDITOR'S NOTE

WHO are killing the Lumads? Not the government, for sure. Because, to follow the logic of President Benigno Aquino III in a forum last September 9, the government has "no campaign to kill anybody." Disputably, though, this maybe the same logic that can be applied to the massacre of Chinese tourists at the Quirino Grandstand in August 2010 when the new Malacañang boys were running the show. That was why the leadership did not see the need to apologize, despite foreign pressure. And, by some stretch of imagination, the same logic maybe used in the Zamboanga siege in September of 2013 when the president with his boys encamped "to watch" the war games with the MNLF. Well, perhaps at Mamasapano, too, where some sectors are reportedly now looking for an "alternative truth".

According to human rights groups, it appeared that the President was trying to exonerate whoever are behind the summary killings of the Lumads in Surigao del Sur. The CBCP president Archbishop Socrates Villegas calls this "disturbing." In a statement released Sept. 11, the Archbishop said, "We are disturbed profoundly by reports that national leaders have been quick to exonerate the militia group of wrong-doing. This alarming eagerness to deny culpability does not augur well for truth and justice. Such declarations inspire credence only after a reliable and trustworthy investigation by impartial and competent persons shall have taken place. If made before any such investigation, they disturbingly suggest a refusal to hold accountable those to whom the Administration so eagerly extends its mantle of protection."

But while the national leadership seems to be somewhere else, local leaders and advocacy groups are very much aware who are harassing and killing the Lumads. In fact, on Jan. 30, 2015, a "Peace Dialogue" was held in Surigao del Sur attended by the PNP, AFP, the Provincial Government, the LGU of Lianga, religious groups, and Lumad leaders. In that dialogue, the perpetrators were identified. They are members of the Magahat/Bagani, a paramilitary group headed by Datu Calpito Egua, Marcos Bocales, Marcial Belandres, and Bobby Tejero. This gathering agreed to immediately dismantle and disarm this paramilitary group and file criminal charges. Of course, nothing happened after that except more harassment and more killings of the Lumads.

The priests of the Diocese of Tandag in a pastoral statement issued on Sept. 8, believes that there are powerful hands that maneuver behind the paramilitary group Magahat/Bagani. Otherwise, these killings would have already ceased and court cases filed months ago. The priests say in their statement, "One can see and understand that only those community of Lumads who firmly stand to protect the forest and reject mining activities and anything that destroys nature were obviously the ones being hounded and intimidated supposedly by the aforementioned notorious group. Gathering all these, we can say that all this could be a work that has been extensively planned. Our indigenous people who, ever since, have been one with Nature, have lived in and survived out of their land of heritage, are now victims of those who are hungry and greedy for power and wealth."

Again, who are behind the killings the Lumads? Sadly, it's not so easy to take President Aquino's word for it.

This issue is dedicated to our indigenous brothers and sisters. Read on.

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Quote in the Act

"But the most beautiful thing God made—so the Bible tells us—was the family."

Pope Francis, in his address at the Prayer Vigil for the Festival of Families during the World Meeting of Families held in Philadelphia, USA, in September 2015 where he said further that God sent his Son to a family, that God came into the world in a family.

"If militia groups cannot fit within a structure of clear authority and command by legitimate state authority, they should not be tolerated, much less employed as mercenaries of the State."

Socrates Villegas, archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan and president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines; in a recent statement "On the Killing of voiceless and defenseless Lumad" where a militia group is suspected to be the perpetrator.

"This will have a big impact, because China has been burning so much more coal than we believed."

Yang Fuqiang, former energy official in China who now advises the Natural Resources Defense Council; on a recent report that China, the world's leading emitter of greenhouse gases from coal, has been burning up to 17% more coal a year than the government previously disclosed.

"In the Philippines the number of internally trafficked girls and minors is not exactly known but the sex bars are thriving and full of young girls for sale."

Shay Cullen, a Catholic priest who is the president of Preda Foundation; in a recent blog where he called for global justice and accountability as a way to end trafficking of women and children.

"The airport authorities seem to dismiss these as small incidents but 'tanim-Bala' is a big thing to our OFWs. It is a big thing for our country's reputation because it gives lie to the tourism slogan, because there is no fun in extortion."

Ruperto Santos, bishop of Balanga and Chair of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People; on the worsening problem of planting live bullets in international travelers' luggage passing through NAIA, which is being downplayed by Malacanang.

KEITH KRISTOFFER BACONGCO

On the killing of voiceless and defenseless Lumads

"Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." (Gen 4:10)

THE prophets of the Old Testament repeatedly excoriated God's people for worship that failed the test of authenticity. Ritual and ceremony are empty unless God is worshipped by hearkening to cries for justice and the lamentation of the oppressed.

Recently, Lumads in Surigaodel Sur were cut down, witnesses claim, by an armed militia group. The Association of Major Religious Superiors has named the Magahat-Bagani Force, a militia group.

In behalf of the voiceless and the defenseless, the CBCP endeavors to worship the Living God in Spirit and in Truth by taking up the cudgels for the fallen, and for their grieving families and bereaved communities. The CBCP asks the government for an honest, thorough, impartial and speedy investigation so that the guilty may be held to account for their wrong-doing.

Indigenous peoples and cultural communities are already disadvantaged in a number of ways. They are, in our day and age, the 'anawim Yahweh, the poor of the Lord who have no avenger and none to stand for their rights. That their leaders and members should suffer yet the tragedy that has recently been visited upon them only underscores their plight as marginalized and underserved, apparently outside the pall of protection even of the law. This cannot be just. This cannot be the will of God.

That a militia group has been named is likewise troubling. Militia groups, by their very nature, do not fall under a clear, established and accessible chain of command. Government makes use of such groups for counter-insurgency, counter-rebellion maneuvers. It is their association with government that can be pernicious, for while they act with the tacit consent, if not authority of state agents, they cannot be held to account for their actions by the regular channels of accountability and attribution that exist in the regular armed forces and police.

We are disturbed profoundly by reports that national leaders have been quick to exonerate the militia group of wrong-doing. This alarming eagerness to deny culpability does not augur well for truth and for justice. Such declarations inspire credence only after a reliable and trustworthy investigation by impartial and competent persons shall have taken place. If made before any such investigation, they disturbingly suggest a refusal to hold accountable those to whom the Administration so eagerly extends its mantle of protection.

We call on all who have direct and competent proof of facts to contribute to the just resolution of this tragedy visited on indigenous Filipinos. We respectfully invite the attention of the State to the fact that under accepted principles of international law, state responsibility lies where persons acting in behalf of the State commit some actionable wrong, and the State hesitates about acting or, worse, refuses to act. If militia groups cannot fit within a structure of clear authority and command by legitimate state authority, they should not be tolerated, much less employed as mercenaries by the State. We ask our indigenous Filipino brothers and sisters to keep their faith in the ways of peace and to abide by the law, even as they rightly press for the vindication of their rights.

From the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, September 11, 2015

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

Politics a monster to be tamed

By Fr. Roy Cimagala

Baclaran Church devotees sign a petition calling for the abolishment of all forms of pork barrel last Oct. 26, 2014. RAYMOND SEBASTIAN

IN fact, more than to be tamed, politics needs to be humanized and Christianized. It has to have a soul, proper to our human dignity as persons who by nature also belong to a society, and more, who are the image and likeness of God, children of his.

Yes, politics touches the spiritual and supernatural dimensions of our life. It just cannot be left to the forces of purely worldly conditions—economic, social, legal, cultural, historical, etc. It has to be referred to God, our Creator who continues to govern us through His providence, with which we try our best to get it in sync.

It just cannot be left alone, to be at the mercy of our instincts and passions alone. These always need purification, proper grounding, and orientation that in the end could only be done if things are referred to God, and not just to some smart ideology.

If our understanding of politics falls short of this fundamental and indispensable consideration, we certainly would be in trouble. There's no other way but for it to be like a no-man's land, wild and chaotic in spite of appearances of law and order, and behaving like a juggernaut that inflicts more harm than good to everyone.

Giving politics its proper soul is not going to be easy, nor will it be finished definitively in our time. It flows with life itself, our collective life, in fact, and with all the complexities that such condition entails. But that's the thrill and adventure of politics.

We have to be wary of Godless ideologies and vague principles that seem to stimulate our political activities. Among them is that Bismarckian principle that politics is the art of the possible, the attainable or the art of the next best, without clarifying what criteria and standards are to used to follow it.

If God and His laws are not given primary consideration in this regard, that political principle would certainly produce all kinds of scenarios, not all of them moral and fitting to our human and Christian dignity.

It can easily unleash Machiavellian game plans that can set aside even basic human ethics. That's why we have been having killings, cheating, recourse to, treachery, ridiculous gimmicks, dirty tricks, and other brazen political maneuverings.

It should be made clear that strictly putting God at the forefront of our political exercises does not hinder our politics. On the contrary, He will enhance it, since with Him, we can always ventilate our opinions, views, and positions as freely and as openly as possible, but all within the context of charity, justice, and mercy.

Things simply depend on us, on how we play politics, because insofar as God in concerned, He already has given us everything for us to do politics properly. We need to realize first of all that everyone needs to pray first, and offer a lot of sacrifices for our politics, which as we are seeing these days, is getting more and more complicated due to the many issues that have to be addressed.

Politics should be an object of intense prayers and sacrifice, not to mention, an ongoing formation on our political life, since politics requires as much as possible the active participation of everyone in whatever capacity and possibility one has. The very nature of politics is participative. Everyone has a role to play there, at least, to pray and offer sacrifices.

Political leaders and those actively or directly involved in this field should strive to be first and last men and women of God, persons of integrity and appropriate political skills and competence. They should not be politicians just because of pedigree, or money, or fame.

They should know what common good is, both temporal and eternal, because everyone functions in these dimensions of time and eternity, matter and spirit. Though politicians focus more on the temporal common good, they should also know the basics of the eternal common good, so that their work in the former would not undermine their due concern for the latter.

They should be persons of deep prudence, skillful in the art of teamwork, knowing how to relate political realities to God's plans.

Political parties should have their own respective ways of policing their ranks, seeing to it that their members are truly dedicated to their work, are persons of conviction, fidelity, and purity of intention, and not just users, seekers and exploiters of opportunities.

Let's remember that politics is a noble profession, a basic human necessity given our social nature.

The Poor: Vision of the Philippine Church

The Holy Father visits former street kids of Manila at the Tulay ng Kabataan in Intramuros, Manila, during his pastoral and state visit to the Philippines in January 2015. TULAY NG KABATAAN

By Fr. James M. Kroeger. MM

THE Church in the Philippines seriously attempted to take the wisdom of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and integrate it into the vision and life of the local Church through the month-long Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991). The PCP-II document contains pivotal insights on what it means to be "the Church of the Poor," insights as relevant today as when they were first spoken.

PCP-II noted: "In the Philippines today, God calls us most urgently to serve the poor and the needy. The poverty of at least half of the population is a clear sign that sin has penetrated our social structures. Poverty in the sense of destitution is not God's will for anyone" (122).

PCP-II struggled to define what "Church of the Poor" means. "The 'Church of the Poor' is one whose members and leaders have a special love for the poor.... It is not an exclusive or excluding love in such a way that there is no room in a Christian's heart for those who are not poor. For always, the Christian must love all persons.... Christ was able to love well-to-do people like Zaccheus and the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus" (126-127).

"The 'Church of the Poor' is one where, at the very least, the poor are not discriminated against because of their poverty, and they will not be deprived of their 'right to receive in abundance the help of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially that of the Word of God and the sacraments from the pastors'" (128).

The comprehensive document of PCP-II observes: "The 'Church of the Poor' is one that will be in solidarity with the poor. It will collaborate with the poor themselves and with others to lift up the poor from their poverty" (130).

As the Second Vatican Council taught: "The Church encompasses with her love all those who are afflicted by human misery and she recognizes in those who are poor and who suffer the image of her poor and suffering founder. She does all in her power to relieve their need and in them she strives to serve Christ" (LG 8).

"The 'Church of the Poor' means, in the words of Pope John Paul II, that: 'Before today's forms of exploitation of the poor, the Church cannot remain silent. She also reminds the rich of their precise duties. Strong with the Word of God, she condemns the many injustices which unfortunately, even today, are committed to the detriment of the poor'" (131).

"Pastors and members of the Church will courageously defend and vindicate the rights of the poor and the oppressed, even when doing so will mean alienation or persecution from the rich and powerful" (131).

Continuing the insightful catechesis of PCP-II, we read: "The 'Church of the Poor' will also mean that the Church will not only evangelize the poor, but that the poor in the Church will themselves become evangelizers. Pastors and leaders will learn to be with, work with, and learn from the poor. A 'Church of the Poor' will not only render preferential service to the poor but will practice preferential reliance on the poor in the work of evangelization" (132).

"The 'Church of the Poor' is one where the entire community of disciples ... will have such a love of preference for the poor as to orient and tilt the center of gravity of the entire community in favor of the needy" (134).

"When the Church in the Philippines becomes truly this Church of the Poor, the poor will feel at home in her, and will participate actively, as equal to others, in her life and mission. The Church will then become truly a communion, a sign and instrument, for the unity of the whole Filipino nation" (136).

Educating Youth on Mother Nature

By Bernardo M. Villegas

CARL CASTILLO / AREOPAGUS COMMUNICATIONS

SPENDING three weeks in the cool mountains of Bukidnon helped me appreciate even more the significance of the latest encyclical letter of Pope Francis entitled "Laudato Si" with the subtitle, "On Care for our Common Home." Especially in Barangay Dahilayan of the municipality of Manolo Fortich in the province of Bukidnon, one can cry out with Pope Francis: "Laudato si, mi Signore"—'Praise be to you, my Lord.' In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. 'Praise be to you, my Lord, through our sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs." Thanks to socially responsible business people like the Paras clan and Walter and Annabelle Brown, among others, Dahilayan is truly a paradise of Mother Earth where one can see the greatest number of trees, fruits, herbs, vegetables, and flowers in addition to mountain trails, waterfalls, and streams with crystal clear water. Think of Baguio fifty years ago. That is what entire families with their children among the forty million domestic tourists who travel around the archipelago every year will enjoy in Dahilayan and the surrounding areas of Bukidnon.

It is important that children of families who live in asphalt jungles like Metro Manila and Metro Cebu can experience communing with nature in places like Dahilayan. That is the only way the leaders of future generations could be motivated to avoid the sins against the environment of the last two or three generations of Filipinos (that includes myself). The Pope captures what these generations have done to Mother Nature in the Philippines: "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." Unfortunately, those who will come after us may not know what we have done to destroy nature because, unless we bring them often to places like Dahilayan, they would think that our environment has always been as ugly as the cities in which they are spending most of their lives. They would not know the difference between unspoiled mother nature and the environment produced by human irresponsibility and selfishness.

We must do everything possible to replicate nature's beauty in places like Dahilayan all over the Philippines: in mountain areas close to Manila like the Sierra Madre; the natural parks of Mt. Makiling; the surroundings of Mt. Arayat; whatever can be salvaged in the Mountain Provinces from the reckless urbanization of Baguio; natural parks in islands like Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan. There has to be a concerted effort, under the leadership of the Department of Tourism, to emulate what Malaysia has been able to preserve in their famous Cameroon Highlands and Genting Highlands. Although I have nothing against beach resorts, we must not concentrate all of our efforts on seaside or aqua tourism. It does not mean that we cannot commercialize portions of mountainous areas. On the contrary, Dahilayan, for example, owes part of its attraction to a commercial venture of the Paras family called the Dahilayan Adventure Park where adventurous tourists can enjoy the thrills of Asia's first longest dual zipline and other "ZipXtreme" experiences. In fact, kilometers and kilometers of cemented road that make Dahilayan accessible to domestic tourists have been constructed with the private capital of the Paras family. The Browns in turn have developed farm lots as well as camps and lodgings for out-of-town seminars that blend perfectly with forests, vegetables and flower farms, and other high-value agribusiness ventures. I hope there will be entrepreneurs in other mountainous islands who can visit Dahilayan and learn from its experiences.

What about those in Metro Manila who may not have the opportunity to travel to these mountains in far-away islands? I suggest that they consider natural parks like those close to La Mesa dam and those in Mt. Makiling and Mt. Banahaw. Right in the middle of Manila, I hope that we can still preserve areas that can be spared the relentless spread of real estate projects. I just received a suggestion from a friend, Jose Maria Zabaleta of SACASOL, the largest solar energy project today, about the 19-hectare property in the Ortigas area that the PCCG confiscated from the Marcos family. It seems the long-standing attempt to sell it to a private developer has recently failed. There may still be time to ask the government to reconsider making money out of it and convert it to a forested natural park in the middle of the asphalt jungle that is Metro Manila. A good beginning could be for the Local Government of Pasig to declare it as an ecological zone. Future generations of people in Metro Manila will be forever grateful to this present or the next Administration if we can have a real park that can be designed like those in London or Madrid. Our public officials would be listening to not only to Pope Francis but also to St. John Paul II who said in his first encyclical Redemptor Hominis that we should have leaders who avoid seeing no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption. (For comments, my email address is bernardo.villegas@uap.asia.)

Global justice to end human trafficking

Vatican City - May 20, 2014: Sr. Estrella Castalone speaks about Talitha Kum's new campaign against human trafficking 'Play for life, against human trafficking' at the Vatican Press Office on May 20, 2014. CNA

By Fr. Shay Cullen

THE revelation here in Ireland of a human trafficking syndicate bringing young men and women into slave-like conditions from poverty in Romania has shocked police and public. The human trafficking ring was centered in Letterkenny, County Donegal and a group of young men were being forced to work without salary and forced to sleep in dirty, unsanitary degrading conditions.

They were fearful for their families back in Romania who were under threat of retaliation by the trafficking mafia. New legislation in Ireland will penalize the traders and those who use the victims. This will also penalize the men who sexually exploit girls and women forced into sex slavery.

How wrong we are if we think that this crime against poor, vulnerable people is committed only in the developing world and poor countries. It can be found anywhere even in developed countries and is perhaps more prevalent than we know.

We need special courts in all countries where human trafficking is rampant where a second retired judge from another country will join a local judge to help as a volunteer to speed up the process and prevent bribery and corruption.

The United Kingdom and the Philippines have a special challenge to stop trafficking. Some years ago twelve Filipina women were found in Northern Ireland near Omaha controlled by a slave master who made them work in a factory without pay, just promises, and he held their passports. They were trapped. Angie, one of the women in the group, had a hidden cell phone. One night, a group of men came to break into the house to rape them. Then Angie called a Columban Father in the nearby town of Omaha whose number she had and they were rescued.

Human trafficking involves abduction, cheating, lying, imprisonment, grave threats, physical brutality, forced labor, prostitution, rape and imprisonment by the traffickers. If the victims run away, they are tagged as illegal migrants and undocumented aliens and can be charged and jailed. Although this is changing in some countries where they are now seen as victims of a crime and get protection and help. That is how it should be everywhere.

The United Kingdom has made a significant step forward with the appointment of a former police constable Kevin Hyland, OBE (born 1963) as the United Kingdom's first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to fight slavery and human trafficking. He was formerly head of the London Metropolitan Police Service's Human Trafficking Unit. Every country needs such an independent commission to investigate this crime.

The British government realized the enormity and extent of the crime after 21 Chinese men, smuggled into Britain by traffickers, died by drowning in Morecambe Bay while picking cockles at low tide. They were caught by the fast incoming tide. They were smuggled illegally into England hidden in a container van

Graffiti on a wall in Olongapo City denounces sex tourism involving minors. PREDA

and were hired out by Chinese gangs to a local businessman and his son to collect cockles.

In the Philippines the number of internally trafficked girls and minors is not exactly known but the sex bars are thriving and full of young girls for sale. Many are minors as discovered by Preda Foundation social workers. Hundreds of Filipina are trafficked to Korea under the E6 visa system as entertainers but most end up in the brothels around the Korean US bases.

The rich countries of the North, the United States and the European community are prime target destinations for people traffickers. There they get a premium price for their human cargos. They see these poor people they traffic as commercial property, as something they own and to be sold. Much has not changed since the days of legalized slavery. The Americans fought a civil war over slavery when the northern states led by Abraham Lincoln tried to abolish it and free all slaves.

Like the thousands of slave owners of the past in Europe and America who considered their slaves as human property to be bought and sold today it is similar attitude but more covert.

Slavery was abolished in England in the 18th century, thanks to campaigners William Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament, and anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson. It was not implemented for many years. Then the British slave owners demanded compensation for the loss of their human property. The University of London has compiled a database of the thousands of slave owners and investors in slavery in England who got paid huge sums according to the records.

The slaves who suffered got nothing. Jamaican descendants of slaves are demanding compensation and will raise the issue during the visit of British Prime Minister David Cameron who is visiting the Caribbean island soon. Ironically his ancestor cousin, 6 times removed, was a slave owner who got as much as 3 million sterling pounds in today's money.

Kidnapping and using forced labor to get rich is a very common crime in Asia and sex slavery and trafficking of minors in particular is widespread in Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines.

Hundreds of Thai men were rescued earlier this year from an island in Indonesia where they were imprisoned for years with no escape and forced to work on fishing boats without pay. Many died there in misery and anguish far from their families. The fish products identified as being processed and sold into the markets of the United States and the EU will be banned.

Pope Francis at the end of an interfaith meeting of heads of religions and police chiefs from around the world held in the Vatican April 2014 declared human trafficking to be a crime against humanity. The sooner the United Nations declares the same the better.

Globalization of the world economy makes human trafficking easy for the corrupt to thrive but the globalization of justice is nowhere to be seen except in the International Criminal Court and tribunals in African countries bringing war criminals to trial.

We need to expand this process of justice so that special courts with prosecutors from different nations working together and judges from other countries will sit on each other's benches and quickly judge the human trafficking cases. This sharing of the judicial process will stymie and prevent bribery and corruption. Specially selected juries with members noted for their honesty and uncorrupted integrity is also a possible solution.

Justice and accountability for crime has to be the way forward to end this scourge against humanity especially the women and children most cruelly abused and exploited. There is hope and action to counter this evil but we all have to do our share to end it once and for all.

CBCP reminds BECs: Be agents of change

THE head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) on Wednesday, Nov. 11, reminded delegates of the ongoing National Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) Assembly at San Fernando de Dilao Parish in Paco, Manila of their dignity as "People of God" who are called to become instruments of social transformation, starting with the family.

"The Church is the People of God. We are not a political party. We are not a corporation. Neither are we an NGO. We are God's people, for no other reason than it is God who gathered us together. And we are with God, in Whose heart we find our beginning and our end," stressed Archbishop Socrates B. Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan in his homily, speaking on behalf of his brother bishops.

Church for society

Villegas went on to point out that BEC is not about having large membership given that its primary focus is being not a "Church for the Church," but being a "Church for society."

"This simply means that BEC must be a vehicle of communitarian renewal, of change, even for people who refuse to believe in God, and those who mock the Catholic Church. We are all for them just the same," he said.

The prelate went on to tell the audience that if they wanted to see what being BEC is like they should look no further than the people sitting next to them, saying each one of them mirrors the Divine.

"If you cannot see God in your neighbor, you can never see Him anywhere else. You have to see Him first within you … If you cannot find the image of God in your neighbor, it's your problem, not your neighbor's," he explained.

Knowing God in oneself

According to Villegas, there is no point in wanting to share God to others if one has no prior relationship with Him.

"If you do not know God, how can you imitate God? If you do not know God, how can you follow God?" the prelate asked.

However, Villegas stressed that the best place to find BEC is in the family.

"Where can we find BEC? At home! The family is the first Church. It is the picture of God's love," he exclaimed.

Moreover, he warned the faithful that when love is not discovered in the family, there is no hope in encountering it elsewhere.

Trinity = community

According to Villegas, BEC originates in a God Who is Himself a family, a community or "Communio" of Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"'Communio' is directed towards 'missio' [mission], solidarity towards fellowship, unity towards concern for all, oneness towards mutual responsibility," he added.

In conclusion, Villegas challenged BEC members to be a "Church of the Poor."

"Every BEC should be a Church of the Poor. It is not because the Church has a duty to provide poor people free with food, shelter, and medicine. It means that they are given a voice and are able to participate fully in the life of the Church," he said.

Noting that most of them are adults, the prelate urged assembly participants to do their best to woo the youth.

"Young people may not always listen to their elders, but they watch them and learn from their example," he said.

Furthermore, Villegas invited the delegates to try to reach out and win back fallen-away Catholics, former Catholics who now profess a different creed and those who reject religion altogether.

Talks, motorcade

Nearly 2,000 BEC members from the country's various arch/dioceses are in Manila from Nov. 11 to 14 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the closing of Vatican II and to take part in the culminating activity for the "Year of the Poor."

This year's 3rd CBCP-BEC Assembly is hosted by the Archdiocese of Manila (RCAM) and its suffragan dioceses of Kalookan, Novaliches, Pasig, Cubao, Parañaque, Malolos, Antipolo, and Imus.

Besides Villegas, other prelates expected to grace the activities include Cotabato Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI, Cebu Archbishop Jose S. Palma, and Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle.

Quevedo is set to give a talk on Nov. 12, Thursday, entitled "BECs in the Philippines – Thanksgiving for 50 Years of Vatican II's Spirit of Renewal."

Palma is scheduled to preside over the concelebrated Mass later that afternoon.

Archbishop Socrates B. Villegas of Lingayen - Dagupan. R. LAGARDE

Meanwhile, on Nov. 13, Friday, Tagle is assigned to discuss "BEC in the Philippines: Responding as a Community of Missionary Disciples to the Challenge of Pope Francis to be a Poor Church for the Poor."

In a statement, Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSsR, executive secretary of CBCP's Episcopal Commision on BEC, said that roughly 10,000 leaders and members of BECs nationwide are predicted to join the delegates in the culminating activity at the Cuneta Astrodome on Nov. 14, Saturday, from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.

Motorcades from various dioceses and parishes in Metro Manila will converge along Roxas Blvd. near the Department of Foreign Affairs, the priest added.

Among the personalities expected to share their talents during the program are Jamie Rivera, Jimmy Bondoc, and the singing priests known as "Priests in the City."

The Papal Nuncio to the Philippines Archbishop Giuseppe Pinto will read a message from Pope Francis to the assembly while Tagle will celebrate the culminating Mass at 4:00 p.m. with bishops and over 200 priests as concelebrants. ***(Raymond A. Sebastián / CBCP News)***

NASSA/Caritas Philippines roll out P13.21-M relief project

MANILA, October 22, 2015—According to NASSA/Caritas Philippines Executive Secretary Rev. Fr. Edwin Gariguez, the aid includes provision of ready-to-eat food, drinking water, hygiene kits, emergency shelters, and other non-food items like blankets, sleeping mats and mosquito nets to at least 5,000 families or approximately 25,000 individuals affected by the recent typhoon.

"We are aiming to help the most vulnerable people such as the elderly, disabled, single parents and those who are ill from the worst-hit and hard-to-reach areas. We are very thankful to our Caritas networks around the globe for its immediate response to our appeal," Gariguez said.

Initial reports from the diocesan social action centers reveal that 15 provinces—Aurora, Quezon, Cagayan,Nueva Vizcaya, Qurino, Nueva Ecija, Kalinga, Benguet, Pangasinan, Zambales, Rizal, Cavite, Batanes, La Union and Abra—are the worst-hit areas during the onslaught of Typhoon Lando. At the grassroots, the 16 dioceses in Central and Southern Luzon, Cagayan Valley, Cordillera, Ilocos and Calabarzon are coming to the aid of the typhoon victims.

"We are still waiting for more data from our assessment teams on the ground. These areas may still change depending on the needs of the affected dioceses," Gariguez added.

Typhoon Lando's damage to agriculture is very visible in Quirino province. This corn, for instance, could no longer be eaten in San Dionisio, Nagtipunan, Quirino. NASSA/CARITAS PHILIPPINES' RAPID ASSESSMENT TEAM

Pledges and support to the victims of Typhoon Lando from other Caritas organizations worldwide are being extended to NASSA/Caritas Philippines. So far, CORDAID (Caritas Netherlands) has pledged 40,000 EUR to the Typhon Koppu emergency response activity.

Gariguez said regular updates about the program are being provided through SMS, electronic mails and the social media sites of NASSA/Caritas Philippines. The Typhoon Koppu Monitoring Center has already been activated through the following emergency hotlines: (02) 527-4163 and 0927-610-9977.

The Global Caritas Internationalis with its 165 member countries worldwide is currently being headed by its first Asian President, Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle. ***(Myraine Joly Carluen-Policarpio / CBCP News)***

PH missionaries ease Sierra Leone's Ebola-related trauma

MANILA, Oct. 15, 2015 – With the Ebola virus slowly getting under control, Pinoy missionaries help Sierra Leone families with members recovering from the Ebola virus deal with the trauma of death and discrimination.

Sr. Bernardita "Didith" Otibar and Fr. John Jay Magpusao have been using their psycho-spiritual training to assist almost 20 parishes in the two big districts of Sierra Leone deal with the lingering psychological and emotional effects of the Ebola outbreak.

Camillian Task Force (CTF) has trained community-based psycho-social facilitators, most of them are teachers, retired teachers, and university students who are also active parish workers. there are priests also. They are the ones visiting the villages where the affected-families and survivors are, said Magpusao, a registered medical technologist by profession.

"The facilitators [we train] are able to journey with these families as they cope with their losses, loved ones and livelihood alike, due to

Fr. John Jay Magpusao, the one of only two Filipino missionaries in their area in Sierra Leone assists local women during a feeding program for adults and children. CAMILLIANS

At one of the Camillian Task Force (CTF)'S training sessions on disaster preparedness in Sierra Leona. CAMILLIANS

[Ebola], towards healing. Their emotional burdens, by the way, were made heavier by the stigma and discrimination they also suffer from other members of their villages," added the priest in an exclusive interview with CBCP News.

Stories of courage, strength

The facilitators gather more or less 400 families of 6 to 12 members every month in their respective parishes for some updating on the impact of the program on their lives and giving of recommendations on how the program can still be improved.

"Listening to their stories of courage, strength, and bravery in overcoming the challenges brought to them by the Ebola outbreak [was] so inspiring. Their faith in God, or Allah, since most of the families we are serving are actually Muslims, keeps them going and gives them hope," the priest added.

According to Otibar, who arrived in the country last September, the work is "less demanding than what she had experienced [serving] in Samar" but the challenge remains the travel distance between villages.

Volunteers at one of the Camillian Task Force (CTF)'s monthly group therapy sessions as part of the psychosocial support program in Sierra Leona (Photo: Camillians)

Sr. Didith, as she is fondly called, had worked in the Philippines among survivors of super typhoon Haiyan in Basey, Samar and nearby towns.

Otibar who goes to the CTF office at the Loreto Clinic run by Sisters of Cluny, together with Magpusao, visits these 400 families enrolled in the congregation's Post-Disaster Response program. They are accompanied by a local staff, Adama Michael, a nurse specializing in mental health.

"Not really far from home"

"Currently, the situation of infection is dwindling fast but there are still few isolated cases due to perhaps negligence to the protocols," explained Aris Miranda, MI, a Filipino Camillian priest who coordinates CTF activities worldwide from Rome .

Otibar joined Sr. Benedetta Odundo Akech, a Kenyan, in Sierra Leona a couple of months ago.

Despite being the only two Filipinos engaged in the service of providing psychospiritual support in their area, Otbar and Magpusao are "not really far from home", said Miranda, since there are also Augustinian and Xaverian Filipino missionaries in the country.

"The main problem of communication is the low internet signal," he added. ***(CBCP News)***

Group brings anti-human trafficking campaign to Masbate

MANILA, Oct. 12, 2015—An international anti-human trafficking network extended last week its campaign against exploitation of women to an island province in the Bicol Region.

In an e-mail message, Sr. Adel Abamo, SDS, Talitha Kum Philippines animator, said the network "is in the diocese of Masbate now" campaigning to end trafficking of women in the province.

Citing Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking as a source, Masbate ranks 5th among the 10 provinces in the country with the most number of trafficking cases, with Cebu at the top, she said.

Sr. Adel Abamo, Talitha Kum Philippines animator, during a talk. PHOTO TAKEN FROM HER FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

Prostitution and poverty

"Women from Masbate are trafficked to Cebu and other nearby provinces for prostitution."

Victims are mostly college students, ages 16 to 20-years old, Abamo said. They are forced into prostitution by poverty.

"Some resort to prostitution to pay their tuition fees," she said.

According to Abamo, Talitha Kum can link the women to other partners that espouse the same advocacy of freeing them from prostitution.

According to the nun, the group and its government, and non-government organization partners can provide them with employable skill trainings.

Focus on Masbate

"Everyone should be part of the advocacy to prevent women from getting trafficked," Abamo said.

Since the major root of prostitution is poverty, it should be addressed by providing women with employment and livelihood projects, she said.

Masbate "is the first of 10 dioceses in the country where Talitha Kum will push its advocacy," Abamo said. ***(Oliver Samson / CBCP News)***

Italian priest, PAO chief and Maranao princess bag local peace awards

MANILA, Oct. 10, 2015—Mindanao-based Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, PIME, led this year's recipients of the Pamana ng Kapayapaan (Inheritance of Peace) awards for his work in promoting inter-religious harmony and peace in Southern Philippines.

The Italian priest was cited for founding the Silsilah Dialogue Movement (SDM) in Zamboanga City, an organization that is advocating for peace and love of neighbor regardless of religion since 1984.

According to representatives of religious groups, academic communities, peace advocates and civil society groups that conferred the award in celebration of the United Nation's International Day of Peace, Fr. D'Ambra's initiative has brought various groups in Mindanao, including the aboriginal people, closer together because religious and cultural differences have been addressed and explained by the SDM.

The group also recognized the significant role played by the SDM in peace negotiations between the government and the Muslim rebel groups.

"I was informed that some friends shared with you my book CALL TO A DREAM and from that initial sharing you have found more information about me and the Silsilah Dialogue Movement," Fr. D'Ambra said upon accepting the award last October 1 at the Far Eastern University.

"Yes, I have a dream: the dream to share with all I encounter in my life that we have to love all, because we are part of the same human family, people of different cultures and religions but created by the same God who loves all of us.

"I dream to inspire many to dream with me and together to live and promote the Culture of Dialogue, Path to Peace. For this reason, it is my strong desire to remain with you in the Philippines up to the end of my life," he added.

Fr. D'Ambra cited the Zamboanga siege in 2013, wherein the SDM promoted the slogan "Why violence? Why not peace? We are brothers and sisters!"

"This is the time when we have to build bridges of peace and to find ways to harmonize the aspirations of the people. This is true also for our situation in Mindanao. It is time for both sides to meet in the middle and to find pragmatic solutions guided by sincere intentions, with the hope that along the way we continue to share and to improve what is needed for the common good," he stressed out.

Aside from Fr. D'Ambra, Public Attorney's Office (PAO) chief Dr. Persida Rueda-Acosta was conferred the National Peace Award for Public Service. Acosta was recognized for her strong dedication to the public by restoring people's faith in the judicial systems.

Meanwhile, Bai Rohaniza Sumndad-Uzman, a Maranao Princess, was recognized for establishing "Teach Peace, Build Peace Movement," with the mission to make every Filipino child a peace-builder. She was lauded for promoting peace and development in many parts of the country through education, inter-faith, inter-cultural and inter-generational engagement. ***(CBCPNews)***

Prison ministry appeals aid for Leyte jail fire victims

MANILA, Oct. 10, 2015—The Catholic Church's prison ministry is seeking aid for victims of a fire incident that razed the regional prison facility in Leyte province last Thursday.

The Oct. 8 inferno at the maximum security compound of the Leyte penal colony in Abuyog town killed at least 10 inmates and hurt several others, according to local police.

Rodolfo Diamante, executive secretary of the CBCP Commission on Prison Pastoral Care, said around 1,200 inmates were affected by the incident and are currently staying with those in the minimum security compound.

"We appeal to our volunteers and chaplains nationwide to send help. It's really sad that it happened," Diamante said.

Photo shows what is left of the Leyte regional prison facility after the first fire incident that struck in 2013.

"We are mobilizing our 86 units of volunteers to lend a helping hand... preferably to give their aid in cash and send it to our local chapter in Leyte so they will just buy all the things needed there," he said.

He said the inmates urgently need clothes, cookware, kitchen utensils, sleeping mats and blankets.

The cause of the fire is yet to be determined but the apparent congestion at the facility has been a source of worry of the prison ministry.

Diamante said the only way out of the problem is to ensure a reform of the country's justice system and to improve jail facilities across the country.

He also renewed his call on government to abandon its plan to build a P50-billion "mega prison" project in Nueva Ecija, saying the money could be used to improve regional prisons.

"The problem is really about overloading and weak maintenance of prison facilities," Diamante said.

The Leyte penal colony was already struck by fire in May 2013, destroying the facility's biggest dorm, Spiritual Center and clinic.

"Unfortunately, the Spirituality Center, which was repaired with the help of the Archdiocese of Palo, is destroyed again," Diamante added. ***(CBCPNews)***

Archdiocese of Jakarta organises seminar to tackle corruption

JAKARTA, Oct. 21, 2015—The Indonesian Catholic Society Forum of the Jakarta Archdiocese (FMKI KAJ)* held a seminar on corruption on 17 October. The goal was to raise moral awareness among Catholic teachers, educators and foundations about how to use money to avoid corruption and manage Church finances in an honest and transparent way.

The FMKI KAJ organised the meeting with the National Assembly Catholic Education (MNPK)† and the Bhumiksara Foundation.

Dozens of people – students, seminarians and members of the foundation – attended, including Harkristuti Harkrisnowo, from the Legal and Human Right Ministry; Fr Samuel Pangestu, vicar of the Archdiocese of Jakarta; Royani Lim from the Bhumiksara Foundation (Yayasan Bhumiksara), and Harefa, from the Anti-Corruption Commission (KPK)‡.

Participants presented their work experience with respect to corruption prevention. Two priests spoke about the moral position of the Church on the subject.

Fr Pangestu, a former banker who became a diocesan priest and a close aide to the archbishop of Jakarta, talked about how to reconcile a job in a management fund and the Church's moral teaching.

Fr Matheus Mali, a professor of moral theology at the University of Sanata Dharma Yogyakarta, described his work in moral education at the institution.

"When a student or a seminarian breaks moral rules, because of graft or cheating, he has to leave the seminary," he said. ***(AsiaNews)***

For Bishop of Kengtung, educating young people will revolutionize the country

MYANMAR. Oct. 17, 2015—We cannot "defeat the drug lords or a brutal government, nor those who incite religious extremism and violence against women and children. We can only educate young people, and do the best we can," said Mgr Peter Kü Ca Louis, 63.

Speaking about his diocese's mission, which is in Shan State, eastern Myanmar, the bishop, who has been the bishop of Kengtung since 2002, noted, "Education is the priority of our diocesan programme for now and the future. Our approach to evangelisation is holistic: we do not try to save people's souls without also saving their body."

The diocese of Kengtung lies on the border with China, Laos and Thailand, the so-called "golden triangle", a world hub for the production of heroin and methamphetamine. The diocese "is quite big compared to the rest of Myanmar and has more than a million people. Catholics number more than 60,000."

"The community is quite lively," Mgr Ca Kü said. "We have some groups for young people. For instance, the St Dominic Association brings together children, the choir and the altar boys.

"Our educational programmes are offered in schools with residence halls that we set up in various parishes. in these facilities, we house students (especially tribal Akhas) because their parents are poor and cannot take care of them since they have to work all day long. We help them with after-school activities, tutoring and moral and religious education, although not all of them are Christian or ready to convert."

"Before I became bishop," Mgr Ca Kü said, "education levels in the diocese were very low. At present, it has gone up a lot. About 600-700 children in the diocese are university graduates." At the same time, "We are very concerned about issues like drugs, human trafficking, and exploitation. We are trying to keep kids away from all this."

"In theory, public education in Myanmar is free," the bishop said, "but that is actually a joke because they [the government] raised every imaginable tax. Thus, life is much more expensive than in the past."

For Mgr Ca Kü, education is the only way to make the country more democratic. "We are praying for free and fair elections," the prelate said speaking about the elections of 8 November. "If it is time for a change of government, we hope that it will better than the one in power today."

"The problem with politics is that it appears more democratic, but there has been no change of heart. Politicians do not appreciate people as they ought to. By educating young people, we make them more aware about political problems, hoping that some of them may want to pursue this kind of career. In view of its history, this country is not accustomed to participatory politics."

"We have few Christians in parliament," Mgr Ca Kü said, "with limited political weight." In fact, "We lost the debate over the polygamy and conversion laws, which limit freedom of conscience and which we opposed as a Bishops' Conference. For this reason, it is important to educate the new generations: everyone should get involved in politics."

PIME missionaries evangelised the area of Kengtung after they arrived in 1912. Erected in 1927 as an apostolic prefecture, Kengtung was elevated to the status of diocese in 1955.

"At present, there are no more missionaries," the bishop noted. "We have 40 priests, all locals, 30 seminarians in the diocese's minor and intermediate seminaries and another 20 in the major seminary in Yangon."

"Since we are close to the border with other states, we work a lot with the tribals and immigrants, especially Chinese. We get many conversions. Every year we celebrate between 2,000 and 5,000 baptisms."

Relations with the government are good. "President Thein Sein paid a friendly visit to our diocese," the prelate said. "My duty is to protect people and I must be diplomatic. We talk frequently with local authorities and they do not hinder us. "

"The desire to convert is always the last thing in our work of evangelisation, never the first," Mgr Ca Kü said. "We provide farmers with financial help, as well as health assistance and education. We encourage them to plan for the future. If someone wants to convert, our door is open."

"Some time ago, we organised a conference to mark the 500th anniversary of the arrival of missionaries in Myanmar," the bishop said. "Many non-Christian historians and experts spoke. One of the most beautiful comments was, 'You Catholics never force anyone to convert'." ***(AsiaNews)***

Lumad leaders have a meeting with representatives from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). KRIS BAYOS

More guns to kill more IPs

By Joel Tabora, SJ

Fundamentally, the indigenous peoples (IPs) want to be left alone. They want to work their lands according to their customs and traditions, see to the education and welfare of their children, and be happy within the national fold of Filipino peoples.

That desire is their right. The law guarantees it. It says: "The State shall protect the rights of the Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs) to ensure their economic social and cultural well being and shall recognize the applicability of customary laws governing property rights or relations in determining the ownership and extent of ancestral domain" (Sec. 2b, Chapter 1, RA 8371).

But the IPs are sitting on minerals which others want. Or they are living on land that others covet. Big money and big profits are involved, or the messianic illusions of a religious leader. The driving force is huge private profit. Or the establishment of the "Kingdom of God." The ideological justification is the economic welfare of the country, or the will of God. Both are lies: Mining has not brought about national prosperity. God creates land; he is not a landgrabber.

To any development project, the IPs are supposed to give their "free and prior informed consent (FPIC). Otherwise, clearly, the development project ought not proceed. The law defines FPIC carefully. It means: "the consensus of all members of the ICCs/IPs to be determined in accordance with their respective customary laws and practices, free from any external manipulation, interference and coercion, and obtained after fully disclosing the intent and scope of the activity, in a language and process understandable to the community" " (Sec. 2g, Chapter 1). But FPIC is roundly manipulated. "Consensus" is division prior to conquest, "free from external manipulation" is unabashed bribery, "free from coercion" is the imposition coming ultimately from the State that has decided illegally that the exploitation of natural resources justifies setting aside the rights of the IPs. So, when the IP still refuses to give his FPIC, he is killed.

Here the State can impose its intent on the National Commission on ICC/IP (NCIP), "the primary government agency responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies, plans and programs to promote and protect the rights and well-being of the ICCs/IPs and the recognition of their ancestral domains as well as the rights thereto" (Sec. 38, Chapter VII). Instead of protecting the rights of the ICC/IP, the NCIP mediates the interests of the State, including the interests of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which chooses--lamentably--the exploitation of natural resources over its mandate to protect the environment. Of course, it is unfortunate that in this work-in-progress "for the good of the country," the IPs are killed.

The mining companies deny the killings. The religious leader denies the killings. The military deny the killing. Yet, accounts of the killing of the IPs abound.

The military do not free the IPs from the mining intrusion and the murders; they do not enable them to live accord-

Lumads urge the CBCP to broker peace talks between the government, CPP-NPA-NDF. KRIS BAYOS

The mining companies deny the killings. The religious leader denies the killings. The military deny the killing. Yet, accounts of the killing of the IPs abound.

ing to their rights under the law. Neither do the national police.

The New People's Army (NPA) take on the cause of the IPs. Or so it claims. Initially, the IPs ally with the NPA; they think the NPA can help them defend their ancestral domains. But in time the IPs learn that the NPA revolutionary agenda to topple the Philippines' democratic government is different from the agenda of the IP just to live quietly in peace on their ancestral lands. The IP withdraw from the alliance. But not without impunity. The IP are killed in withdrawing from the alliance.

Meanwhile the NPA and their allies insist on taking on the IP struggle and embed it in their communist rebellion and their international socialist struggle; of this the IPs have no understanding. They have no understanding of the importance of the NPA struggle for the so-called ultimate humanization of humanity in communism. The NPA presume the IPs accept this, whether they give their FPIC to it or not. Their protection is their humanitarian mission.

So the NPA recruit many IPs to its noble cause: full understanding of this is not necessary; raw readiness for battle is sufficient. The military reject its nobility and oppose their rebellion. The IPs are sucked willy nilly into the NPA-military conflict. The military clash violently with the NPA, militarizing whole neighborhoods, disturbing the work on the fields and the learning in the schools. The IPs flee the militarization for their lives. They flee the conflict. In fleeing, they are killed.

Not being able to tolerate the armed rebellion of the NPA the AFP defends the State in fighting the NPA. Seeing that many of the NPAs are IPs, the IPs take on the face of the NPA. So IPs are killed.

The armed military blames the NPA, the armed NPA blames the military. The IPs are unarmed. The IPs are killed.

Militarized zones. Schools disturbed. Villages caught in cross fire. IPs killed. IPs flee militarized areas. Where they flee, they are killed. All in the context of the national recognition of the rights of the indigenous peoples.

Meanwhile President Aquino, far from keeping his campaign promise to be rid of Pres. Arroyos E.O 546 arming civilian volunteer organizations (CVOs), has approved the military proposal for a Special CAFGU Active Auxiliary (SCAA) unit in Surigao del Norte to protect the interests of the Taganito Mining Corporation of the Nickel Asia Corporation and the Sumitomo Metal Mining Corporation after allegedly 3 billion pesos worth of mining property has been destroyed by the NPA. Even more disturbing is the reported approval of the military's request for more budget to arm the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographic Units (CAFGUs), the SCAAs and the private armed groups in the area.

Fundamentally, the IPs want to be left alone. They want to live their lives as they judge fit. More guns won't help.

Lumads are victims of 'ideological conflict' too--Cardinal

MANY indigenous Lumads have been forced to flee their communities as a result of "ideological conflict," a ranking Church official said on Wednesday.

Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of the Cotabato archdiocese said Lumads are being killed and their rights are violated amid the fighting between the government forces and the communist New People's Army (NPA).

The known peace advocate made the statement over Radio Veritas, saying that it is "very important" to emphasize other circumstances behind the human rights abuses committed against the indigenous peoples.

"When the NPA go to their communities, they either recruit or train and so forth. And the military goes in to prevent NPA of doing that, so the Lumads are caught in the crossfire of this ideological conflict," he said.

Cardinal Quevedo called on the Lumads to also discern for themselves about their situation.

"I hope that our Lumads will realize that they have to discern for themselves... that they have to look at their situation and to find out who is taking advantage of them," he said.

Hundreds of Lumads from arrived in Manila last week to call on the government to act against the killings of indigenous peoples and stop the militarization of their communities.

Lumad is the generic term for different indigenous communities in the Southern Philippines.

Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of the Cotabato archdiocese. BRENDA MILAN

Cardinal Quevedo echoed the call of the Diocese of Tandag for the government to investigate the killings of Lumad leaders in Surigao del Sur and give justice to the victims.

The local church also reiterated its appeal to authorities to dismantle the Mahagat-Bagani militia, a government-backed paramilitary group, tagged in the harassment and killing of Lumads.

"Those are two things that they want and I agree with them," he said.

The diocese also urged the government to get to the bottom of the problem, which according to them, is mining.

It said that only communities of Lumads who are fighting against mining were the ones "being hounded and intimidated" by the militia group.

After all, it added, there are strong allegations that the military "are in collusion" with big mining companies that would like to expand their operations in Surigao del Sur. ***(CBCPNews)***

CBCP hits 'disturbing' gov't response to Lumad killings

CBCP Plenary Assembly. ROY LAGARDE

THE Catholic hierarchy joined in the chorus of condemnation against the killings of Lumads in Mindanao and criticized the government's response to the issue.

In a statement issued Friday, CBCP president Archbishop Socrates Villegas said it is "disturbing" how the government quickly exonerated those allegedly behind the killings.

"This alarming eagerness to deny culpability does not augur well for truth and justice," Villegas said.

According to him, such declarations inspire credence only after a reliable and trustworthy investigation by impartial and competent persons shall have taken place.

"If made before any such investigation, they disturbingly suggest a refusal to hold accountable those to whom the administration so eagerly extends its mantle of protection," he said.

President Benigno Aquino III in a forum on Wednesday said the government has "no campaign to kill anybody", as he defends the military's alleged involvement in the killings.

The much-awaited statement from Aquino, however, dismayed various human rights groups, saying his response was inadequate.

The bishops are also backing calls for the government to urgently investigate the killings of three Lumad leaders by alleged paramilitary forces in Surigao del Sur.

"The CBCP asks the government for an honest, thorough, impartial, and speedy investigation so that the guilty may be held to account for their wrong-doing," Villegas said.

The CBCP chief also said the use of militia groups for the government's counter-insurgency campaign is already "troubling."

"If militia groups cannot fit within a structure of clear authority and command by legitimate state authority, they should not be tolerated, much less employed as mercenaries by the State," he added.

The Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) earlier said the Lumad communities are under attack because of their determination to protect their ancestral lands.

Sr. Francis Añover, RMP coordinator, said the Lumad people continue to be victims of massive land grabbing and displacement because of large-scale mining operations and the expansion of huge plantations.

"The Philippine Army and its para-military groups commit grave human rights abuses as clearing up operations for the entry of big foreign and local corporations," Añover said.

The bishops said indigenous peoples are already disadvantaged in a number of ways and the government's failure to protect their rights "only underscores their plight as marginalized."

"This cannot be just. This cannot be the will of God," Villegas said. ***(R. Lagarde / CBCPNews)***

AMRSP to PNoy: Abolish 'Lumad-killing' militia

Lumad leaders gather at the Liwasang Bonifacio for the Lumad Manilakbayan 2015 to protest the recent killings of Lumad community leaders in Mindanao as well as to mark the second year anniversary of super typhoon Yolanda. ROY LAGARDE

THE Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) on Tuesday, Sept. 8, sent a letter to President Benigno S. Aquino III, enjoining him to act as a leader on behalf of Lumads killed in Mindanao recently by dismantling the paramilitary group tagged for their murder, and by helping people displaced due to the conflict.

Government response

"Mr. President, your 'bosses' in these areas are calling on you for protection. As Commander-in-Chief, can you not order that the Magahat-Bagani Force militia be officially disbanded and their firearms surrendered to the AFP?" asked AMRSP

The religious group went on to urge President Aquino to order government agencies to respond to the needs of the dislocated families in these areas, believing that his administration can still be effective in responding to the needs of the affected population.

Prophetic action

"We unite as one body for the prophetic action as credible witnesses of God's mercy and compassion. Mr. President, pursuant to our 'Cry for the Earth and Cry for the Poor' statement, we strongly call on you to take immediate action regarding these killings of gunmen of the Magahat-Bagani Force Militia," AMRSP declared.

According to the Catholic group, the deaths of Dionel Campos an Aurelio Sinzoi, executed at Kilometer 16, and of Emerito "Emok" Samarca inside the compound of the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (Alcadev), both in Sitio Han-ayan, "cry to the heaven for justice."

Mass evacuations

In the letter, the AMRSP also denounced the mass evacuations of residents of the Lumad communities of Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

The missive was signed by Sr. Eden Panganiban, SSpS, AMRSWP chair; Fr. Gerard Francisco Timoner, OP, AMRSMP vice-chair; Sr. Michaela Gotangco, FdCC, AMRSP executive secretary; and Sr. Crescencia Lucero, SFIC, AMRSP-JPICC. ***(Raymond A. Sebastián / CBCP News)***

Military 'colluding' with mining firms against Lumads?

Mining operations in Mabini, Compostela Valley

A CATHOLIC diocese said the government needs to get to the bottom of the alleged military harassment and killings of indigenous peoples in Mindanao—mining.

The Diocese of Tandag said only communities of Lumads who are fighting against mining were the ones "being hounded and intimidated" by a paramilitary militia group operating in Surigao del Sur.

In a pastoral statement, the diocese firmly believes the violence against Lumads is something "that has been extensively planned."

After all, it said, there are strong allegations that the military "are in collusion" with big mining companies that would like to expand their operations in Surigao del Sur.

"Our indigenous peoples who, ever since, have been one with nature, have lived in and survived out of their land of heritage, are now victims of those who are hungry of and greedy for power and wealth," part of the statement read.

The diocese lamented that Lumads who are the "heroes" in protecting the environment are now the ones in need "of our combined and continuing support."

The church officials reiterated its call on the government to stop prioritizing supposed development projects at the expense of indigenous peoples' rights.

"We all strongly condemn the terrorization, harassments, and the killings of our Lumad brothers and sisters as well as denounce the root cause of it all," they said.

The church leaders also reiterated its appeal to local authorities to dismantle the "notorious" Magahat-Bagani force tagged in the killings of Lumad leaders.

Last January, an agreement was reached during a "peace dialogue" between religious groups and the local authorities to disarm and abolish the militia group.

It was also agreed that a case will be filed against the Magahat-Bagani group in accordance with the due process of law.

According to the diocese, the responsibility to implement what had been agreed upon was given to the PNP and AFP to resolve the situation.

"Sadly, until now, the problem has not been solved," the church officials said.

"Like all of us, the Lumads have human rights as well. Let us therefore give them the justice that they deserve," they added. ***(R. Lagarde / CBCPNews)***

Lumad children seek Pope Francis' help

MANILA, Sept. 23, 2015— Some Lumad students brought their plight to Pope Francis, and asked his help so they can go back in peace to their village.

On Tuesday, the students went to the Apostolic Nunciature in Manila on Tuesday to hand over a letter for the Pope.

Among them were Rachel Libora and Michelle Campos, whose father Dionel, were among those killed by a militia group in a hinter village in Surigao del Sur on Sept. 1.

Michelle Campos, daugher of slain Lumad leader Dionel, including other protesters gather peacefully outside the Apostolic Nunciature in Manila on Tuesday to bring the Lumads' plight to Pope Francis. ROY LAGARDE

'Killed mercilessly'

"They were killed mercilessly. Right in front of their loved ones," Campos said.

"I can't understand why they they killed my father who only wanted to help our tribespeople and to develop the land of our forefathers," she said.

The two traveled arrived in Manila last week for week-long lobbying with different government agencies to seek justice for the victims.

Libora believes that the Pope can help them "because he has a deep, genuine concern for the poor."

She said they particularly want the pontiff to give attention to the plight of thousands of Lumad children who are caught amid "massive militarization" of indigenous communities in Mindanao.

"We just want to go back to our village. We want to go back to our school and study again," Libora said.

Threats of a massacre

According to her, they will remain under the threat of murder and even massacres if the government will not dismantle the paramilitary group.

"Peace in our community is impossible until the paramilitary group is there," she added.

About 580 families or 2,800 fled their homes following the brutal killing of the tribal leaders since early September.

For almost a month now, they have been languishing in a sports complex in Tandag City since early this month.

Local officials said the number of Lumad refugees getting sick who are mostly children, women and elderly continues to rise inside the evacuation centers.

Among the common illnesses include cough, fever, and diarrhea. ***(R. Lagarde / CBCPNews)***

Recoletos urge #endlumadkillings

BACOLOD City, Negros Oc., Sept. 18, 2015 – With one heart and in solidarity with victims, the Augustinian Recollects (OAR) in the Philippines have recently released a series of placards and computer graphics as a way of protesting the recent killings and harassment of Lumads in Mindanao.

(L-R) Br. Rey Tripulca, OAR; Fr. Charlie Orobia, OAR; Fr. Alden Alipin, OAR; and Fr. Tony Limchaypo, OAR. GREENHEART HERMITAGE

Silent protest

"Our common statement is symbolized by unified #endlumadkillings photos. We stand with the struggle of the Lumads, protection of their rights and dignity as a people," said Br. Jaazeal "Tagoy" Jakosalem, OAR, of the Recoletos' Commission on Social and Ecological Concerns, in a statement.

According to him, the early Recoletos in what is now Caraga used to live with the indigenous peoples (IP) of the region.

Greed

Jakosalem shared their missionaries helped Mindanao IPs stand on their feet by teaching them sustainable agriculture and fishing.

He added that their religious protected Lumads from the alleged greed of mining companies, politicians, and business people which now endangers their lives and their communities.

The placards and computer graphics flash "Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor," which is the theme of the ongoing Year of Conscecrated Life, and hashtagged one-liners like #PLANETOVERPROFIT, #endlumadkillings. ***(Raymond A. Sebastián / CBCP News)***

Gov't, NPA urged to declare indigenous communities 'peace zones'

A Lumad carries a copy of Pope Francis' latest encyclical, Laudato Si, as they talk to Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle who visited their camp site at the Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila on Wednesday. R. LAGARDE / CBCPNEWS

MANILA, Nov. 11, 2015— Both government forces and Communist insurgents are being urged to declare indigenous communities across the country "peace zones".

This recommendation was made by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle upon his visit in the camp site of protesting Lumad people at the Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila on Wednesday morning, Nov. 11.

"We are calling on both the military and the NDF (National Democratic Front) to declare as 'peace zones' the areas of our indigenous brothers and sisters," Tagle said.

Caught in the crossfire

The church official deplored the deterioration of the situation of Lumad communities in Mindanao, and said that it is alarming that some of them have been killed.

Cardinal Orlando Quevedo earlier said many Lumads have been forced to flee their communities as a result of "ideological conflict" between the military and the New People's Army, NDF's armed wing.

"When the NPA go to their communities, they either recruit or train and so forth. And the military goes in to prevent NPA of doing that, so the Lumads are caught in the crossfire of this ideological conflict," he said.

According to him, it is "very important" to emphasize other circumstances behind the human rights abuses committed against the indigenous peoples.

"I hope that our Lumads will realize that they have to discern for themselves… that they have to look at their situation and to find out who is taking advantage of them," Quevedo said.

Hundreds of Lumads arrived in Manila last month to call on the government to act against the killings of indigenous peoples and stop the militarization of their communities.

Lumad is the umbrella term for multiple different indigenous communities in Southern Philippines.

Pull-out of military

Tagle said attaining peace means pulling the government forces out of the tribal communities and dismantling paramilitary groups, including the Magahat-Bagani.

Members of the Magahat-Bagani paramilitary group were allegedly involved in the slayings of Lumad leaders in Surigao del Sur.

"Let justice reign and for the authorities to hold accountable those behind in the killings of the Lumad leaders," Tagle added.

The cardinal, along with some priests and nuns, also brought food and water and gave financial aid to the Lumads.

He also said that his position on the Lumad issue reflects the stand of many bishops, particularly those based in Southern Philippines.

"Let's do everything that we can [so] our Lumad people can return home and into their ancestral lands safely and peacefully," he said. ***(Roy Lagarde / CBCPNews)***

Franciscan's Statement of Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples

AFTER the celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Sunday (Oct. 11) and our annual retreat (Oct. 19-23), we, members of the Franciscan Custody of St. Anthony of Padua, that ministers in the Visayas and Mindanao through our schools, parishes and other institutions, recognize our ministry to the indigenous peoples also as part of our Vision-Mission. In view of recent incidents in Mindanao that involved them, we want to be in solidarity with them through this public statement.

• We acknowledge with respect and love their presence and culture as integral to and an enrichment of our national identity and culture as Filipinos;

• We denounce in the strongest terms the killings and violence in their communities, and we join them and other concerned agencies in the demand for a thorough investigation of the incidents, with appropriate action being taken to prevent such incidents from happening again;

• We also support the move of human rights groups to investigate the validity concerning the militarization of their communities, as well as their actions in defense of their ancestral lands, and their support and promotion of the environment in their areas;

• We uphold their rights for self-determination as citizens of this country to share in the progress and benefits in the areas of health care, education programs and the rest, to give them the opportunities to update themselves and live with some financial autonomy and true human dignity;

• Finally, last but not least, we respect and call for the protection of the expressions of their indigenous traditions and belief system, being with them as brothers, as we prepare for the time when the Spirit will reveal their readiness to receive the Good News of Jesus.

In the spirit of dialogue and respect for people and all creation inspired by our Father St. Francis of Assisi, and in oneness with the direction given to the Church today by Pope Francis, we pray for peace in our country and the Lord's blessing on our ministry to our indigenous peoples, as we sign this document this 23rd day of October, 2015, in St. Francis Friary, Punta Princesa, Cebu City.

BRO. FELIX C. JUNGCO, JR., OFM
Custos, with 55 signatures of friars in the school, parish and health-care ministries in Samar, Biliran, Cebu, Basilan, Balo-i, Kidapawan, Zamboanga del Sur, Leyte: the solemn professed, the student friars in SAT-MI, and the novices in Ormoc. St. Francis of Assisi Friary, 2 Capricorn St., Punta Princesa, 6000 Cebu City

A press release:

Rural Missionaries oppose dislocation of Lumad caused by expansion of corporate plantations

Bro. Jeffrey Pioquinto, SJ

THE Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) expressed its opposition of dislocation of the Lumad people in their communities caused by land grabbing and expansion of corporate plantations in Mindanao which was causal to the holding of the nationwide caravan Manilakbayan 2015. The group co-convened the Network Resisting Expansion of Agricultural Plantations in Mindanao (REAP Mindanao Network) on its launching at the College of Education of University of the Philippines, Diliman. The network aimed to create awareness and take actions against the monopoly control of agro-corporations over hundreds of thousands of hectares of land in Mindanao.

"We join the resistance against expansion of plantations in Mindanao that displaces our Lumad brothers and sisters, to protect the dignity of their lives and culture, as well as the environment, we urge the church sectors, the Catholic

BRO. JEFFREY PIOQUINTO, SJ

community, to do the same," Sr. Francis Aňover, RSM, RMP national coordinator said during the activity.

RMP said that Mindanao hosts the largest plantations of rubber, banana and pineapple in the country such as of the giant fruit companies Del Monte, Sumifru, Dole and their subsidiaries. Their plantations have displaced and continue to encroach ancestral lands of Lumad communities in Bukidnon, South Cotabato, Sarangani, Compostela Valley and Davao provinces. At present, about 1 million hectares of land are being converted into oil palm estates located in Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabao, Caraga and Northern Mindanao region.

The religious group also held the Aquino administration accountable for this act for corporate greed as control over the lands is usually through government-led initiatives such as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program, agri-business venture arrangements (AVAs) and other non-land transfer schemes that violates the rights of the indigenous people to ancestral land and culture, as well as the farmers' rights to genuine land reform.

"As we have been tasked by God to protect our brothers and sisters and His bio-diversed creations, we are duty-bound to oppose this plunderous act that instigates the poverty and hunger of hundreds of thousands of Lumad, including helpless children," Aňover said.

RMP also urged parishioners near UP Diliman campus to visit the Manilakbayan 2015 camp-out beside Commonwealth avenue and to donate food, mattresses and their other needs. The Lumad from Mindanao would be at the university until November 1.

Reference:
Sr. Francis Anover, rsm
National Coordinator
October 28, 2015

On the Reforms Issued by Pope Francis in the Trial of Marriage Cases

CNA

IT is so clear to all of us by now that indeed the principal and all-embracing vision of the papacy of Pope Francis is mercy and compassion. It is mercy and compassion that explains his action and work. Pope Francis in his words, gestures and teachings shows us the face of the clement judge who is Jesus Christ Himself. Now in his latest Apostolic Letter Mitisludex Dominus Iesus (translated "The Lord Jesus, Clement Judge), the Pope has opted by an act that is called motuproprio to simplify the process for the declaration of marriages null and void from the beginning.

The teaching about the indissolubility and unity of marriage remains. The doctrine about the sacredness of marriage and family life is unchanged. The declaration of nullity of marriages is not divorce.

This new Apostolic Letter reaches out to those Catholics who suffer quietly from the bond and obligations of what they thought was a marriage; when the truth is there was no marriage to speak of from the very start because the requirements for the valid reception of matrimony were not present. The Pope reaches out tenderly to those who suffer from invalid marriages.

The process has been simplified and dramatically shortened. The matrimonial tribunals must be brought closer to the people; in fact each diocese is mandated to have such marriage courts with the Bishop as the symbol of Christ the Lawgiver and Judge. The services of the Church must be more accessible to the people; the process to receive those blessings of new peace for those who have suffered long, must be simplified. Indeed, this is another proof of the old adage in Church pastoral ministry—the salvation of souls is the supreme law.

There is a lot of fresh air entering the windows of the Church. More doors are being opened in welcome. "Come to me all who are weary and find life burdensome and I will give you rest", says the Lord.

From the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist, Dagupan City, September 8, 2015

+SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen Dagupan
CBCP President

The political scene

IT neither hopeless nor pointless and neither is it irreversible nor irreparable. Yes. It is disturbing and dismaying, saddening and even depressing. Such can be rightfully said about the political scene in the Philippines during these extra difficult times. While it has a good amount of negative features, hopeless it is certainly not, precisely when its non-flattering elements are brought to fore—openly and objectively—with the ardent hope that a big number of Filipinos with good will and noble intentions would still have, such as the following lamentable realities in Philippine politics slowly though surely corrected:

1. The interests of the powerful and those few wealthy families are pitted against those of the multi-million weak and poor people usually perpetrated through political peddling and influence.

2. The supposedly equal application of the law and the equitable administration of justice are time and again jeopardized by preferential factors on account of political considerations.

3. The constitutional and wherefore categorical principle of Separation of Powers among the three branches of government are not rarely set aside for politico-reciprocal advantages.

4. Political debts are paid by those elected to public offices, particularly through the appointment of their well-identified supporters to many different juicy government positions.

5. The Executive Department surreptitiously though effectively collaborate with Congress in padding government budgets with many different conceivable "porkish" and at times even mysterious items.

6. There is practically no public and clear accountability of the resources and facilities of government owned and controlled corporations that should be rendered by the political protégées thereto appointed.

7. A rather elaborate, impressive and wherefore costly propaganda machine infallibly accompanies all wealthy and influential candidates for public offices from local to the national levels.

8. The electoral process has been systematically subverted by those in tenure of political offices in favor of their own selves, their immediate as well as distant family members, not to mention their special friends.

9. People have become by and large cynical about the political moves of those in the Executive and Legislative branches of government in order to politicize even the judiciary.

10. If today, we are what we are in our political scene, we need to have a closer and honest look at our political culture precisely in order to remedy our pitiful Political scene.

Lumad

IN general, it can be said that the Lumad—as a collective people's identity—is an indigenous "non-Islamized" people in Southern Philippines. The place they have occupied and lived in for centuries, has the distinction of being a rather spacious land area and definitely quite rich for its abundant timber and specially so for its mining resources. And this wealth of nature is precisely the cause of their many and serious problems—instead of being the source of their blessing, the origin of their common welfare.

Reason: Non-Lumad—not only their fellow Filipinos with neither any sense of ethics nor the use of right reason but especially greedy and amoral foreigners are after their said abundant natural resources. So what if they destroy the environ, so what if they leave behind a desolate people plus a poisoned earth? So what if they harass, they kidnap and/or even kill the simple natives who simply want to keep what is really theirs, to protect what in fact belongs to them?

So it was and so it still is that the Rightists and the Leftists plus the traitors to their own people came and are still coming. To say that they look at the Lumad as their common enemy and that they are ready to do anything and everything to rob them of their rightful resources, to drive them away in order to occupy their land, to put them to death even—this is an understatement. And such are precisely the composite of the big misfortune of the Lumad long since, but especially so in these days and time. They only want to keep what is rightfully theirs. They simply want to be left in peace so that they can live their simple lives, have their simple needs.

Such was the over-all background when Sultan Kiram himself wanted to see and talk with the Malacañang occupant. He pleaded for the meeting. He begged for the talk. He became sick. He died. And the supposed highest public official in the land mandated to look after the public welfare of the people all over the country, said nothing, did nothing. To this date, Sultan Julius is not known even but to have attempted to see and talk with the same supreme power figure in the Philippines, a portion of which has been home to the Lumad long, long before he was even born.

These are really sad and pitiful times for the Lumad: Some of their villages are in fact considered "occupied" by these or those militant groups. They have some small and poor schools that are "shut down". More. Their human rights are nonchalantly violated. Families are flagrantly driven away from their homes. Children are denied their education. Their present is a challenge. Their future is one big question.

By the way: What has BBL got to do with all these atrocities against and consequent resentments of the Lumad? Is BBL not supposed to establish unity and peace in Mindanao? What has the US got to do with the BBL? What countries are actually funding BBL since its conception—and why? How do the MNLF and the BIFF and the ASG and the ISIS look at the BBL? Where are the Lumads in the BBL?

Signs of hope

"HOPE springs eternal." This is not but a consoling truth in time of depression and dejection—having in mind the forthcoming elections with its many surprises plus their accompanying likewise many questions and numerous doubts. In other words, the following are but some of the key signs that proclaim the hope that the country will survive the now already ongoing electoral amorality—i.e., that there is nothing right or wrong provided these and those political candidates "win" the electoral exercise.

More and more able people are voting intelligently—over and above the mere publicity paid for by political candidates many of whom are engaging in some kind of a popularity contest. More importantly, a growing number of electorates are becoming more and more attentive and vigilant in seeing to it that their votes are duly counted and thus accounted for.

More and more civic-minded Filipinos share their time, knowledge, and resources through healthy voluntarism in the formation of civic organizations and movements that are tasked with the fundamental mission of watching over the electoral process—before, during, and after it is held. The key members thereof are electoral counting machines savvy.

More and more non-traditional yet competent politicians are elected into office just as more and more young and idealistic politicians are accorded the chance to hold public offices. There are the best public officials who safeguard and promote the common good and public welfare of the people in general. They are the ones who make the electoral process worth the troubles it generates in society.

The above-mentioned signs of hope for the transformation of Philippine politics are neither but hopeful thinking nor but mere aspirations—nor but vague options. So is it that more and more populist resolves and pursuant actions are needed to make real and lasting difference in the Philippine political scene and culture long since undermining national development and progress, especially in the socio-economic order.

But then, let it be said that the saying "One step at a time goes far in the day" is worth remembering and accordingly acted upon. In other words, the rather long-standing viciousness appended to Philippine politics in general, can still be slowly but surely counteracted by still upright and competent politicians—with the affirmation and support of likewise upright and competent Filipino citizens.

No. It is neither useless nor hopeless. A couple of hundred professional corrupt and corrupting public officials are no match to millions of voters who study the qualifications of the candidates for public office, who cast their votes accordingly and who see to it that their votes are duly counted. Otherwise, even their children will suffer the consequences of being governed by disabled and lazy, individualist, and dynastic politicos.

GONE VIRAL

This is the STRONG #ALDUBNation helping the OPPRESSED #Lumad. #StopLumadKillings #ALDubEBTamangPanahon ~ Michel Eldiy @ChiliMedley The Lumads sa Tamang Panahon. #Lumad #ALDubEBTamangPanahon ~ Paolo Ugale @paolougale

Kagigil ng news tungkol sa #Lumad!! #StopLumadKillings ~ JamieFiel Madrilejos @fielskieee Hindi ako Fan ni @143redangel pero nung nakita ko kung pano sya ka serious na ipinaglalaban ang kalayaan ng mga #lumad saludo ako sa kanya. ~ Yinshanmei @yinshanmei

Touché by those beneficiaries for ALDUB Library. Give from your God will bless u more #Lumad @arcelp @aldubforlumad #SPSHalloweenParty ~ ALDUB FOUNDATION @AldubGalaxies

Sana may tumakbong #Lumad sa pagka-presidente. Para bigyan din sila ng atensyon ng media. @ANCALERTS @gmanews pleaseeee. ~ TROJ @troooooooj

3 out 4 of NPA are lumad. -AFP CHIEF #LUMAD ~ joeychua @silentforce_ame The military should really stop this red-baiting propaganda. They should just stop harassing the #Lumad people. ~ DocDarbs @DarbyMD

Seems to be plenty of evidence to rid the military of these bad apples. The #lumad are filipinos after all! ~ Colin D Levesque @CamiguinColin

Local cohorts promoting mining&militarizarion of #lumad communities #stopkillinglumads ~ marjorie pamintuan @marjpamintuan

#lumad #afp #paramilitary tama na ang patayan. Doesnt make sense.. ~ mandirigma @lidaidsotf

Ang init ng salubong ng mamamayan sa mga #Lumad ! ang tahimik ng mga midya! Keber ang pangulo!! asan na kayo?!! andito na sila! #StopLumadKillings ~ Amianan Salakniban

Those in "Matuwid na Daan" didn't do anything about #NAIABullet #BOC #Fallen44 #Yolandaph #lumad Hacienda Luisita ~ Amy Williams @AmyWill_143

People had kilometric words to say about killings in foreign places but none of that of the #Lumad. We are a disappointing lot. ~ Angel Cortes @unjellybean Sep 15

EMOTIONAL VIRTUE: A Guide to Drama Free relationships

"This guy must like me, he chats with me almost every day."
"This girl must have feelings for me, I think her tweet was meant for me."

In a world of social media, iMessengers, chatting and even online dating, it's almost too difficult to find meaning in the relationships we find ourselves in. Assumptions about a person's romantic intentions based on a Facebook post or a single tweet are out there in the open, in our heads. What is real cannot be considered real anymore? The true meaning of a relationship is being reduced to what it's supposed to be but then is filled with twice the drama. Others can't help but give in to too much emotions based on their fluttering hearts - which they mistakenly identify as "la-la-love." Then what happens when everything goes offline or someone looses his connection? Bye-bye to the relationship or whatever you think it was and one is left heartbroken, crying in the corner.

Sarah Swafford puts everything into perspective in her book "Emotional Virtue." I heard about Sarah and her Emotional Virtue Ministries from Crystalina Evert when she, Crystalina, came here to the Philippines to give a chastity talk. Sarah is also a Catholic speaker who talks about chastity and dealing with our emotions. For her, our emotions should not be taken for granted, yes, we practice chastity but it should not only be physical, it also involves our emotions, our feelings, the way we deal with our relationships. Because as they say, emotions tent do rule us when we get heartbroken. And more than that, we, as men and women should be guided by virtues. So when the book came out in the market, I immediately browsed my favorite online bookstore and purchased a copy.

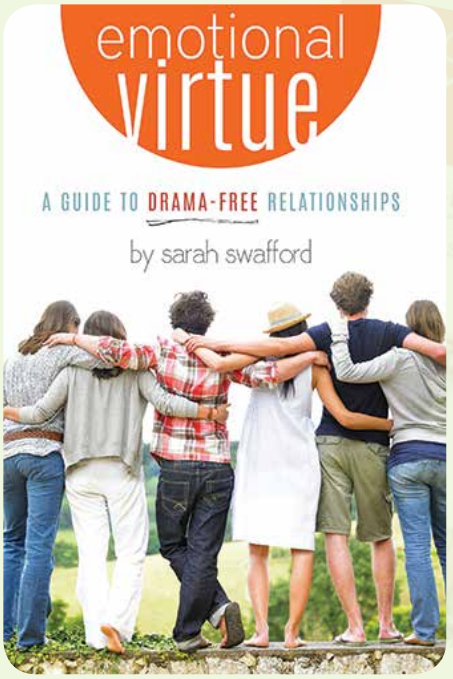
"Virtue is striving for human excellence.

Virtue is forming the habits of knowing and choosing the good.

Virtue harnesses and trains your passions and emotions to work toward the good.

Virtue gives you the freedom to love."

The book itself is a guide on how to keep our emotions in the right place as we wait for the right person God has prepared for us. One thing in the book I considered particularly funny as well as striking was when Sarah described an all-single-girls typical Friday night: from a chick-flick marathon to planning your destination fantasy wedding to mentally



stalking him and moving on to social media stalking. We, girls, devoted 3 hours checking each photo with his dad, uncles, and sisters and then you start texting him and conclude, "Oh, he must like me already." Admit it, we have all been guilty of this once in our lives.

But this is not only a book for women but for the men as well. Sarah discusses the world's idea of perfection, how to face our own insecurities, and live the life that God wanted us to be - with our emotions intact.

Natural Progression of a Relationship

What I like most about this book is the discussion or the list about the natural progression of a relationship. Just what I have said above, in a world of social media, it is easier for us to have notions about a potential relationship, and this book is a guide - a must read for all who want to have a meaningful and lasting relationship.

The list that goes from:

1. Getting Acquainted
2. True Friendship
3. Having a DTR - Defining the Relationship
4. Dating
5 Courting
6. Engagement and lastly,
7. Marriage

Swafford goes and discusses each step - in particular order - and how important that one should go through each stage - leaving no gray areas. It also discusses animatingly and realistically the process of moving on and moving forward that keeps your heart hoping for the greater things that God has been planning for you.

Allowing yourself and more so God, to be the "boss" of your thoughts. You have found a weapon as your heart and mind are being attacked by the world, saving yourself from all the drama you and the people around you do not deserve.

In our relationships, we eventually need to lay everything down in front of God, surrender all to Him. A better way to start doing that is to guide our hearts, minds, and our emotions.

I leave you with quote in the book that will also be forever embedded in my mind:

"Emotions are good, but it is not their job to recognize the truth. Our mind must recognize the truth; and in the task, it must not be dominated by our emotions. But once the mind is locked in on the truth, and our emotions are following our mind's lead, then we should encourage our emotions." - Sarah Swafford. ***(Sky Ortigas)***

Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

DIRECTOR: Genndy Tartakovsky LEAD CAST: Adam Sandler, Andy Samberg,Selena Gomez, Kevin James, David Spade, Steve Buscemi, Keegan-Michael Key, Molly Shannon, Fran Drescher, Mel Brooks SCREENPLAY: Adam Sandler WRITER: Robert Smigel MUSIC: Mark Mothersbaugh PRODUCER: Michelle Murdocca FILM EDITOR: Catherine Apple GENRE: Comedy, Animation, Family, Fantasy PRODUCTION DESIGNER: Michael Kurinsky ART DIRECTOR: Steve Lumley PRODUCTION COMPANIES: Sony Pictures Animation, Sony Pictures Digital, Columbia Pictures, LStar Capital DISTRIBUTORS: Andes Film, Columbia Pictures, Fundamental Films, Sony Pictures Releasing, United International Pictures. Universal Pictures, Warner Bros Entertainment, Westec Media Ltd. LANGUAGE: English LOCATION: United States RUNNING TIME: 1 hr. &29 mins.

Technical assessment: 3.5
Moral assessment: 3
CINEMA Rating: V13

Hotel Transylvania has gone through several changes since Johnny first came into it—for one, the hotel is now open to human guests. The movie opens with the wedding of Mavis and Johnny (Selena Gomez and Andy Samberg). Years later, Mavis and Johnny will have a baby boy, Dennis, whose lack of any vampire abilities worries his grandfather, Dracula (Adam Sandler) that he might be a human, and with that, Mavis and her family might leave Hotel Transylvania to protect Dennis. So when Mavis and Johnny leave to visit Johnny's parents, Dracula finds the opportunity and calls his friends to train Dennis in the way of the monster—in the hope that he is one.

Hotel Transylvania 2 has managed to maintain its charm and comedic feel from its previous installment. The premise is still pretty interesting although maybe quite worn-out for a vampire-falls-in-love-with-a- human plot. The coming of the new addition to the family gave the story an interesting twist and angle. However, the film has the tendency to be quite under structured that it lacks cohesiveness. The characters are interesting and all the voices seem to be enjoying their part. But there are features that seem to be unnecessary in plot development (such as the break dancing) although it has to be there because of its adherence to randomness. The film is able to drive home a point and it cannot be denied that it is still a delight to watch especially for the young and the young at heart.

Hotel Transylvania 2 presents a thesis against discrimination of any kind. The differences between humans and vampires are used as a metaphor to represent various kinds of discrimination on a local and global vantage point. The message against discrimination is very strong in the movie: that one should accept the other no matter how different—all creations are considered equal—and no one should be discriminated against by the color of their skin, gender, or by their gender preference. Acceptance, tolerance and equality are the big messages of the film. In between the laughter and the thrills, these messages echo up to the point of overselling the values of family, friendship, and marriage. Paradoxically, this vampire movie tells its audience to love and accept one's child no matter how odd his or her choices may be. At the end of it all, a father's love and a family's love for one another springs eternal. And yes, love is love, and even vampires are capable of it. But watch out, such paradox may create confusion for the very young and the very theme of vampires would need guidance from adults since the film's target market is the very young audiences.

PHILIPPINES. Filipino 'Laudato Si' now available

Since its release in June, Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si," a document first translated to eight languages, continues to spark discussion. Now, it has been translated into Filipino. Published by Claretian Communications, the letter on the care of creation has been translated by Filipino from Spanish by Leo R. Ocampo. The Tagalog version of the landmark document was released during the recent Manila International Book Fair. Catholic bishops earlier called on Filipinos, Christians, and non-Christians alike, to study and reflect on the various points of the encyclical. (CBCPNews)

LEBANON. Refugees at risk because UN aid agencies are broke

The response of the international community to the needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and other countries remains weak and "does not meet the needs," said UN chief's Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon Philippe Lazzarini in an interview with Lebanon's Arabic-language daily An Nahar on Sept. 30.The UN official said that the World Food Program has recently warned that it would suspend its operations starting November not just in Lebanon and Jordan but in Syria too if it does not receive new funding. Mr Lazzarini added that the meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon in New York is aimed at sending a message that Lebanon remains a "priority on the agenda of the international community." He lamented however that several international grants have been frozen because of the government's failure to approve them. (Asianews)

JERUSALEM. Catholic schools reopen, their value recognized

"We are pleased with today Christian schools are open and officially began the school year. In theory we lost 28 days, actually with the holidays and the Jewish, Christian and Muslim holidays, there were only 15 and we have plenty of time to catch up for lost time". With these words Mgr. Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo, Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem, comments to AsiaNews on the signing of the agreement between representatives of the Christian Schools and the Israeli Ministry of Education. The agreement was "reached between the 10 on Saturday night and midnight Sunday" resolving the standoff and ending the protest of Catholics in the Holy Land. School is now open for the tens of thousands of young people and teachers. "With a little 'patience and staying true to our line - adds the prelate - we got what we needed to start." (Asianews)

SAUDI ARABIA. Over 700 pilgrims die in Hajj stampede

at least 717 dead, a thousand wounded in the worst incident in 25 years

At least 717 people have been killed and about a thousand wounded in the horrific stampede near the holy city of Makkah during hajj on Sept. 24. Saudi officials have been constantly updating the figure. It is not clear why the incident occurred, but Saudi officials suggest that a surge in the number of pilgrims heading towards the Jamarat Bridge might be the cause. According to the authorities, this is the deadliest incident to occur during the Hajj in 25 years. Saudi Health Minister Khaled al-Falih said the crush occurred because pilgrims moved "without respecting the timetables" established by authorities. (Asianews)

BANGLADESH. IS militants claim murder of Italian volunteer

Islamic State (IS) militants have claimed responsibility for the murder on Sept. 28 of Caesar Tavella, a 50 year-old Italian volunteer working in Bangladesh with a Dutch NGO. The man was killed by three armed men after work, while jogging in Gulshan, the diplomatic area of the capital, near the Egyptian embassy. The assailants fired three shots, one of which wounded him in the hand and the other two to the abdomen. Although IS extremists have claimed the crime because the man was a "crusader", the police suspect that the responsibility could be attributed to other groups. (Asianews)

INDIA. Hindu group seeks pope's apology for clergy sex abuse

A prominent Hindu group in India has asked Pope Francis to apologize to Indians who have suffered sexual abuse at the hands of Christian missionaries in the country. The joint general secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or world Hindu council, Surendra Jain, said Christian missionaries have sexually abused children in India and Pope Francis should apologize to the victims, reported the mass circulation Hindi daily Navbharat Times. Jain was responding to the news of the pope's Sept. 27 meeting in Philadelphia with survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Jain said that Christian missionaries have been involved in such acts around the globe and the pope is offering an apology because there is pressure on him from the U.S. and other western nations. (UCAN)

SRI LANKA. Activists, Catholics outraged by child murders

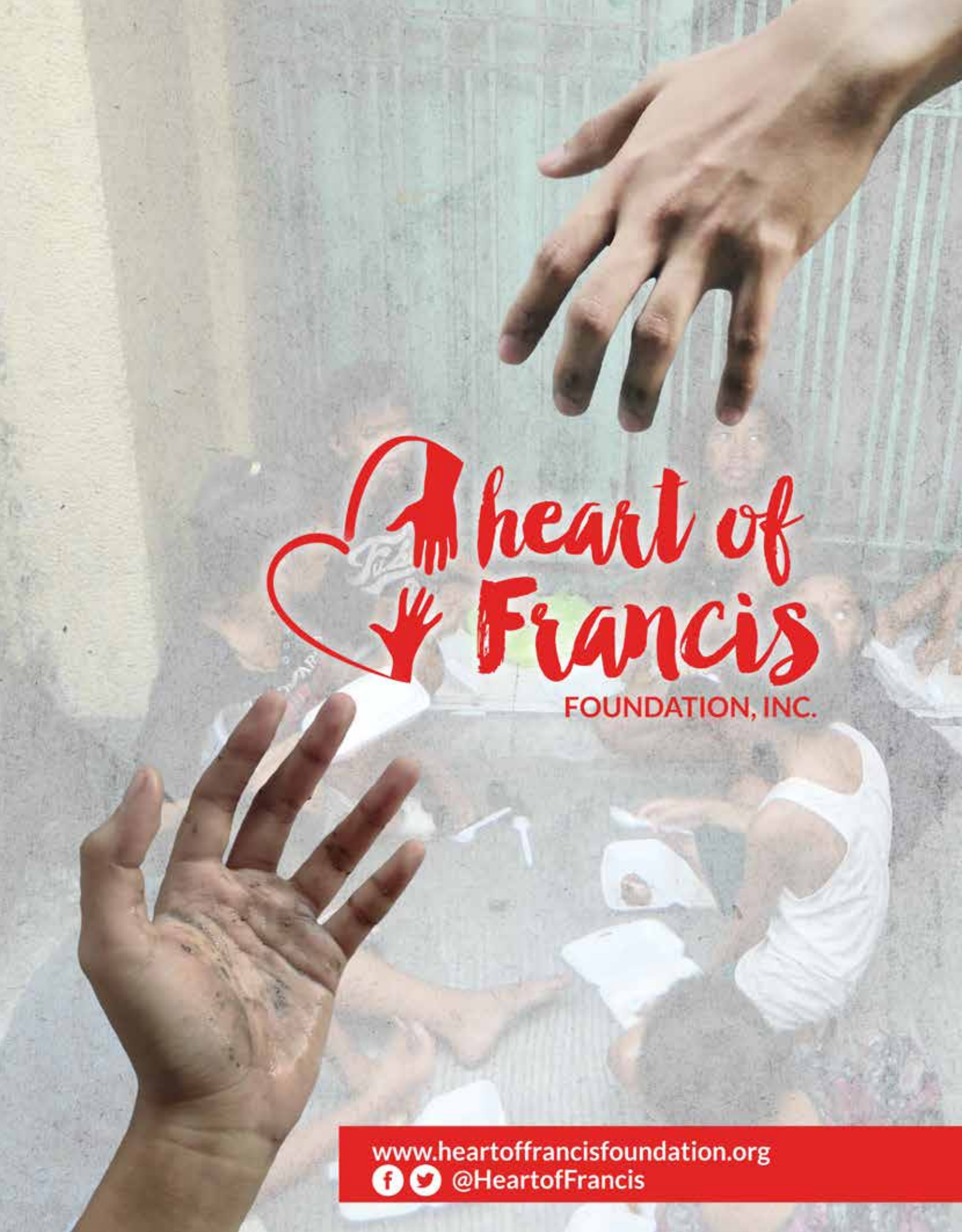
Catholics in Sri Lanka are adding their voices to demands that authorities crack down on sexual violence against women and children. Recent high-profile cases of child abductions have outraged activists in the island nation. On Sept. 18, activists from the group Mothers and Daughters of Lanka demonstrated in the capital, Colombo, to demand that authorities implement laws to stop sexual violence against women and girls. One of the pressing problems, said Nalini Ratnaraja, an activist who attended the rally, is that justice is slow for perpetrators of gender violence. Courts are also quick to grant bail to suspected perpetrators, she said. (UCAN)

INDONESIA. Universities urged to play role in eradicating corruption

State-run and private universities in Indonesia can help eradicate corruption through the formation of students during their college years, said a philosophy professor from the Atma Jaya Catholic University in Jakarta"An effort to eradicate corruption needs two elements namely action and reflection. If [we] are just active, [our] reflection is empty. But in many universities, there is only reflection and no action is taken," Aloysius Agus Nugroho said at a forum held Sept. 29 at the university. Universities can produce people with anti-corruption spirit, he said, noting that the community values learned by young people can help control the spread of corruption on a national level."This is what we need to look at. It is not easy though," he said. He suggested that universities should include the effort to eradicate corruption in all subjects. (UCAN)

VIETNAM. Abandoned church on Vietnam beach attracts tourists

Many tourists to Vietnam find appealing the ruins of a church on a beach in Nam Dinh Province, around 120 kilometers from Hanoi. The beach is located in Hai Ly Commune in Hai Hau District. In the past, the location of the beach was home to many small and large churches. As time went by, seawater encroached on the beach and damaged these churches. This one church, which survived the encroachment, has been abandoned since 1996.The ruined church on the beach is now a popular destination for wedding photo ops. It has the best view during dawn and dusk. Tourists enjoy watching not only the church but also fishing activities of local people here. Vietnam is home to many iconic churches, which are very popular among tourists for its architecture and history. (UCAN)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