

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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FEATURING:  
**THE UST MARTYRS**  
of the Religious Persecution  
in Spain (1933-1937)

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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**January-December 2007**

## *EDITORIAL*

As it approaches the quadricentennial anniversary of its foundation, the University of Santo Tomas takes pride in the official beatification by the Catholic Church of several martyrs who were once teachers and students of the University. This certainly indicates the kind of institution UST is. In its almost four hundred years of existence, UST continues to produce the best specimens of human nature.

The official declaration of the Church that certain persons died as martyrs brings great jubilation among us. But it also occasions a lot of soul-searching and questioning. Martyrs died for what they believed in. They believed in truths that cannot be compromised – regardless of the circumstances. They were willing to go to their deaths to defend these. But why did God not intervene when these martyrs were in midst of so much human agony? How can God sit and fold his arms while these people were not only dying, but dying in His name?

Is there only one kind of martyrdom recognized by the Church? It appears that the martyrs whom the Church presents to us as models for emulation are Christians who had suffered terrible deaths in the midst of religious persecution. There was a time when missionaries went

to pagan lands even against the will of their superiors because they sought physical martyrdom as a prize.

There may be a deeper martyrdom that awaits recognition from the Church – the lifetime suffering of a person like Mother Teresa who continued to trust in God, despite the overwhelming feeling of God's absence in her life. Or, the seemingly endless psychological torture borne by the main character in the Shusako Endo's novel, *Silence*, who apostatized in order to save a group of Japanese Christians from certain death. In his novel, Endo provocatively pushes the argument that the "crucifixion" of the spirit (that takes a lifetime), makes the crucifixion of the body (that can happen in one instance) pale in comparison. For Endo, a person can become a martyr not only by sacrificing his life, but also one's reputation or moral integrity for the sake of others.

Perhaps it is about time that we revisited our standard concept of heroic virtue in the light of the logic of God's self-emptying, as Paul puts it in his letter to the Philippians.

Should not the Church recognize as martyrs those who, all their life, suffer quietly but valiantly because of poverty, injustice, abandonment, loneliness, and grief, and whose only consolation is their belief in a homeless God who left the comfort of heaven in order to suffer with them?

These questions notwithstanding, we have to give our undiminished adulation and praise to the new Thomasian martyrs. Their courage and steadfastness invite us to show our best in time of trial, and to discover the unending grace that wells in our heart.

## FEATURES

### Martyr, Blessed, Saint: A Short Catechism

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ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, OP

In our time, words that were once of great significance have gradually lost their savor, "Charity" has been associated with lottery draws, asylums, or orphanages. "Redemption" is applied to centers where you exchange winning coupons for your prizes. "Hope" is the name of a woman, or the family name of a dead comedian, or of a luxury cigarette. "Martyr" is the role played by the battered or jilted wife in our favorite soap opera.

And how about those whom we call "blessed"? They are now commonly known as the *beatos* and the *beatas*, forever kneeling on their favorite church pews, sibilantly praying to their favorite saints. And the "saints"? They are the dolled up images and statues we wipe with our hankies as we bombard them with supplications which we, ourselves, hardly work at to realize.

There are other words, great Christian words, which have been dragged down from their places of respectability because of disuse, abuse, misuse, or plain ignorance on our part.

“Do you know what an ‘ascetic’ is?”, I asked one of my friends the other day. “Oh, that” – he replied – “that sounds *sour*.” He had in mind acetic acid, commonly known as vinegar. “How about a hermit?” “Gee”, he beamed, “he surely stinks. He looks like a guru.” Undaunted, I asked him another: “What about a monk?” He thought for a while, then innocently replied: “Is that short for monkey?” I gave up.

Last October, several Dominicans were beatified in Rome, martyrs in the 1936 Spanish Revolution. Perhaps it is opportune to recall the meaning of words and processes associated with that event.

## 1. WHAT IS BEATIFICATION?

Beatification comes from the Latin word *beatus*, which means happy, blessed, holy. Beatification, then, means to make or declare holy or blessed.

In Church usage, beatification is the act by which the Church through an official decree by the Pope, permits a certain diocese, region, nation, or religious institution to venerate publicly under the title *Blessed*, a dead person whose life is marked by holiness or heroic practice of the virtues. Special privileges accompany beatification. They are:

- 1) permission to celebrate solemn triduum (3-day prayers to the blessed, usually capped by a Mass) in honor of the new Blessed.
- 2) insertion of the name of the new Blessed in special martyrologies (list of martyrs) or litanies;
- 3) by special decree, an annual date is set for the celebration of a Mass and the recitation of a special Office of the new Blessed.



These privileges, however, are restricted to a certain locality (diocese, region, or nation) or religious institution and do not apply to the universal Church.

## 2. IS BEATIFICATION DIFFERENT FROM CANONIZATION?

Beatification and Canonization are properly, the only two official ways of declaring the sanctity of a dead person. Canonization is the final and definitive step in the long process of inquiry and investigation by which the Church ascertains that a dead person is fit to be called a saint. Beatification is nearly always a stage immediately preceding it. In both cases, the same rigorous proofs of eminent virtues are demanded.

As to their effect, beatification and canonization differ. While the public veneration of the canonized saint is prescribed for the whole universal Church, the public veneration of the Blessed is only *permitted*, or if it is prescribed – it is only in a certain locality or particular religious institute, as mentioned above.

*“Beatification and canonization are done for us. These are decrees of recognition through which the Church gives us the assurance that the saints and the Blessed have undoubtedly attained salvation.”*

As regards the requirements for beatification:

- a) in the case of martyrs (as in the case of the martyrs of the 1936 Spanish Revolution), it is enough that their martyrdom be proven beyond any doubt. To do this, such a proof is subjected to a detailed examination in accordance with rigid norms established to that effect.

- b) in the case of non-martyrs, it must be proven that they have practiced the virtues to a heroic degree and that two miracles (at least) attributed to their intercession be accepted after thorough investigations.

For Canonization, it is required that after beatification, two more miracles attributed to the intercession of the Blessed be accepted after the same rigid investigation.

**3. DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE SAINT IS HIGHER IN DIGNITY AND SANCTITY THAN THE BLESSED, AND THEREFORE A MORE POWERFUL INTERCESSOR?**

Beatification and Canonization are not done *for* the Saints. When a dead person is beatified or canonized, it does not mean that he hereby attains entry into heaven, enjoyment of blessedness, and capacity to intercede for us.

These declarations do not affect the saints and the blessed, nor do these increase their dignity or happiness.

Beatification and Canonization are made *for us*. These are decrees of recognition through which the Church gives *us* the assurance that judging from their heroic virtuous life, the saints and the Blessed have undoubtedly attained salvation and are thereby proposed to us (a) for *veneration* (b) as *models for Christian living*, and (c) as *intercessors before God*.

**4. IT IS ALL RIGHT TO TAKE THE BLESSED AND THE SAINTS AS MODELS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING. BUT WHY MUST THEY BE VENERATED?**

The Blessed and the Saints are heroes in the spiritual life. Just as military heroes are admired, emulated, and

occupy a special place in the hearts of men, so much more do the Blessed and the Saints deserve such honor and admiration. Hence their veneration.

In the case of the martyrs, their heroism is plain enough. Their selflessness is often like that of military heroes, though it is more difficult to die alone and forgotten in a pit or dungeon than at the head of one's regiment. The deepest motive of martyrs, however, is not merely the consciousness of being a leader or champion of a cause; it is rather their determination to refuse *nothing* to God, Whom they love.

**5. WOULD THIS VENERATION OF A HUMAN BEING NOT DETRACT FROM OUR WORSHIP OF GOD?**

There is a danger to that effect. But in itself, veneration of the Saints and the Blessed would even lead us to the worship of God. We *adore* God and give Him worship, but we venerate the Saints as followers and imitators of the Lord, and they deserve such veneration because of their wholehearted attachment to Christ.

**6. HOW ABOUT THEIR BEING INTERCESSORS BEFORE GOD?**

This is a natural consequence of our belief in the saint's fellowship with Christ. Life after death is not a diminished life, a shadowy reflection of life on earth. It is, rather, the flowering in God of all that was good in it; and all souls living in Christ are united as members of a single body. What is more natural than those who have victoriously finished their earthly course to be concerned for those who are still in battle? They go on praying for those who are dear to them, as they prayed when on earth.

As St. Ambrose wrote of martyrs: "We need not blush to take them as intercessor in our weakness; they too knew the body's weaknesses, even as they overcome them." The invocation of the Saint and the Blessed, and the belief in their power to intercede for us is as old as the Church herself.

## **7. HOW DOES THE CHURCH ARRIVE AT THE DECISION TO BEATIFY OR CANONIZE A DEAD PERSON?**

The legal processes attendant to the proclamation of a Blessed or Saint have their roots in antiquity, although it is only within the last few hundred years that they acquire the precise form they take today.

In the early centuries of Christianity, martyrs and other holy persons were venerated and revered even without any explicit ecclesiastical proclamations. *Vox populi* seemed to be the rule of the day. To put order to such increasing numbers of venerated martyrs and saints, ecclesiastical intervention was deemed necessary. For the most part, it was the bishop of the diocese who examined the case and passed judgments (episcopal canonizations). *Vox populi* was still the point of departure but the decision of the bishop had the greatest weight. In the course of time, a certain procedure took shape: an account of the Saint's life and miracle was read out in the presence of the bishop, the bishop studies this, and finally gives his verdict. If the Bishop proclaims a dead person to be a Saint, the resulting veneration, unless approved in some fashion by the Pope, was purely local. Only after the express or implied approval of the Pope did a local veneration of a saint become universal.

By way of parenthesis, we may say that the Blessed Mother and the Apostles were always venerated universally

because their sanctity was acknowledged from the very beginning.

In the late 993, during the council at Lateran, the Bishop of Augsburg, Luitalfus, petitioned Pope John XV to proclaim his predecessor, Ulrich, a saint. In support of this plea, he presented a record of Ulrich's life and a list of his miracles. The evidence was favorably received and Ulrich was proclaimed officially by Pope John XV as a Saint. This was the first ever recorded *papal canonization* and while it did not put an end to episcopal canonizations, (they continued off and on until 1634), it did set a precedent and it became more frequent and gradually developed into stricter procedures, until in 1634, it became the only lawful one.

In 1558, Sixtus V established the Sacred Congregation of Rites with the principal function of handling cases for beatification and canonization; Popes Urban VIII in 1624 and Benedict XIV in the following century perfected the arrangement for canonizations governed by both law and theology. Since 1914, up to the present, further improvements were being made by the succeeding popes to adopt the canonization and beatification processes to modern needs.

#### **8. WHAT WERE THE SCIENTIFIC LEGAL PROCESSES INVOLVED BEFORE THE POPE APPROVES THE BEATIFICATION OF A DEAD PERSON?**

The beatification of the martyrs of the 1936 Spanish Revolution followed the same procedures as that of Lorenzo Ruiz and companions. Let us look back to such procedures. At the request of the Dominicans of the Philippines two "ordinary" canonical inquiries were made (it is called ordinary because the Bishop or the "Ordinary of the Place",

as he is called, is the one who initiated it). One inquiry was made in 1636 and another in Macao in 1637, with the intent of sending the proceedings to Rome for the initiation of the Beatification Cause. For unknown reasons, those proceedings were not transmitted to the Holy See and remained in Manila.

In 1639, another Inquiry was made in Macao, which included Lorenzo Ruiz. This Inquiry reached Rome in 1663 and was summarized by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in the presence of the Holy Father and several Cardinals. But again, this summary was misplaced and until now is missing. For a long time, the Cause was not re-opened again although documents were continually gathered for the eventual formal presentation of the Cause.

In the 1950's significant steps were taken to push the Cause forward. First, the original text of the canonization Inquiry made in Macao in 1637 was sent from Manila to Rome and was approved by the Holy See; consequently an Advocate of the Cause was appointed in 1959, and a new and last canonical inquiry was opened at the Episcopal Curia of Nagasaki to which 21 persons were summoned to testify about the "continual flame of martyrdom" of Lorenzo and his companions.

After all these processes were completed, the writings of the so-called "Positio", or the historical study of the life and martyrdom of Lorenzo and his companions was made. With regard to Lorenzo Ruiz, the Philippine Hierarchy through its successive Presidents, their Eminences, Julio Cardinal Rosales and Jaime Cardinal Sin, had sent supplication to the Pope in favor of the inclusion of Lorenzo. In June, 1979 the *Positio*, a 750-page volume written by Fr. Fidel Villaruel,

O.P., came out of the press and was officially presented to the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

The **Commission of Historians** examined the authenticity and historical validity of the documentation contained in the *Positio*. After the Commission had found it satisfactory the *Positio*, together with individual judgments of the historians was passed on to the *Promoter of the Faith* (popularly known as the “Devil’s Advocate”) who then carefully examined the case of each candidate for beatification, pointing out the possible flaws or difficulties that exist which might hinder the beatification. When all such difficulties had been resolved, the *Positio* was turned over to the *Commission of Theologians* which studied the case of each martyr to see whether in the testimonies approved as historically valid, there existed elements required for true martyrdom. After such elements had been established as existing, the *Positio* was submitted to the *Commission of Theologians* which, based on the findings of the previous commissions, gave their own verdict that Lorenzo Ruiz and companions were really killed “in odium fidei” (out of their persecutors’ hatred for the faith), and that they accomplished, therefore, the supreme sacrifice for Christ and the Church.

Finally, the beatification cause was submitted to the Pope for his final decision. This same process was followed in the beatification of the UST martyrs in the 1936 Spanish Revolution.

## **9. DOES THE POPE, IN DECLARING A PERSON BLESSED, DO SO INFALLIBLY?**

Unlike in canonization, where the Pope infallibly proclaims a person as a Saint, in the beatification of a person,

the Pope *does not* exercise his infallibility. As a matter of fact, in principle, a decree of beatification may be revoked by a Pope if there is good reason to do so. But since normally, a Pope does not beatify a person until after minute inquiries and prayerful deliberation have been made, hence, although beatification does not demand faith, yet it gives moral certainty of its truth, and to deny or ignore it would be presumptuous.

#### **10. HOW DOES THE ACTUAL BEATIFICATION CEREMONY PROCEED?**

The solemnities of the beatification ceremony usually begin with the celebration of Mass in St. Peter's Basilica by a prelate, usually one who had a conspicuous interest in the cause. This Mass is celebrated in the presence of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

The Pope himself is not present, nor does he make the official pronouncement. The papal decree of beatification is read by the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites immediately after the Gospel, taking the place of the sermon. At the conclusion of the reading, the picture of the new Blessed is unveiled above the altar. Then the Mass continues.

In the afternoon, at about Vespers (the time for the recitation of the Evening Prayers of the Divine Office), the Pope makes his appearance at St. Peter's to venerate the new Blessed.



# **A Heritage of Saints, A Legacy of Martyrs: The University of Santo Tomas' Enduring Contribution to the Communion of Saints**

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**SEM. NOEL VINCENT B. ABALAJON**

*Archdiocese of Capiz*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Our Church history testifies that not a few of Christian nations were born and reborn through martyrdom – Rome during the imperial persecutions; England, Wales, Ireland, Netherlands, among others, at the height of Protestant Reformation; France during the French Revolution; and Uganda in Africa. In the twentieth century, we had the victims of the Mexican Revolution, the Religious Persecution in Spain, the Second World War, and the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe.

When Christianity was brought to Asia by the Spanish missionaries at the Age of Explorations and Missions, many Christians, the religious and the converts alike, suffered and

won the crown of martyrdom – the groups of martyrs in China, Japan, Vietnam and Korea. This brings us to our country, which for almost six centuries now, remains to be a cradle and bastion of Christianity in Asia.

Today with around 80% of its population Catholic, the Philippines is truly blessed as a strong Christian nation in Asia. Beginning in 1565, our country, “the Pearl of the Orient Seas,” proved to be a fertile ground for Christian faith. In fact, history tells us that unlike our neighbors in Japan, China, Korea, and Vietnam, not a single martyrdom by a Filipino native was recorded in our land. There was hardly a struggle against the Christianity the Spanish missionaries preached; at most, only political and patriotic rebellions.

Let us remember that our first Filipino saint, Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila, canonized in 1987, was a lay man, martyred in Nagasaki, Japan in 1637 along with some Dominican friars as companions. The second candidate to the honors of the altar, Blessed Pedro Calungsod, was a catechist and a young assistant of the Jesuit priest, Fr. Diego Luis de Sanvitores, both of whom suffered martyrdom at the island of Guam in 1672.

But the question remains, however, does this mean we have not produced saints in our midst across centuries?

Yes, we indeed have a handful of them – candidates for the sainthood, who were either founders of religious congregations for women or saintly bishops whose remarkable lives are gifts to the Philippine Church. The very helpful website “Hagiography Circle,” which records the recent causes of saints at the Vatican, lists eleven (11) candidates to the sainthood from the Philippines; two of them were already raised to the altars:

1. St. Lorenzo Ruiz of Manila (1600-1637), Martyr of Japan
2. Blessed Pedro Calungsod (c.1648-1672), Martyr of Guam
3. Servant of God Jerónima García Yáñez de la Fuente de la Asuncion (1554-1630), Foundress of the *Real Monasterio de Santa Clara (Clarisas)*
4. Servant of God Francisca Fuentes del Espiritu Santo (1647-1711), Foundress of the *Beaterio de Santa Catalina de Sena (Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena)*
5. Servant of God Ignacia del Espiritu Santo Yucua (1663-1748), Foundress of the *Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesus (Religious of the Virgin Mary)*
6. Servant of God Dionisia Talangpaz de Santa Maria (1691-1732), Co-Foundress of the *Beaterio de San Sebastian de Calumpang (Augustinian Recollect Sisters)*
7. Servant of God Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz de Jesus (1693-1731), Co-Foundress of the *Beaterio de San Sebastian de Calumpang (Augustinian Recollect Sisters)*
8. Servant of God Joaquina María Mercedes Consuelo Barceló Pagés (1857-1940), co-foundress of the *Beaterio de Agustinas Terciaras de Ultramar (Augustinian Sisters of the Our Lady of Consolation)*
9. Servant of God William Finneman, S.V.D. (1882-1942), Apostolic Vicar of Calapan

10. Servant of God Alfredo Ma. A. Obviar (1889-1978),  
Bishop of Lucena
11. Servant of God Aloysius Schwartz (1930-1992),  
Founder of Sisters of Mary of Banneux and Brothers  
of Christ.

Still there are other saints and blesseds who had walked the hallowed grounds and had toiled the fertile soil of the Philippine islands like St. Pedro Bautista of the Franciscans, St. Ezekiel Moreno of the Augustinian Recollects, Blessed Diego Luis de San Vitores of the Jesuits, and many more like St. Andrew Kim Taegon of Korea.

On the part of the Dominicans in the Philippines, two educational institutions founded by the friar preachers, continue to stand out as cradles and bastions of saints and martyrs.

The University of Santo Tomas, the Royal and Pontifical Catholic University of the Philippines, the oldest university in Asia founded in 1611, and the Colegio de San Juan de Letran of Intramuros, Manila, whose beginnings can be traced back to the year 1620, have given birth to many heroic people whose life and death, tears and blood, joys and pains have brought many a soul to conversion. Many of them were missionaries assigned to the Philippines during the Spanish Period since our country was the center for missionary expansion in the East. Some stayed in the Philippines for a long time to evangelize the natives, to teach in schools, and to serve in the parishes. Then afterwards, when the call of charity came like the martyrs of Japan (1629-1637) and Vietnam (1745-1862), they journeyed to distant isles to bring Christ's gospel, where they even-

tually offered their lives for the faith. Still others like the martyrs of the Religious Persecution in Spain (1933-1937) chose to defend their faith in their native land. Though not a single of them was a Filipino, we can truly claim them as our own for it was the Philippines where they served as ministers of the Church and where they prepared themselves for their eventual martyrdom.

### **THE UST MARTYRS OF JAPAN (1629-1637)**

As martyrs of Japan these Dominican friars were companions of St. Lorenzo Ruiz to the honors of the altar. Their witnessing to the splendor of truth amidst insurmountable trials was instrumental to his eventual acceptance of the crown of martyrdom. They were altogether beatified on February 18, 1981, and after six years, were canonized on October 18, 1987.

**St. Antonio Gonzales, O.P. (1593-1637)**, the superior of the Japan mission, was the rector of the University of Santo Tomas in 1636. In their court trial, he remained steadfast for his faith amidst the terrible tortures. As what he bravely spoke to his persecutors: "Yes, I knew the prohibition. But I have no other purpose in coming here than to preach the good news and the way of salvation and to show the errors in which you and your people live."

**St. Domingo Ibáñez de Erquicia, O.P. (1589-1633)**, another Dominican, was an excellent preacher and professor of theology at the University of Santo Tomas from 1621 to 1623, same with **St. Guillaume Courtet, O.P. (1590-1637)**, who taught theology from 1635 to 1636. Their other companions like **St. Lucas del Espiritu Santo, O.P. (1594-1633)**

was a young lecturer of Arts at UST in 1623, while **St. Tomás Hioji de San Jacinto, O.P. (1590-1634)**, was a Japanese Christian, who completed his philosophical and theological studies at UST (1620-1628) and was eventually ordained priest.

## **THE UST MARTYRS OF VIETNAM (1745-1862)**

These Dominican saints belonged to the different groups of Martyrs of Vietnam. St. Domingo Henares was beatified by Pope Leo XIII on May 27, 1900. St. Vicente Liem de la Paz, O.P., St. Jerónimo Hermosilla, O.P. and St. Pedro Almato, O.P. were beatified by St. Pius X on May 20, 1906, while St. José Ma. Díaz Sanjurjo, O.P. and St. Melchor García Sampedro were beatified by Pope Pius XII on April 29, 1951. But they were altogether canonized by Pope John Paul II on June 19, 1988.

Among the martyrs of Vietnam, **St. Vicente Liem de la Paz, O.P. (1731-1773)** stands as one of the most popular Vietnamese martyrs. He went to study at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran in Manila from 1747 to 1753. He pursued his higher studies at the University of Santo Tomas (1753-1758), where afterwards he made his solemn profession and received his ordination. He was martyred in Vietnam on November 7, 1773. Begging the Emperor to allow him to die with his European companion, he uttered: "We both profess the same religion in life, and the same we will profess in death."

The other martyrs of Vietnam came with different groups. **St. Domingo Henares, O.P. (1765-1838)** arrived in the Philippines in 1786. He completed his theological studies

in UST, and at the same time, a professor of Humanities (1786-1789). He was sent to Vietnam in 1790, and in 1803 was named Apostolic Vicar of Eastern Vietnam. He was beheaded on June 25, 1838. Another Dominican bishop, **St. José Maria Díaz Sanjurjo, O.P. (1818-1857)**, on the other hand, also completed his studies in law while teaching at UST (1844-1845). In 1845, he left for the Vietnamese mission, and after four years in 1849 he was named Apostolic Vicar of Central Vietnam. On July 20, 1857 he received his crown of martyrdom. Lastly, **St. Pedro Almato, O.P. (1830-1861)**, finished his theology in UST (1848-1853), and was eventually ordained priest. Thereafter he went to Vietnam, where he was executed on November 1, 1861.

However, in my further research, two more distinguished Dominican priests who became bishops of Vietnam were affiliated with the Royal and Pontifical University. They are: **St. Jerónimo Hermosilla, O.P. (1800-1861)**, who studied theology at UST from 1825 until 1829, and became Apostolic Vicar of Eastern Vietnam in 1841; and **St. Melchor García Sampedro, O.P. (1821-1858)**, who was named lector of philosophy at UST in 1848, but shortly left for Vietnam, where he was appointed Apostolic Vicar of Central Vietnam in 1855.

## **THE UST MARTYRS OF THE RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN SPAIN (1933-1937)**

At the first half of the twentieth century, a new batch of Thomasian martyrs rose to great esteem. Around 10,000 priests and religious, both men and women, were killed during the Religious Persecution in Spain (1933-1937) by the Republican government and their allies.

From 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War raged in Spain. General Francisco Franco and the Nationalist groups fought and won against the ruling Republicans of the Communists and other left-wing groups.

Of the 498 beatified martyrs, seventy-four (74) were Dominicans and twenty-one (21) of them belonged to the Province of the Our Lady of the Rosary. Of these twenty-one (21) Dominican priests, eight (8) lived and worked in the Philippines, and six (6) are considered UST Martyrs. Of these six (6) UST Martyrs, two became administrators and professors of UST, while the other four (4) were students of theology. They were solemnly beatified last October 28, 2007 at St. Peter's Square in Rome.

**Blessed Buenaventura García Paredes, O.P. (1866-1936)** led the batch of these new UST martyrs. He was a professor of Political and Administrative Law at the University of Santo Tomas (1899-1901). He was also assigned as Director of *Libertas*, the UST Daily (1900-1901). When he was elected prior provincial of the Our Lady of the Rosary Province in 1910, he was instrumental to the purchase of the new UST campus in Sulucan (now, Sampaloc area). The tricentenary of the foundation of the University Santo Tomas was also celebrated during his term. He was the Master General of the Order from 1926 until 1929. He was assassinated in Madrid on August 12, 1936. During his arrest and imprisonment, he courageously mustered to exclaim: "Nobody defended me? Nobody stood beside Jesus to defend him either. Let us go."

**Blessed Jesús Villaverde Andrés, O.P. (1877-1936)** earned his licentiate in Sacred Theology at the UST Faculty



of Sacred Theology in 1918 and his doctorate in 1919, where he was a prolific professor of theology, philosophy and canon law. He served the University in various positions as Secretary General (1919-1921), Treasurer (1929-1932) and Dean of Theology (1932-1927). He was later appointed rector of Colegio de San Juan de Letran in Intramuros (1924-1927). He was assigned in the Dominican mission in Basco, Batanes (1915) and at the Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Rosario in Baguio (1916-1918). He returned to Spain in 1934 when he was elected Prior of the Convent of Santo Tomas in Avila. He was killed in Madrid on October 16, 1936.

**Blessed Pedro Ibáñez Alonso, O.P. (1893-1936)** completed his theological studies at UST (1916-1917) and was ordained priest in 1917. He then worked as a missionary in China for five years. In 1924, he was assigned to the Colegio de San Jacinto in Tuguegarao, Cagayan, where he stayed until the school was closed in 1934. On August 27, 1936, he was assassinated in Madrid.

**Blessed Manuel Moreno Martínez, O.P. (1862-1936)** finished his theology at UST (1884-1885), and was ordained priest in 1885. He became chaplain of the Colegio de Santa Rita in Pampanga from 1913 to 1916. Like Fr. Alonso, he worked for many years as a missionary in China. He was killed in Madrid on August 5, 1936.

**Blessed Maximino Fernández Marinas, O.P. (1867-1936)** completed his theological studies at UST (1892-1893), and was ordained priest in 1893. After ordination, he was assigned to the missions of Cagayan as curate of Alcalá (1893-1896) and of Sánchez-Mira (1896-1898). He was a

prisoner of the Katipuneros during the 1898 Philippine Revolution, but was set free through the compassion of the governor of Nueva Vizcaya. In 1902 he returned to Spain and was assigned to different posts. With eleven bullet wounds, he died totally abandoned in a hospital and mocked by the medical personnel on August 15, 1936.

Finally, **Blessed José Ma. López Carrillo, O.P. (1892-1936)** finished his theology at UST (1918-1919), and was ordained priest in 1919. He was sent afterwards to the missions in China, where he stayed for sixteen years. In 1935 he returned to Spain during its turbulent period. He was executed together with other religious from different Orders on August 27, 1936.

## **CONCLUSION: LESSONS AND CHALLENGES**

It is but fitting to end this article with a personal reflection on these Martyrs of the University of Santo Tomas. There are indeed timeless lessons and challenges which we can learn from their lives and martyrdoms.

### **1. “The Greatest Legacy left by Spain to the Philippines is our Catholic Heritage.”**

An alumnus priest of UST once shared this story about their Philippine Church History class with the then Dominican historian, Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P. Once, while discussing a lesson on the abuses committed by our Spanish colonizers, they were making fun of the Spanish friars which made Fr. Pablo to remark: “You are laughing at the mistakes of the friars, but you cannot even imitate their virtues.”

In our present celebration for the beatification of these martyrs, we should remember the many Spanish missionaries who tirelessly and selflessly worked for the evangelization of our country. These friars are often much-maligned in our Philippine history as cruel and vicious, especially with Marcelo del Pilar's caricature of "Fray Botod." We therefore need to rewrite our Philippine history, and be proud of our Catholic heritage. These Dominican martyrs from different centuries however should remind us to be grateful.

**2. "UST's Greatest Gift to the Philippine Church are the Saints and Martyrs: it had produced in every century (17th, 18th, 19th and 20th)."**

From earliest years of the Christianization of the Philippines until the dawn of the third millennium, the two Dominican schools of UST and Letran had produced powerful intercessors for us in heaven. The martyrs of Japan came from the seventeenth century, while the martyrs of Vietnam represent the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And the 1936 Spanish Civil War martyrs are Christ's witnesses for the twentieth century.

Can we hope for a new batch of UST martyrs for the twenty-first century, the third millennium?

**3. "The Extra Challenge for Modern Catholics: Martyrdom is a Gift to Some, but Holiness is a Call to All!"**

We – either priests, religious or lay, men or women, young or old – are all called to follow their examples, if not through a martyr's death, a saintly life will do best – if we only learn to surrender ourselves to God's will everyday

and to detach ourselves from material things and earthly pleasures in our own little ways. Pope John Paul II in his homily during the canonization mass of St. Lorenzo Ruiz and Companions issues this same challenge: “to die for the faith is a gift granted to few; but to live the faith is a call addressed to all.”

Finally, the Gospel verse every Lenten season reminds us: “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts!” With this call, we can no longer remain silent and non-chalant, because *Caritas urget nos!* – “Love compels us!”

Let me end with a prayer, which forms the lyrics of the official, prize-winning hymn to the UST Martyrs:

*Almighty Father,  
Your Son's precious blood flowed through the  
wounds of the UST Martyrs.  
Bless our fears – that we may always draw  
courage from your unending guidance.  
Bless our pains – that we may bear witness  
graciously to Christ's loving remembrance.  
Bless our sufferings – that your spirit may lead  
us to heaven's promising assurance.  
Inspire us to live in accordance with these martyrs'  
example – ever fervent in nourishing the seeds  
of faith, hope and love.  
This we ask through Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.*

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# The Religious Persecution in Spain (1933-1937)

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PEDRO GONZALEZ TEJERO, O.P.

Spain, since the end of the nineteenth century up to the middle of the twentieth century, endured one of the most turbulent and dark periods of her long history. In the 1930's, the Spanish monarchy had to abandon the country, taking refuge in Italy. This gave way to the General Elections, where the Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed. On June 3, 1933, Pope Pius XI in his encyclical "*Delectissima nobis*" denounced before the whole world the actual religious persecution suffered by the Church in Spain. A great number of priests and religious were killed; countless churches and convents were desecrated and burned in various capital cities. The government manifested enmity openly against the Catholic Church and likewise all the mass media. The socio-political condition was disastrous and without any hope of improvement. There were strikes, disturbances and military uprisings everywhere. There was a true lack of peace and harmony everywhere. The situation became worse when the Catholic leader of the right wing, Calvo Sotelo, was assassinated.

On July 18, 1936, the whole nation was engaged in a military revolt. From this moment on, Spain was divided into two factions: on the one side, the Republican Government, aided by the left-wing Socialist, Communist, Anarchist, Labor Union groups; and on the other, the insurgent Nationalists, supported by the right-wing "La Falange," "Los Reguetés" and other groups of Catholic identity under the leadership of General Francisco Franco. The Republicans were aided by Russia, America, England and other international forces, while the Nationalists received support from the political regimes of Germany and Italy. The war lasted for three years, and there were more than a million casualties. It was a cruel fight, destructive and merciless.

The religious persecution instigated by the Republicans reached its peak of hatred and violence during the first months of the revolution. Almost 10,000 priests and religious, both men and women, as well as many lay faithful, known by their religious convictions, were murdered while proclaiming their fidelity to the Church, to Christ and to their faith. There was no case of apostasy. All died forgiving their persecutors. To these numerous victims we have to add several thousands of lay faithful who were killed for political reason, personal hatred and pure vengeance. This religious persecution can truly be considered as "the greatest known in the history of Spain, and perhaps, in the whole history of the Catholic Church." In 1939 the war ended with the victory of the Nationalists led by General Francisco Franco.

During the succeeding years, the Spanish Church made inquiries on the motives behind the deaths of so many people. It was soon revealed that most of them suffered



real martyrdom for the Church and for Christ. For this reason an office was created by the Spanish bishops' conference in conformity with the Congregation of Saints at the Vatican. Several Causes were already presented and approved. And so, more than 400 people had already been bestowed the honor of beatification, eleven (11) of whom had already been canonized. There was a growing interest among the religious orders in different Spanish dioceses for the Cause of their martyrs. Along the years, twenty-three (23) Causes had already been introduced before the Holy See. After the rigorous canonical studies and investigations, the Church had already approved the solemn beatification of the 498 martyrs last October 28, 2007 at St. Peter's Square, Rome. Practically, all the Spanish dioceses are represented by their respective martyrs, with two (2) bishops, twenty-four (24) diocesan priests, 462 religious men and women, and seven (7) lay faithful. It is important to note that two (2) of these beatified religious were killed in 1934, while 489 suffered martyrdom during the first months of the revolution in 1936, and seven (7) in 1937.

Several questions may be raised which concern this phenomenon. One of these is the number of Dominican religious included in these almost 500 beatified martyrs. To answer, there were seventy-four (74) Dominican martyrs, who are distributed according to dioceses in the following manner: thirty-eight (38) from the Diocese of Madrid (28 priests, 8 cooperator brothers, 3 seminarians and 1 novice), twelve (12) from the Diocese of Barcelona (2 lay Dominicans, 1 nun, 2 teaching sisters, 7 sisters of the Annunciata), ten (10) from the Diocese of Oviedo (6 priests and 4 cooperator

brothers), and fourteen (14) from the Diocese of Santander (8 priests and 6 cooperator brothers).

A second interesting question is the number of the Dominican martyrs from the Province of the Our Lady of the Rosary, and if any of them has any connection with the Philippines. To answer, the Holy Rosary Province has twenty-one (21) beatified martyrs. Out of these twenty-one (21) martyrs, eight (8) lived and worked in the Philippines. **Fr. Buenaventura García Paredes, O.P.** and **Fr. Jesús Villaverde Andrés, O.P.** taught at the University of Santo Tomas. **Fr. Pedro Ibáñez Alonso, O.P., Fr. Manuel Moreno Martínez, O.P., Fr. Maximino Fernández Marinas, O.P.** and **Fr. José Ma. López Carrillo, O.P.** completed their theological studies at the University of Santo Tomas. Some of them were sent to China and Vietnam missions. Some worked in the Philippines in the parishes of Northern Luzon. **Fr. Inocencio García Díez, O.P.** taught at the Colegio de San Jacinto, Cagayan, while **Fr. Antonio Varona Ortega, O.P.** taught at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Intramuros. This booklet contains their biographies with complete information about their lives and martyrdoms.

The last question may be asked about the position of the Universal Church with regard to this extraordinary beatification. These are the words of the Church hierarchy in Spain: "These various beatifications have not been prepared to promote a spirit of grandeur. The ceremony and the festivity will be great because it is indeed a great moment in the history of the Church in Spain." "The Church does not condemn the perpetrators when she beatifies her martyrs; she only concerns herself with the glory of God and the good of men." "We should be prepared for this celebration

and participate in it so that it would be a good occasion for the renewal of Christian life.” “The martyrs who died forgiving their murderers are the best examples for the promotion of the spirit of reconciliation.”

I end this article with this confession as an eyewitness to these terrible events. When the war started, I was sixteen (16) years old. Together with the forty-one (41) aspirants in the Convent of Ocaña, I learned about the death of all the priests of this Convent. I knew some of them like Fr. Buenaventura Paredes, Fr. Manuel Moreno, Fr. Maximino Fernández, among others. I look up to all of them as holy and venerable persons. When the three (3) priests who took care of us were killed after the assault of the Convent by the Communists, we were left abandoned. All our families were on the side of the Nationalists. During this crucial period, our lives were truly miserable and desperate. I have endured the three years of the Spanish Civil War in such circumstances. Thanks to God, I survived this horrible ordeal (now, I am 87 years old)! When the war ended in 1939, I was able to continue my Dominican vocation. I should have attended the solemn beatification, but my poor health did not allow me to do so. Nevertheless, I am happy and contented that these martyrs whom I have personally known will intercede for me before the throne of God.



# **On the Occasion of the Announcement of the Beatification of our Brethren who Suffered Martyrdom during the Spanish Religious Persecution\***

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**BONIFACIO SOLIS, OP**

**Dear Brothers,**

For many Spaniards the Civil War of 1936 continues to bring diverse memories and remembrances. We do not wish nor do we want to enter into politics in any way. The social and political causes of that period and the events that followed are still being analyzed by experts and historians. Unfortunately, the results of these studies depend greatly on the political convictions or ideologies of those who undertake them. As in all civil wars, including the one that befell upon our nation, we do not exclude the possibility that there were great excesses from both sides.

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\* Letter from the Prior Provincial Fr. Bonifacio Solis, OP on the beatification of the Brethren martyred during the Spanish Religious Persecution.

As believers we renounce war, the death penalty and violence. There is no justification to take away the life of anyone, much less for the causes and reasons of religious convictions which they may stand for and which are far from the terms of justice and the process of law.

We as Dominicans and followers of Christ have made an option for a way of life that is of a special consecration in which we try our best to follow our Divine Master in the way of perfection and obedience till death. For throughout his life Jesus preached and talked about forgiveness and reconciliation through love.

This has been the extraordinary example of self-giving that our brother-martyrs have given to us. They had made the profession to seek the Gospels' truth and justice in the Province, and for that reason many of them had crossed the seas and dedicated long years of their lives in the service of the Kingdom in faraway lands. And they had lost their lives, after short judgments, without proofs or reasons. The unjustified political and social fanaticism or the resentment of those who condemned the Church had caused them to die violently. They were obliged to abandon their convents and when they were arrested, they were put in prison for a short period of time or, as in the case of Fr. Buenaventura García de Paredes, he could say only: "Nobody defend me? Nobody stood beside Jesus to defend him either. Let us go". This was the offering of their own lives as a holocaust to Him who had called them to follow in His footsteps: He called them to offer their lives in their own country like so many of their confreres had done in other countries and nations.

May we come to discover God's will for us through the generosity of their lives so that we too can offer courageously our lives in the service of the Truth which we preach, following the examples of our Martyrs who offered their own as a testimony of a total and complete love for Christ.

We congratulate those who had worked with generosity to promote the beatification cause of these martyrs.

May our martyrs Buenaventura García de Paredes and companions bless us!





## ARTICLES

### To Contemplate Mary is to Contemplate Jesus: *The Three Postures of Mary\**

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AMBASSADOR HENRIETTA T. DE VILLA

Magandang tanghali po. Naku nasa ora de peligro tayo. Masarap mag siesta ngayon. Pero alam ko naman ang ating Mahal na Inang si Maria hindi natin tinutulugan. Kaya ba ninyong tulugan ang ating Mahal na Ina? Makikinig ba kayo ng tungkol sa kanya? Bakit? Dahil mahal natin si Maria.

Alam ba ninyo kung ano ang ating pinagdiriwang ngayon? The birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of us all. Let us sing Happy Birthday to Mary.

We are also celebrating today, together with the birthday of Mary, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her Canonical

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\* Speech delivered during the Marian Conference on the Centenary of the Canonical Coronation of Our Lady of the Rosary, La Naval de Manila (1907-2007). The Conference was held on September 8, 2007 at the Angelicum College, Quezon City.

Coronation as Our Lady of the Rosary, La Naval de Manila. Anong ibig sabihin ng canonical coronation? Maigi 'yong naiintindihan natin kung bakit tayo dapat mag-celebrate at ang kahalagahan ng ating celebration. Hindi po ako theologian, ngunit ang pagkaintindi ko sa canonical coronation, ang ibig sabihin nito na ang pagkorona sa kay Maria sa kanyang title of Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval Manila ay nasa canon o batas ng Simbahan. At ito ay isang Papal Act o gawaing nagmula sa Santo Padre noong 1907 na nagpapatunay na ang imahen ng Our Lady of the Rosary is historically old, simula pa noong unang panahon, at sa ating mga pangangailangan Our Lady of the Rosary ay magsisilbing ilaw ng ating pagtiwala at pag-asa.

Magsisilbing ilaw ng ating pagtiwala o pananampalataya at pag-asa. Ibig sabihin din si Maria, Ina ni Kristo at ating Ina ay isang halimbawa na dapat nating tularan – halimbawa ng panampalataya at pagtiwala sa Panginoon, Pag-asa rin sa Panginoon.

Magaling ba si Maria? Mabait ba siya? Mahal ba ninyo si Maria? Kinikilala ba ninyong Ina natin siya? Ang pinakamagaling na pagkilala sa kanya ay sundin ang kanyang payo at isabuhay ang kanyang halimbawa. Dahil si Maria lagi tayong dinadala kay Kristo.

Our Beloved Pope John Paul II, the Pope of Mary, siya ang isa sa pinakamagaling at pinakamamahal na Santo Papa ng ating panahon. His coat of arms or his emblem says TOTUS TUUS Maria – All for Thee Mary. Pope John Paul II said that the Rosary is the sweet chain of Mary linking us to God. That if we want to know Jesus we must enter the school of Mary. Kaya si Pope John Paul II, upang

gawing isang kabuuan ng Magandang Balita ang Rosaryo – the Rosary, a Compendium of the Gospel – dinagdagan niya ng isa pang set of mysteries ang Rosaryo: The Mysteries of Light. (Ask audience the other mysteries of the Rosary – Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious). It is not enough to know the mysteries. Like Mary, you have to keep them in your heart, ponder on their meaning (pagnilayan at pag-isipan), think of what they are saying to you, and then apply them in your life.

Mahirap isipin ang tinatawag ng Simbahan na Christian mystery kung wala doon si Maria – ‘yong liwanag na binibigay niya sa ating pagka Kristyano. Kaya tayong mga Kristyano, tayong mga sumasampalataya sa Diyos, sumusunod sa kay Kristo, at naniniwala sa Espiritu Santo, imposibleng hindi tayo lalapit at hihingi ng tulong kay Maria.

Si Maria ay ang No. 1 na nilalang. Ang Panginoon tuwang-tuwa sa kanya kaya pinili siyang maging Ina ng kanyang kaisa-isang Anak na si Hesus. Tawag ng angel kay Maria – full of grace – *kecharitomene* – ibig sabihin, the loved one, the pampered one, the favorite one. God chose this beloved Mary, this favorite Mary to make of himself a man.

At hindi kahit na sinong lalaki and piniling maki-isa kay Maria upang isilang si Hesus. Ang Espiritu Santo mismo ang lumilim sa kanya. Kaya si Maria ay tunay na Ina ni Hesus at Ina ng Diyos.

Bilang Kristiyano, ang ating dapat tularan at sundin ay si Hesus. Ngunit upang matularan natin siya, kailangan makilala muna nating maigi si Hesus. Sabi ni Pope John

Paul II, "To contemplate Christ, we must contemplate Mary." Pagpinagmasdan at pinagnilayan natin ang mukha ni Maria, makikita natin ang mukha ni Hesus.

Totoo naman 'yon, di po ba? Magkamukha ang mag-ina. Meron po akong pinsan, si Joji, nakatira sa America. Doon na siya nag-asawa, at doon na rin siya nang-anak. Matagal bago siya dumalaw dito. Nang dumating siya, dala niya 'yong kanyang anak. In one of the parties for her, another cousin came in. The son of Joji was near the door, but Joji was in the dining room. The moment our cousin saw the boy, sabi agad, "Naku, anak ka ni Joji ano? Talagang anak ka ng nanay mo... kamukhang-kamukha ka niya."

Hindi lamang sa mukha, makikita ang similarities. Pati na rin sa ugali. Madalas maririnig natin, matalino ang batang ito, katulad ng ina niya, o mabait ang batang ito, katulad ng nanay niya.

Let us contemplate Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of us all. Through her we will know Jesus. With her, we will be able to follow her prompting: "Do whatever he tells you."

In the school of Mary, there are many lessons open to us. For this afternoon we will consider 3 postures of Mary. Ano ba yong posture sa Tagalog? Anyo, katayuan? Anyway the 3 postures of Mary that I would like to share with you are:

First: FIAT – To Believe... I believe in the Lord

Second: STABAT – To Stand... I stand for the Lord

Third: MAGNIFICAT – To Praise... I praise the Lord

FIAT means I believe, I entrust. ‘Yong mga maalam sa Bibliya, natatandaan niyo ba kung saan binigkas at pinakilala ni Maria ang kanyang FIAT sa Panginoon? Ang kanyang pananampalatya at pagtiwala sa Diyos?

Noong binista siya ni Angel Gabriel upang ibalita sa kanya na siya ay kalugod-lugod sa Diyos, at dahil dito siya ay maglilihi at magkakanak ng isang lalaki na tatawagin niyang Hesus. At itong anak niyang si Hesus ay magiging Tagapagligtas ng buong sangkatauhan.

Siempre nagulat at natakot si Maria. Batang-bata pa siya, 14 years old lamang, inosente, dalaga. Kaya nagtaka siya at nagtanong: Paanong mangyayari ito, dalaga ako at walang asawa? Noong pinaliwanag sa kanya ni Angel Gabriel na ang Espiritu Santo ay bababa sa kanya at lilimliman siya ng kapangyarihan ng Kataas-tasan. At ang magiging anak niya ay banal at tatawaging Anak ng Diyos.

Kung tayo ang sinabihan ng ganon, ano kaya ang gagawin natin? Marahil marami pa tayong tanong at paliwanag na hihingin. We will ask for guarantees, for further proof. But Mary, when she heard the angel’s answer, at once replied, “Ako’y alipin ng Panginoon. Mangyari sa akin ang inyong sinabi.” Lubos ang sampalataya ni Maria sa Diyos. Buo ang kanyang pagtiwala na walang imposible sa Panginoon. Mary’s FIAT is spontaneous and freely given. God addresses himself directly to Mary’s freedom. In freedom, she consents to God, to life, to salvation.

Later this afternoon I will be sponsor at a wedding. In all weddings that I attend, I am awed by the fact that God chose to enter humanity by being born in a family,

through a mother. A news item the other day was so distressing. Imagine, half a million abortions a year take place in the Philippines, the only Christian country in Asia.

The man Jesus, His yes to God, to life, to being our salvation came through Mary's FIAT.

Tingnan nga natin ang anak ni Maria, si Hesus. Ano ba ang kanyang katayuan, ang kanyang kalooban? Believe ba siya sa Ama niya? Buo ba ang pagtiwala niya sa Panginoon?

Balikan natin ang nakaraan. Let's go back in time – in the Garden of Olives. Nagpapawis ng dugo si Kristo. Nakikita na niya ang kanyang katapusan. Pahihirapan, hahamakin, gugulpihin at ipapako siya sa krus. At lahat nito ay mangyayari sa kanya pagkatapos niyang gumawa ng kabutihan sa mga tao – ginamot ang maysakit, pina-lakad ang lumpo, binigyan ng liwanag ang bulag, binuhay ang patay, pinangako ang langit sa tulisan, nangako ng pagbabahagi ng kanyang sarili, nagturo ng kabutihan, nagpatawad ng kasalanan. Kaya ang laki ng kanyang dalamhati. Broken hearted talaga si Hesus. At dahil tao rin siya, ang laki ng kanyang takot sa kanyang sasapitin. Kaya sabi niya sa Ama, “Ama, kung maaari, ilayo mo sa akin ang sarong na ito. Gayunman, huwag ang kalooban ko ang masusunod, kundi ang kalooban mo.”

Buong pagtiwala sa Ama. Buong pagsunod sa kalooban ng Diyos. Jesus consents freely to the will of the Father. He says Yes to God, Yes to life, Yes to our salvation. Anak nga ng Ina niya. Like mother, like Son.

Ang mga anak ngayon, ano ba ang katayuan, ang attitude nila? (ask who in the audience are sons and daughters). Buo pa ba ang pagtitiwala sa kanilang mga magulang?

At higit sa lahat, buo pa ba ang ating pananampalataya sa Diyos, at pagtitiwala ng ating buhay sa kanyang kalooban? Kung may hinihiling sa atin ang Diyos sa pamamagitan ng ating kapwa, na magdudulot sa atin ng hirap at sakit, ano ang magiging tugon natin? FIAT ba ni Maria? Thy will be done ni Hesus? Ito'y araw-araw na tinatanong sa atin. Araw-araw din ang ating sagot. Pagnilayan po natin ito at, kasama ni Maria ating Ina, ialay natin ang ating sagot sa Panginoon.

STABAT – paninindigan. Balikan natin ang Bibliya. O, by the way, next year the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI will convene a synod – isang pagpupulong na titipunin sa Roma ang lahat ng obispo, arzobispo at cardinal ng buong mundo. Paguusapan nila ang kalagayan ng simbahan at ng mundo ayon sa isang napiling paksa or theme: The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. Kaya magandang batayan ng ating buhay at kilos ang Bible.

Nang pinako na sa krus si Hesus, at iniwanan siya, tumakbo at nilisan siya ng kanyang mga alagad, mga kaibigan, mga disipulo. Nandoon si Maria, ang puso piga sa luha, bugbog sa hinagpis sa pagsaksi sa nangyari sa kanyang anak.

It must have been horrible to watch her Son, literally torn to pieces, bloodied and nailed to the cross. And there was the mob full of rage against him, against his followers,

and against all that he stood for. That is why all his followers ran away, they all fled in fear. But Mary stood there with Jesus, beneath his cross. She did not run away for fear of her life, nor did she spare herself from the pain of his death.

Naiwan at nakatayo sa tabi ng krus ni Hesus ay ang kanyang Ina na si Maria. Hindi siya natakot na baka siya ay dakipin at pahirapan din. Hindi siya nagdalawang-isip kung anong dapat niyang gawin. Si Maria ay tumayo sa tabi ng kanyang Anak na hinatulang isang kriminal. (Naalala ko tuloy si Edith Burgos, ina ni Jonas Burgos, na hanggang ngayon naninidigan sa paghanap sa kanyang anak).

Si Maria, buo ang kanyang tiwala, ang kanyang pananampalataya na si Hesus, ang kanyang Anak, ay mabuting tao, Tagapaglitang tao, at siya ay Anak ng Diyos... na si Hesus ay ang daan, ang katotohanan at ang buhay. Kaya si Maria ay nanindigan ng buong pagmamahal at tiwala sa Katotohanan, Katarungan at Kapayapaan.

Sa pang-araw-araw na buhay, kitang-kita ba kung ano ang ating pinaninindigan.

When Mary stood beneath the cross of her Son there was such a beautiful but poignant exchange of gifts. When you think about it, God did not spare Mary his loved one, his *kecharitomene*, his favorite from the pain of watching her Son murdered. But then God did not spare himself of his only Son... his Son Jesus who did not spare himself, even his life for love of us. Yet even in their pain, the reflex of their hearts is to give – to give entirely, to give freely. Isipin natin ang ating posture sa buhay. Do we give entirely? Do we give freely?



Jesus gives us his Mother, that she may be our mother, too. And Mary standing beneath the cross hears her dying Son giving John, the beloved disciple who represents us all to her, "Woman, behold thy son." And Mary in accepting us as Jesus' last gift to her, gives birth in sorrow to new sons and daughters, her sinful children whom she received in place of the best of sons. And from that day up to now, she stands beside us to help us when we fall, always leading us and giving us her Son Jesus. Compassion of Jesus is also the compassion of Mary. Entering into our pain and sorrow and always acting to make things better for us.

MAGNIFICAT – Papuri. Balik na naman tayo sa Salita ng Diyos, sa Bible. Kaya ang Bible ang pinakamagaling at wastong reference book sa kabanalan, our reference material for holiness. Sa eskuwela ba tinuturo pa 'yong good morals and right conduct bilang basehan kung paano tayo mamumuhay ng maayos? But still the best teaching guide is the Bible for it contains the Word of God.

Bago umalis si Angel Gabriel pagkatapos niyang ibalita kay Maria na siya ay magiging Ina ng Diyos, binalita rin niya na ang pinsan ni Maria, na si Elizabeth ay nagdadalang-tao at manganganganak din. Nakakagulat ang balitang ito dahil si Elizabeth ay may edad na, matanda na at impossible nang magka-anak. Ngunit naniwala si Maria, alam niya na sa Diyos walang impossible. Kaya dali-dali siyang pumunta sa kanyang pinsan. Malayo ang tinitirhan ni Elizabeth. At walang kotse, o jeepney o bus noong panahon ni Maria. Ang daan ay bako-bako... hindi aspaltado... at hilly, pataas-pababa, mabato.

But Mary when she heard the news about Elizabeth, the reflex of her heart... I need to help my cousin, she is not so young and being pregnant is harder for her. Mary did not think about herself or the implications of her rushing to her cousin's aid. Hindi siya nag-alala sa layo ng lalakarin niya. Hindi niya naiisip na siya ay nagdadalang tao rin, na ano kaya ang sasabihin ng iba dahil siya ay walang asawa. No such worries for Mary. Her impulse was to help. Never mind the self.

Ang ganda ano? Lalung-lalo na sa panahon natin na puro Me, Myself, Mine. What was so amazingly awesome in Mary's posture was how the glory of God would become incarnate in total love, in total faith, in total humility and hope.

And what was the fruit of Mary's visitation of love and help to her cousin Elizabeth? Ang kanyang pagbisita ay nagbunga sa kaligtasan at papuri. "Yong sanggol sa sinapupunan ni Elizabeth ay lumukso sa tuwa dahil natanggalan ng bahid ng kasalanan. At si Elizabeth pinuspos ng Espiritu Santo at nagpahayag: Pinagpala ka sa mga babaeng lahat at pinagpala rin ang iyong sinapupunan. Mapalad ka dahil nanalig ka, nagtiwala kang matutupad ang sinabi sa iyo ng Panginoon.

Ano ang naging reaction ni Maria? Lumaki ba ang ulo niya? Naging mayabang ba siya na siya ay pinagpala sa babaing lahat? Na siya ay No. 1? Naku, iba si Maria. Talagang, punong-puno ng grasya. Ang sabi niya: ang puso ko'y nagpupuri sa Panginoon. Nagagalak ang aking espiritu sa aking Tagapagligtas.

Ang unang binigyan niya ng papuri ay hindi ang sarili, kundi ang Panginoon. At pagkilala niya sa Panginoon bilang kanyang tagapagligtas ay pag-aako na siya ay aba, mahirap, mahina at nangangailangn ng kaligtasan ng Panginoon.

Her MAGNIFICAT was in praise of the Lord and also an echo of her people's cry for help. Mary was an *anawim*, the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized of her time. She also declared what her Son would be doing in the world... he would reverse or turn upside down the hierarchies of the world.

- the boastful he will scatter, and the humiliated he will lift up
- the powerful he will cast down, and the poor he will help
- the greedy he will send away empty, and the hungry he will fill with good things

What we must remember, especially as we commemorate her canonical coronation, that Mary is a Queen in the sight of God for all eternity – a queen in her poverty, through which God exalts her. Her poverty is not taken away from her. Her poverty will also be that of her Son. Her Son will be servant and poor. As his Mother is servant and poor.

The Magnificat of Mary teaches us to praise God, God with us, God who hears the cry of the poor. Jesus gave us his Mother. And together they are with us to love us, to forgive us, to save us. What does Mary ask of us?

FIAT – I believe in Jesus, the Son of Mary for whom nothing is impossible.

STABAT – I stand with Jesus, the Son of Mary, who hears the cry of the poor.

MAGNIFICAT – I praise Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Son of God, my Savior and my all.

The real celebration of Our Lady of the Rosary is when each and all of us declare with our life everyday and in all circumstances our FIAT, STABAT, MAGNIFICAT in Christ with Mary.

# The Gift of Mission

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JAMES H. KROEGER, M.M.\*

Why mission? This perennial, persistent question admits of a variety of valid responses. Asking “why” is fundamentally a question of “mission motivation.” Why evangelize? Why be Jesus’ disciple? Why concern yourself? What ends does mission really serve?

The bishops of Asia have continually grappled with these questions as they explore the evangelizing mission of the Church in this vast continent of four billion people, where less than three percent of the burgeoning masses are Christian. Although these Asian Church leaders have elucidated several reasons for engaging in mission, what

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is striking is the “mission motive” they mentioned *first* during the Fifth Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) Plenary Assembly.

Collectively, they forcefully asserted: “We evangelize, first of all, from a deep sense of *gratitude to God*, the Father ‘who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing’ (Eph 1:3), and sent the Spirit into our hearts so that we may share in God’s own life. Mission is above all else an overflow of this life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God” (FABC V).

The Asian bishops vigorously affirm: “That is why it is so important for us Christians to have a deep faith-experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39), that love which has been poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). Without a personal experience of this love received as gift and mercy, no sense of mission can flourish” (FABC V).

Note some of the key words and phrases employed as the FABC describes this motive for mission: “gratitude to God,” “grateful hearts,” “spiritual blessing,” “given to us,” “love received as gift and mercy.” Indeed, mission is viewed as a *gift*, graciously given, gratefully received, and generously shared. Gratitude can serve as a powerful, energizing motive for engaging in evangelization.

**Image of Gift.** All cultures and peoples give gifts, particularly on special occasions and significant life events: birthdays, weddings, holidays, anniversaries. Gifts bond people together, they express gratitude and appreciation. Gifts are personally and carefully chosen, seeking to please

the recipient. Often gifts are exchanged, further cementing family and interpersonal solidarity.

Asians have elevated “gift-giving” into an art. What would Chinese celebrations and the Lunar New Year be without generous gifts offered in red envelopes (*angpao*)? In Korea the ritual celebration of one’s sixtieth birthday (*hwangap*) is an occasion for lavish gifting. No Filipino feels comfortable without bringing some *pasalubong* – large or small – when returning home.

Probably, it is the experience of giving and receiving gifts – so deeply human – that prompted Asia’s bishops to see *gratitude* for abundant grace received as a fitting image and motive for mission. This “gift” image expresses Christian thankfulness for God’s unique, gratuitous gift – Jesus the Son. Each day in the Eucharist, a Greek word that means thanksgiving (*eucharistein*), we say: “we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks.” Frequently, in the Mass the Prayer over the Gifts refers to the “holy exchange of gifts.”

To capture the depths found in imaging mission as gift, this “Asian” reflection now presents three interrelated moments of what might be termed “gift missiology.” Three “R” words capture mission-as-gift: **Recognize**, **Receive**, and **Reciprocate**. *Recognize* by being profoundly aware of the uniqueness of God’s gift. *Receive* by personally appropriating God’s gift. *Reciprocate* by sharing God’s gift with others.

**I. Recognizing the Gift.** The first moment in appreciating “gift missiology” is to become deeply conscious of the depths of God’s love, the love of the Trinity. The

mission decree of the Second Vatican Council (*Ad Gentes*) noted: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father. This decree [divine plan] flows from that 'fountain of love' or charity within God..." (AG 2). Mission originates in the centrifugal love of the Trinity; our missionary God shares of his essence which is love. God the Father gifts us with his incarnate Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. One can receive no greater gift! Prayer and contemplation facilitate a "depth-awareness" of this great gift.

The New Testament is replete with expressions of God's magnanimous generosity. Paul reminds the Romans: "Adam prefigured the One to come, but *the gift* considerably outweighed the fall.... Divine grace, coming through the one man Jesus Christ, came to so many as *an abundant free gift*. The *results of the gift* also outweigh the results of one man's sin.... Jesus Christ will cause everyone to reign in life who *receives the free gift* that he does not deserve" (Rom 5:15-17). As one contemplates God's profound generosity, gratitude wells up in the heart, leading one to proclaim "Thanks be to God for *his inexpressible gift*" (II Cor 9:15).

Recognizing God's gifts also means being profoundly aware that we do not earn or merit the gifts; they come from God's generosity, as Paul explains to the Ephesians: "This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but *by a gift*



from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art..." (Eph 2:7-10). Paul encourages the Romans to humbly receive God's gifts: "I want to urge each one among you not to exaggerate his real importance.... *Our gifts differ* according to the grace given us" (Rom 12:3-8).

As Jesus prepares to leave his disciples, he promises them: "I shall ask the Father, and he will *give* you another Advocate to be with you forever, that Spirit of Truth..." (Jn 14:16). Jesus' promise is fulfilled at Pentecost: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.... The Spirit *gave* them the *gift* of speech... [to] proclaim the marvels of God" (Acts 2:1-12).

The early Christian community – and our Church today – have been assured of God's continuous generosity: "... you will not be without any of the *gifts of the Spirit* while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed" (I Cor 1:7). Paul notes that all gifts have one source: "There is a *variety of gifts* but always the same Spirit.... All these are the work of the one and the same Spirit, who distributes *different gifts* to different people just as he chooses" (I Cor 12:1-12).

God's generous gifts are for all peoples, whatever their religious, ethnic, or cultural background; thus, "the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners.... All were astonished that the *gift of the Holy Spirit* should be poured out on the pagans too" (Acts 10:44-45). Peter proclaims God's graciousness in Jaffa, saying: "I realized then that *God was giving them the identical gift he gave to us* when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who was I to stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17).

Mission originates in this profound consciousness of what the Father has graciously wrought in Christ Jesus and their Spirit, continually manifested in the Church. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux expressed her awareness of God's gift when she concluded: "My vocation is Love! In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be Love. Thus, I shall be everything."

**II. Receiving the Gift.** A transformed consciousness that fully appreciates God's graciousness will receive the gift of faith with a joyful heart. One need only recall how this precious gift has been given and received. One could ask: Why of the four billion people in Asia have I been privileged to receive the gift of Christian faith? Who were God's instruments in transmitting the gift to me? What price did my parents or the missionaries have to pay so that I would have this great treasure? Who have been the holy people sent into my life to help me appreciate God's gifts? Reflecting on these key questions will facilitate a more personal reception of God's gifts of grace.

When Jesus engages the Samaritan woman at the well, he challenges her to have a deeper appreciation of the gift being offered: "If you only knew the *gift* God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have *given you living water*" (Jn 4:10).

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul invites them to a more profound awareness of the gift of being a Christian; he says: "People must think of us as Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. What is expected of stewards is that each one should be found

worthy of his trust.... What do you have that was not *given* to you? And if it was *given*, how can you boast as though it were not?" (I Cor 4:1-2, 7).

Both the Samaritan woman as well as the Corinthian community are to appreciate that, since they have been recipients of God's gifts, they themselves have now become gifts with the potential of being gifts to others. Precisely because one is loved, has experienced God's love, and has therefore become loveable, one can reach out to others with the gift of love. This is the transformed consciousness that God's gifting creates in receptive individuals. One is reminded of what the Asian bishops have said: "Without a personal experience of this love received as gift and mercy, no sense of mission can flourish" (FABC V).

A depth reception of God's Trinitarian gifting will result in a further gift: a personal vocation to ministry. This was the "conversion" experience of Saint Paul; the Lord affirmed: "this man is my chosen instrument to bring my name before pagans and pagan kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Paul personally owns this gift: "I have been made the servant of that Gospel by a *gift of grace from God* who gave it to me by his own power" (Eph 3:7). Paul celebrates God's choice, noting that: "God never takes back *his gift* or revokes *his choice*" (Rom 11:29).

Reception of God's gift is a continuous, ongoing process. Paul reminds his beloved Timothy (and us) to continually grow in our "reception" (appreciation, personalization, appropriation) of God's gift: "You have in you a *spiritual gift* which was given to you when the prophets spoke and the body of elders laid their hands on you; *do not let it*

*lie unused.* Think hard about all this, and put it into practice” (I Tim 4:14-15).

**III. Reciprocating God’s Gift.** The key New Testament passage that best captures this third moment of “gift missiology” is: “What you have received as a *gift*, give as a *gift*” (Mt 10:8). The logic is simple: if one truly appreciates a gift, one wishes to share it with others. The desire to gift others is the best and clearest manifestation of authentic gratitude.

The New Testament letters of James and Peter add further insight: “Make no mistake about this, my dear brothers: *every good gift*, everything that is perfect, is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light” (Jam 1:16-17). “Each of you has received a *special gift*, so like good stewards responsible for *all these different graces of God*, put yourselves at the service of others... so that in everything God may receive the glory” (I Pt 4:10-11).

The 1999 apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA) provides several insightful perspectives on how the Church in Asia is to “reciprocate” (return, repay) the gifts it has received. “The Church’s faith in Jesus is a *gift received* and a *gift to be shared*; it is the *greatest gift* which the Church can offer to Asia” (EA 10b).

“Blessed with the *gift of faith*, the Church [is to become] a community aflame with missionary zeal to make Jesus known, loved and followed.... The great question now facing the Church in Asia is *how* to share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as *the gift containing all gifts*, namely, the Good News of Jesus Christ” (EA 19a, 19c).

“Only if the People of God *recognize the gift* that is theirs in Christ will they be able to *communicate that gift* to others through *proclamation and dialogue*” (EA 31f).

The perspective of “mission-as-gift” contains several pivotal insights on the approach or manner of mission in Asia, which is necessarily the mode of dialogue. Christians treasure the gift of their Trinitarian faith, offering it freely, even enthusiastically, to others. The gift is offered with a sincere heart; yet, all evangelizers know that the other person is free to accept or reject the gift. The dialogue partners (e.g. Muslims, Buddhists) also have gifts to offer: the riches of their faith and their personal “God-experience.” Thus, a wonderful “exchange of gifts” can result. All people who have the gift of faith need to collaborate so that through using their shared gifts they can enrich the poor and needy in their midst.

The Asian bishops were indeed most perceptive in their reflection on a renewed motivation for mission, listing *gratitude* first among several possible motives. Recall what they said: “We evangelize, first of all, from a deep sense of *gratitude to God*.... Mission is above all else an overflow of this life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God.... Without a personal experience of this life received as gift and mercy, no sense of mission can flourish” (FABC V).

**Conclusion.** Paul’s well-chosen advice to his co-evangelizer Timothy appears to be a fitting exhortation for concluding these short reflections on the *gift of mission* [“gift missiology”]. In Paul’s words, Christians can find an anchor for their *recognition, reception, and reciprocation*

of the gift of faith. Paul writes: "*Fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you.... Never be ashamed of witnessing to the Lord.... Bear hardships for the sake of the Good News.... Accept the strength that comes from the grace of Christ Jesus.... Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it.... Do all with patience.... Make the preaching of the Good News your life's work, in thoroughgoing service*" (II Tim 1:6, 8-9a, 2:1, 4:1, 5).

## *DOCUMENTATION*

### **Marriage and Its Religious Dimension**

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**MOST REV. LEONARDO MEDROSO, DD**

The perception of marriage in its flesh and blood realities can be gleaned from cases submitted to a Church court for resolution. It is from these messy, if not unknown, elements of the contested matrimonial bond that the truth of marriage is ferreted out.

Leafing through the acts and decisions of the Roman Rota the Holy Father, the late Pope John Paul II, discovered a tragic pattern in marriages submitted for resolution. He found out in rhythmic regularity that marriages which broke down are unions wherein the spouses have ruled out the religious dimension of marriage. I am wondering whether this discovery may also be true in other matrimonial courts.

Along this vein Pope John Paul II in his address to the judges of the Roman Rota, highlighted the importance and the significance of the religious dimension of marriage and the family. He cited the phenomenon of many recent matrimonial cases and observed that there is a pattern. The pattern is the diminishing awareness of the spouses of the

significance of the sacramentality of the Christian marriage. Spouses do not consider anymore the transcendence of Christian marriage, its intimate meaning, its intrinsic supernatural value, its positive effects on the conjugal life and family. He also observed that secularism has much to blame to this modern phenomena in Christian marriage. He said: "Today's strongly secularized mentality tends to affirm the human values of the institution of the family while detaching them from religious values and proclaiming them as fully independent of God. Influenced as it is by models of life that are too often presented by the mass media, today's mentality asks, 'Why must one spouse always be faithful to the other?' A person of faith can easily answer that question; but a person who is cut off from that religious dimension of marriage is in a quandary. Caught in a crisis, this person of no faith "will even reformulate the preceding question in this way: why it is always necessary to love the other spouse even when so many apparently justifying reasons would lead one to leave?"

Confronted with such a phenomenon, the Holy Father enjoined the audience to help the families to value the significance of the sacramentality of marriage in their own lives. He also urged them to always consider the religious dimension when dealing with sacramental marriage. He said: "The consideration of the sacramentality highlights the transcendence of your function, the bond that links it to the economy of salvation. The religious dimension should for this reason permeate all your work. From handling scientific studies on marriage to the daily activity of the administration of justice, there is no room in the Church for a vision of marriage that is merely immanent and pro-



fane, simply because such a vision is not true theologically and juridically” (op. cit., 6).

Down the centuries the Church has maintained with insistence the ever-enduring doctrine of marriage and its sacramentality. When it talks on the union of man and woman in a perpetual and exclusive contract of giving and accepting each other in the rite of marriage, it has to be taken within the context of a sacrament and therefore within the area of faith. Christian marriage is more than a piece of legislation; more than the union of a male and a female hit by a chemical reaction called love. It is a sacred union. It starts with the free choice of the man and the woman in love, mutually surrendering themselves to each other which they do by entering into marriage whose meaning and values do not depend on them alone but on God himself. For God is the Author of marriage, delicately endowing it with proper laws and regulations. And more. Due to the reality of sin, making him/her prone to the temptations of the flesh and the pride of life that oftentimes sours the relationship between man and woman, God saw to it that union of man and wife become a source of grace, elevating it into a sacrament. Here the spouses are caught up by the Christ who gives that great promise: “My grace is sufficient for you.”

Marriage therefore bestows that sacramental grace to “perfect the couple’s love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity. By this grace they help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children” (cf. CCC, n. 1641). To ease out this religious dimension, therefore, is detrimental, if not suicidal, to the union.



# **Our Firm Stand Against Contraceptive Mentality**

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**CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES**

We hope it is not true that congress plans to appropriate one billion pesos for the purchase of condoms, birth control pills and other "reproductive health" products to control population growth. If it is true, we categorically object to it and instead strongly recommend that the one billion pesos be directly appropriated and/or added for hunger and poverty alleviation projects, as well as for free education of extremely poor children.

The use of abortifacients, contraceptive pills and devices, sterilization, directly willed abortion are wrong in themselves. They are against nature and God's law. They are wrong not because the Catholic Church forbids them; rather the Church forbids them because they destroy the fruitfulness of human reproductive capacities given by the Creator and hence are morally wrong. (CBCP said this already in 1990 and at other times!). It is not just a matter of being conservative, but also of being morally upright.

The church advocates Natural Family Planning as the only morally acceptable way of practicing responsible parenthood. The Church does not forbid the advocacy of the increase or decrease of population provided the freedom of the couple to exercise sexual and family morality according to their religious conviction are respected. Since the Church objects to the use of artificial contraception, the church likewise objects to their dissemination, creating thereby a contraceptive mentality towards a culture of death.

It is not true that the Philippines growth rate is 2.36%. The United Nations using the same census data has arrived at a very much lower rate. The National Statistics Office has already projected a Philippine population growth rate of 1.99%. These notwithstanding, we do not subscribe to the allegations that population must be controlled because it is the main cause of poverty; there are other grave factors. We will not join countries with collapsing population growth rate.

We exhort our clergy to proactively preach the doctrine of the Church on principled population control. We strongly encourage and support our legislators in Congress and the Senate who promote the moral teachings on life, family and population.

†ANGEL N. LAGDAMEO  
*Archbishop of Jaro*  
*CBCP President*  
*October 6, 2007*

# Message to the Hindus on the Feast of Diwali 2007

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PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR  
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*“Christians and Hindus :  
Determined to Walk the Path of Dialogue”*

*Dear Hindu Friends,*

1. As *Diwali* approaches, your religious feast, I am sure all of you in your respective families, neighbourhoods and communities will be taking time to share your joy with one another. On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue I am happy to have this opportunity, for the first time since taking office, to send you my greetings. Sensitive to your religious feelings and respectful of your ancient religious tradition, I sincerely hope that your search for the Divine, symbolized through the celebration of *Diwali*, will help you to overcome darkness with light, untruth with truth and evil with goodness.

2. The world around us is yearning for peace. Religions promise peace because they trace their origin to God who, according to Christian belief, is our peace. Can we, as believers of

different religious traditions, not work together to receive God's gift of peace and to spread it around us so that the world becomes for all people a better place to live? Our respective communities must pay urgent attention to the education of believers, who can so easily be misled by deceitful and false propaganda.

3. Belief and freedom always go together. There can be no coercion in religion: no one can be forced to believe, neither can anyone who wishes to believe be prevented from doing so. Allow me to reiterate the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which is quite clear on this point: "It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free. Therefore no one is to be forced to embrace the faith against his own will" (Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 10). The Catholic Church has been faithful to this teaching as Pope Benedict XVI reminded recently to the Ambassadors of India and other countries to the Holy See: "... Peace is rooted in respect for religious freedom, which is a fundamental and primordial aspect of the freedom of conscience of individuals and of the freedom of peoples" (18 May 2006). Forming believers first of all to discover the full dimensions and depth of their own religion, and then encouraging them to know other believers as well constitutes an important challenge for religious communities committed to building world peace. Let us not forget that ignorance is the first and, perhaps, the principal enemy in the life of believers, while the combined contribution of every enlightened believer provides a rich resource for lasting peace.

4. Like all human relationships, those between people of different religions need to be nourished by regular meetings, patient listening, collaborative action, and above all, by an

attitude of mutual respect. Accordingly, we must work to build bonds of friendship, as indeed must the adherents of all religions. "Friendship is nourished by contacts, by a sharing in the joy and sadness of different situations, by solidarity and mutual assistance" (John Paul II, *Message to the participants of the International Convention "Matteo Ricci: for a dialogue between China and the West"*, 24 October 2001, 6). In situations of misunderstanding, people need to come together and communicate with one another, in order to clarify, in a fraternal and friendly spirit, their respective beliefs, aspirations and convictions. Only through dialogue, avoiding all forms of prejudice and stereo-typed ideas about others and by faithful witness to our religious precepts and teaching, can we truly overcome conflicts. Dialogue between followers of different religions is the necessary path today, indeed it is the only appropriate path for us as believers. Together, in collaboration, we can do much to build a society of harmony and a world of peace.

5. Dear Hindu Friends, the hand I warmly extend to greet you on the occasion of your feast is also a gesture of willingness on the part of the Catholic Church to meet and collaborate with you, your families, your community leaders and all followers of the *Sanatana dharma*, in order to promote harmony in society and peace in the world. Once again, I wish each one of you a happy *Diwali*.

**Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran**

*President*

**Pier Luigi Celata**

*Secretary*





## **HISTORICAL SECTION**

### **The Painter of "The Baptism of Christ" (1912) in the Pasig Cathedral with a Brief History of the Baptistery Chapel (1869)**

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**DR. LUCIANO P.R. SANTIAGO**

As part of the exemplary conservation efforts of the Diocese of Pasig, the Commission for the Conservation of Church Heritage together with the *Comité de Festejos* has recently sought the restoration not only of the baptistery but also of the damaged painting of "The Baptism of Christ." The commission is under the able leadership of Fr. Roy Rosales, Rector of the Cathedral while the presidents of the *comité* last year who sponsored the project were Mr. Willy de León and Ms. Frieda Legazpi, also active members of the commission. In August of this year, Ms. Maita Maronilla Reyes, art consultant of the Lopez Museum, Archdiocese of Manila and now of the Diocese of Pasig completed the restoration of the sacred work of art. It depicts the biblical scene, familiar to all, of St. John the Baptist pouring the baptismal water on Christ in the River Jordan. God the Father and the Holy Spirit hover over them to affirm the

first sacrament instituted by Christ to give grace. It also now forms the first of the Luminous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary introduced by the late Pope John Paul the Great. It is a delightful picture to most Filipinos especially the Tagalogs and the Kapampangans who as their names indicate are “people of the river.”

### **The Painting**

Who was the painter of this oil on canvas? The restorer could not find the signature of the artist and the date of the painting on its remaining parts. Perhaps it was in the torn section. The late Pasig historian Dean Carlos Tech had examined the work in the 1990s when it was still largely intact though long removed from the retablo of the baptismary altar. He reported quite excitedly to this writer that he saw the signature of the painter “Leandro Jabson” and the date “April 1912” on the canvas. This was confirmed by the artist’s daughter, Dra. Encarnación Jabson del Rosario (1912-2002) who said that her parents had told her that her father painted it at the request of the parish priest and to commemorate her own baptism on that date.

### **The Baptistry Chapel: Yesterday and Today**

Unique in Philippine church architecture is the Pasig baptismary chapel. It is probably the only such structure in the country, which is autonomous from the main building of the church though it is appended to it and opens into the church interior. It is a reflection of both the faith and the opulence of the parish and town in the 19th century. Happily, its relative isolation protected it from the ruthless modernization of the 60s which the rest of the church and convent fell prey to.

Archival records show that the present baptistery of the Pasig Cathedral was built in 1869 during the term of Fray Juan Vagué, the longest serving pastor of Pasig (1849-1871) during the Spanish Period. This was six years after the Great Earthquake of 1863 severely damaged the bell tower. At the base of the belfry, the original baptistery – like most surviving old baptisteries in the Philippines – was located. (It is now occupied by the image of Señor Jesús Nazareno). The baptistery was transferred provisionally to the erstwhile bodega (the present Parish Office) on the ground floor of the convent directly opposite the previous site. A small door was carved out of the concrete wall of the storage room opening into the nave to make it accessible to the parishioners. In 1867, the old baptismal font, “cracked and worn-out” was replaced with the present one made of white marble imported from Hong Kong. It was bought with four other smaller marble fonts for the Holy Water at the total cost of 600 pesos.

The present site of the baptistery used to be the cemetery, which was located just outside the church wall behind the belfry and almost spilling towards the *Tribunal de Naturales* (now the site of Jolibee). Seven months before the construction of the chapel, the cemetery had to be cleared and transferred to the back of the church apse. The dome of the baptistery was made of concrete, its interior walls were lined with blue tiles (*azulejos*) and “to protect it from humidity,” its floor was covered with planks of hardwood (*tarima*) like the rest of the church. (The durable wooden floor was purchased and removed by Don Fortunato Concepción in 1937 to serve as the floor of his mansion, which is now the Pasig City Museum.) The sum of P2,500 was allotted for the project.

There was apparently a sculpture of St. John baptizing Christ in the central niche of the retablo of the 18th century altar (now inappropriately drenched in gold by a previous administrator). The wide central niche of the altar corresponds almost exactly and – through an extension at the back – anchors the altar as well to the grilled arched window at the apse of the chapel. There are two other windows of the same size and shape on both lateral walls. These side windows are flanked by a pair of floor-to-ceiling Corinthian half columns made of hardwood, the base of which are carved with motifs of guava fruits and leaves. These repeat the decorations on the twisted middle column on both sides of the retablo. The motif may be recognized as symbols of another indigenous rite of passage in adolescence also called “binyagan,” a euphemism for circumcision. Installed later was the huge elaborately grilled wrought iron double door the upper part of which features the Augustinian emblem of a Heart Afire and Pierced with Arrows that can also be seen at the church façade.

The baptistery altar is now the oldest in the cathedral, carved in the same baroque style as the venerable altars of San Agustín Church in the walled city. The statue of the Baptist and Christ probably disappeared during the Filipino-American War when American troops occupied the church for a whole year (1899-1900). Thus, the retablo was virtually empty in the early 20th century until Señor Leandro Jabson presented his work for it in 1912. Since then, three to four generations of Pasigueños had been christened under the gentle gaze and grace of Jabson’s painting until the 1980s. Whereupon, it was replaced with a stained glass of the same scene by the great Pasig artist Mr. Cenón Rivera. In the meantime, Jabson’s work was stored in a damp bodega of the rectory, forlorn, neglected and exposed to the elements in the company of other rejected objects until the present restoration.

## The Painter

Although Jabson was an amateur painter, he did a competent and diligent job in this work. His main interest was landscapes as indicated by the fact that nearly all his surviving obras are of this genre. This must be why in his "Baptism of Christ," the landscape of the Jordan River is excellently delineated. It evokes Bitukang Manok, a vigorous branch of the Pasig River, which used to meander along the center of town parallel to the parish church. It further recalls a biblical passage: "Wherever the water goes, it brings health, and life teems wherever the river flows... because this water comes from the sanctuary." (Ezk 47:1-9, 12). In Jabson's painting, the figures of Jesus and John are depicted with relatively less expertise especially in the foreshortening of the hands and feet. Quite appropriately, Jabson seemed more interested in conveying the spiritual significance of the occasion than its artistic merits.

His best friend and colleague in painting was Don Ambrosio Zamora, Sr. (1888-1940), the leading land surveyor of Rizal province in the early 20th century. Both of them were landscape painters. As a major landowner and a surveyor, respectively, they knew all the idyllic spots in the outskirts of the town and province, which were then still in pristine and unspoiled condition. To these they led the likes of Fernando Amorsolo and his associates on weekends earning them the opportunity to paint with the master. This was well before the advent of the subdivisions and gross pollution in the 70s. They must have also taken art lessons from Don Ramón Peralta (1877-1940), a U.P. professor in landscape painting who settled with his attractive family in Pasig. Peralta was the painter of the mural of angels surrounding the main altar of the Immaculate Conception in the early 30s. Sadly, it was obliterated *en*

*masse* together with other sacred murals from the 19th century during the modernization of the church in the late 60s. Such was the historical insensitivity of both church and civil officials in the past.

## **Ancestors**

Atty. Leandro A. Jabson was a successful lawyer and politician who was to the manor born in Pasig. His branch of the clan owned and still owns most of the Jabson Estate which he organized upon the death of his father, Don Manuel Jabson, the original owner. Don Manuel had gradually built his huge estate through entrepreneurial talent, hard work and remarkable frugality. Other contemporaries who were numbered with him among the big landowners of Pasig were: Don Juan Pinga of Maybunga and Don Patricio.

Dumandán of Santolan who, as their surnames indicate, were able to maintain much of their landholdings from the Pre-hispanic to the Spanish Period; Don Cristino Santana of the Pariancillo (grandson of Don Pasqual de Sta. Ana, Indio hacendero of Angono and Talim Island); the Miguel sisters, Doña Nicolasa and Doña Macaria, who owned the busiest store at the Pariancillo; Don Cecilio Tech of San José whose lands were cultivated to the buyó, the source of the popular betel nut chewing; and Don Joaquín Tuason who of all of them had the most unique source of income: writing and publishing religious best sellers which were snapped up by the faithful.

Of Chinese descent, the Jabson clan originated from Fujian province where the majority of Chinese settlers in the Philippines came from. In Hokienese or Fujian language, Jabson (Tsap-son) means the “tenth or youngest grandson” in the male centered society. (Tua-son is the “first or oldest grandson.”). The Jabson forbears were very active parti-

cipants in both church and civic affairs of the old town. They served as the *gobernadorcillos* or mayors of the *Gremio de Mestizos de Sangley* (Chinese mestizo socio-political unit) of Pasig. The first prominent Jabson patriarch, Don Domingo was the town executive in circa 1820; Don Félix Jabson, his son, in 1838; Don José Jabson in 1855 and Don Ramón Jabson, Don Manuel's father, in 1867-1868.

Don Ramón Jabson married Doña Ciriaca Natividad with whom he had seven children: Ladislao, Manuel, Ciriaco (married Victoria Cabrera y Chiangco), Luisa, the only daughter (married Luís Cabrera y Chiangco, father of Dra. Cristina Cabrera from his second marriage), Félix, Pedro (unmarried) and another son.

Don Manuel himself was elected by the *principalía* or town elite as the mayor in 1879-1880. In June of 1879, he with his brother Félix and other members of the *Gremio de Mestizos* offered the parish church the priceless works of art – “The Sacred Heart of Jesus and The Immaculate Heart of Mary” in fused silver and gold combinations. These were to be attached to their respective images on their and other major feast days. The other donors whose names were inscribed at the back of the precious Hearts were Doña Ynocencia Bartolomé, Doña Margarita Pablo, Don Cándido Miguel, Don Felipe Marcelo and Doña Saturnina Cruz (wife of Don Cecilio Tech).

## His Life and Times

Leandro was born in their ancestral house in Malinao on March 13, 1890. Built in 1884 as inscribed on a beam in the ceiling, the *bahay na bato* still stands and now serves as the Alfonso Clinic. He was the only child of his prominent parents. When he was about five years old, his mother, Doña Paula Antonio died unexpectedly. His father

remarried in 1897 to a first cousin, Doña Anastacia Jabson. (Cousin marriages, which require episcopal dispensation, were not uncommon during the Spanish Period.) As expected, his stepmother, who was also his aunt, took excellent care of him. Another only child was born to the second union, Leovigilda Jabson y Jabson (1898-1980). She was to marry Dr. Pablo Alfonso y Calderón (1884-1958), nephew of the parish priest of Pasig, Padre Patricio Calderón of Pulilan, Bulacan. The Alfonso Clinic was named for him.

Leandro's early education was interrupted by the Philippine Revolution and the Filipino-American War. After the prolonged upheaval, he enrolled at the Ateneo de Manila then located in Intramuros, where he was an interno and finished as a Bachelor of Arts in 1909. He then transferred to the Manila Law College where he graduated with an LL.B. degree in 1915. He married a "beauty with brains" Miss Juanita Velásquez y Tuason (1896-1977) of Sta. Ana, Manila in 1911. They made their home in the Yearsley House in Bambang, which they purchased from its American owner. Surrounded by a concrete high wall, the unique residence was built in the style of the American South by Mr. Albert Yearsley, who made his fortune as the pioneer American cinematographer in the Philippines. Their first child, Encarnación was born on March 25, 1912. As recounted earlier, it was to commemorate her christening the following month that Atty. Jabson painted "The Baptism of Christ" for the local baptistery. "Encarning" was to become the second woman physician of Pasig (UST 1938). She belonged to the second batch of lady physicians to graduate in UST. She married Dr. Romualdo del Rosario (1914-67; MD 1940 UST). The first woman physician of Pasig was Dra. Cristina Cruz Cabrera (1891-1987, MD 1920 UP).



The birth of "Encarning" in 1912 was a propitious event in the life of her parents. Three years later, Atty. Jabson successfully ran for congress as the representative of Rizal province. He was the first Pasigueño to fill the prestigious position. He succeeded Dr. Sixto de los Ángeles of Marikina who then became the head of the Department of Legal Medicine of the University of the Philippines. Those were the days when the politicians were also brilliant professionals in their respective fields. Atty. Jabson divided his time between practicing his profession, managing the family estate and painting in his free time.

His ideal world was overturned by the Second World War which suddenly struck, of all days, on the town fiesta of Pasig, December 8, 1941. The stresses and hardships of the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945) greatly debilitated his health. Twice in his life, in childhood and now in middle age, he witnessed and experienced the misery and atrocities of war. Not unexpectedly, his fortified house was spared destruction at the height of the strife. Pasig was finally liberated by the guerillas on February 19, 1945. Almost exactly one month later, after the jubilations of "Liberation," on March 18, 1945, Atty. Leandro Jabson closed his eyes forever in the peace of the Lord surrounded by his wife and family. He was buried in the Jabson Mausoleum at the Pasig Catholic Cemetery.

Two sons came after "Encarning:" Engr. Manuel V. Jabson (1917-1963) and Atty. Ramón V. Jabson (1919-1988). A legal luminary and an incorruptible judge, Ramón became the Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals. The main street in Malinao, which passes in front of the Jabson ancestral house is now named in his honor. The Jabson grandchildren in various capacities continue to serve the church and city of Pasig today.



# **Diosdado: God-Given and Given to God (A Bishop's Autobiography)**

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**MOST REV. DIOSDADO TALAMAYAN, DD**

## ***Early Childhood***

I was born on October 19, 1932 in Manila. Though my parents, Judge *Mamerto R. Talamayan* and Doña *Erlinda Aenlle-Talamayan*, were from Aparri, I spent my years of happy childhood with my siblings – *Oliver, Rodolfo, Ernesto, Manolo, Erlinda, Juliana, Luz* and *Editha* – in Luquilu and later in Catabayungan in the town of Cabagan, Isabela.

We are nine siblings in the family. *Oliver* was a medical doctor who later became the mayor of Aurora, Isabela. *Rodolfo* is an electrical and mechanical engineer who became a colonel in the Philippine Air Force. *Ernesto*, as a law student, was elected municipal councilor of Aurora. Later, as a lawyer, he became a Regional Trial Court Judge. *Manolo* was an agricultural engineer who managed for a long time the family corporation: *MAMER*, combination of the names of our parents Mamerto and Erlinda. *Erlinda*

was a teacher by profession but later on became a real estate broker. *Juliana* is a pharmacist who put up the first pharmacy in the entire Mallig Region in Aurora. Later on, she became a councilor of Aurora, Isabela. *Luz* also graduated as pharmacist. *Editha*, as a mathematics and physics teacher, did not only teach here in the Philippines but also in the USA.

At that time, there were no television sets, cellular phones or CD's for entertainment. After dinner, before our evening prayers, we would be all together in our family living room. To the joy of our parents, we would sing current love songs. This explains why up to now I love the old favorites like "*Ramona*", "*Mexicali Rose*" ... and our theme song was the Spanish hit: "*Pregunta a las estrellas*".

I studied at Cabagan Central School under famous educators like Mrs. *Naty Binag Rabot* and Ms. *Luz Gatan*. Even at the early stage of our schooling, we already learned how to *diagram* English sentences. In school, I met people and developed friendships that up to now have remained. To mention a few of these friends, I recall my happy encounters with *Miguel Purugganan*, *Belen Buraga Pascual*, *Tomas Beltran* and *Vicente Sarangay*.

My intermediate schooling took place at the Cabagan Farm School, the forerunner of the Isabela State University. We had developed a beautiful garden called "*Datoc's Social Hill*" which was a favorite destination of many school field trips in Isabela. Our main sport was softball. Small as I was, I played the role of a catcher. We formed our own barrio teams – with tournaments with little betting on stake. Our childhood escapades included going to fiestas at the other side of the Cagayan River which, at that time, was relatively not too wide. We would just swim with

our clothes held by one hand, while the other hand paddled our way to the other side of the river. I am glad our parents never learned about this. Or else, we would have been whipped with our respective mothers' slippers as we were prohibited to swim neither at Pinacannauan River at barrio Ugad nor at the Cagayan River at Pantalan. Since many children got drowned there, many of the people believe that they were victims of the "*sirenas*". We were all curious how the *sirenas* looked like. As kids, since it was always rumored by older people in Cabagan that the *sirena* would attend dressed in black the *Viernes Santo* procession, we always wanted to stay at the back of the procession searching for the *sirena*. To our dismay, we never succeeded to see one!

Cabagan is a deeply religious town. Up to now, there are many daily churchgoers. This is a fruit of the Sunday Catechetical Programs of our parish and of the efficient catechists, personally trained in Tuguegarao by a catechetical institute directed by Bishop *Constancio Jurgens*. We always looked forward to his pastoral visits to our parish for two reasons. Primarily, Bishop Jurgens had an imposing figure, a white man dressed with beautiful episcopal robes. Secondly, the *banda* of Casibarang, mainly manned by the *Zipagan* and *Tarun* families, gave a cheerful atmosphere. The best treat for us pupils during those pastoral visits was: there were no classes.

Our happy days were interrupted by World War II. We had to evacuate to the other side of the Cagayan River. Kicking and, at first, excited, as our mother had us carry at our backs our clothes, we felt like Boy Scouts going to a camp! When the Japanese returned, we took up *Nippongo*, learned the basic alphabet *Katakana* and some songs which our age level can sing. Up to now, I

remember the lyrics of the songs like *O te te, Tunaide, Miyoto o Kay no so rakete....* We fled our homes for the second time when the American planes started bombing. When we returned, our home was among those spared. The G.I. Joes came. We enjoyed their chocolate bars and learned their songs. We loved singing *You are My Sunshine* and *I Want to Buy a Paper Doll*, among others. When things normalized, our family moved to Manila. My mother, together with some enterprising businesswomen, opened a restaurant called *Corner Lunch* at P. Campa, Sampaloc. In that restaurant, I enjoyed doubling as a waiter while studying because the customers always gave a tip to the *cute* little boy who served them!

### ***Priestly Formation***

Meanwhile, my childhood *barkada*, *Miguel Purugganan*, now Bishop Emeritus of Ilagan, and *Marino Gatan*, the present Administrator of Ilagan, entered the Minor Seminary in Vigan. While I was in Manila, *Mike* wrote me a couple of times. This rekindled my desire to be a priest, an ambition which I already felt during the war. However, this desire was not immediately fulfilled since my mother called me to Manila to help take care of my father who was sick and eventually died of stomach ulcers. Meantime, before having the chance to go back to Cabagan, I lived as an intern sacristan of the Franciscan Fathers in *Intra-muros*. Since concelebrated Masses were not practiced that time, the priests had to celebrate Mass in different altars. Thus, I had to go from one altar to the other to serve and recite the psalm "*Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam*" – "I shall go to the altar of God, to God who gives joy to my youth" (cf. Psalm 43:4). I must also say that before going to Manila, many of us young boys in Cabagan thought

of becoming a priest due to the friendly approach of our pastors to us. I particularly remember the late Fr. *Alfonso Abaya* for his wonderful friendship. When we returned to the province, my mother enrolled me to continue my high school studies at the then Cagayan Valley Athenaeum. Before classes started, I was in Aparri for the May fiesta with some of my siblings. The fiesta Mass was celebrated by the pastor then, Fr. *Domingo Alindayu*. He said Mass at the ground floor of what is now the rectory of the Parish of Aparri since the church then was burned. He preached on the need for more priests. As if by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, when I returned to the home of my late Tita *Juliana Talamayan Torio*, I told her I wanted to be a priest. She brought me to the *nipa* rectory of Fr. *Alindayu*. The priest asked if I knew my prayers, which of course I knew because we always had our evening family prayers and we were effectively catechized in Cabagan by the late catechists, *Sofia Bauí* and *Anis Marayag*. My mother who came to fetch us in Aparri brought me to Tuguegarao and got a personal interview with Bishop *Jurgens* who at that time lived in the residence of *Moises Antonio*. The bishop asked me just one question: "Why do you like to be a priest?" Now, that I recall that interview with the bishop, I cannot believe how I, as a young boy at 14 years old, answered the right way: "I want to serve God and help people". With this answer, I was accepted, sent to Vigan Seminary, and the rest is history.

I made the Minor Seminary course for three years, instead of the typical five years, because the Bishop then, the Most Rev. *Alejandro Olalia*, decided to send me to the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Central Seminary where I spent seven years of my priestly formation. I feel grateful to God for having been exposed to spiritual giants like our

seminary Rector, Rev. Fr. *Juan Ylla*, OP, and our Spiritual Director, Rev. *Juan Ortega*, OP. Our Dominican philosophy and theology professors are well known in their respective fields: Fr. *Jesús Gayo* for Metaphysics, Fr. *Antonio Gonzáles* for Theodicy, Fr. *José Blanco* for Dogma, Fr. *Francisco del Río* for Morals and Fr. *Jesús Meriño* for Scriptures. We were ordained priests on the occasion of the Second National Eucharistic Congress at the Rizal Memorial Stadium in Manila. The congress was highlighted by the mass ordination to the priesthood of seventy-seven deacons. Our ordaining prelate for our group was the late Archbishop *Juan Sison*. There were ten of us in Class '57. Four of us became bishops, namely, Archbishop *Pedro Dean*, Bishop *Cirilo Almario*, Bishop *Ricardo Tancinco* and myself.

### ***As a Young Priest***

Armed with degrees of Licentiate in Philosophy and Licentiate in Theology, my first assignment was to teach at the San Jacinto Seminary in Tuguegarao. With me was Rev. *Salvador Lazo*, who later became a bishop, our Rector. Among my brilliant students were Bishop *Sergio Utleg* of Laoag and Bishop *Rodolfo Beltran* of Bontoc-Lagaue. Some of my students who did not make it to the priesthood became outstanding laymen. To mention a few, I remember former Secretary *Silvestre Bello II*, former Mayor Dr. *Fernando Babaran*, successful businessmen Mr. *Sesinando Singson*. As a seminary instructor, I was tasked by Archbishop *Teodulfo Domingo* to raise the necessary funds for the construction of the actual three storey and solid concrete buildings of the San Jacinto Minor Seminary in Alimanao Hills, Peñablanca. I organized the Young Professionals of Tuguegarao who presented, under my direction, the play *Bamboo Cross*. This play was presented



in many towns of Cagayan Valley. Mrs. *Guadalupe R. Villaciete*, Mrs. *Lourdes Bassig Garma*, the late Atty. *Felicitos Guzman*, Arch. *Antonio Cepeda*, Atty. *Pedro Perez, Jr.*, the late *Pedro Pagalilauan*, Mrs. *Zeny Pavon Nagano*, Mrs. *Editha Talamayan Angco*, Mrs. *Corito Garcia Singson*, Ms. *Viveca Maguigad*, Atty. *Nick Pagalilauan* and the late Atty. *Hermenegildo Cagurangan* were in the cast. I have kept bonding with this group. Up to now, the surviving members gather together to remember the old days.

### *European Opportunities*

I was granted a scholarship from the *Cultura Hispánica* for graduate studies in Spain in 1959, through the efforts of the late Dr. *Antonio Estrada*, the Cultural Attaché then of the Philippine Embassy, and his wife Doña *Josefa Estrada*. This generous couple thoroughly helped me in paying for my tuition fee, board and lodging. They also provided for my pocket money during my stay in Spain. Doña *Josefa* is now 101 years old and lives with her youngest son, Mr. *Francisco Estrada* who with his wife, the former *Cristina Ansaldo*, takes very good care of her. Though bed ridden, she gives a beautiful smile whenever I visit her. As the National President of the Catholic Women's League then, she and her co-workers helped me substantially in my studies abroad. I obtained the doctoral degrees in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical University of Salamanca, with a grade of *magna cum laude*, and in Philosophy at the *Universidad Central de Madrid*, garnering a grade of *Sobresaliente* – the highest grade possible. As it is done in Spanish universities, if somebody garners the highest grade, each of the five examiners in the panel would stand to announce the grade. To my great joy, they all did stand!

While in Madrid for my graduate studies, I stayed at the *Colegio Mayor de Guadalupe* which became the venue of meetings and gatherings of the *Circulo Filipino de Madrid*, an association of Filipino students in Spain. I was the Spiritual Director then of the association. Many of the members returned to the Philippines and became very successful in life. Among them were the late Governor of La Union and Ambassador to Mexico Dr. *Justo Orros*, Congressman *Victor Ortega*, Honorable Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary *Alberto Romulo*, Finance Secretary *Margarito Teves*, Former Board Member *Julius Cea Napal* and sugar magnate *Bibiano Sabino*. Among the ladies whose friendships I keep up to now are: Mrs. *Conchitina Sevilla-Bernardo*, Mrs. *Margarita Ansaldo-Tambunting*, Mrs. *Merybeth Lopez de Leon*, Mrs. *Vicky Fernandez-Zubiri*, Mrs. *Asuncion Ledesma Sabino*, and Miss *Celine Hernaez*. We had many activities, particularly, involving ourselves in the deliberation of the activities of the *Semana filipina*. As a preparation for Christmas, we even had the *Misa del Gallo* at 5 o'clock in the morning at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel. The *Madrileños* admired us for celebrating Mass at that unholy hour for the simple reason that no one wakes up that early in Madrid!

My post graduate leave in Spain was highlighted by my two summer courses at the *Institut Catholique de Paris*. I had to write my doctoral thesis on the Philosophy of *Henri Bergson* who was celebrating his centenary that time. My professor and thesis adviser, the famous *Catedrático Angel Gonzalez Alvarez*, suggested that I must at least know how to read *Bergson's* original works in French. It turned out that not only did I learn to read French but to speak it, with some degree of fluency and ended up earning a diploma in French Culture and Civilization – *Cours Moyen*.

I stayed with the Assumption Sisters who closed the convent gates at 6 o'clock in the evening... so, I never had the experience of *Paris by night*. While in Paris, I had a classmate who was an assistant parish priest in London. He asked me to take his place for two months so that he could prolong his absence from his parish. It was a welcome opportunity for me to go to Hyde Park and listen to the speakers talking of varied topics, to see the changing of the Guards at the Royal Palace and, of course, to experience the London fog.

### *¡Adiós España!*

In 1961, I left Spain, despite of the request of the *Circulo Filipino de Madrid* for me to stay longer to attend to their spiritual needs. Mrs. *Lina Sevilla*, a regular columnist of the Manila Times, had published such request. However, Archbishop *Domingo* did not grant it since the late Fr. *Domingo Mallo* asked for a study leave. For this reason, the archdiocese needed someone to take over some of his duties. Later on as secretary, I came across my appointment as acting Parish Priest of Tuguegarao. This appointment, however, did not take effect, as Archbishop *Domingo* decided to appoint instead the late Msgr. *Ricardo Jamias* as Parish Priest of Tuguegarao. However, I was allowed to go home via the United States to spend some time with the La Salette Fathers, who had answered the invitation of the Bishop *Jurgens* to work in Southern Isabela. I stayed at the La Salette Mission in Southbridge, Massachusetts where I learned the strategies for mission animation. Later on, I was assigned to the La Salette Shrine in Attleboro, Massachusetts where I learned so much on the effective ways on how to promote Marian devotions. There I had the chance to meet many friends and bene-

factors who regularly visited the La Salette Shrine. I organized them to be members of the "*Dollar a Month Club*" to help the San Jacinto Seminary. This they did for many years. Some of them are still alive. I include them in my itinerary whenever I go to the USA. However, most of them have gone to the next life. Mrs. *Alice Pelletier*, whose Knights of Columbus husband, Mr. *Joseph Pelletier*, became my good friend. When Mr. *Pelletier* died, *Alice* kept their promise to come and visit me. *Alice* stayed in Tuguegarao for almost a year. When she died, she left a good amount for the San Jacinto Seminary in her will. Miss *Loreta Souci* came for my ordination. Her sister Mrs. *Doris Kelly* is still alive in her middle 80's. She and her children continue to help in our projects up to now.

### *First Assignments after Studies Abroad*

When I finally returned to the Philippines in 1962, I took the place of Msgr. *Domingo Mallo* as Chancellor. I took over his other important positions such as Director of the Catholic Action, which was then the umbrella of all the religious organizations and movements. The Central Committee of Catholic Action was headed by Judge *Virgilio Pobre*. The other officers whom I remember for their dedication were Miss *Socorro Ricerra*, the Red Cross Administrator that time, and Miss *Margarita Otero*, up to now is alive, who was the head of the Provincial Girl Scouts. Later on, the leadership of the Catholic Action was taken over by Mr. *Supremo Bautista*. The Tuguegarao Curia of the Legion of Mary was headed by Mrs. *Montserrat Gonzales Babaran*. I am happy that up to now, many are still active in the Legion of Mary: *Purita de Leon*, *Renzy Lorenzo*, *Corazon Atuan*, *Ofelia Cagurangan* and *Linden Reyes*. Ms. *Adoracion Cabreros* was then Vice Mayor of Tuguegarao

and president of the Catholic Women's League (CWL). As their spiritual director, we founded and reactivated 22 CWL units in the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao which at that time composed of the entire Cagayan Valley region. The Student Catholic Action (SCA) had taken much of my time but it was rewarding because many of our SCA officers have become very successful in their respective fields of profession: Dr. *Roger Perez*, now President of the Cagayan State University, was the president of the Archdiocesan level; Dr. *Levita Manglapus Castro*, now the Vice President of La Salette University, Santiago, was the Secretary; General *Rodolfo Alvarado*; General *Eduardo Purificacion*; Miss *Estrella Simon*, now a School District Supervisor; and Mr. *Leandro Bacuyag* who became the principal of Lal-lo High School. They all accompanied me in my many talks to the students of Cagayan Valley, motivating them to prepare themselves for future Christian leadership. As fulltime Secretary, Chancellor and instructor at the Cagayan Teachers' College, I had the opportunity to motivate our young to prepare themselves to live as responsible Christian leaders. It was at this time that we felt the need to have Catholic Action Center. For this reason, Archbishop *Domingo* tasked me to start a building where such meetings and youth gatherings can be held. This building was also intended for the training of church workers. Thus, the *Patria de Tuguegarao* started its construction. With the help of the local CWL Unit of Tuguegarao, we conducted the yearly summer *Santacruz*an inviting as many young girls to compete for the crown of *Reina Elena*. The candidate who gave the highest contribution was given the title of *Reina Elena*. All the *sagalas* marched in a colorful procession in the Marian month of May. The whole town looked forward to this yearly procession where each *sagala* participated with

titles such as *Reina Esther*, *Reina de las Flores*, etc... Each *sagala* solicited love offerings from their families and friends for the construction of the *Patria de Tuguegarao*. One unforgettable source of income for the construction was the detective play *Mousetrap*, the script of which I got in London. I directed the play and the important roles were played by the late Ms. *Candy Balao*, Mr. *Alfonso Guzman* and Mr. *Emilio Malamug*, to mention a few.

### *In the Field of Education*

In 1967, Archbishop *Domingo* asked me to establish a college in Aparri, to answer to the clamor of many parents in the coastal towns for a Catholic college. Archbishop *Domingo* had originally requested the Society of the Divine Word Fathers (SVD) to put up that much sought college. In fact, Fr. *Ambrosio Manaligod*, SVD had been assigned to open it but failed because they could not find a lot big enough for the college. Upon learning that our family owned parcels of land in Tallungan, Aparri, Archbishop *Domingo* sent me to my mother who was then living in Manila with our youngest brother *Manolo* and his wife *Afring*. I went to ask if she, as the family administrator, could give the available lot for the planned school. My mother smiled and gave me this most unforgettable answer: "*Tell Msgr. Domingo that if I can give my son to the Church, why can't I give that property to the Church?*" So the Lyceum of Aparri opened its portals, admitting first to fourth year high school and first year AB students. The late Fr. *Florencio Samus* was a big help in obtaining the needed government permit. When Archbishop *Domingo* asked Fr. *Samus* who would be the resident director, he answered: "*Who else but Fr. Dado.*" So I moved to the first wing of the building of Lyceum of Aparri which was then under construction

by the late *Inocencio Babaran*. It was a big test of faith. I knew I could teach but to start a school and run it, I had my doubts. To my consolation, Fr. *Gregorio Pagulayan* and Msgr. *Vicente Catral* gave their support and help. We had to buy many gas lamps as the electricity would be down many times. To economize, each of us took as many teaching loads we could possibly take. We did not receive any salary to save our school fund. I stayed for a while at the parish rectory in Aparri. Then, for better supervision of the school, I moved to the Lyceum of Aparri to a three by four meter room with a small adjacent kitchen. On Saturdays and Sundays, I would go to Tuguegarao for paper works, as at that time, Archbishop *Domingo* still kept me as his Chancellor and Secretary.

After a full school year at the Lyceum of Aparri, although already a holder of two doctoral degrees, I saw the need for a degree in Education. At that time, there was a great need for teachers. The nearest teacher education institutions were in Tuguegarao. So, in 1968, I went to Columbia University Teachers' College in New York, USA. Fortunately, the New York Chancery assigned me as Assistant Parish Priest of St. John the Martyr at 72nd Street, New York. The pastor, Msgr. *Stanislaus McGovern* turned out to be a supportive pastor and a very good friend. He would bring me out regularly to the finest dining restaurants. When he left his summer vacations, he would make me in charge of the parish instead of the other American parochial vicar. I helped him put in order all his canonical books. My services were returned with such generosity that it became easy for me to pay all my studies. When he died, he included me in his will. Although the inheritance was not that big, I deeply appreciate his kind gesture. While in New York, I had my chance to renew my friend-

ships with my friends in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Together with Engr. *Saturnino Domingo*, we formed the Cagayano Circle, the nucleus and eventual model of many other circles which meet once a year for Masses in honor of the Lady of Piat. These gatherings give the devotees opportunity to give their love offerings for the construction of the Basilica of Our Lady of Piat. Despite of my heavy schedule in the parish church and with my studies, I managed to meet many friends and visit Filipino families. It was also during this time that former Senator *Heherson Alvarez* and I became good friends. I graduated after two years from Columbia University with a Master's Degree of Teacher Education, obtaining the highest grade of one in all my subjects.

The Lyceum of Aparri continued its expansion. Msgr. *Vicente Catral*, Fr. *Quintin Garcia* and Fr. *Arnulfo Ventura* took care of the school during my study leave. On my return, we applied for new courses. The Graduate School level was also opened with the help of Dr. *Teresa Lazo Co.* We constructed new buildings and a gymnasium, named in memory of my late mother. It was my joy to have established the Lyceum of Aparri Hospital, the first Catholic Hospital in the region. It was also during my time that we offered the first health care course – midwifery – in Region II. While in Aparri, I was appointed Episcopal Vicar, elected president of the Priests' Assembly, Chairman of the Anti-TB Fund Campaign, and pioneered as Chairman of the Aparri Water Works. I have enjoyed the cooperation of the Municipality of Aparri. Most of its inhabitants are my blood relatives. Msgr. *Catral* and I were among the favorite of the town. Our names would appear on top of the host's list of invited guests. Aside from being a friendly recreation, we relished the excellent recipes of the Aparrianos and wit-



nessed their ballroom dancing. During the fiesta days of Aparri, which lasted for 12 days, I was chairman of at least five programs. Most of the presentations, the dances and entertainments, were naturally provided by the Lyceum students. The teachers who had pioneered the school with me were Mrs. *Florence Tan*, Mr. *Benjamin Gonzalo*, and Dr. *Herminia de Claro* who, up to now, is connected to the school. I also had a set of senior citizen friends like Miss *Adelaida Foz*, Miss *Pacing Paysan*, and Miss *Caring Caude* who visited me regularly. Mayor *Oscar Littaua*, a common cousin with Msgr. *Catral*, and his wife, *Manang Isabel Rapada Lirraua*, regularly invited us for delicious meals. I truly enjoyed my stay in Aparri which, I would jokingly say, provided me fresh air, fresh fish and fresh *chissmiss!* I was then ready to spend the rest of my life in the academe of the Lyceum of Aparri.

### ***Auxiliary Bishop of Tuguegarao***

To my surprise and disbelief, the Holy Father *John Paul II* appointed me Auxiliary Bishop of Tuguegarao, on October 18, 1983, eve of my 52nd birthday. Papal Nuncio Archbishop *Bruno Torpigliani* ordained me bishop in Tuguegarao on January 12, 1984 at the St. Peter's Cathedral. I was greatly honored with the presence of Senator *Juan* and Mrs. *Cristina Ponce Enrile*, Don *Jaime* and Doña *Bea Zobel*, Ms. *Maribel Ongpin*, Mrs. *Zenaida Quezon Avanceña*, Attys. *Alfonso* and *Yolanda Reyno*, and Dr. *Josefa Estrada*. These personalities, among the many other old time friends, stood as my sponsors. As auxiliary bishop, I continued to reside at the Lyceum of Aparri. As a member of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), I was elected chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Health Care, Chairman of the Committee on Eucharistic

Congresses, member of the Commissions on the Clergy, on the Doctrine and Faith, and co-chairman of the Commission on Missions. At one time, I was elected member of the CBCP Permanent Council. Throughout my years as chairman of the Commission on Health Care and of the Committee on Eucharistic Congresses, Ms. *Tely Somera* collaborated with me as secretary and organizer. During my frequent trips to Manila, the Blessed Sacrament Fathers in Sta. Cruz have provided me always a hospitable welcome.

### ***Archbishop of Tuguegarao***

Archbishop *Domingo*, following the law, retired at the age of 75. While in Tagaytay City for our yearly CBCP Assembly, Archbishop *Torpigliani* called me aside causally and told me that the Holy Father *John Paul II* had accepted the retirement of Archbishop *Domingo*. He told me that a new Archbishop of Tuguegarao was appointed. Naturally, I asked: "Who was the new Archbishop?" He answered: "*Un tal Obispo llamado Diosdado*." I was installed Archbishop of Tuguegarao on April 10, 1986 at the St. Peter's Cathedral.

April 10 is a historical day in the Archdiocese. On this day, the Diocese of Tuguegarao was created on April 10, 1910. The first Cagayano bishop – Most Rev. *Teodulfo Domingo* – was installed as first Archbishop of Tuguegarao on April 10, 1975. On April 10, 1996 the Shrine of Sto. Niño in San Gabriel Village, Tuguegarao City was erected. April 10, 2007 marked the Episcopal Ordination of my Auxiliary Bishop, Most Rev. *Ricardo Baccay*.

I then returned to Tuguegarao after being away for more than 20 years. Though no longer a resident of Aparri, I remain to be the President of the Lyceum. Fr. *Ranhilio*

*Aquino* took over the administration of the Lyceum of Aparri. He added new courses, especially the School of Nursing. He also helped me put up the Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary (TAMS) which today has produced more than 30 priests, not only for the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao but for the nearby ecclesiastical jurisdictions. The concept of TAMS, offering Philosophy to college graduates of other courses, was imitated by many other ecclesiastical jurisdictions. When I allowed Fr. *Aquino* to share his talents to be the Dean of Graduate School at UST and to be Executive Director of the Judiciary Academy of the Philippines under the Supreme Court of the Philippines, Fr. *Joel Reyes* took over as Executive Vice-President. He continues to add new courses and build new structures like the hospital, the canteen, the seminary building, the high school building, and the San Lorenzo Church, considered as one of the most beautiful modern structures in our Archdiocese. A new separate library building is nearing its completion.

### *Projects*

The first project I undertook was the expansion of the Archbishop's Residence. Sr. *Erlinda Bandril*, SPC was tasked by the Provincial Superior to help me. With her architectural expertise and with the financial help of benefactors abroad, we were able to construct a huge and a very practical building, the episcopal residence and seat of the curia.

In preparation for the 400 years of the organized presence of the Church in Cagayan, as the original seat of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia erected in 1595 in Lal-lo, we reconstructed and tried to put in their original form the colonial churches in our jurisdiction.

The façade of the *St. Peter's Cathedral* had a big crack and the flooring was giving in. Msgr. *Josefino Ramirez*, Chancellor of Manila, helped me get a good structural engineer – *Ceferino Sugui* – to make the needed repairs. The Diocese of Stuttgart-Rottenburg (Germany), through its Mission Director, Msgr. *Ebehard Mullbacher*, and the assistant director, Madam *Jutta Blasius*, helped us substantially. The tower was fixed. The plaster which hid the red bricks of the church was removed. It was finished just on time before the strong earthquake of July 16, 1990. Msgr. *Samuel Baculi* supervised the repairs. When he was sent to Rome for his advanced studies, Msgr. *Vicente Catral* was appointed acting parish priest. He saw to it that the church was not only repaired but beautified by changing the flooring and painting the roof. Msgr. *Marcelo Bassig* started with the construction of the rectory. The construction of the pastoral center was initiated by Bishop *Beltran*. Msgr. *Benjamin Lasam* took over the construction.

The *Ermita de San Jacinto* had many cracks inside and outside. This church is fifty years older than the Cathedral. It served as the Pro-Cathedral after the war. We really preserved its charm and antiquity. Most Rev. *Ramon Villena*, now bishop of Bayombong, started the renovations. Fr. *Dante dela Cruz* was responsible for the major repairs. Now the *Ermita* looks like one of the old mission churches in California. The beautification of the church and its surroundings continued with Fr. *Adalbert Barut*. The new rectory was constructed during the time of Fr. *Bernard Corpus*.

The reinforcement of the walls of the *St. James Parish* in Iguig was started during the term of Fr. *Ferdinand Baculi*. Later on Msgr. *Marcelo Bassig* beautified it through a beautiful ceiling. Fr. *Roger Cortez* built the life-sized

statues of the fourteen Stations of the Cross overlooking the beautiful Cagayan River. Pilgrims visit the church for a special reason. The church has a side chapel, constructed through the generosity of the late Don *Antonio Madrigal* and his wife Doña *Mandy*. The chapel houses an authenticated relic of the cross of Christ given by the late Archbishop *Torpiglini*. This priceless relic is encased within the Jubilee Cross with a reliquary adorned with precious stones donated by Mrs. *Lita Cruz*.

The *St. Philomena Parish Church* in Alcala, Cagayan is the widest church in the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao. It was also strengthened by Engr. *Sugui* during the incumbency of Bishop *Sergio Utleg*. Fr. *Luis Rey Sapaden*, through the help of the laity, led by the now Governor of Cagayan, *Alvaro Antonio*, removed the columns in between. A beautiful altar was constructed through the initiative of Fr. *Danilo Valdepeñas*. When entirely finished, it will be a real tourist attraction. It is historical since it was the place of refuge of the Bishop of Nueva Segovia who fled during the time of the Katipunan. He stayed for more than a year in Alcala while waiting for a boat to Aparri, and later to bring him to Manila. The renovation of the *Sto. Domingo Church* in Lal-lo was started by Fr. *Henry Singayan*. However, it was during the time of Msgr. *Narciso Allag* and, later, Msgr. *Marcelo Bassig* that the beautification was finished. Fr. *Dante dela Cruz* beautified the patio frontage, keeping in a prominent place the old wooden cross, which the people believe to have stopped the erosion of the river that could have eaten the entire Poblacion of Lal-lo. Msgr. *Antonio Sibayan* has added a beautiful Perpetual Adoration Chapel.

The *Parish of San Jacinto de Polonia* in Camalaniugan takes pride of possessing the oldest bell in the Far East: the *Sancta Maria*, made in 1505. Fr. *Rotillo Mamauag*

constructed a new tower for it. The old church, started by the late Fr. *Telesforo Cordova*, and later improved and enlarged by subsequent parish priests, gave way. A new beautiful church was constructed by Rev. Fr. *Camilo Castillejo* with the aid of his parishioners.

Although the Franciscans Fathers made the needed reinforcements of the *Sta. Ana Church* in Buguey, its beautification took place during the administration of Rev. Fr. *Noel Adolfo* and is presently continued by the current pastor, Fr. *Luis Sapaden*.

The only remaining part of the *St. Peter Church* in Pamplona then was the façade. Earlier, the pastor and the parishioners agreed to tear it down, to give way to a new church. While they constructed a pastoral center, a new church was also already under construction. Knowing the history of the Church and its architectural beauty – the façade and some of the old thick walls are still standing – I consulted an engineer about the possibility of its reconstruction. Luckily, we received an affirmative answer. I then invited Atty. *Egon Cayosa*, a native of Pamplona, to join me in meeting the parish priest, Fr. *Jerome Adriatico*, now the Provincial Superior of the SVD Fathers in Northern Luzon, and some of the parish lay leaders, among them were Mrs. *Ifurung* and the late Ms. *Iluminada Cayosa*. They were convinced to reconstruct the church instead of putting up a new structure. Fund campaigns were started then at the Christ the King Mission Seminary in Quezon City where the late Atty. and Mrs. *Bienvenido Quirolgico* gave a substantial amount as seed money. The *Valera* sisters, now Human Rights Commissioner, *Purificacion Quisumbing* and, Professor, Dr. *Clarina Raviña*, were among the first Pamploneses to help in the fund raising campaign. Now, the Church is fully reconstructed. *Epie Bangalan* and her

sister, now Vice Mayor, *Bessie Bangalan*, put up a beautiful adoration chapel adjacent to the old church.

The *St. Raymund Peñafort Church* of Rizal has been declared by the National Center for Culture and the Arts as one of the Heritage Churches in the Philippines. The Commission on Cultural Heritage is presently helping us in its full reconstruction. Its reconstruction was earlier started by the CICM missionaries and was later followed by their diocesan successors, particularly, Frs. *Federico Fabian*, *Alex Caurel* and *Macario Malano*, present pastor.

New churches were built to respond to the growing number of Catholics in Cagayan. One of the first pastoral plans that I wanted to implement, when I took over as local ordinary, was to create another parish in Tuguegarao City. Though there were already existing *barangay* parishes in *Cataggamman* and *Annafunan*, the Parish of St. Peter's Cathedral could not attend to the growing number of Catholics in the city. We seriously attempted to erect the *Ermita de San Jacinto* to be a parish but the Board of Consultors, with just reason, thought it was too near the Cathedral. Meantime, a delegation of people from San Gabriel, headed by their *Barangay* Captain, Mr. *Ruben Santiago*, with Mrs. *Encarnacion Toledo*, Mrs. *Helen Morales* and Miss *Cipriana Gayagoy*, paid me a visit, to report that more and more people in San Gabriel were being converted to other religious sects. To respond to this problem, Msgr. *Vicente Catral* volunteered to say Masses on Sundays in different places, first, in the multipurpose hall, then in the private home of Mr. *David Catral*. Providently, we were informed that there was a foreclosed property by the Philippine National Bank (PNB) in that village. Through the help of the late Mr. *Pedro Apeles*, a friend from Bacolod City and one of the PNB Directors, we were able to acquire

that property. With the help of Engr. *Robert Guzman*, the construction began. Meantime, the *Rosary Group*, led by the pious residents of San Gabriel, conducted a series of fundraisings. Their efforts gave birth to a beautiful modern structure – the ***Sto. Niño Parish Church*** – considered as one of the most beautiful churches in the Valley. The Rectory was built in a lot, partially acquired from a donation from Mrs. *Monina Plan*, and from a token sale from Mr. and Mrs. *Perfecto Macababbad* and Mr. *Arteza*. Msgr. *Gerard Ariston Perez* continued what Msgr. *Catral* started by forming the faithful. Bishop *Ricardo Baccay*, during his incumbency as pastor, put up the nice pastoral center. The present parish priest, Fr. *Bernard Corpus*, is putting up a tower for the carillon bells, the first in Region II. The bells were purchased from Belgium, through the fund campaigns of the parishioners and from the solicited funds from friends and benefactors of Msgr. *Catral* in USA.

Even with the creation of the Sto. Niño Parish, the need to attend to the pastoral demands of the faithful in the northern *barangays* of Tuguegarao City was considered. From the lot donated by the late Dr. and Mrs. *Gregorio Reyes* and family – particularly their daughters, Dr. *Remedios Amistad* and Ms. *Gloria Villaflor* – another beautiful modern structure – the ***Divine Mercy Parish Church*** – was erected in *Barangay Leonarda*. Fr. *Franklin Manibog*, the incumbent pastor, was able to get the cooperation of the flock. Presently, the construction of the Rectory and Pastoral Center is in full swing. Mrs. *Samia Abraham Henrage* freely offered her residence across the church to serve as temporary rectory. The Divine Mercy Parish shall be declared Archdiocesan Shrine soon.

The ***Church of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage Parish*** in Tallang, Baggao was constructed through the



initiative of the lay faithful. Even without a permanent pastor, they constructed a beautiful church. This prompted us to appoint a permanent parish priest in the person of Fr. *Bienvenido Umandap, Jr.* The Sisters of St. Peter Claver based in Rome sponsored the construction of the beautiful rectory. At the moment, Fr. *Ramiro Geronimo* is putting up a pastoral center and a kindergarten school building complex.

The *Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Church* was constructed by Fr. *Giovani Piva*, OFM in Casambalangan, Sta. Ana. It is an artistic church with delicate wood carvings. Other new churches were constructed: *St. Francis Church* in Mauanan, Rizal; *St. Roche* in Naruangan, Tuao; *St. Vincent Ferrer* in Cordova, Amulung; the *San Lorenzo Ruiz* at the Lyceum of Aparri; and, the *Holy Cross* in Ballesteros.

A gothic church was built by the late Bishop *Odilo Etspueller*, SVD in Sanchez Mira. However, this structure was torn down during the time of Fr. *Jerzy Jagodzinski*, SVD to give way to the construction of a bigger church which could accommodate the growing number of Catholics in that town. Fr. *Edward Prawdzyk* completely changed the old church built by the late Fr. *Ambrosio Manaligod*, SVD in Abulug since it was destroyed by a typhoon. The church built by Fr. *Prawdzyk* is spacious, beautiful and equipped with what is perhaps the best sound system in the region.

The lot, where the old church of Cataggaman is located, is about to be eaten by the erosion caused by the mighty currents of the Cagayan River. The late Fr. *John Iringan* started the construction of a beautiful church in a newly acquired lot also in Catagamman. The construction was continued by Bishop *Baccay*. Then it was finished and embellished by the late Msgr. *Narciso Allag* and Msgr. *Cesar Tagal*. The present pastor, Fr. *Dante Sabban*, has started the construction of a new rectory. Cataggaman

Church was patterned after the style of Peñablanca Church, built by Rev. *Jovencio Masirag*, as the old church constructed by the Rev. Fr. *Roger Cortez* was completely destroyed by the typhoon. One of the most imposing churches, with a matching rectory, was built by Msgr. *Cesar Tagal* in Nabaccayan. Fr. Cortez built the beautiful adoration chapel. Rev. Fr. *Othelo Bartolome*, the incumbent pastor, has embellished it more. It has been declared as a Eucharistic Center. This is the only parish in the Archdiocese with many barrio chapels which met the canonical requirements of reposing permanently the Blessed Sacrament. Msgr. *Antonio Sibayan* enlarged substantially the Gonzaga Church built by Fr. *Antonino Sernagiotto*, OFM. The rectory was beautified by the incumbent pastor, Fr. *Bienvenido Umandap, Jr.* The San Isidro Labrador Parish Church in Lasam was built by Fr. *Camilo Castillejo*. The church has been beautified by Fr. *Celso Lagasca* and was enlarged by Fr. *Othelo Bartolome*. The church continues to be embellished by the incumbent pastor, Fr. *Antonio Pintucan*. The Church in Solana, with the coordination of the parishioners and with the special support of the then Mayor *Rodrigo de Asis*, has been completely enlarged through the removal of the pillars inside and a completely new roof. A beautiful rectory was constructed by the late Fr. *Jaime Sales, Jr.* Fr. *Ricardo Pagaddu* has entirely beautified the façade of the old church of Enrile. Sto. Niño Church has been given a new look with the construction of a very beautiful rectory initiated by Fr. *Danilo Valdepeñas* and beautified by its incumbent pastor, Rev. Fr. *Noel Malana*.

### ***The Devotion to Our Lady of Piat***

Most outstanding of all these constructions is the Basilica Minore of Our Lady of Piat. Its construction has

been a long dream. In fact, Archbishop *Domingo* started the construction of a new shrine at the old Sto. Domingo Parish Church grounds in Piat. But after putting up the posts, the construction was stopped since the people really wanted the shrine to be constructed in its original site, the site of the old *ermita*. Right after my installation as Archbishop of Tuguegarao, the cornerstone was blessed at the St. Peter's Cathedral with Senator *Juan* and Mrs. *Cristina Ponce Enrile* as sponsors. Attys. *Alfonso* and *Yolanda Reyno* heavily helped in the initial preparations of the Piat Foundation and of the construction of the shrine. The actual construction did not start till 1988, after Mrs. *Cristina Ponce Enrile* had the plan made by Architect *Bautista*. She chaired the Our Lady of Piat Foundation which was responsible in raising the desired amount for its construction. With their help and the generosity of benefactors abroad, we were able to develop a worthy pilgrims' complex with a very beautiful church where the more than four hundred years old image of the Lady of Piat is venerated. The new structure was blessed by the late Archbishop of Manila, *Jaime Cardinal Sin*. Adjacent to the church is the tallest belfry in the region housing the sonorous bells from Belgium. The Basilica Complex takes pride of a beautifully landscaped Rosary Walk Garden. The Pilgrims' Inn was built to cater to the needs of pilgrims from different places. The collection of precious materials related to the devotion to Our Lady of Piat and other ecclesiastical art works at the Piat Heritage Museum was collected through the efforts of Fr. *Macario Malano* and Fr. *Fredel Agatep*, current museum curator. The late Pope *John Paul II* delegated His Eminence *Javierre Cardinal Ortas*, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in Rome, to preside over

the inauguration liturgy of the new Minor Basilica. The Quadricentennial Anniversary of the Arrival of the Image of Our Lady of Piat from Macau and the Golden Anniversary of the Canonical Coronation of the Image was graced by *Francesco Cardinal Marchisano* from Rome and by the Apostolic Nuncio *Antonio Franco* in 2004.

Aside from the efforts of the local parishioners of Piat, the love offerings of the devotees from Cagayan and other places in the Philippines, international groups also raised substantial amounts.

The devotees of Our Lady of Piat based in Manila, under the leadership of Dr. *Carolina T. Prada*, have organized, for more than 30 years, an annual Mass at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City. The Mass is scheduled on a Saturday falling nearest to July 2, feast of the Lady. Their love offerings were entirely given to the Church and served as the seed money for the construction of the Piat Basilica.

Several groups abroad meet once a year for a Mass in honor of Our Lady of Piat. On such occasions, they give their love offerings for the construction of the Basilica in Piat. For the past many years, I personally went abroad to preside these Piat devotions. In my absence, Msgr. *Vicente Catral* or any of my priests would go. Msgr. *Joseph Chacko* of the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao acts as our Mission Representative in the USA. These are the Our Lady of Piat devotees' groups and their respective coordinators abroad: **Chicago, Illinois:** Dr. and Mrs. *Vivencio Battung*, Commissioner *Teresita Bulan Sagun*, Mrs. *Elizabeth Castro*, Mr. *Romy Gumila* and the other past presidents; **New Jersey Area:** Dr. *Sylvia Guballa*, Engr. *Ninoy Domingo*, and Mrs. *Zeny P. Abbariao*; **Terre Haute, Indiana:** Mr. *Eddie Gonzales* and Dr. *Bob Avena*; **Washington, DC Area:** Mrs.

*Marilen G. Pascaran, Mr. and Mrs. Vicente Sarangay, Mr. and Mrs. Jose Talamayan Perez, and, Mr. Tomas Mallonga; Tams River, New Jersey: Dr. Randy C. Talamayan; Westfield, Massachusetts: Mrs. Edith Talamayan-Angco; Providence, Rhode Island: Mrs. Doris Kelly; Los Angeles Area: Ms. Vivian Hawkins, Mrs. Edith Medina, and Mrs. Raymunda Sugimoto; San Diego, California: Mrs. Visie Reyes Refugia, Mr. Rollie River, and Mrs. Ditas Guzman; San Francisco Area: Mrs. Danita Reyes Casareno, Mrs. Rema Zafrini, Mrs. Aeropagita Bayao, and, Mrs. Chita Sinon; Mississauga: Mrs. Zeny C. Guzman, Dr. Solon Guzman, Dr. Venus B. Guzman; Nanaimo, British Columbia: Mrs. Dina Ramos Haaland; Vancouver: Mr. Saturnino de Yro, Mrs. Riching Achanzar and Mr. Tomas Pagalilauan; Calgary: Mr. and Mrs. Henry Casuga and Mr. Melchor Villa.*

### ***Other Constructions***

As Catholicism increased in the Archdiocese, more spiritual demands have to be taken into consideration. To nourish us spiritually with their prayers and sacrifices, we invited the Poor Clare Sisters to establish a monastery in Bayo, Iguig. This beautiful structure on top of a hill is the local church's powerhouse of prayer. The Villa Domingo Renewal Center in Maddarulug, Solana was constructed to cater to the spiritual formation of the faithful through retreats, seminars and other activities. Aware of the need to form and build the youth in their faith, the Archdiocesan Youth Center at the *Ermita de San Jacinto* was built. To continue forming and training the faithful, especially the lay, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center at the St. Peter's Cathedral Compound will soon be blessed and inaugurated. It will house the different offices of the pastoral commissions and organizations of the Archdiocese.

## *New Parishes*

As a simple priest and President of the Priests' Assembly, I invited in 1982 at the Lyceum of Aparri, Bishop *Cirilo Almario, Jr.* with his then Financial Secretary, now Bishop *Deogracias Iñiguez*, to facilitate the Priests' Assembly. This was the forerunner of the First Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly. The presbyterium, with the facility and skills of Bishop *Almario*, had already identified the need to take care more of the barrio folks who were proselytized to other religious sects. With this pastoral concern, we have erected barangay parishes: San Vicente Ferrer Parish in Pattao, Buguey; Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Casambalangan, Sta. Ana; Santo Niño Parish in San Gabriel, Tuguegarao City; Holy Family Parish in Gadu, Solana; Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in Tallang, Baggao; San Roque Parish in Naruangan, Tuao; St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Mauanan, Rizal; and, Divine Mercy Parish in Leonarda, Tuguegarao City.

## *Institutes of Consecrated Life*

As the spiritual fervor of the faithful increased, more pastoral concerns arose. Thus, the need for new charisms was felt. Appreciative of the labors of the original religious congregations of women working in our ecclesiastical jurisdiction – the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, the Daughters of St. Paul, the Franciscan Apostolic Sisters and the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres – we have gradually invited new institutes of consecrated life to collaborate in our work of saving souls and enrich us with various charisms.

The *Poor Sisters of St. Clare*, a community of contemplative sisters dedicated to prayer and contemplation were invited to journey with us in our life as a praying

community. Their love for the Eucharist serves as an assurance to their commitment to be the prayer reservoir of the Archdiocese. The *Holy Spirit Sisters* of the *Opus Spiritus Sancti* Movement based in Germany help in the formation of the faithful by maintaining the Villa Domingo Renewal Center. With their life of witnessing, they were able to awaken among some local girls the vocation to the religious life. The *Missionaries of Charity* of Blessed *Theresa of Calcutta* are sisters who take care of the abandoned, undernourished, malnourished and orphaned children in Aparri, Cagayan. Living a life of prayer and compassionate care for the underprivileged, the sisters had attracted easily the cooperation of benefactors and native vocations. The construction of their charitable center was made possible through the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. *Mario Pablo* who donated the lot. The *Sisters of the Poor of St. Catherine*, based in Tuao and, recently, in Tuguegarao, were invited to help in the apostolate and evangelization of the youth. They give spiritual formation, particularly, to the out of school youth. The collaboration of the *Blessed Virgin Mary Sisters* in USA has enriched the formation of children and adults through the frequent visits of Sr. *Susan Marie Alconcher*, BVM. She had helped in catechizing the adults by preparing them for confirmation and marriage. Recently, the *Holy Face Sisters* had arrived to help Fr. *Roger Cortez* in spreading Eucharistic adoration and witnessing. The sisters had just opened a school for young children in Cabaritan, Ballesteros.

Though originally founded in the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao by Fr. *Gerry Filippetto*, OFM, the *Franciscan Apostolic Sisters*, received the formal decree of erection of their congregation from me. I was also instrumental in the acquisition of their status as a religious institute of

Pontifical Right. Today, the sisters serve the Church in the USA and Papua New Guinea.

Thankful for the generous work of male religious congregations in the Archdiocese – the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM), the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) and the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) –, all parishes in Cagayan have their resident pastors.

With the reorganization of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Prelature of Batanes-Babuyanes, the ***Dominican Fathers*** (OP) have come back to labor in Cagayan when the islands of the Babuyanes were included, by virtue of a Papal Bull, within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao.

### ***Lay Groups, Organizations and Movements***

More lay faithful are now conscious of their active role in the Church. Lay groups, movements and organizations are flourishing throughout the Archdiocese. All the existing religious groups like the Legion of Mary, Catholic Women's League, *Apostolado de la Oración*, *Adoración Nocturna*, Knights of Columbus, and Holy Name Society were given the needed support. They continue to be a big help in the apostolate of the Church. However, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, new organizations and movements were organized.

The ***Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals*** (BCBP), under the leadership of Atty. & Mrs. *Pedro Perez*, Engr. *Ignacio* and Dr. *Teresita Carag*, and Mr. and Mrs. *Oscar Gannaban*, has helped a lot of people by training them to be exemplary working Christians. They had made their presence felt through a deeper spiritual life in their family and work.



The *Mother Butlers' Guild*, through the leadership of the late Mrs. *Asuncion Baculi*, as president, and her successors, Mrs. *Balbina Fermin* and Dr. *Paz Sales*, help us to celebrate the liturgy with dignity by providing us with beautiful vestments. They also see to it that the church linens are always clean.

The *Parish Renewal Experience* (PREX), through Msgr. *Fidelis Limcaoco* and his parishioners, most notably, General and Mrs. *Guillermo Picache*, was introduced in the different parishes of the archdiocese. They trained our faithful through several PREX classes. Their first Spiritual Directors were Fr. *Jovencio Masirag* and Msgr. *Marcelo Bassig*. Some laymen like Mr. and Mrs. *Salvador Caguran* and Miss *Leticia Doctolero*, to mention few, have shared their experience to many parishes. A good number of parishes now have their own PREX classes. The first PREX classes in the Diocese of Ilagan were conducted by the Tuguegarao PREX core group. As a result, many lay faithful have become committed to the Church.

Mr. & Mrs. *Edwin Andrews* introduced the *Couples for Christ* in Solana, Cagayan during the time of Msgr. *Antonio Sibayan* as pastor. This beautiful family movement has been introduced in many parishes of the archdiocese. The group worked harmoniously with the already active *Marriage Encounter* which sanctified many families before and after I became the Archbishop.

The *Volunteers in Prison Service*, headed by Miss *Leticia Doctolero*, has been compassionately caring for those who are in prison. They faithfully minister to the spiritual needs of prisoners. They would help me to reach out to prisoners every Christmas and Prison Apostolate Awareness Sunday. I also remember, in a special way,

Ms. *Leticia Villar* and her prayer group who also help us in this apostolate.

The *Basic Ecclesial Communities* (BEC), a new way of being Church, has been talked about and introduced by the La Salette Fathers already before. However, the initial efforts did not catch the interest of the people. Through the Northern Luzon Forum, led and organized by Archbishop *Orlando Quevedo* and Bishop *Francisco Claver*, BEC was reintroduced. After many sessions with these two prelates, who were once in Mindanao but found themselves assigned in Northern Luzon, we ventured to introduce this pastoral program in the archdiocese. Msgr. *Gerard Ariston Perez* and Rev. *Manuel Vicente Catral* were trained. Both of them did everything to make the Itawes region a real BEC oriented vicariate. Now, BECs exist in many parishes of the Archdiocese.

I formed the *Serra International of Tuguegarao*, through the help of Mrs. *Petrona Bucad Lim*, the National President of the club. This club, named after the evangelizer of California, Blessed *Junipero Serra*, aims to provide for the spiritual and material needs of future priests. The group helps a good number of seminarians. To name a few members, we have Miss *Leticia Doctolero*, Mrs. *Marilou Baquiran*, Mr. *Supremo Bautista*, Ms. *Linda Sarail*, Mr. *Elmer de Yro*, Mr. and Mrs. *Oscar Gannaban*, and Tourism Director *Blessida Diwa*, present club president.

### ***Other Significant Programs and Activities***

Since I started to be the Ordinary of the See of Tuguegarao, programs and activities have not stopped. Very notable among them was the First Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly (FAPA). Its decrees were fruits of workshops,

seminars, conferences and surveys from the *barangay* to the Archdiocesan levels. The Jubilee Year 2000 has been preceded by three years of preparation: 1997, Year of God the Son; 1998, Year of God the Holy Spirit; 1999, Year of God the Father. Many liturgical activities and seminars were held stressing on the roles of the three Divine Persons. During the Year of the Holy Spirit, Msgr. *Narciso Allag* and Msgr. *Vicente Catral* joined me visiting all parishes and, practically, all barrios for confirmations. The Jubilee Year 2000 was truly a time of grace and renewal.

Remembered up to now was the 400th Year Celebration of the Arrival of the Lady of Piat held in 2004. The role of Mary as Mother and Queen of the Cagayan Valley was greatly stressed. During the grand celebration held on June 20, 2004, numerous bishops, hundreds of priests, religious and lay people came from all parts of the country and from abroad. Unforgettable was the nine day fluvial procession of the Lady of Piat from Aparri to Tuguegarao. The procession took place by following the majestic Cagayan River and tracing the voyage of the Miraculous Image of the Blessed Mother in 1604 when it arrived in Lal-lo, the former city of Nueva Segovia. Governor *Edgar Lara* and the local municipal mayors and officials gave their full support to this event. In connection with the Quadricentennial celebrations, three important books were produced – first, one prepared by the Devotees of Our Lady of Piat Foundation, under the care of Dr. *Luis Evangelista*, second, was the souvenir program edited by Fr. *Bernard Corpus*, and third, the most researched book *Yena Tam Ngamin* by Mr. *Roberto Caballero*. It has now become a collector's item. To trace the origins of the Lady of Piat, I joined the group of Mr. *Caballero* to Macao where the Image came from. Ms. *Josephine Darang* in

her well read column *Purely Personal* in *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* covered the events as they unfolded. She has been very instrumental in spreading here and abroad the devotion to Our Lady of Piat.

I attribute to the maternal providence of Our Lady of Piat, whose image was brought by the Dominican friars from Macao, those Chinese friends who came along to help me in my apostolic undertakings. Aside from the generous Chinese community in Tuguegarao, I befriended generous Chinese people from other places. I am so grateful to have met Miss *Elvira Yap-Go*, my co-helper in our Biblical and Eucharistic apostolates. Her generous self-giving is very much appreciated. Another kind hearted Chinese friend and benefactor is Ambassador *Antonio Cabangon Chua* who has not failed to help in the different projects of the archdiocese. The *Wongchuking* family, particularly Mr. and Mrs. *Alexander Wongchuking*, has continually supported our priests and their projects. The deep Marian devotion to the Lady of Piat of Mr. and Mrs. *Alberto Pua*, and of Mrs. *Juanita Ngo* is worth emulating.

I thank God for all the opportunities given us to help the dynamic Christian lives of our people. Through the untiring and sincere support of the clergy – both Diocesan and Religious –, the efforts of our Catholic Institutions – not only the substantial active collaboration of the laity in both the governmental and non-governmental organizations –, and most especially, the religious organizations and movements, recent surveys reveal that there has been an increase of Catholics in Cagayan. When I took over, the estimated number was more than 80% of the population. Now that I am about to turnover my office, the number of Catholics has increased to more

than 90%. This is proven by the number of Sunday churchgoers – all of our churches are overflowing with people. The number of parishes created during my incumbency is a proof that we have generously responded to the call of evangelization. The active participation of the lay faithful in our parishes indicates that we did not only grow in quantity but also we have improved in quality.

### ***My Priests***

Aware of the need to form more future priests, I have always encouraged the faithful to be generous and helpful in supporting spiritually and financially our seminarians. Aside from organizations dedicated to such cause like the Serra Club and Catholic Priesthood Foundation, some individual lay faithful like Ambassador *Albert* and Mrs. *Gretchen del Rosario*, Ambassador *Frank Alba*, Dame *Carmen Carag*, Mrs. *Rose Padilla Gallego*, Ms. *Kay Tungcul*, and Ms. *Nina Battad*, have regularly contributed to the support of our seminarians. Mrs. *Lourdes Alunan Fernandez*, Mrs. *Elsa Alunan Poblador* and Ms. *Josefa Alunan* have continued the family tradition to financially provide for needy seminarians. The *Madrigal* family, especially the late Don *Antonio Madrigal* and wife Doña *Mandy*; Dame *Chito Madrigal* and husband, Ambassador *Manuel Collantes*; and, Mrs. *Ising Madrigal* and husband, Dr. *Daniel Vasquez*, have always generously helped not only our seminarians but also other projects of the archdiocese. The archdiocese is thankful to Fr. *Moises Cabrera* who continually shares with us his blessings.

As I am about to retire, I continue to support and provide for priests entrusted to my care. When I was appointed

Shepherd of God's people in the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao, I made it a point to sincerely love and understand my principal collaborators – the priests whom the Good Shepherd has given me. I accepted them as a Father would embrace the good qualities and weaknesses of his children. I thank them for their wonderful and selfless collaboration. Throughout the years, I have encouraged them to cultivate their talents and sent many of them for further studies locally and in foreign universities. Their ongoing formation had always been attended to. In fact, our presbyterium has the most number of professionalized clergy in Northern Luzon. Thanks to the *Opus Spiritus Sancti* Priests' Movement, the *Opus Dei* fathers and the Priests' Assist Program for helping in the ongoing formation of our priests. Several priests have undergone renewal programs here and abroad. The Archdiocese of Chicago has always helped in the ongoing formation of our clergy by providing renewal programs at the St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois.

Yes, as I am about to bow out, I still think of the welfare of my priests. I have initiated the fund campaign for the Priests' Foundation, to provide for the hospitalization of the clergy. Through their initiative, my talented priests have staged *Amami*, a series of concerts to raise funds for the Priests' Foundation. Who can forget the much acclaimed performances of the F-5 – Frs. *Adrian Baculi*, *Andres Gumangan*, *Dante Sabban*, *Antonio Pintucan* and *Bernard Corpus* – who with their beautiful voices and dances have charmed the audience?

In the field of education, the Tuguegarao Archdiocesan School System, through the leadership of the former

superintendents, Fr. *Ranhilio Aquino* and Msgr. *Juan Quinto*, and the ongoing efforts of the present superintendent, Msgr. *Benjamin Lasam*, helped me established three colleges – Lyceum of Aparri, St. Joseph's College in San Jose, Baggao, and Lyceum of Tuao – and several parochial high schools. Through the support and expertise of Dr. *Levita Castro*, many of our schools have survived.

The role of governance in my ecclesiastical jurisdiction was made easier through the kind collaboration of my former Vicars General – Msgr. *Benjamin Lasam*, Bishop *Rodolfo Beltran*, the late Msgr. *Narciso Allag* – and my present *alter egos*, Bishop *Ricardo Baccay* and Msgr. *Samuel Baculi*. I acknowledge the wonderful help extended by the past and present Episcopal Vicars, members of the board of consultors and presbyteral council. I am very grateful to my secretaries: Msgr. *Vicente Catral*, Fr. *Ranhilio Aquino*, Bishop *Ricardo Baccay*, Msgr. *Gerard Ariston Perez*, Fr. *Bernard Corpus*, Fr. *Stephen Simangan*, Fr. *Andres Gumangan* and Fr. *Fredel Agatep*. To the chairmen of the different archdiocesan pastoral commissions, my collaborators in responding to the work of evangelization, I am so impressed by your labors and sacrifices. In a particular way, I wish to thank those who worked in the Social Action Center, Bishop *Sergio Utleg*, Fr. *Constancio Floria*, and Fr. *Gary Agcaoili*. Fr. *Manuel Vicente Catral* continues this wonderful apostolate with the people in need of the Church's maternal help. I remember, in a special way, those priests who quietly do their ministry in small and faraway parishes. Indeed, this is my opportunity to express my gratitude to all the priests, living and departed, who worked with me. May God reward your silent sacrifices!

## *As the Sun Sets Down*

To show my love and concern for the priests entrusted to me, I intend to bequeath them two legacies: a retirement home – to take care of their physical needs when they are sick or retired –, and the Eucharistic Healers of Mary – to take care of their spiritual necessities in their advanced years.

A couple of years ago, I realized that I was nearing 75 years old. The retirement home built by my predecessor was turned into a Retreat House because it was not conducive for old and aged residents since it is a two storey building. Meantime, around five priests are nearing or are in their 80's. While strong enough to stay in parishes as "*adscrito*", I really felt the need of a retirement home, with all the needed facilities of sick and old priests. When the Holy Father accepts my retirement, I know I would not have a home to go to, for we have lost our ancestral home. I opted not to build a home of my own or buy a condominium in Manila. Other aging priests also started to worry where they would spend the last years of their lives.

Having brought this problem to some Cagayanos living in Manila, they thought of reviving the Our Lady of Piat Foundation, led by Doña *Cristina Ponce Enrile*, and helped, in a special way, by Attys. *Alfonso* and *Yolanda Reyno*. However, the Devotees of Our Lady of Piat Foundation, Inc. was born. The core group elected General *Edgar* and Mrs. *Marinette Aglipay*, chairman and vice chairman, respectively. They sponsored different fund campaigns: a golf tournament in Manila, raffle draws, and souvenir programs by soliciting advertisements from



businessmen and private citizens. At the moment, the said foundation has graciously invited Mr. *Jose Mari Chan*, a personal friend and benefactor of ours, to perform for free in Manila. Its initial project was to finish the needed facilities of the Piat Basilica Minore. However, the foundation extended its generosity by helping us raise funds for the retirement home. They have helped us with a substantial amount to start and finish the Clergy Retirement Home, now nearing its completion in Maddarulug, Solana, Cagayan. Doña *Cristina Ponce Enrile*, Mrs. *Carmen Carag*, Mrs. *Aurora Lazo*, Dr. *Luis Evangelista*, Mrs. *Belen Pascual*, Mr. *Jose* and Mrs. *Rose Tan*, Miss *Jesusa Taguinod*, Miss *Josephine Darang*, and Mrs. *Evelyn del Rosario*, to mention a few, are among the active members of this foundation. Now, we feel that we have a home to go at our old, sick or retired age.

The Eucharistic Healers of Mary was conceived out of God's providence. I was appointed then as chairman of two CBCP commissions: Health Care and Eucharistic Congresses. Combining the core apostolate of these two commissions resulted to a discovery of a unique charism: the healing of the sick through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the power of the Eucharist. This pious union of diocesan right started with three aspirants. With the help of Msgr. *Vicente Catral*, the number of aspirants increased. With one priest and three deacons who are about to be ordained to the priesthood, the pious union has survived through the generosity of our benefactors, especially, Ambassador *Shirley Vicario*, Mr. *William Uy* and Mr. *Jayson Pascual*. With the help of some diocesan and religious priests, the group intends to serve the sick and the aged, especially those priests needing spiritual care – to hear their confession, to accompany them, assist or

celebrate the Eucharist with them and other apostolic works relevant to their charism. As the Good Shepherd does not leave His sheep untended, I wish to provide my priests not only a physical structure to shelter them but, more importantly, with people who will take care of them with compassion and spiritual support.

As the journey continues, the story of my life does not end with my retirement since I am convinced that there is life after retirement. All I need to discover day by day is how to be docile to the potent hands of God who has abundantly blessed me with perseverance and faithfulness. Yes, God does not look on our successes in life. Rather, what matters to Him is our faithfulness. As the sun sets, I realize that everything I have written is God's grace. I have been a recipient of two precious gifts: my dignity as a child of God which I received in Baptism, and, the gift of the priesthood which I received through Sacred Ordination.

When I was baptized, I was named DIOSDADO – *given by God*. When I became a priest, I remained to be called DIOSDADO, but this time, instead of being given by God, I want to interpret it as *given to God...* This I intend to be till the end of my life... to build the Body of Christ!

†DIOSDADO A. TALAMAYAN, D.D.

*Archbishop of Tuguegarao*

*September 8, 2007*

*Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

## CANON LAW SECTION

### Cases and Inquiries

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JAVIER GONZÁLEZ, OP

#### PLACE AND PARTICIPATION OF NON-ORDAINED MEMBERS (COOPERATOR BROTHERS) IN CLERICAL RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

##### QUESTION:

*It is a fact that some religious Institutes of clerical nature have non-ordained members (Cooperator Brothers) fully incorporated into their bosom. Some of those institutions, like for instance the Order of Preachers or Dominicans, started doing so from the early years of their foundation. This sounds to me a little strange: Is it not a contradiction for a clerical religious institute to have non-clerics among its members? How do non-ordained members fit into a clerical religious institute? What is the canonical status of the Cooperator Brothers within their clerical institute? To what extent can these non-ordained members share in the leadership and government of their respective clerical institutes? Can they, for instance, become Superiors or exercise power of governance? Thank you in advance for your enlightenment.*

## **ANSWER:**

The issues raised in the above formulated questions, practical as they may be in their application, are quite technical in nature and they seem not to have an easy answer, especially the last two questions! Yet I will try my best to address them, at least in a general fashion and from the canonical perspective, basing my answer not only on the related provisions of church law, but also on some personal views on the matter.

I wish to start by saying two things: one, that the above statement on the historical presence of non-ordained members side by side with ordained ones within some religious institutes of clerical nature is true and it is still existing; second, that the vocation of those non-ordained members (known with different names in the past but predominantly called "Cooperator Brothers") is a splendid one and worth being upheld, in spite that it may presently be in need of an urgent redefinition, given the acute identity crisis it is going through in different parts of the world. I wonder where the cause or causes of it may be found; perhaps not as much in its theoretical definition as in its practical application to persons and places...

Having said this, let us go straight to the questions formulated:

### **1. How do non-ordained members fit in clerical religious institutes?**

Non-ordained members fit perfectly well in clerical religious institutes, I should say; and it is not difficult to understand it, if we have a correct knowledge of what a clerical religious institute is.

According to the provisions of the Code of canon law, religious institutes – Orders and Congregations – are categorized either as *clerical* or *lay*. (Interestingly, the Code acknowledges that the state of consecrated life by its very nature is neither clerical nor lay; yet, religious institutes are labeled as being one or the other!). A religious institute is considered to be *clerical* if it meets the following three distinctive criteria:

- 1) If it is under the direction of clerics;
- 2) If it assumes the exercise of sacred orders; and
- 3) If it is recognized as such (clerical) by the authority of the Church (cf c. 588 §2).

These three criteria are to be taken *all together*, since each one of them by itself does not seem to be enough to determine the clerical nature of an institute. However, is each of these three criteria to be understood as “absolute” or rather “*ut in pluribus*”? In other words, does the fact of being “under the direction of clerics” mean that *all* its authorities or superiors have to be clerics? Does the assumption of “the exercise of sacred orders” mean that *all* its members have to be ordained? And, finally, does the fact of being “recognized as a clerical institute by the authority of the Church” mean that *all* its members, or at least *most* of them, have to be clerics? The answer is that the three requirements are not to be taken absolutely in themselves, but rather *ut in pluribus*. Thus,

1) The fact of “being under the direction of clerics” (*sub moderamine clericorum*) does not mean that all the superiors of the institute have necessarily to be clerics. (The previous Code required *majority* of the superiors being clerics; the present one does not expressly require it and, in

theory, it would be enough that the supreme Moderator be a cleric);

2) The assumption of “the exercise of sacred orders” does not mean that all members of the institute have to be necessarily ordained; and

3) The fact of an institute “being recognized as clerical by the authority of the Church” does not mean that all its members (nor even most of them, according to the present Code) have to be necessarily clerics.

Consequently, Cooperator Brothers fit perfectly well within a clerical religious institute “as men called to embrace its life as non-ordained religious.” Even though the institute they belong to is clerical, having adopted the priestly office of the Word and of the Sacraments “in accord with the purpose or design intended by the founder and legitimate tradition,” however, the Cooperator Brothers also share in many ways in its mission. This has been so from the early years of some religious institutes and it has always found constitutional justification.

For example, taking the case of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans mentioned above, it is stated in their Fundamental Constitution (n.VI): “The structure of the [Dominican] Order as a religious society arises from its mission and fraternal communion. Since the ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments of faith is a priestly office, ours is a clerical Order, *whose mission the Cooperator Brothers, exercising in a special way the common priesthood, also share in many ways.* Moreover, the total commission of the Preachers to the proclamation of the Gospel by word and work is revealed in the fact that by solemn profession *they are entirely and perpetually united with the life and mission*

of Christ.” (italics mine). And in other places the vital importance of the Cooperator Brothers’ vocation and ministry within the [Dominican] Order is also reiterated, going as far as saying that “since it is the whole community which preaches, the Order’s mission and community life is weakened in the absence of our Cooperator Brothers” (AGC, Bologna, 1998).

I should note here that no reference has been left in the Code of the third type of institutes – “mixed” in nature –, composed by “clerics and laymen on an equal footing and with equal rights and obligations, apart from those arising out of sacred orders” mentioned in one of the Second Vatican Council documents (PC, 15), which would have helped me give a quick answer to this question.

## **2. What is the canonical status of the Cooperator Brothers within their religious clerical institute?**

The question of the canonical **status** of the Cooperator Brothers within their religious clerical institute is still in line with the previous one and could be also formulated in this way: *Do Cooperator Brothers enjoy the same status as the ordained members within the same institute?*

The answer to the latter question, in the ecclesial context, is **yes**: Both “Cooperator Brothers” and “Fathers” belong to the same status *consecratorum*, more specifically *religiosus* (religious), which, together with the *lay* (*laicalis*) and the *clerical* (*clericalis*), constitute the three states acknowledged in the Church (cf LG, 13; c. 207). In other words, the Cooperator Brothers, like the rest of the ordained members of the same clerical institute, are above all *Religious* and as such they share “the *equality* of clerical and lay members” already recognized by the document

*Clericalia instituta* of November 1969. Does it mean that there is no difference between them? Certainly there is. The difference lies in each one's personal *condicio* (condition), which in the "Fathers" is *clerical*, while in the [Cooperator] "Brothers" is so-called *lay*. The difference here comes exclusively from the reception (or not) of Holy Orders, which conditions also some institutional and personal obligations.

The correct understanding of this equality as well as of the difference between both groups is essential to help each one find its own place within the same religious institute, and also to help eliminate unhealthy discriminations between "Fathers" and "Brothers." The opposite has shown itself also true: An inadequate understanding of such equality and difference has at times created confusion and misunderstandings, leading eventually to situations similar as the one we have nowadays where the very identity of the Cooperator Brothers in some religious institutes is at stake. Let two facts illustrate this:

a) In the past forty years, undoubtedly more for the better than for the worse, most external differences between "Fathers" and "Brothers" within the same institute have been eliminated [e.g., in the habit, in the listing order (by profession), in precedence, in nomenclature, in the enjoyment of most rights and privileges, etc.]. The results by and large have been positive. To objections raised on this regard my answer is that what was in some instances wrong were not the changes themselves but rather the *reason* behind those changes. In fact, if the *only* reason for the changes was just to eliminate *any* difference between "Fathers" and "Brothers," the very fact of the priestly ordination became soon a remaining discriminatory element. As a consequence, some



Cooperator Brothers requested being ordained priests, a request that in certain instances was granted. This created some confusion and even a feeling of resentment in quite a number of Brothers who looked at those ordinations as a sort of "promotions" and as clear signals that something was lacking in the Brothers' vocation... Fortunately, common sense and theological criteria prevailed but some negative effects are still felt.

b) On the other hand, the surging of a "new generation" of Cooperator Brothers with good training and in possession of professional skills even greater than those of some ordained members of the same community, and involved furthermore in specialized ministries (preaching, administration, leadership...), "annoyed" somehow some "Fathers" who saw it as an invasion or stepping into the traditional clerical competences...

Where do we stand now? Do non-ordained religious members still have a place within clerical institutes? Certainly they have. As a matter of fact, the full incorporation of Cooperator Brothers into religious clerical institutes not only does not pose any sort of canonical problem, but is considered important, necessary in the Church. It could be asked: *What kind of Cooperator Brothers does Consecrated Life (and the Church) need today?* Still the "traditional" Brothers, that is, those who, seeking their sanctification through the embracing of religious life, dedicate themselves to God through the service of their community mainly by manual work and accomplishment of the humblest community chores, moved in their simplicity and great faith little more than by blind obedience...? Or rather the "new" Cooperator Brothers, fully involved in their institutes' primary task (preaching, in the case of the Dominicans)

through highly specialized services, such as involvement in religious education programs, catechetical formation, campus and parochial ministries, retreats, pastoral and psychological counseling, teaching, administration and management, finances, communications media, health services, engineering and mechanical services, liturgical planning, leadership roles, etc., as the respective clerical institute's charism might be?

Obviously, there is room in religious life for *both* categories of Brothers: the so called traditional and the new. (Actually it is just *one* category of them only that adjourned to the new signs of the times!) Indeed, there is great need of Cooperator Brothers who, in accordance with their capacity but with great faith and religious spirit, render unassuming day-to-day services to the community; and there is also need of Cooperator Brothers who, seeking likewise their sanctification through the embracing of religious life, undertake jobs and new forms of apostolate unthought-of in the past, as for instance, through those specialized ministries mentioned earlier (liturgical, teaching, and social) as well as in the exercise of governance, obviously in the measure that they may be capable of in accordance with ecclesiological principles and the canonical provisions. Both of them fit perfectly well into clerical religious institutes and speak in their own way of the excellency of the Cooperator Brothers' vocation and ministry, as well as of *new ways of participation* they may have today in the charism of their respective institutes.

The present-day possibility of religious Cooperator Brothers becoming superiors in their communities – something that currently requires a special dispensation from the Apostolic See granted on a case to case basis – or simply

the actual holding by the non-clerical members of administrative offices, the function of councilor at any level, etc., has originated new questions not exempted of controversy. The controversy is due not only to the existence of different views on the nature of the religious superiors' authority, but also to the interrelatedness of the power of orders and of governance in the Church.

This gives way to the next question.

### **3. To what extent may Cooperator Brothers share in the leadership and government of their religious institutes?**

There is little doubt for me that Cooperator Brothers can have a share in the leadership and government of their clerical religious institutes; actually, they are doing already in some instances. The problem is "to what extent" that can be done, for there are here two other factors involved: the existence of different views on the nature of the religious superiors' authority and the interrelatedness of the power of orders and of governance in the Church.

I have mentioned before that the Second Vatican Council urged Orders of men to "strengthen the bond of brotherhood" among their members and told them of the possibility to admit clerics and laymen *"on an equal footing and with equal rights and obligations, apart from those arising out of sacred orders"* (PC, 15). The reason for it, in the mind of *Ecclesiae Sanctae* n.27, was in order to allow priests a greater freedom for those ministries reserved to them.

But this creates a problem, because religious superiors, in the fulfillment of their office, exercise some power of

governance over their subjects. Furthermore, “in clerical religious institutes of pontifical right, superiors have *in addition* the ecclesiastical power of governance” (596 §2); and this, according to some sectors in the Church, does not seem possible to “lay” [= non-ordained] superiors! How can we solve this dilemma? Perhaps by reformulating the issue in two different questions:

a) Is the authority or power of governance which religious superiors have over their subjects the same as the “ecclesiastical power of governance” dealt with in canons 129-144? And

b) Is it truly impossible for non-ordained superiors in clerical institute to hold the “ecclesiastical power of governance” dealt with in canons 129-144?

Without pretense of solving anything, let me share some thoughts on these two questions and so to tackle the issue on the extent non-ordained members can share in the leadership and government of their respective institutes.

*a) Is the power of governance proper of the religious superiors the same power as the “ecclesiastical power of governance” dealt with in canons 129-144?*

My answer is **not**, based mainly in the contents of canon 596, in the reading between lines of the Code’s background on this matter, and on the opinion of some experts.

Firstly, canon 596 states in its §1 that “*Superiors and Chapters of institutes have that authority over the members, which is defined in the universal law and in the constitutions.*” Then, §2 adds, “*In clerical religious institutes of pontifical right, they [Superiors and Chapters] have IN ADDITION the ecclesiastical power of governance*” (The stress is mine).

And finally, in §3 the canon elaborates: "*The provisions of canons 131, 133 and 137-144 apply to the authority mentioned in §1.*" This third paragraph clarifies a little the nature of that power by which religious superiors govern within their institutes, namely, a power that although may not be confused with the "ecclesiastical power of governance," as we have just said, it bears many similarities to it. In fact, the canons listed in the §3 are actually taken from that very section ["The Power of Governance" (cc.129-144)] and describe ordinary and delegated power (c.133), the delegation and subdelegation of ordinary executive power and its interpretation (cc. 137-138), the effects of approaching a higher authority (c. 139), the provisions for several persons delegated in the same manner (cc. 140-141), the cessation or suspension of the power (cc. 142-143), and the jurisdiction supplied by the Church in cases of common error and positive and probable doubt. (It is to be noted that among the canons not applied to all superiors is c.134, which includes the major Superiors of clerical religious institutes of pontifical right among the "Ordinaries.")

Secondly, the working reports of those preparing the present Code of Canon Law indicated the conviction that *lay* [= non-ordained] religious superiors exercise some form of *public ecclesiastical power*, even if all were not of a mind to identify that with the ecclesial *potestas regiminis* or power of governance. This is canonically supported by: (a) the omission of the term "dominative" power, which was understood as private; (b) a definition of office which embraces the role of all religious superiors; (c) the provisions of c. 129 §2 for lay participation in the ecclesiastical power of governance; and (d) the application of canons from the power of governance to the power common to all religious superiors.

Thirdly, Prof. De Paolis puts forward the following observations: *"In the Church there are two types of power: power of governance, i. e. proper to the hierarchy and another one associated with the charismatic dimension of the Church, and with all Institutes of Consecrated Life, which do not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church but to its life and holiness."* (De Paolis, "La potestà di governo nella chiesa. Gli uffici ecclesistici," in *I Religiosi e il Nuovo Codice di Diritto Canonico, Atti della Asemblea CISM*, Collevalenza, 8-11 November 1983, p. 54.)

I am aware that this opinion of mine is not shared by all the authors. In fact, some of them maintain that the power in §1 and the power of governance in §2 are of the same nature and therefore the difference is only quantitative and a matter of technicality. For instance, Prof. Ghirlanda writes:

"Since power in the Church is one, the power in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life is *of the same nature* as the ecclesiastical power of governance."

And Prof. Anastasio Gutierrez offers this view:

*"Non vedo alcuna differenza qualitativa tra la potestà di governo che compete ai Superiori di un Istituto clericale di diritto pontificio e la potestà che il c. 596, §1 attribuisce a tutti i Superiori chierici, compresi i sacerdoti di un Istituto clericale diocesano, o secolare; l'una e l'altra sembra canonicamente vicaria del Romano pontefice e ontologicamente sacramentale."* (A. Gutierrez, "I canoni riguardanti gli Istituti di vita consacrata e le Società di Vita apostolica collocati fuori della parte ad essi riservata," in *Vita Cons.* 1 [1984] 61-68.)

What is in any case clear is that all religious Superiors receive their authority *from God through the ministry of the Church*. When and how? Some say that it is conferred *ipso iure* by the Code; the prevalent opinion, however, is that it is conferred by the Church at the time of establishing each institute and by the very approval of its constitutions.

Since the ecclesiastical legislator has yet to offer a conclusive answer, the question has not been adequately resolved.

*b) Since "in clerical religious institutes of pontifical right, superiors have in addition the ecclesiastical power of governance" (cf. 596 §2), is the holding of this power of governance possible for non-ordained superiors?*

The nature of the participation and exercise of the ecclesiastical power of governance by non-ordained persons is another unresolved issue, closely connected with the previous one. Developments in this area of canon law will definitively affect the Cooperator Brothers' role and ministry. For if, as canon §2 reads, *in clerical religious institutes of pontifical right, Superiors have the ecclesiastical power of governance*, one wonders whether in the case of a Cooperator Brother being superior can he enjoy (nor not) the ecclesiastical power of governance, given his lay (non-ordained) personal condition.

Each day are less and less those who maintain that the *power of governance* in the Church is inseparable from the *power of orders (sacra potestas)* and therefore reserved exclusively to those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders. Traditionally it has been thought to be so: only clerics could obtain the power of orders and of jurisdiction; and only clerics could exercise the power of eccle-

siastical governance, through stable offices reserved for them. That is why only clerical exempt religious superiors could enjoy ecclesiastical power of jurisdiction for both the internal and the external forum. All other religious superiors exercised “dominative” power. The position of a *lay* superior could not be called an ecclesiastical office because such an office included participation in the power of governance which was reserved to clerics.

During the Code revision process, the consideration of *canonical mission* as an alternative source of the power of governance opened the way for lay participation in the exercise of that power (for instance, Paul VI authorized the help of lay judges in collegiate tribunals.) The 1981 final draft of the Code, after stating that those in sacred orders were able to possess the power of governance (jurisdiction), added: In addition, however, “...*insofar as it does not depend on sacred orders, the lay Christian faithful may have that part in the exercise of this power which is conceded to them in particular cases by the supreme authority of the Church.*”

The present Code no longer restricts all power of governance to clerics but provides for lay persons to *cooperate* in its exercise in accordance with the law (c.129 §2). Clearly, “to cooperate” means something more than “to collaborate” or to simply extend some help, since it implies “to operate.” Now, *co-operation* in the *exercise of a power* demands the holding of that power. This may allow us to say that lay people, by virtue of baptism and confirmation, have the *radical capacity* to have the power of governance and therefore to cooperate in the exercise of that power in the measure it is granted them by the competent ecclesiastical authority. Such cooperation will have to be, as the Code says, *in accordance with the law.*



In fact, in accordance with the law, some lay people *cooperate*, for instance, in the administration of justice, following canon 1421 §2. Likewise the present law does provide for many offices previously reserved to clerics to be held by lay persons (e.g. diocesan chancellors and tribunal officials), including also a long list of ministries that go from those liturgical and catechetical (lectors, ministers of holy communion, theology teachers, preachers in oratories, ...), to those related to pastoral apostolate (prayer leaders, parish pastoral administrators, assistants at marriages, presiders at funerals, judges, etc.) and could continue even to the capacity to grant dispensations from merely ecclesiastical law, for after all dispensation is an act of executive power which can be delegated (c.85).

However, referring specifically to the Cooperator Brothers becoming superiors in clerical religious institutes of pontifical right, the Code, in spite of not precluding such possibility, so far does not grant them the *cooperation* in the ecclesiastical power to govern an Institute, a Province and even a local community. That is why until now, in those particular cases in which the Apostolic See has granted a Cooperator Brother becoming a local and even provincial Superior, an indult is required as well as the appointment of a religious cleric as his "vicar" for those acts that require special power of governance.

Clearly, the present law of the Church is not the final word on this matter. After all, the issue is still under doctrinal discussion. Most canonists admit that canon 129 is somewhat unclear and it simply reflects what would appear to be the current state of theology and practice on this matter. The study must continue.

It is my belief that non-ordained religious members of clerical institutes, by virtue of baptism and confirmation, have the *radical capacity* to hold power of governance. And that henceforth, if elected (postulated) and/or appointed Superiors, they enjoy over their subjects, by virtue of their religious status and the solemn profession of vows, the “religious” power of governance proper to religious institutes. In addition, they would have to be given also all the ecclesiastical power of governance needed to properly fulfill their ministry, the limit being only those dispensations or faculties which bear directly on the power of Orders, since their exercise remains exclusively in the hands of clerics and is not subject of delegation. Only for these acts [and not for those that require power of governance] they should depend on an assistant or vicar. Such is my opinion, which I respectfully submit to a better judgment.

\* \* \* \* \*

I close by saying that to my mind the discussion on the role and place of the non-ordained members (“Cooperator Brothers”) within clerical religious institutes should be focused not so much on what the Cooperator Brothers can DO but rather on what they ARE, since the former will only be a natural consequence of the latter (*operari sequitur esse.*) Further changes in the law of the Church as well as in the Constitutions of some religious institutes may be needed; but what is above all needed in everyone is “a new mentality” (*novus habitus mentis*), essential not only to rediscover the relevance of the Cooperator Brothers’ state and role in the clerical religious institutes, but also to reaffirm the Cooperator Brothers themselves in the happiness and sanctity their vocation has along the centuries had.

# Sunday Homilies for January-February 2008

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FR. ENRICO GONZALES, O.P.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD – LK 2:16-21

Christmas is Relationship

January 1

The octave of Christmas explains what this Yuletide Season is all about. It is not only the birthday of Jesus, it is the birthday of all men as well. In giving birth to Jesus, Mary his mother has also become our mother. Isaiah must be right! He prophesied Christmas in terms of relationship: “Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” (Is 7:14). ***Mother and child:*** is there any relationship nobler than this? No wonder that the classical Christmas celebration is centered on the family. The family is the womb where the growth of healthy relationships is nurtured and strengthened. The loss of relationships brought about by disintegrating families explains most effectively the alienation of people in our society at present. People die of loneliness if not of outright suicide. Relationship

– call it love – gives meaning to our human existence. To illustrate, here is a personal anecdote which actually happened to me on my way to Maragusan, an out-of-the-way village at the navel of Compostela Valley.

My story began in Davao City, in a busy transport terminal to be exact, where jeepneys going to Maragusan commence their trips. An awful sight for a metropolitan passenger like me who for the first time dared to travel in a jampacked jeepney which officially had a full capacity space for fourteen persons and yet, on that day seemed to have brought one whole *barangay* in it. I could not believe it! Even the rooftop was populated with passengers. The driver motioned me to climb to the top since there was no more space inside the jeepney. I was absolutely not comfortable with this arrangement since I had never traveled in a “double-decker” jeepney all my life. I insisted to get inside the jeepney to the amusement of the driver who challenged me to try if indeed I could grab a strip of space at all. I tried and was indeed successful. I controlled my breath as I slotted myself into the jeepney. I knew that with the appropriate breath control, I could manipulate my body like an accordion, shrink it into the size that would exactly fit into any space available, no matter how small. I found a narrow opening between two passengers and presto! I seated myself in between them. The accommodation might not be perfect but within these circumstances, I could not ask for anything better. Imagine me sitting skin to skin with two beautiful ladies beside me!

The jeepney started to move and sooner than expected, we were halfway to Panabo – the first city next to Davao City. The trip could have proceeded smoothly if not for the

jolt I felt from the lady on my right. She elbowed me – a motion which focused my attention to what she was about to do next. Slowly she unbuttoned her blouse! I could not help but gazed at what she was doing. She bared her breast and began feeding her baby. Yes! That pretty lady was a mother and she was breast-feeding. What do you think I am telling you? An X-rated story fit for adults only? That would be the case if I did not complete my anecdote and just stopped at that point where the lady was unbuttoning her blouse. That would be a pornographic picture indeed! But when the baby entered the scene, did not the picture change altogether? We had the graphic vision of the greatest love of all: the love of the mother for her child. Indeed no love is greater than this: the mother nourishing her baby from her own substance. With this relationship in action right in front of our eyes, we would be admiring this sight not with any prurient interest but with pious reverence. It was Madonna and the Child once again: Jesus and his Mother!

The Madonna and the Child should inspire us to live the spirit of Christmas all the days of 2008. “Give love on Christmas day” is not an empty wish for only twenty-four hours. It is indeed true: Christmas is forever!

## THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD – MT 2:1-12

From Darkness to Light

January 6

Historically, Jesus was born to a specific social group: the Jewish people. This historical fact, however, does not rule out the Gospel-message that through the Jewish people, Jesus is the savior of all. The angels praised God on the first Christmas night saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors” (Lk 2:14). This favor is not exclusive to Israel. Jesus preached to his people but certainly, that was only the beginning. His words are meant to resound throughout the whole world. No wonder that right from his birth, Jesus showed himself the savior of mankind. Thus, the tradition of the Nativity crib represents a motley of visitors: from the shepherds to the Magi.

The *Epiphany of the Lord* celebrates the inclusion of the non-Jewish race to the grace of redemption wrought by Jesus. The Magi had pagan roots all right but even their paganism was not strong enough to corrupt their original goodness. Because man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26), he was not born for darkness. He was created for light, for truth. For this reason, man would always be restless until he discovers the truth unto the utmost. The Magi were called wise men precisely because they possessed this virtue which attracted them not only to the surface of things but to the foundation of reality itself. In their journey to the ultimate truth, they were guided by a star. This

Christmas star represents the light – the Truth – without which human life will become meaningless.

Nowhere in the history of mankind that such absence of meaning in human life is as evident as in today's contemporary society. It is as though the Savior was not yet born and mankind still sits in darkness. Contemporary man despairs of finding the truth. There seems to be no redeemer sent from above to teach him the way to wisdom, not even a teacher to deliver him from just superficial knowledge. Technology has indeed revolutionized mass media. It has made communication fast and accessible to all but ironically it has no power to battle against lies. Sadly, mass media has in fact become tools for propagating propaganda which sows confusion and nothing more. No wonder our present civilization has fast turned into a culture of lies. No wonder wisdom has become an archaic word without any meaning except a cliché in our contemporary vocabulary. The present man is well informed all right, indeed a walking encyclopedia, but such erudition has not helped him at all to live a righteous life. He continuously walks in circles, without destination, just trapped in a daily routine that speaks of eternal boredom. In the midst of this hopelessness, will not God grant us another *Epiphany*? Yes, indeed he will, if only like the pagan Magi, we become men of good will, and let go the scales that blind our eyes from seeing his Star.

## THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD – MT 3:13-17

Committing Ourselves to Persons

January 13

*The Baptism of the Lord* is one rare occasion where the Holy Trinity revealed itself as a concrete reality with whom we have to relate in order to enter into eternal life. This revelation defines our understanding of what *person* really is. All human philosophies tend to reduce *person* into one of those things we encounter in the world. Such reduction is a gross mistake because *person* is not just an object. *Person* is definitely not a thing. The question left unanswered: if *person* were not a thing, then, what is it?

The Baptism of the Lord pointed out the fact that *person* necessarily implies *co-person*. *Person* is in fact *communion*: a substantial relationship which personifies unity in variety. There is no other way to call this communion more appropriately than with the word *love*. No wonder that when Jesus was baptized a voice was heard speaking about love: "This is my Son, the Beloved with whom I am well pleased." (Mt 3:17) In a sense a similar experience happened to us when we were baptized. Since that moment we have been integrated with the communion of life – love – which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share with one another in the Holy Trinity. Adopting us as his children, God also calls us *The Beloved* with whom he is well pleased. Responding to this love, we accept our vocation to love. This love makes our human life essentially person-oriented. For love cannot but be for persons,



not for things. No wonder *The Apostles' Creed* effectively sums up our baptismal commitments into just one: ***commitment to persons***. From beginning to end, "*I believe*" sounds like a refrain of a song repeated regularly followed by words speaking of persons and not things.

This commitment to persons is equally commitment to love. It defines our very own personality as one popular Eucharistic song challenges us: "*Kung hindi ako iibig, sino ako?*"

## FEAST OF SANTO NIÑO – MT 18:1-5, 10

A Challenge to Us All: Grow Up!

January 20

The Santo Niño represents Christianity in the Philippines. He was the first symbol of faith which the Spaniards brought to the Philippines to start the conversion of our nation to Christianity. He images best our character both as individuals and as a community. Like a child, Filipinos are playful. We love to dance and sing! And what a music! The lilting melody of our songs projects playfulness even in our pain. Imagine a Filipina lass singing *Aray! Aray! Aray!* in the midst of her miseries. This only goes to show the pervasiveness of our attitude that whatever comes to us – success or failure – everything will have an end. So, why be intimidated by suffering? Enjoy while the supply lasts, so life goes. This attitude of course has its plus and minus. The positive side of it makes the Filipinos resilient enough to meet all disasters in their lives with resignation. The negative side of it makes the Filipinos look so fatalistic that he seems not to care what will happen next. *Qué sera sera!* Smiling people, Filipinos smile when they are glad, they smile when they are sad, they smile when they are excited, they smile when they are bored, they smile when they are pleased, they smile when they are dissatisfied. They smile all the time so that they miss the creative dimension of suffering. Yes, Carl Jung once pointed out that suffering is a dynamic reservoir of creativity. For being playful at times to the extreme, Filipinos miss the creative energy which pain and suffering

can build into their character. So playful indeed they are that they are willing to get crucified like Jesus as a form of entertainment. Just watch our fanatic Filipinos staging their own version of crucifixion every Good Friday. What a waste of creative energy that could have been derived from suffering!

Filipino Catholics tend to forget that the *Santo Niño* did not live as a child all the time. He grew to be a mature adult, a self-respecting Jew who was in fact beyond the average responsible citizen of Israel and a pious synagogue-goer adopting a moral code to the utmost perfection. For no reason except envy and jealousy, Jesus was persecuted but the pain he suffered in the wake of this persecution became a gold mine in his hands. Jesus' creativity was just exactly like his Father's. His Father created the whole universe out of nothing, Jesus produced an instrument of redemption out of ignominious cross.

With all the sufferings which we, Filipinos as individuals and as a nation have to face, we simply hope that we will not just smile at them as a reaction. May we respond to our trials and pains as creatively as Jesus. The cross will not crush us but challenge us to rise from our falls with re-energized vitality. After all, Filipinos are not called just to be Juan de la Cruz; they also have the vocation to be Juan de la Resurrección.

**THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – MT 4:12-23**  
**The Kingdom of Heave is Close at Hand!**  
**January 27**

The Evangelist Matthew has indeed taken the most appropriate quote from Isaiah to describe the ministry of Jesus right at the start (vv. 15-16). Jesus is truly the light, the only preacher who enlightened our minds to see where the kingdom of God really is. The kingdom of God is not a piece of territory so far-away that it is beyond our reach. *Ang paghahari ng langit ay abot-abot ninyo.* (v. 17) The kingdom of heaven is within our reach because it is “close at hand”. Why is the kingdom of heaven or otherwise called kingdom of God (Mk 1:15, Lk 17:21) close at hand? Because “the kingdom of God is among you.” (Lk 17:21). The Evangelist Luke cautioned us not to seek for the kingdom of God in wrong places: “... there will be no one to say, ‘Look here! Look there!’” The kingdom of God is neither here nor there. God is in our midst! “*Ang Diyos ang namamagitan sa inyo!*”

The kingdom of God is not here because it is not pure interiority. This belies the pietistic belief that God dwells only in those people who do nothing in their lives but pray and forget their responsibility in the world. Even the monks who live in solitude are never so alone as not to mind their contribution, no matter how modest it might be, in the uplift of human civilization. The classical motto lived out in Benedictine monasteries “*Ora et Labora*” (Pray and work)) say it all. With prayer and work, monks perse-

veringly develop through the centuries both the spirit and the earth – a lifestyle which explains why the impact of their influence to the rise of western culture. On the other hand, one should not also locate the kingdom of God in pure exteriority. Absolute activists whom we see only in the streets are busy-bodies intending to change the world by solely mouthing slogans. Empty talks, these slogans just come out of empty heads which find no time in reflection before acting. Action without reflection, is tantamount to shooting first before asking questions. With no time to pray to God who after all is the sole master of his kingdom, mindless activists build up a kingdom of their own which actually are mere sand-castles. In the process, they end up like an endlessly spinning top or a decapitated chicken which still runs extremely fast all right but ends nowhere for lack of direction.

The kingdom of God is not just within us or outside us. The kingdom of God is among us – in our mutual relationship. Call this relationship *love* for love is the very Spirit that bonds together in eternal unity the Father and the Son. Was not the Lord who once said: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love”? (Jn 15:9) So, we ought to abide in the Spirit for only with the guidance of the Spirit that we will be able to build up loving communities among us. In the long run, only where there is love among us will there be the kingdom of God in our midst.

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – MT 5:1-12**

**The Beatitudes: The First Will Be the Last and the Last, the First.**

**February 3**

Last Sunday we saw how Jesus began his preaching ministry with the proclamation of his kingdom. Now, the Gospel-reading features the very Constitution of such kingdom: *The Beatitudes*. At first sight, *The Beatitudes* appears to be a classical example of Jesus' rhetoric. But no, Jesus after all is not a traditional politician who beguiles us with words, words, words and nothing but words. Behind the melodious rhythm of *The Beatitudes* is a strategy for a radical revolution. The kingdom of God – Jesus' kingdom – is intended to turn our world upside down. The principle which runs through *The Beatitudes* is "*The first will be the last; the last will be the first*". The kingdom of man however enshrines the opposite principle: "*The first is the first; the last is the last*" and this principle will endure in human politics forever. So, do not expect politics to change the world. The more politicians change the world, the more the world becomes the same. Thus, the rulers of this world from then until now is just a succession of the same names: Bush follows Bush, Macapagal follows Macapagal. In the history of monarchies, kings have the same name and distinguished only by their number: King Henry IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, and so on. Anything new? No wonder lots and lots of people are losing hope in the world's political agenda. The poor most especially in this kind of system will remain the last and will never rise out of it. In the long run, all

political projects redound only to the benefit of the elite, not of the poor, until Jesus entered into the scene and shocked us with the astounding style of his regimen. He intended to revamp the world's structure like a bottle of liquid medicine: shake it well until the bottom goes up and the top goes down. How? Clearly, Jesus' kingdom has the preferential option for the poor; they are the first in the order of liberation, in the order of redemption. So, if you belong to the elite – the privileged, the rich and famous, the wealthy and the mighty – beware! In the impending shake up, you will be the first to go. But it is not entirely hopeless for you. Step down while there is still time. Don't let Jesus catch you wallowing in this world's glory, abusing your position of advantage. Take the ranks of the poor, be their friends by helping their cause, their development and well-being. Then you will be *poor in spirit* (v. 3), so, the kingdom of heaven will be yours too!

**ASH WEDNESDAY – MT 6:1-6, 16-18**  
**The Beginning of At-One-Ment**  
**February 6**

Ash Wednesday ushered in the season of atonement – the period in our liturgical calendar dreaded by those who hate to be reminded of their mortality and of the need for an abstemious lifestyle. *Cuaresma* or its English equivalent *Lent* is the forty days of preparation for Easter. By tradition, it is observed with fasting and abstinence, intense prayer and alms-giving. Ouch! These practices really pinch our flesh and they hurt. But they hurt only because we are not used to them. Our addiction to fast food, our boredom to prayer, communal and private, our attachment to our wallets are proverbial. Their consequence to our lives – social and personal – is likewise familiar: voracity, lust, greed, in one word, selfishness. Is not selfishness the reason why society throughout human history is never one? Mankind keeps on disintegrating, its ranks always falling apart, thanks to our selfishness – local and global. Jesus entered into the world to teach it how to combat selfishness. And what a lesson! He died on the cross to show to us up to what extent the war against selfishness can go. Love that is willing to give up all if only to win us all is what the redemptive mission of Jesus intends to accomplish. During this Lenten season, Jesus leads us to this divine love, the only effective antidote to selfishness. Being our leader, Jesus hopes that we follow. We are not called to reenact Jesus' crucifixion literally. It is enough that this one leader – Jesus – died on the cross for us. His lead, however, challenges us to do our share.



Our share takes the form, during this Lenten season, of fasting and abstinence, of prayer and alms-giving. Through these practices, we profess our allegiance to Jesus and identify ourselves to his cause: that all of us may be one as Jesus and his Father are one. (Jn 17:11) No wonder we call these biblically inspired Lenten exercises acts of atonement. We are doing these for the sake of *at-one-ment*.

From selfishness to selflessness is the route that atonement necessarily takes – the reason why atonement is unavoidably painful. Atonement is essentially a reversal of values. Once we are used to preferring short term values – some goods which satisfy our whims and caprices alone – now, we choose long term values – some goods which in the long run, help fulfill the will of God for us. This reversal certainly entails pain. It means the abandonment of our individual comfort for the sake of the common good, it means doing the will of God instead of our own. Jesus made this choice once in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Lk 22:44) and he sweat with blood. Our acts of atonement – fasting and abstinence, prayer and alms-giving – will surely not bring us that far. We will not sweat with blood. But our atonement once united with that of Jesus will effectively bring about the salvation of mankind: *at-one-ment*. We will be one as Jesus and his Father are one.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT – MT 17:1-9

### The Irony of Selfishness

February 10

St. Bernard of Clairvaux satirized selfishness with the Latin word for love, but qualified: *amor curvus*. The phrase when translated into English literally means *crooked love*. Graphically, it may be portrayed by a man who coils his arms around himself. This is an effective visual representation of self-love gone awry. Self-love is not necessarily evil but when it has no point of reference but self, then the whole concept becomes suicidal like those arms seeking to strangle its owner. To redeem the concept of self-love, it must necessarily imply love for others. In this case, self-love is not synonymous with selfishness but with self-possession. For how can we give ourselves to others if in the first place we do not possess ourselves? Self-love is converted into selfishness when the individual becomes an isolated self whose obsession is just his self-centered interests, no more no less. Thus his lifestyle turns to become pure self-indulgence. His happiness is simply to curl his arms around himself: *amor curvus*.

The devil who tempted Jesus in the Gospel-reading for this Sunday is the absolute paragon of selfishness. He might appear generous enough to offer to Jesus everything – fame, fortune, power – but lo! To all these things, there was a string attached. In exchange of everything, the devil wanted Jesus to be his possession. In the end, his real intention came out in the light of the day: the devil wanted to be God. Another case of *amor curvus*, the most wicked of the kind!

Jesus held the fort splendidly. He did not need to prove his divinity by showing off his almighty power. Doing so at the moment would only have one reason behind: self-concern leading to self-conceit and to self-display of unimaginable magnitude. Absolute hubris! Jesus would have none of it. Jesus is God and just like his Father who showed his power only because he gave himself to us in creation, Jesus would do exactly the same. Redemption, his mission, is after all re-creation. Thus, no wasteful display of power. Jesus would use his power for only one purpose: self-giving which in another Latin phrase of St. Bernard is called *amor rectus*. If *amor curvus* is translated into *crooked love*, *amor rectus*, on the other hand, is rendered literally as *straight love*. *Straight love* explains graphically the poise of the Father when creating the universe. No one else but Michelangelo could give an expert artistic expression of this poise in his masterpiece named *Creation* at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. There, we see the Father stretching out his body from one end to another in the act of creating man. A visual representation of *amor rectus* indeed! How did Adam respond? In the same painting of Michelangelo, Adam rested lazily under the tree and looking defiant, he curved his forefinger towards himself. A portrait of *amor curvus* indeed!

Jesus redeeming mankind followed exactly the example of his Father. Just as the Father served us in the beginning of time in his creation, so, Jesus came to our world not to be served but to serve. (Mk 10:45) The absolute *amor rectus* in action! Especially during this Lent, we will abandon the *amor curvus* of the devil and obey the *amor rectus* of Jesus and his Father. We will practice *Alay-Kapwa!*

## **SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT – MT 17:1-9**

### **Climb Every Mountain**

**February 17**

The all favorite Broadway musical *The Sound of Music* features one among its other memorable songs *Climb Every Mountain*. It is a song with a challenge. We must not be afraid of the heights. We should look not at the difficulty but the excitement which any adventure offers. Well, an advice which Peter, James and John should bear in mind for just like any regular guy, they too are afraid of adventures which promise no security. At least for once, way up in the mountain where Jesus took them, they experienced the utmost security they did not even dream of. They enjoyed a vision which was almost heaven. Jesus revealed himself in all his glory, in the midst of the two most revered figures in Jewish socio-religious history: the Prophet Elijah and the Lawgiver Moses. The Father was even there confirming the divine nature of Jesus as his Beloved Son. The ensuing experience was so ecstatic that Peter himself proposed that they stayed there indefinitely until Jesus punctured their reveries and prodded them to proceed on their way. There was indeed another “mountain” waiting for them next. The coming vision was the very contradiction of what they had just witnessed: the unimaginable bloody crucifixion of Jesus. To Jesus, that too should be accepted and borne perseveringly. For, indeed, the life of glory which is necessarily linked with the life of grace is free but never cheap. It requires for its acceptance a heart willing to take the risk in following Jesus and the utmost pain such following

entails. To follow Jesus after all is to enter the narrow door (Lk 13:24) and carry the cross (Lk 14:27). Yes, the cross is not simply the exclusive property of Jesus. There is indeed a cross made specifically for each one of us without which, how can we claim the glory of resurrection? So let us not kid ourselves. Life is definitely not all laughter. Anyone who laughs all the time is a loony. Neither is the one who cries without let up is normal. We laugh and cry intermittently.

Jesus showed us there are enough mountains to climb in this world. Whether it is the mountain of Transfiguration or the hill of Golgotha, no mountain is daunting enough to drain our spirit. In the company of Jesus, we will laugh and cry and still remain normal. Indeed, more than normal, we will become saints!

### **THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT – JN 4:5-42**

#### **The Saving Effect of the Prophetic Utterance “Help Me!” February 24**

The prophetic word need not be pedantic all the time. It can be as pedestrian as the common plea “Help me!” That was practically what Jesus was telling the Samaritan woman when he approached her at Jacob’s well and said: “Give me a drink.” (v. 8) Basically, this is Jesus’ strategy in entering our lives. He does not work his way into us from the position of power but amazingly, from the position of weakness. Why not? This strategy is psychologically winsome. A display of might, especially if done extravagantly, might even repel people from our side. This is understandable. Call it defense mechanism. We hate getting intimidated by persons who exert on us extreme pressure. In the face of force, we get ourselves ready for a fight. But in meeting anyone who approaches us with arms at rest, we too lay down our defenses. We love underdogs. We welcome peaceable people. Even in wars, we never kick a dead horse, so to speak. So, why insist on protecting ourselves by showing might which more often than not we do not have?

Look! Jesus led the Samaritan woman into a conversation from the vantage point of helplessness. Jesus appeared as a person in need. Not as a Jew who prided himself for belonging to a superior race, Jesus projected the universal image of a man suffering from thirst. The Samaritan woman was right from the start caught off balanced. Intrigued by

her curiosity, she fell into the “trap”. She became mindless of the traditional animosity that existed between their two peoples. To cut the story short, Jesus turned the table to her and led her to the realization that she was in fact more thirsty than he was, that she too was in need and therefore, should ask for help.

Now, we realize that only way we can enter into the kingdom of God is through prayer. Prayer is the most effective way to tell God “Help me! As St. Thomas Aquinas explains, prayer is essentially supplicatory. Take the example of *The Lord’s Prayer*, the model of all prayers. *The Lord’s Prayer* is practically a series of petitions to aid us in our needs – from the spiritual to the physical. In short, *The Lord’s Prayer* is rooted from a heart crying out to God as his Father: “Help me!” God cannot but respond to this plea that comes from the heart. The petition will be granted. This explains why the supplication “Help me” is a prophetic utterance. For a prophetic utterance is an expression which when spoken cannot but happen. Indeed, God cannot disappoint his children crying out for help. Thus,

Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him? (Mt 7:7-11)

Well said and hopefully well taken. We will indeed show that we have taken these words to the heart by spending this Lenten season in intense prayer. Through prayer, we will experience not only the conversion of the Samaritan woman who eventually saw the Savior in that thirsty man at Jacob's well. We will also see the glory of God in the helplessness of that dying man named Jesus. At the foot of the cross, we will witness the victory of God over death. After all, at the crucifixion of Jesus, is resurrection not far behind?



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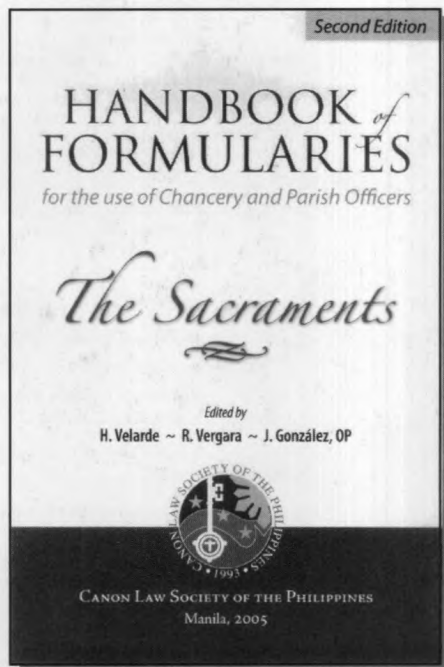
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