GUEST EDITOR'S PREFACE

"SPEAK, LORD…" (1 Sam 3:9): The CBAP's 25 Years of Listening and Responding to God's Word for a Wounded World

Salamat sa Panginoon! Purihin ang Diyos! The Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines celebrates its silver jubilee this 2024! With gratitude to our leaders, mentors, and colleagues who have endeavored to sustain our scholarly community, we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the CBAP with the theme "Speak, Lord…" (1 Sam 3:9): The CBAP's 25 Years of Listening and Responding to God's Word for a Wounded World.

Speak, LORD, for the world is in crisis!

We are now in the first quarter of the third millennium, 2024-2025. As a human family and as a creation community, we have been through and are still facing a world in crisis, a wounded world, in terms of technology, health emergencies, socio-economic-political upheavals, and wars, as well as environmental disasters, among others.

Although technological advances in the new millennium are welcome, they also come with new threats and risks. The menace of 2000s incidents like the Y2K bug and the ILOVEYOU virus has evolved into more serious dangers, such as the more and more sophisticated deepfakes, which are used for online abuse, blackmail, and

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scams.[1] Social media companies face criticism for manipulating data to spread misinformation, which harms democracy and fuels extremism, as seen in the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal, Russian election interference, TikTok's data-harvesting issues, and the 2022 launch of ChatGPT, which can also shape political bias.[2] Nevertheless, there are still a lot of communities in the world that struggle with slow or even without internet access, which hampers their development.[3]

Health crises have also shaken the world, starting with the SARS outbreak in 2002 and later the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-2020, which led to millions of deaths and continues to have significant effects on socio-economic, political-governance, mental health, violence, and

[1] Vishal Singh and Prerna Chaudhary, "Y2k38: The Bug," *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology* 2 (2012), https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=028107578dd31a64eeb268224881a39eac4584d1; Shannon C. Sprinkel, "Global Internet Regulation: The Residual Effects of the ILoveYou Computer Virus and the Draft Convention on Cyber-Crime Notes," *Suffolk Transnational Law Review* 25, no. 3 (2002 2001): 491–514, https://www.suffolklawreview.org/; Daniel Miller, Klaire Somoray, and Hallam Stevens, "A Shallow History of Deepfakes" SSRN, January 22, 2025, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5130379.

[2] Francis Russel, "Pox Populi: Anti-Vaxx, Anti-Politics," *Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 3 (2023): 699–715, https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221101660; Maja Brkan, "Artificial Intelligence and Democracy: The Impact of Disinformation, Social Bots and Political Targeting," *Delphi - Interdisciplinary Review of Emerging Technologies* 2 (2019): 66–71; Laura Cervi, Santiago Tejedor, and Fernando García Blesa, "TikTok and Political Communication: The Latest Frontier of Politainment? A Case Study." *Media and Communication,* May 16, 2023, https://www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication/article/view/6390; Fabio Motoki, Valdemar Pinho Neto, and Victor Rodrigues, "More Human than Human: Measuring ChatGPT Political Bias," *Public Choice* 198, no. 1 (2024): 3–23, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-023-01097-2.

[3] Elizabeth A. Mack et al., "A Review of the Literature About Broadband Internet Connections and Rural Development (1995-2022)," *International Regional Science Review* 47, no. 3 (May 1, 2024): 231–92, https://doi.org/10.1177/01600176231202457.

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the environment.[4] Conspiracy theories on the COVID-19 pandemic and misinformation surrounding vaccines have also compounded these issues and now endanger vaccination programs and the spread of diseases globally.[5]

Economic challenges also characterize this first quarter of the third millennium, such as the global financial crisis triggered by the U.S. housing crash, resulting in global recession (2007-2009) and the Eurozone debt crisis in Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and Spain.[6] Today, we all feel the global inflation crisis because of the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and other

[4] Ali A Rabaan et al., "SARS-CoV-2, SARS-CoV, and MERS-CoV: A Comparative Overview," *La Infezioni in Medicina* 28, no. 2 (2020): 174–84; Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE), "COVID-19 Dashboard - Global Map," Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, February 15, 2023, https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html; Freedom House, "Democracy Under Lockdown: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Global Struggle for Freedom" (2020), https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/COVID-19_Special_Report_Final_.pdf; Idiano D'Adamo, ed., *Assessment of Socio-Economic Sustainability and Resilience after COVID-19* (Basel: MDPI, 2021), https://doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-0365-2720-8; Sheila Ramaswamy and Shekhar Seshadri, "Children on the Brink: Risks for Child Protection, Sexual Abuse, and Related Mental Health Problems in the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 62, no. Suppl 3 (2020): S404–13, https://doi.org/10.4103/psychiatry.IndianJPsychiatry_1032_20.

[5] Ipek Baris Schlicht et al., "Automatic Detection of Health Misinformation: A Systematic Review," *Journal of Ambient Intelligence and Humanized Computing* 15, no. 3 (March 1, 2024): 2009–21, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12652-023-04619-4.

[6] See Duncan Maclennan and Anthony O'Sullivan, "The Global Financial Crisis: Challenges for Housing Research and Policies," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 26, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 375–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-011-9231-z; Michael Ray, "Britannica Money: Euro-Zone Debt Crisis," *Brittanica.Com,* April 1, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/money/euro-zone-debt-crisis.

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wars across the globe, and worldwide tariff-trade wars initiated by Donald Trump.[7]

Events like the 9/11 attacks against the United States in 2001 altered global security policies,[8] while the Arab Spring led to mass protests and changes in leadership across several countries.[9] Furthermore, the convergences of technological, security, medical-social, and economic-political upheavals have also favored the rise of right-wing populist governments with some of these features: nationalist, anti-immigration, "anti-elitist," "pro-traditional values," anti-democracy, anti-climate change and its mitigation, and pro-strongman politics. Examples are Vladimir Putin in Russia (1999 to present), Narendra Modi in India (2014 to present), Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey (2003 to present), Victor Orban in Hungary (2010 to present), Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel (interrupted rules from 1996 to present), Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil (2019-2022), Donald Trump in the United States (2017-2021, 2025 to present), and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines (2016-2022),[10] among

[7] Michelle Kilfoyle, "Ukraine: What's the Global Economic Impact of Russia's Invasion?," *Economics Observatory,* October 25, 2023, https://www.economicsobservatory.com/ukraine-whats-the-global-economic-impact-of-russias-invasion; Warwick McKibbin and Roshen Fernando, "The Global Economic Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic," *Economic Modelling* 129 (2023): 106551, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2023.106551; Miranda Jeyaretnam, "How Trump's Tariffs Could Lead to Global Recession," *Time.com,* April 9, 2025, https://time.com/7275987/trump-tariffs-global-economy-recession-trade-war-asia-world-impacts/.

[8] See Harmonie Toros, Lee Jarvis, and Richard Jackson, "What the War on Terror Leaves behind: An Introduction," *European Journal of International Security* 10, no. 1 (February 2025): 1–8, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2024.39.

[9] "What Is the Arab Spring, and How Did It Start?," *Al Jazeera,* December 17, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/17/what-is-the-arab-spring-and-how-did-it-start.

[10] Kurt de la Peña, "Evidence in Duterte ICC Case: His 'Kill' Rhetoric, Words," *INQUIRER.net,* July 17, 2024, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1961835/evidence-in-duterte-icc-case-his-kill-rhetoric-words; "Situation in the Philippines: Rodrigo Roa Duterte in ICC Custody," *International Criminal Court,* March 12, 2025, https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-philippines-rodrigo-roa-duterte-icc-custody.

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others.[11] Interestingly, most of these so-called strongmen were not able to respond well to the COVID-19 pandemic unlike the countries led by women who were able to better address the health emergency such as Angela Merkel in Germany, Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand, Tsai Ing-Wen in Taiwan, Erna Solberg in Norway, Sanna Marin in Finland, Mette Fredireksen in Denmark, Katrín Jakobsdóttir in Iceland, and including Leni Robredo in the Philippines.[12]

On top of everything and with such a multiplier effect, natural disasters magnified planetary suffering, such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004) with over 230,000 fatalities from at least 14 countries, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (2005), and the earthquake-tsunami that triggered the Fukushima nuclear meltdown in Japan (2011).[13] In the Philippines, we reeled from the high number of fatalities as well as economic, infrastructure, and agricultural losses because of Typhoon Winnie in Quezon (2004), the Guinsaugon, Leyte landslide (2006), typhoon Ondoy's flooding of Metro Manila (2009),[14] the 2013 super-typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan which killed more than 6,000 people in Leyte, and the series of destructive typhoons in 2020 at the height

[11] Alessandro Nai and Emre and Toros, "The Peculiar Personality of Strongmen: Comparing the Big Five and Dark Triad Traits of Autocrats and Non-Autocrats," *Political Research Exchange* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 1707697, https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2019.1707697.

[12] Greg Orme, "Women Leaders Have Shone During the Pandemic: Men, Take Note," *Forbes,* August 4, 2021, under "Leadership Strategy," https://www.forbes.com/sites/gregorme/2021/08/04/women-leaders-have-shone-during-the-pandemicambitious-men-should-take-note/.

[13] The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Fukushima Accident: Summary, Date, Effects, & Facts," *Britannica.com,* March 11, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/event/Fukushima-accident.

[14] Gregory Bankoff, "The History of Natural Hazards in the Philippines," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History,* 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.821.

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of COVID-19 which even more complicated the pandemic health policies and responses.[15]

Your servants are listening and hoping…

Amidst these challenges, people grapple with meaning and ask, "Why?"—followed by pleas for God to speak and allow believers to understand what is happening in the world. While Pope Francis only referenced the COVID-19 pandemic in his letter to Fr. Rino Fisichella, the president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization,[16] the aforementioned larger global and planetary contexts make the call to be "Pilgrims of Hope" in 2025 a necessity. It is to this call that we, as members of the CBAP, are impelled to respond by means of meaning-making, by pleading "Speak, Lord…," by listening to God's Word, and by embodying the example of the Word-Made-Flesh.

In this special issue of *Landas* for the silver Jubilee of the CBAP, we present a glimpse of how our community of exegetes in the Philippines grapple with and yearn for God's presence in these critical times. Most of these critical analyses and reflections were presented at the celebration of the 25th Annual Convention in Mère Monique Retreat House, Iloilo City, on 20-22 September 2024. In this issue, they are gathered and arranged from general to particular topics, from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

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[15] Dennis Mersereau, "Why so Many People Died from Haiyan and Past Southeast Asia Typhoons," *The Washington Post,* November 12, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/capital-weather-gang/wp/2013/11/11/inside-the-staggering-death-toll-from-haiyan-and-other-southeast-asia-typhoons/; Ian Christopher Naungayan Rocha et al., "Typhoons During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines: Impact of a Double Crises on Mental Health," *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* 16, no. 6 (December 2022): 2275–78, https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2021.140.

[16] "Letter from Pope Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, for the Jubilee 2025," *Iubilaeum2025.va,* February 11, 2022, https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025/lettera-di-papa-francesco.html.

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In the first article, presented at the last 10 July 2025 Business Meeting at the Loyola School of Theology, Sr. Ma. Anicia Co, R.V.M. reminds us of our beginnings. In "CBAP@25: Remembering its History, Celebrating its Stories," she showcases her recollection of the beginnings of the CBAP as a student in Leuven, as a founding member, and as one of the past presidents of the organization, our first female leader of the community of biblical scholars in the country.

This recollection is followed by our first keynote speech given by Peter Dubovský, S.J. (Pontifical Biblical Institute), and is entitled "Hope in the Moment of Crisis: A Study of Different Models of Crisis and Hope in the Bible." In this contribution, Dubovský explores and examines three models of crisis and hope as representative paradigms of solutions to crisis in the Bible: the divine wrath and reconciliation model, the God of history model, and the prayer model. He underlines that the elements of ritual, the role of God, and prayer are all necessary dimensions that allow hope to resolve crisis situations.

Pablo Virgilio Siongco Cardinal David, D.D., more familiarly known among the CBAP members as Bishop Ambo, focuses his presentation on the pericope from which the jubilee theme is taken. He completes the passage as the boy Samuel's response to the call of the LORD, "'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening!' (1 Sam 3:9)" and relates it to the CBAP's "25 Years of Listening and Responding to God's Word for a Wounded World." He underlines that the Bible is an important spiritual guide in today's confusing world, especially with technology spreading both true and false information. He speaks from his own context in the Diocese of Kalookan as they face significant challenges such as the violent drug war, the COVID-19 pandemic, and environmental disasters. For him, the ongoing Synod on Synodality is an encouragement for everyone to participate in shaping the diocese's vision and mission through listening and involvement. Interpreting 1 Samuel 3 through a synodal lens, he emphasizes listening to each other and discerning responses to challenges communally. David's presentation has four parts: the call to listen, how the LORD speaks, the role of Samuel in Israel's history, and a reflection on listening to God in Kalookan today.

In "Michal's Legacy: Bridging Biblical Narratives with Advocacy for Women," Rodel Magin, O.S.A. (Colegio San Agustin-Biñan) conducts a narrative and feminist analysis of the biblical account of Michal, daughter of King Saul and wife of David, as recorded in various passages from the books of Samuel (1 Sam 14:49; 18:20–28; 19:11–17; 25:44; 2 Sam 3:12–16; 6:16–23). By examining Michal's story, Magin's investigation elucidates the multifaceted challenges women face, both historically and in contemporary contexts. He argues that Michal's narrative offers critical insights into ongoing gender inequalities as well as advocates for societal transformation and the promotion of gender justice. Framed between a theological and ecclesial context, his article aligns its call for action with the Church's affirmation of human dignity and the recognition of women's essential, though often unacknowledged, contributions. Echoing Pope Francis, Magin underscores the indispensable roles of women as foundational figures in community life.

As mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly changed how people and sectors operate, and its effects are still felt five years on. Fr. Maverick Pelayo (Loyola School of Theology) shares the sentiment of those he ministers to during the health emergency in his contribution, "'Incline Your Ear to My Cry' (Psalm 88): Walter Brueggemann's Theology of Lament in/and the (Post)Pandemic World." Pelayo discusses the importance of lament during times of crises for individuals and communities and investigates Walter Brueggemann's understanding of lament in the Psalms, focusing on Psalm 88, known as the saddest psalm. Pelayo first presents key themes from Brueggemann's views on the lament psalms. He then examines and theologizes on the actions and words of both the divine and the psalmist in Psalm 88. Finally, he outlines the faith and practical implications of Brueggemann's theology of lament and Psalm 88 for the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

The resurrection narratives in the New Testament offer hope amidst the challenges of our times. Rev. Rhoneil Arevalo offers to the readers the resurrected Jesus' words in his contribution entitled "*Sumainyo ang Kapayapaan*: Can Peace Be Dispensed? Searching for

the Probable Meaning of the Peace Greeting in the Context of the Religious Violence in John 20." From a textual critic's viewpoint, this is a formal translation of the peace greeting in John 20. However, Arevalo contends that the Tagalog translation may not fully capture the Gospel writer's intent. For him, the evangelist seems to imply that there is more to the phrase "Peace be with you" than just a greeting, as it appears three times in John 20. The structure of the chapter suggests that the gospel author is also encouraging the frightened disciples to be brave. This viewpoint is supported by literary devices, such as dualism, symbolism, and contrast, as well as context clues like the time (late Sunday evening) and locked doors, indicating the disciples' fear due to threats from religious and political authorities. The Greek form of the salutation offers alternative meanings concerning Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. Considering the ongoing theological and political crises among the leadership and members of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines, Arevalo ponders how they can appropriate this peace greeting of the Risen Christ in John 20.

The ecumenical duo of Fr. Oscar Alunday, S.V.D. and Rev. Edgar Ebojo rounds up the collection of contributions. Amidst the hustle of today's world, rest is rare and is often seen as a personal need for mental health. However, "they wonder if rest should be always viewed from an individual lens." They ask, "Does it relate to the Church's life?" "What role does rest play in synodality and spreading God's Word?" Their Te-Er experience in Sadanga, Mountain Province, highlighted how important rest is for deeper listening to God's message. In this contribution, Alunday and Ebojo take us to an encounter with God's Word in the Cordilleran concept of Te-Er. With their adventure and misadventure in Northern Luzon, they underlined the vital tasks of biblical scholars in the Philippines—how to more and more spread the message of the Bible, how to dialogue this message with both our lowland and indigenous cultures, and how to live this dialogue for the good of our local, national, global, and planetary communities. Their article sums up this task, "Resting to Listen: Reflections on the Cordilleran heritage of 'Te-Er' and the Biblical concept of 'Rest'."

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Two more presentations were included in the Iloilo celebration of the CBAP's silver jubilee, but due to the authors' other publication commitments, we can only include their summaries. Dr. Veronica Chiari Dy-Liacco (University of San Agustin-Iloilo City) addressed the politically, socially, and theologically difficult question of the "Deeply Jewish Roots of the So-called 'Self-Hating' Jew" against the backdrop of the ongoing Hamas-Israeli war in Palestine, especially in Gaza. The violence against civilians of both camps has attracted attention from international courts. The International Criminal Court has found both Israeli and Hamas leaders guilty of war crimes, with arrest warrants pending. The International Court of Justice is looking for evidence of genocide claims against Israel. Reactions worldwide against the ongoing war are strong and varied. Dy-Liacco's paper did not take sides in these reactions nor question their validity. She discussed the claim that Jews opposing Israel are self-hating, suggesting their opposition is rooted in antisemitism linked to the Gaza situation. Exploring Jewish life in exile, Dy-Liacco's paper argues for a deeper understanding of the historical roots of the conflict.

For her part, Dr. Ma. Marilou S. Ibita (De la Salle University/KU Leuven/Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) titled her presentation, "'Pray, then, like this...' (Mt 6:9-13): A F.R.E.S.H Approach at Recontextualizing the Challenges of the Lord's Prayer." She proposed that Matthew's (Mt 6:9-13) version of the so-called Lord's Prayer presents traces of imperial-induced traumas in everyday life in their communities under the Roman Empire. These traumas, which evoke an anti-imperial response, are reflected in the evangelist's presentation of the prayer petitions and the characterization of those who pray (Jesus, the disciples, and the crowd). She employs a future-oriented, rights-based, ecological, and sustainability hermeneutical approach (F.R.E.S.H.) using a narrative-critical analysis with insights from the politics, economy, and ecology of the Roman-occupied Galilee, trauma, and ritual studies. Her analysis of the Matthean Lord's Prayer in its literary and historical contexts highlights how Jesus' teachings on prayer respond to the multi-faceted imperial oppression. The gathered insights were recontextualized in the Philippine contemporary setting and exemplified how biblical scholarship may contribute to the

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promotion of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals #1 No Poverty, #2 Zero Hunger, #3 Good Health and Well-Being, #4 Quality Education, #8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, #10 Reduced Inequalities, #16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and #17 partnership for the goals.

Included in this special edition on how the CBAP endeavors to find God's presence in this wounded world are the two homilies during the Eucharistic celebrations of the community.

The first speaks about the call of Jesus to Matthew as the CBAP's celebration of its silver anniversary was held on the feast of the apostle, 21 September 2024. Bishop Broderick Pabillo, D.D. (Taytay, Palawan), a long-time member of the CBAP, underlined in his homily that the invitation of Jesus, "Follow me!" is meant for everyone. Pabillo highlighted that our different roles in serving the Word of God—as teachers, writers, scholars, researchers, Bible animators, and translators—show our commitment to living up to our call to follow Jesus in the charisms each member received. The duties of an apostle and evangelist are to be true to the Word and share the Good News to the end of the earth.

Finally, in his Sunday homily and mission-sending of the CBAP Jubilee participants, Bishop Ambo David—who was elevated to the cardinalate in 2025—recalls how he taught a biblical course called "Reading Between the Lines of the Scriptures: The Role of Imagination in Biblical Interpretation." He notes that James Barr's work helped him see that fundamentalism is more of a mental health issue than a hermeneutical one, as it hinders one's ability to see the difference between literal and literary meanings. Given this hindrance, David highlighted that there are two obstacles to learning that we must unlearn: pretentiousness and competitiveness. These attitudes block our ability to learn and relate to discipleship. Jesus dealt with these obstacles among his disciples through a symbolic action: by placing a child in their midst. For David, God has put Pope Francis' preaching and praxis of synodality as God's word for us today. Indeed, addressing our individual and collective pretentiousness and competitiveness that

destroy our communities and our planet lies in our capacity to listen to each other and, together, discern God's will, for the LORD will speak through, with, and to the whole created community.

Ma. Maricel S. Ibita
CBAP President
2023-2024