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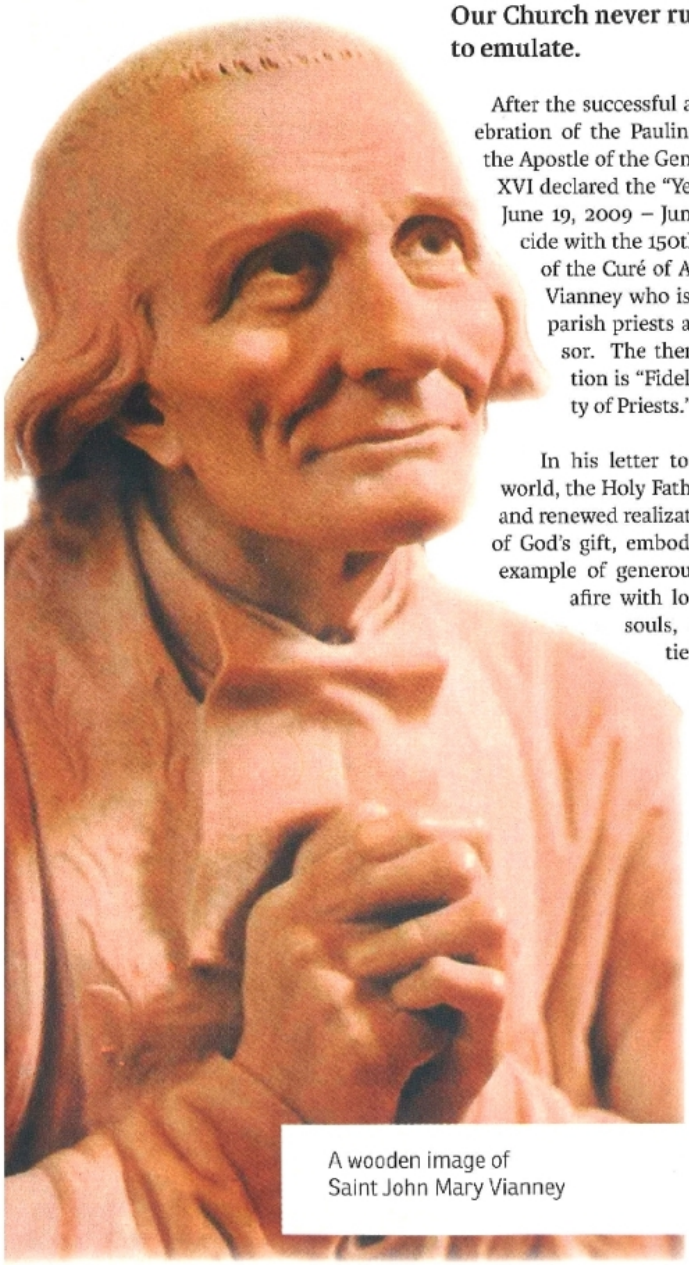


Priesthood

Saint to Emulate

by Ian Paul E. Empig, SSP

Our Church never runs out of saints to emulate.



A wooden image of Saint John Mary Vianney

After the successful and meaningful celebration of the Pauline Year in honor of the Apostle of the Gentiles, Pope Benedict XVI declared the "Year for Priests" from June 19, 2009 – June 19, 2010 to coincide with the 150th death anniversary of the Curé of Ars, Saint John Mary Vianney who is the patron saint of parish priests and a model confessor. The theme for this celebration is "Fidelity to Christ, Fidelity of Priests."

In his letter to the priests of the world, the Holy Father calls for a "joyful and renewed realization of the greatness of God's gift, embodied in the splendid example of generous pastors, religious afire with love for God and for souls, and insightful, patient spiritual guides."

Following the example of Saint John Mary Vianney who lived a life suited to his priestly state, the Holy Father encourages priests to live the evangelical counsels they have professed and urges them to help the laity live these virtues as well. The life of priests must be rooted in the Word of God and nourished by the Eucharist.

The poverty of Saint John Mary Vianney, the Pope explains, is giving everything away, holding nothing back, and trusting in Divine Providence. This is a challenge to priests to live a simple life devoid of too many worldly attachments and fanfare, lest priests be accused of being materialistic and worldly; this would be a serious blow to their life witness.

The life of obedience of the Curé of Ars is simply rooted in his desire to do only what is pleasing to the Lord.

The Pope links the Eucharist with Saint John Mary Vianney's chastity as "suited to one who must daily touch the Eucharist, who contemplates it blissfully and with the same bliss offers it to his flock."

The saint's obedience finds its "full embodiment in his conscientious fidelity to the daily demands of his ministry." The life of obedience of the Curé of Ars is simply rooted in his desire to do only what is pleasing to the Lord.

In this context of a spirituality nourished by the practice of the evangelical counsels, the Holy Father invites all priests to welcome the new impetus that the Holy Spirit is bringing into the Church through ecclesiastical movements, new communities and ministries.

Conscious of people's desire to deepen their spirituality and the emergence of new ecclesiastical communities within the Church, the Holy Father highlights the communion

between the ordained and charismatic communities in proclaiming and bearing witness to the Gospel of hope and charity—even to the farthest bounds of the world.

Moreover, the Pope emphasizes the communitarian aspect of the ordained ministry. Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders and made manifest in Eucharistic concelebration, the communion between priests and their bishop "needs to be translated into various concrete expressions of an affective and effective priestly fraternity."

The local Church in the Philippines has declared June 2009 – June 2010 the "Year of the Two Hearts" as "a Year of Prayer and Work for Peace-building and Lay Participation in Social Change." This is in view of the upcoming May 2010 elections.

Such declaration highlights the need for sincere and concrete expressions and initiatives for peace and nation-building. Genuine dialogue and the desire for lasting peace should be given priority and importance.

The poverty of Saint John Mary Vianney, the Pope explains, is giving everything away, holding nothing back, and trusting in Divine Providence.

Just as Saint John Mary Vianney taught his parishioners primarily by the witness of his life, we Filipinos look up also to our priests to lead by example through their own way of life. May priests and bishops shepherd their flocks in laying down "the moral foundations on which we can build a more stable, more mature Philippine society."

However, the work is not only limited to the ordained, because the bulk of the tasks is in the hands of the laity; thus, the ordained have to be in the forefront of empowering the lay and not taking over the role of the laity in temporal affairs. The role of the ordained is to provide moral leadership in the communal and ecclesiastical life of the parishes and dioceses. Lay participation plays a crucial role in social change for leadership in the many spheres of politics, governance, business, and economics; it is not primarily within the ambit of religious leaders. Rather, it is the role that should be performed by the laity. Thus, we pray that men of integrity will take the challenge of submitting themselves to the process of choosing our leaders who will lead our beloved country.

As we look forward to the coming elections, we fold our hands in prayer that our countrymen may open their hearts to the grace of healing and reconciliation which flows from the wounded heart of Jesus; we also ask the intercession, guidance, and protection of our Blessed Mother that we may all genuinely strive for a better Philippines.

We also pray for our present and incoming Church and government leaders, as they lead us now and in the coming days, to imitate the selfless leadership and virtues of Saint John Mary Vianney. May the priests of today be truly a symbol of God's loving and healing presence in the midst of a wounded and broken people brought about by injustices, corruption, neglect of basic human rights and material perversion. We pray that in the exercise of their ministry, all their actions will truly be *agit in persona Christi.* TL

Ian Paul E. Empig, SSP is finishing his theological studies at Loyola School of Theology. He is the Managing Editor of The Youngster Magazine and works as an assistant in the Vocation Animation Office of the Society of St. Paul.

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FABC's

"Without a vision, the people perish." This brief quote from the Book of Proverbs (29:18) enables us to understand the pivotal role that the person we are honoring today has played in the assembly of the local churches of Asia. Father Catalino G. Arévalo, S.J. has served the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) since its beginnings in 1970. In November of that year, when Pope Paul VI visited Manila and gathered together 180 Asian bishops, Father Arévalo already served as peritus (resource person) for this first-ever Asian Bishops' Meeting. From this organizational gathering, the FABC would soon emerge—with a wide vision of service for all God's peoples of Asia.

In 1974, at the First FABC Plenary Assembly in Taipei, Taiwan, Father Arévalo was the principal writing consultant for the first statement of the Federation, entitled *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia*. This visionary document has served the local churches in Asia so well; it remains the single most influential articulation of the "vision and mission" of Asia's churches in the post-Vatican II era. The depth of theological, pastoral, and missionary insight of this programmatic document has enabled Asia's missionary local churches to understand and implement a vision of integral evangelization through dialogue. It has facilitated the reception of the Second Vatican Council in the Asian continent. Indeed, today FABC can properly be called "Asia's Continuing Vatican II."

In fidelity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and in communion and filial oneness with the See of Peter, the FABC has pioneered a "new way of being church" in Asia. As expressed in FABC I, "To preach the Gospel in Asia today we must make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our peoples. The primary focus of our task of evangelization then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local church" (9). "The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions [of Asia]" (12). The validity of this "triple dialogue" vision, enunciated in 1974, has been repeatedly reaffirmed at subsequent FABC Plenary Assemblies as well as in the pastoral praxis of Christian communities across Asia.

As an integral part of his service as theological advisor for the FABC bishops (1970-1995), Father Arévalo was named in 1985 the first convener and founding member of the Asian Bishops' Theological Advisory Commission (TAC). In 1986 the FABC:TAC met in Hong Kong to begin treating the subjects of the local church in Asia and interreligious dialogue. Participating in the conference were theologians of the different member countries of the FABC who had been appointed by their respective bishops' conferences.

Renamed the FABC Office of Theological Concerns in 1997, the basic aims of this FABC office are the following: (1) to foster Asian theological reflection on issues which are of special interest for the Asian Churches; (2) to be of assistance to the FABC in conceptualizing and making policies for missionary and pastoral action; and, (3) to bring relevant contemporary theological thinking into dialogue with "Asian" theological reflection emerging from within the FABC countries and then to mediate the results to the wider Church.

Father Arévalo shepherded the TAC for a decade. During this period several insightful

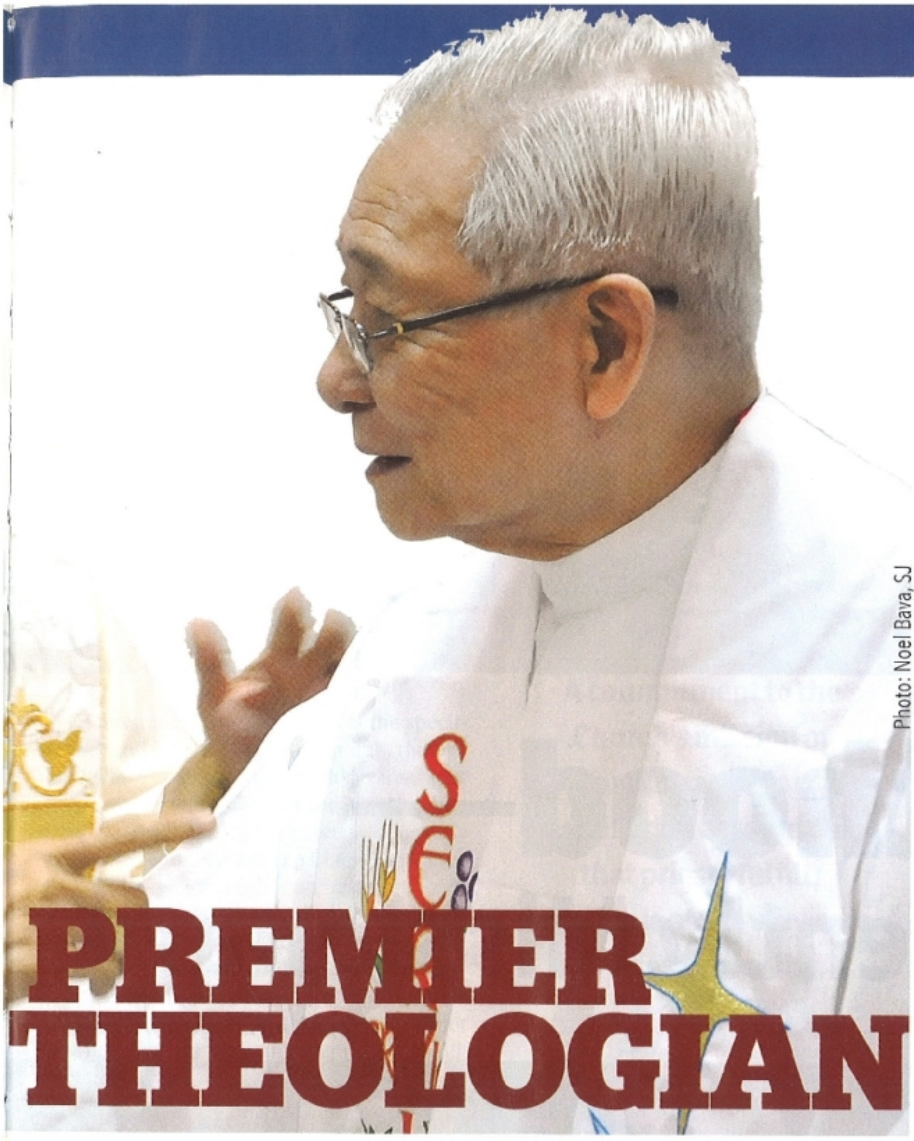


Photo: Noel Bava, SJ

PREMIER THEOLOGIAN

and in-depth studies were produced: *Theses on Interreligious Dialogue* (1987), Theses on the Local Church (1990), and *Asian Theological Perspectives on Church and Politics* (1992). In 1994 the FABC sponsored the first FABC International Theological Colloquium with the theme: *Being Church in Asia: Journeying with the Spirit into Fuller Life.* These profound studies had as their central focus the development of an "ecclesiology of the Asian churches." Along with the plethora of FABC theological reflection, these materials are a privileged locus where the voice and experience of the local churches of Asia are heard.

The committed involvement of "Father Revs" (as he is known by his many students and friends) spans a wide spectrum of activity. He was the first and for many years the only Asian to serve on the Pontifical International Theological Commission. Through appointments by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, he served on that commission for twelve years. He was executive coordinator and program director for two major theological conferences held in Manila, the International Congress on Mission (1979) and the International Conference on the Alliance of Two Hearts (1987).

In 1997 His Eminence, Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, Archbishop of Manila, conferred upon him the award *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* and identified him as "the Dean of All Filipino Theologians and the Godfather of hundreds of priests." When he received the degree of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*, from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1998, Father Arévalo was identified as "Father of Asian Theology," owing to his more than 9,000 pages of theological writing "with an Asian emphasis." Speaking of his own prodigious theological output, Father Arévalo simply says: "All this writing has been done, I trust, in the service of the Church. My Jesuit vocation places my life completely at the service of the Church: her people, her communities, her leadership, her works."

Father Arévalo has always remained involved in pastoral ministry in a variety of apostolates. Former Philippine President Corazon Aquino has revealed that he has been her family's spiritual confidant since the assassination of her husband Ninoy Aquino in 1983. She related that during that time she prayed at a church in Boston for a Filipino priest with whom she could talk. The following day, she said, Father Arévalo was at her doorstep. When Corazon "Tita Cory" Aquino was finally laid to rest on August 5, 2009, Father Arévalo preached her funeral homily—fulfilling her and her family's personal request.

Thus, with sincere appreciation, the Ninth FABC Plenary Assembly is pleased to recognize the invaluable and visionary contributions that Father Catalino G. Arévalo, S.J. has made both to the Filipino nation and, through the FABC, to all the peoples of Asia. In profound gratitude and prayer, we lift you, your loved ones, your intentions, your life and priestly ministry to the Father of Mercies. Father Arévalo, to you we extend our sincere, heartfelt thank you. *Maraming, maraming salamat!* Together we pray: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo.* Forever I will sing the mercies of the Lord. Amen. TL

On August 16, 2009 during the closing ceremonies of the Ninth FABC Plenary Assembly, Father Arévalo was recognized for the outstanding contribution he rendered to the FABC; this citation was read by Father Kroeger and a plaque of appreciation was presented by Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, FABC Secretary General, to thank Father Arévalo for his many years of generous service.



Photo: Ulysses Cabayao, SJ

Priesthood—
Inherently Missionary

by James H. Kroeger, MM



Photo: Ulysses Cabayao, SJ

The Year for Priests (2009-2010), with the theme "Faithfulness of Christ, Faithfulness of Priests," is focused on the renewal of priests; it recalls the 150th death anniversary of Saint Jean Marie Vianney, the Curé of Ars (1786-1859). He served as curé in the "missionary" parish of Ars for 41 years. Pius XI canonized him in 1925 and made him patron of parish priests in 1929.

In the context of this "priestly year," one can fruitfully recall that, since the time of the Second Vatican Council, a renewed vision of priestly ministry has been emerging. It is anchored in the awareness that "the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature" (AG 2). This means that the Church exists in order to evangelize; it is the grace and vocation proper to her identity. "Evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church" (EN 14). Thus, for the Church and her ministers, to live is to evangelize!

If missionary evangelization is the specific task and imperative of the Church, then all her members should have a vivid awareness of their own responsibility for the spread of the Gospel. Stated succinctly in terms of priestly ordination and ministry, the Church perceives that there is inherently an *organic bonding between priesthood and mission*; to be formed for the ordained ministry in the Catholic Church today demands a missionary consciousness and dedication. A commitment to the Church's mission of evangelization is not one function among many that priests fulfill; mission is at the very core of priestly identity.

A New Vision. A brief presentation of selected texts illustrates the intimate connection between priestly ordination, ministry and mission. Vatican II's document on the life and ministry of priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*) states: "The spiritual gift which priests received at their ordination prepares them not for any limited or narrow mission, but for the widest scope of the universal mission of salvation 'even to the very ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). For every priestly ministry shares in the universality of the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles" (PO 10). The Council's mission document (*Ad Gentes*) notes: "Priests represent Christ, and are collaborators with the order of bishops in that threefold sacred task which by its very nature bears on the mission of the Church. Therefore, they should fully understand that their life has also been consecrated to the service of the missions" (AG 39). Vatican II has given the Church a vision of a *mission-intensive priesthood*!

In his first Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday (1979), Pope John Paul II noted: "the pastoral vocation of priests is great, and the Council teaches that it is universal; it is directed to the whole Church and therefore, it is also a missionary vocation." Likewise, in an April 1989 address to the members of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the pope emphasized that "every priest, in a special way, is a *missionary for the world*."

John Paul II's 1990 mission encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) states: "All priests must have the mind and heart of missionaries—open to the needs of the Church and the world, with concern for those farthest away, and especially for the non-Christian groups in their own area. They should have at heart, in their prayers and particularly at the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the concern of the whole Church for all of humanity. Especially in those areas where Christians are a minority [e.g. Asia, home to over 60% of humanity, is less than 3% Christian], priests must be filled with special missionary zeal and commitment" (RM 67).

A commitment to the Church's mission of evangelization is not one function among many that priests fulfill; mission is at the very core of priestly identity.

Mission Emphasis. In his message for World Mission Sunday 1990, which bore the title: "Every Priest a Missionary," the pope spoke about the role of the seminary in forming apostolic evangelizers. He wrote that all priests "must have a *solid missionary formation*, which the seminary above all must provide, during the years of the preparation of future priests. It is important that in the program of theological studies missiology be given a prominent place."

John Paul II's logic is clear; priests who themselves possess a deep missionary consciousness "will be able to form the Christian communities to an authentic missionary involvement.... The priest should feel and act, wherever he is, like a pastor of the world, in service to the whole missionary Church. He is a born animator and the person primarily responsible for the awakening of missionary consciousness in the faithful.... [Priests] should arouse and maintain among the faithful a most active interest for the evangelization of the world" (*Ibid.*).

Apostolic Shepherds. In the 1992 apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV) [*I Will Give You Shepherds*], John Paul II emphasizes that "the ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; ...it is ordered not only to the particular Church but also to the universal Church; ... [it] is incorporated in the apostolic structure of the Church. In this way priests, like the apostles, act as ambassadors of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:20). This is the basis of the missionary character of every priest" (PDV 16). "It thus follows that the spiritual life of the priest should be profoundly marked by a missionary zeal and dynamism. In the exercise of their ministry and the witness of their lives, priests have the duty to form the community entrusted to them as a truly missionary community" (PDV 32). They are also expected to reach out beyond their own parish or Catholic community; as authentic shepherds, they need to heed Jesus' words: "There are other sheep I have that are not part of this fold, and these I have to lead as well" (Jn 10:16). Yes, in the words of Pope John Paul II, "All priests must have the mind and heart of missionaries" (RM 67).

Vision of the Philippine Church. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991) issued a mandate that "the Church in the Philippines ... shall put itself in a more active state of mission (*PCP-II Decrees, Art. I, #1*). This "active state of mission" was to be concretized, promoted and implemented through a five-to-ten-year National Pastoral Plan. This plan, issued in 1993, bore the title: *In the State of Mission: Towards a Renewed Integral Evangelization.*

On July 5, 2000 the Philippine bishops is-

sued a beautiful pastoral letter on mission and evangelization within the local Church. It bore the title: *"Missions" and the Church in the Philippines: A Pastoral Letter on the Church's Mission in the New Millennium.* The letter is an inspiring overview of both the theological and pastoral agenda for enabling the local Church to achieve "a more active state of mission."

Missiology should be an integral part of the theological formation of future priests.

The Philippine bishops chose to make mission and evangelization central to the entire Jubilee Year experience through a National Mission Congress, held in Cebu in 2000. Approximately 2,300 delegates assembled for this event; the "Message of the First National Mission Congress" expressed the commitment of the participants to become a "Church-in-Mission."

When the Philippine Church held the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCR) in 2001 to evaluate the implementation of PCP-II, the assembly offered nine important guidelines to promote a "renewed integral evangelization." The ninth guideline, centered on *Animation and Formation for Mission ad gentes*, notes: "We shall respond to the Holy Father's challenge that Filipinos become 'the foremost missionaries for all of Asia' in the third millennium. For this purpose we shall insure that mission animation and formation will be integral to religious formation in the family, schools and other institutes of formation."

Vision of Priestly Formation. The current document that guides formation for priests in the Philippines is *The Updated Philippine Program of Priestly Formation* (UPPPF); it was issued in 2006 by the Episcopal Commission on Seminaries of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). According to the document, a unified vision of theology necessarily includes seven essential theological disciplines. In addition to areas such as scripture, dogma, and moral, *missiology* is identified as integral to a comprehensive vision of theology. The following paragraph (UPPPF 131) links mission studies into a holistic program of priestly formation.

"PCP-II highlights the role of the Philippine Church to be the foremost missionary in Asia. NPCCR echoes the same urgent call by making *Mission Ad Gentes* as one of its pastoral priorities. Rolled into one, it is a call for the Philippine Church to become a Church-in-Mission. But for this to happen, missionary formation of the future priests is indispensable. This requires that Missiology should be an integral part of the theological formation of future priests. As such, all major seminaries and school of theologies (*sic*) should offer courses on Missiology."

Conclusion. Early in all four gospels, one reads of the call of the disciples (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:1-11; Jn 1:35-51). The disciples have questions; Jesus responds by giving a simple invitation: "Come and see," "*Venite et videte*" (Jn 1:39). In similar fashion Philip invites his brother Nathanael to "Come and see," "*Veni et vide*" (Jn 1:46). After the resurrection, the disciples proclaim their faith in Jesus in a variety of ways; they announce to doubting Thomas: "We have seen the Lord," "*Vidimus Dominum*" (Jn 20:25); John says to Peter: "It is the Lord," "*Dominus est*" (Jn 21:7).

In light of resurrection faith, all four gospels conclude with mission imperatives (Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:48-49; Jn 20:21-23). Notice the dynamic expressed by each evangelist; Jesus' disciples are called to respond in two parallel ways. First, they are to *Come and See*; then, they are to *Go and Proclaim.* In a particular way, priests are to be intimate disciples-apostles of Jesus, who himself is "the missionary of the Father."

This presentation, which cited documents of the universal and local Church, has tried to capture the Church's vision of a *mission-intensive priesthood.* More than a simple chronicle of Church documents, this reflection aimed to express how the Holy Spirit is moving us all to become a Church with a clergy that, by God's grace and the power of the Spirit, truly remains "in the state of mission." It is the fervent prayer of this author that Loyola School of Theology is training ministers of the Gospel, priests in particular, who have "the mind and heart of missionaries." Saint Jean Marie Vianney, pray for us! TL

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THINKING with the CHURCH

CCC1546

Christ, hight priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church a kingdom, priests for his God and Father. The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly.

CCC1547

The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate each in its own proper way in the one priesthood of Christ.

CCC1549

Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers.

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Becoming Mature and Celibate

Excerpts from a Qualitative Study on Filipino Priests

by Jordan J. Orbe, SJ

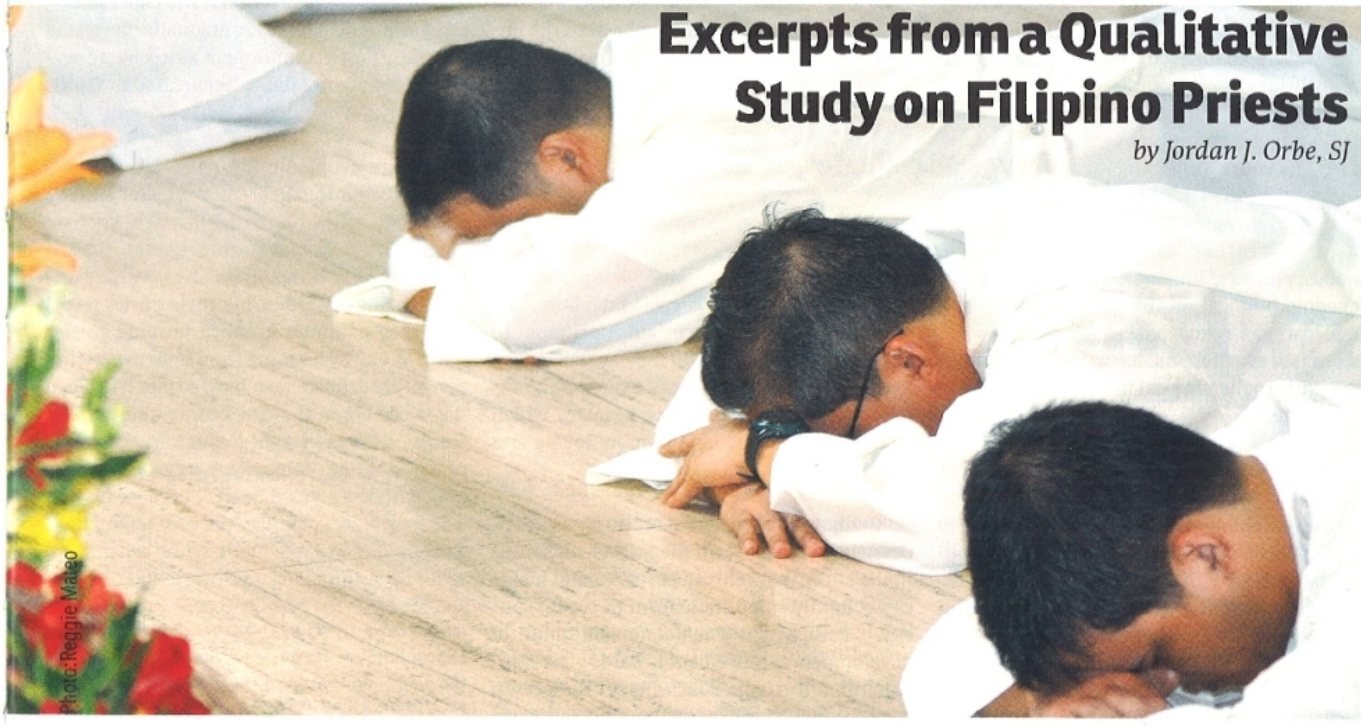


Photo: Reggie Mateo

Popular culture shows how we live in such hypersexualized times. Mass media bombards us with messages and images commodifying sex. In an increasingly sex-saturated environment, many believe that celibacy is fast becoming an anomaly. Abstinence from sexual relations is suspect.

For Roman Catholic priests, issues surrounding celibacy and sexuality are particularly critical, especially after the explosion of sex scandals at the turn of the millennium. In the document *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope John Paul II listed three indicators that seminary authorities ought to look for in candidates to the priesthood: a sufficient degree of psychosexual maturity, a deep authentic life of prayer, and healthy human relationships. How do Filipino priests live out these indicators in the concrete? What does being psychosexually mature mean?

This author attempted to explore the perceptions and experiences of Filipino priests regarding sexuality, celibacy and psychosexual maturity. Responses were gathered through focus group discussions as well as in-depth individual interviews with young, middle-aged and late-adult priests. A total of thirty-two priests from various parts of the country participated in the qualitative data gathering.

Perceptions of Sexuality and Celibacy. When asked the question "What is your understanding of sexuality?" the priests were quick to admit that their ideas about sexuality developed over time. Their earliest notions about sexuality were negative; sexuality was understood as simply genital in nature. Because of this, anything that had to do with sexuality was considered dirty. It wasn't talked about in public. The common sources of these negative perspectives were their early experiences in the family and the extremely conservative formation in the seminary. However, the priests' understanding of sexuality did not remain negative. Through life experiences in ministry and continuing formation, most of them came to a better, more positive appraisal of sexuality. They learned to recognize how sexuality isn't just genital but rather integral to a person. It is a vital element of a person's life and sense of self.

And just as their understanding of sexuality evolved, their un-

derstanding of celibacy deepened over time. From simply a prohibition against marriage and sexual relations, the priests were brought to a more positive view of their vow of celibacy as a commitment and a response to God's love. However, the priests' responses reveal that this more positive view does not preclude the experience of struggle and difficulty.

Struggling and Living with the Celibate Commitment. The priests in the study talked about how the ideals and the concepts they learned in the seminary, especially about celibacy, were challenged in the course of their priestly life. They candidly shared about their experience of difficulty and struggles as celibate men. As vowed celibates they still experienced sexual desires. They used words like urge, needs, yearning, longing, craving, physical or animal instincts, sexual passions and even Filipino terms like init or libog, referring to the physical manifestations of the sexual need.

As vowed celibates, they still experienced sexual desires.

The priests also talked about affective desires that indicated a yearning for intimacy and companionship. This was manifested in the desire to engage in particular relationships. Several of them openly shared their experiences of falling in love. Another need that several of them experienced was a longing for a family and a desire for generativity. These affective needs were common among the participants regardless of age, although they came in varied forms depending on their stage of adult development.

When asked about how they coped with these experiences and remained in their celibate commitment, the priests identified several means. Foremost is nurturing a vibrant spiritual life through prayer and retreats. Far from "over-spiritualizing" their struggle, they found in prayer a deep source of consolation which enabled them to continue as celibates. They also counted on some form of community support. Most of them emphasized the importance of a network of deep relationships which enabled them to open up about their struggles and find comfort, support and even diversion. They identified helpful attitudes such as the personal resolve to remain celibate despite experiencing struggle and failure, and a certain openness to ask and receive help when they are in trouble. Several of the older priests expressed gratitude for their experiences of intimacy which enabled them to be kinder, more loving and compassionate.

Celibate Psychosexual Maturity as a Process. It is evident from the priests' responses in the study that celibate psychosexual maturity is hardly some static form of sexual "purity." Rather, it is a dynamic continuum of development, a movement towards greater integration. It is a process wherein the person goes through the experiences and tasks appropriate to one's developmental stage and allows them to give greater insight into the self and into one's life commitment. As a fully human and therefore sexual being, the priest lives with the tensions that his celibate life entails. As the respondents shared, this domain of sexuality involves tension, struggle and even failure. However, the maturing celibate learns healthy ways of coping and living with these experiences. This movement of maturity is geared towards greater integration, not compartmentalization. The experiences, struggles, and failures are gradually integrated into the priest's commitment as a celibate person. They are not denied, repressed or "spiritualized" away.

Mature people do not pass through life's challenges untouched by struggle. Priests who have grown mature in their celibate commitment have confronted and worked through many difficulties. They readily admit to being imperfect, but their stories reveal how they continue to move towards greater integration. By learning from their experiences, mature celibate men have so much to teach the world about the true beauty and value of sex, which lies in right loving. In the words of Karl Rahner: "tomorrow's priest will be the man with the pierced heart ... because he is to lead men [and women] to the very core of their existence, their inmost heart ... he can only do so if he has found his own heart." TL

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Pari't Politika

by Ismael Jose Chan-Gonzaga, SJ

"Politics has a religious and moral dimension."
CBCP Pastoral Exhortation 1997

I have always wondered why for such a "devout" Catholic nation, the Philippines is ranked among the highest in terms of poverty and corruption. And, though many people would insist that this logic does not necessarily follow or that there is no correlation between the two facts, I find it disturbing nonetheless.

I believe that for so long now, we have chained ourselves with the subtle misconception that being Church means we cannot get involved in the so-called "murky waters" of politics. For years, we have remained silent as our politicians pronounced empty promises of progress while in reality they continue to plunder our country, squeezing the very life out of our people. We remain quiet either because we have been silenced by donations and aid for our own pro-poor outreach programs or because we are now uncertain of the very principle of how we as Church should engage in politics. Honestly, this has been my biggest difficulty.

In the work that the office where I belong does, we go around the country giving political education to Church-based groups like BEC clusters and religious congregations. And, most of the time, a major stumbling block for many is the misinterpretation of the principle of Separation of Church and State. This principle has been used time and again by self-serving politicians whenever the Church begins to feel the very injustice of society and wishes to make a stand.

I believe that the Principle of Separation of Church and State, which is enshrined in our Constitution, draws the limits only on how the State can engage the Church, but there is no implementing rule or legal impediment that prohibits the Church from engaging in politics. On the contrary, the Church, which is made up not of buildings or statues but of human beings, citizens of the State, is morally obliged to engage the State, especially when the State has been amiss in her duty to protect and care for her citizens.

And so, I believe that our role as priests and pastors is very crucial in terms of giving enough support and guidance for a people craving for direction and inspiration. As priests and pastors, we need to engage our flock at the very heart of where they are—in a society of people who share one cultural heritage, one identity as a nation. We need to engage our faithful, citizens of this nation, in a quest for a better country, a better Philippines. As Church, I believe we can no longer remain silent as our people are forced beneath the yoke of poverty and injustice because of the greed of a few. We can no longer remain comfortable behind our convent walls and rectories, while our people grow hungry because of the self-interest of the ruling few. I believe that it is time we as Church live up to our calling to be true pastors, not just of the spirit, but also of the temporal needs of our people—for the **Kingdom is already here and now**, just as it is still to come.

I believe it is time we truly become shepherds once more. TL

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Celebrating the Two Hearts

by Catalino G. Arévalo, SJ





On April 19, 2009 the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) issued a pastoral exhortation to the Catholic faithful regarding spiritual preparation "for another crucial transition in the life of our nation—namely the elections in May 2010." The CBCP declared 19 June 2009 – 19 June 2010 as "a Year of Prayer and Work for Peace Building and Lay Participation in Social Change." The pastoral exhortation highlights the radical change of heart over and above change in social and political structures, "commending ourselves to Jesus and his Blessed Mother."

This year coincides with Pope Benedict XVI's announcement of a special Year of the Priest with the theme "The Faithfulness of Christ, the Faithfulness of the Priest." This double celebration in the Philippines highlights and calls upon the Filipino Catholics' exercise of Christ's Priesthood manifested according to their particular charism (cf. LG 10). This is particularly expressed in the spirituality that the CBCP desires to foster both for the lay faithful and priests this year; it is a "renewal of consecration and commitment of mind and heart, life and action." To give us an idea of this spirituality, we print here with permission a condensed version of the document that launches the Year of the Two Hearts written by our own Father Catalino G. Arévalo, SJ on behalf of The Year of the Two Hearts Organizing Committee.

The Year of the Two Hearts (June 19, 2009 – June 19, 2010). This event is a Year of Renewal, of Consecration and Commitment of Mind and Heart, Life and Action of our Priests and our People. As a nation our country is at present at a new crossroads, a time of crisis once again: the worldwide economic recession, with its consequences, in loss of jobs and widespread uncertainty; the on-going political turmoil in our land, heightened by coming elections of 2010 and the maneuverings connected with these elections; in a special way, the climate of corruption prevailing in all sectors, especially in government. Thus, movements have been emerging to demand urgent reform and restoration of morality, moral values, and moral standards in our society. The CBCP has repeatedly called for this moral reform and renewal, in so many areas of public and professional life, beginning, of course, with personal conversion and personal reform and recommitment to an authentic Christian life.

We as Christians, we as Catholics, know that all this moral and social renewal is not possible without the help of God, without "the power of the paschal mystery" of the passion and death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. We may never forget Our Lord's words, "Without me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5) and those earlier words of the Psalmist, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Ps. 127:1).



We may not allow the growing, surrounding climate of secularism to ever make us "practical pelagians," who believe we can construct a truly better world without God's guidance and grace. Our present Holy Father strongly and insistently reaffirms the faith-conviction that we cannot construct a truly and lastingly better world without the presence and power of God in Jesus and the Spirit working in our lives.

We proclaim and open the Year of the Two Hearts (YTH) to reaffirm our true and total need of the grace of God and the "power of the paschal mystery," so that we, individually and as a people, might move forward toward conversion and renewal in our real lives, in our public activity, in our endeavor to renew our Society. We must begin with recommitment to the Gospel, and thus re-consecration to the heart of Jesus and to the heart of Mary, mother of our Lord. This Year of the Two Hearts must, of course, include and involve our priests and their priestly ministry and life. Thus fostering the "Special Year of the Priest" announced by the Holy Father (lasting also from 19 June 2009 to 19 June 2010), forms an important and necessary part of the Year of the Two Hearts. Finally, YTH will of course involve primarily our Christian laity, our lay leadership in Church and society, our Christian families—in sum, all of our Christian people.

Spirituality of the Year of the Two Hearts. The acronym ROCK has been chosen to sum up the different dimensions of the *spirituality* of the *Year of the Two Hearts*. We might here spell out this spirituality briefly.

Renewal – the reform of minds and hearts, of lives and deeds, of persons and families, of communities, a renewal which seeks ultimately what Pope John Paul II clearly taught as the fullness of *reparation* in our contemporary world. Reparation from sin is to be seen, not only as affecting individual lives, but as building up, under God, and in oneness with the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, "the civilization of truth and goodness, justice and love." Thus, there follows the endeavor to "repair" society that it might truly become a genuine community "grounded on truth, guided by justice, motivated by charity, realized in freedom, and flowering in peace."

Offering – in clear connection with the message of our Blessed Mother at Fatima, lays down the daily, down-to-earth demand of the Spirituality of the Two Hearts: that each day, every thought and desire, word and deed be such that it constitutes an oblation, an offering to God our Father, in accordance with his Holy Will. All this involves the fulfillment of our daily tasks and duties, our personal and professional work, the diverse ways of our participation in public life. All these are "lifted up to the Lord," in union with the Heart of Jesus in his ongoing paschal mystery, first and above all in the Eucharist, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Jesus himself, Jesus crucified and risen, Jesus "at the right hand of the Father," joins our hearts' offering with the offering of his own heart, in thanksgiving and praise, love and obedience, in his intercession as our High Priest in heaven. In all this, joined first of all with his Heart is the Heart of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer.

Our present Holy Father strongly and insistently reaffirms the faith-conviction that we cannot construct a truly and lastingly better world without the presence and power of God in Jesus and the Spirit working in our lives.

Conversion – is at the beginning of all our turning to the Lord and turning to our brothers and sisters, the "daily dying to ourselves" so that we might live to Christ. Conversion leads to consecration – consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus which now means for us, consecration to the Heart of Jesus together with the Immaculate Heart of Mary. With consecration, commitment is joined, commitment to the will and plans of the Father and the plans of Jesus for our own lives, for society, towards sanctification and service, total loving service towards Our Lord and Our Lady and their purposes in the world, as well as humble and loving service toward our brothers and sisters, especially those with whom our Lord identified himself in love and solidarity, as the Gospel teaches us.

Kingdom – "this reigning" is part of the coming-to-be of the ultimate Kingdom of God of the Scriptural teaching, the fullness of the Kingdom of God yet-to-come. In the Kingdom of the Heart of Christ Jesus, and that of his holy Mother, we are constantly asked: "Is your heart at one with our hearts, as our hearts are one with yours?" The offshoot of all this, the process (we might call it) of the truest "heartening" of our lives, is to build up, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, a true community of our Filipino people, one in heart with Jesus and Mary, one in longing and labor for the coming of the Kingdom of God, where His will shall be truly done on earth as it is in heaven, that for which we pray in the Our Father: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." *Adveniat regnum tuum, fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra.*

Conclusion. These reflections and suggestions are meant to presuppose and build on the 19 April Pastoral Exhortation: "The Year of the Two Hearts for Peace Building and Lay Participation in Social Change." They try to spell out what we might call "the core-spirituality" for this Year of the Two Hearts, and the Year of the Priests as well. May the *Year of the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary*, and the *Year of Our Priests* be lived faithfully and profoundly, yes, even intensely, by all of us. May it truly be a new beginning in our people's lives, a new beginning of a renewed Filipino nation by God's grace and favor "at once more human and more divine." TL





"**Believe** what you read,
Preach what you believe,
Practice what you preach."


"BLESS
and approve our offering;
make it acceptable to you,
an offering
in spirit and in truth."

"The priest must feel the same joy at seeing Our Lord whom he holds in his hands."

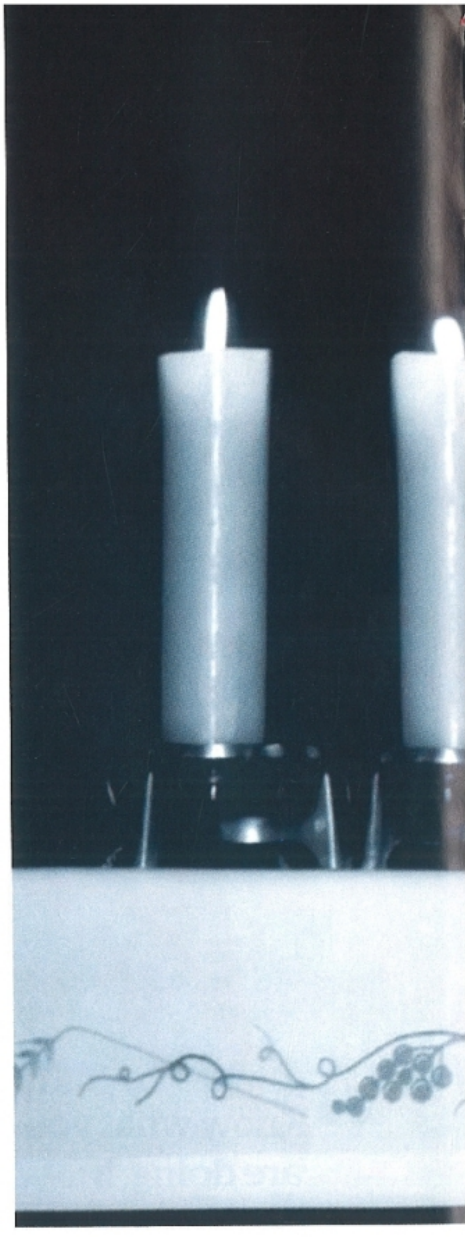
St. Jean-Marie Vianney




“Know what you are doing, imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord’s cross.”

When a Few Good Priests are Gone

by Richard Escoto, OCD



This year is a significant year of study, dialogue, prayer and theological reflection on the life, ministry, spirituality and theology of priests as the Church celebrates the Year of the Priest.

What led me to reflect seriously on the Church's celebration dedicated to priests is the reality of death that has come like a thief in the night and spared no one. For the past months, well-revered and beloved pastors whom I have personally known have passed away. There was profound sadness among the faithful they served. When good priests are gone, there is a deep vacuum that is very difficult to fill. The question is: will their space be filled up again? In these times when we as Church are in need of more and more authentic, determined and good pastors, it is a painful loss when a few good priests are gone. In these times when we the faithful are being faced on all sides with the issues and ordeals of problematic priests, it is a big blow and a shocking loss when a few good priests are gone. We sigh and say, "Why did they need to go?" We already lack priests; we are in search of authentic pastors who share and give witness to the life of the true Shepherd.

Father Green, a well revered and respected professor on spirituality and prayer in our school of theology, passed away this year. When I learned that he was already gone that morning in March, I could not help but cry. I sighed deeply at his passing. He was not only a brilliant teacher, but he became a generous and fatherly spiritual director to me. I could not forget how he devoted his time to listen and to journey with me, despite his hectic schedule as pastor, teacher, formator, spiritual director and author. Father Green became a witness that spirituality or prayer life is integral to the whole life of the priest. I realized too how important it is that spiritual directors are not only simply "spiritual" but "learned." I experienced that in him.

Father Fitzgerald, the first regional superior of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in the Philippines, died last July while engaged in his ministry of conducting retreats. The news of his death was indeed a surprise and a sad experience in our Order. I did not know him personally; I have not met him. However, when I learned about his life as a faithful Carmelite and missionary in the Philippines and in Africa, how he supported and built communities, I was moved with sadness and a sense of loss upon hearing of his sudden death. He was revered as a truly dedicated Carmelite whose life and ministry in the congregation and to the nuns was a life of dedication and service. He was also involved in prison ministry. He had loved much and sacrificed much for the Carmelites, especially the Philippines.

The sudden passing of Father Alex, a diocesan priest from the Prelature of Infanta, brought us to tears and shock. He was only in his early forties. He was so young, so spirited, and so committed as pastor to the *Munting Sambayanang Kristiyano* in San Luis, Aurora. We never thought in our wildest imagination that he would be passing at a very young age. Aside from his being a parish priest, he was the enthusiastic director of the formation house of pre-collegians of the Prelature and also a daily Gospel commentator on the local radio station. Despite his very tiring and hectic schedule, he never complained. He gave his all for the local Church of Infanta. Prior to his mission in San Luis, he served as parish priest in the very remote and poor Jomalig Island for sixteen years. He loved serving the poor and the island inhabitants. Father Alex was so simple, so prayerful, so energetic and so effective as a preacher. Here is a diocesan priest who was an example of prayer, chastity, simplicity, and obedience. I could not forget him, because for one month of our summer immersion program, he guided us and taught us what the "Church of the Poor" really is. He himself was a witness of this vision of Church which the Prelature of Infanta has taken as its vision and mission.

Last August, it was also Father Lito's passing. It was a sudden death because like the first three, he was found dead in his room. I



personally know Father Lito as a silent worker. He was a man of few words. He was committed to his ministry, especially to the apostolate of mass communication. A very low profile indeed! He moved so many hearts, especially in his Pauline Family. His role as editor of *The Youngster* Magazine and other publications will be difficult to replace.

This year of the priest is a great year to recall our reflections on priests. There is no better concrete and effective exposition of the exemplary life of our priests than to retell and share the life-stories of our few good priests who have gone ahead of us. Retelling their selfless sacrifices, ministry and life will somehow encourage the Church of today. It will inspire vocations to the priesthood. We remember and thank those who have showed what it means to be an authentic priest. The Church is grateful for having these pastors and we commend them to the Lord who is the true Shepherd. For sure, they will hear the voice of the Shepherd for they know His voice. We hope and continue to pray that they are within the loving fold of the true Pastor.

When a few good priests are gone, their goodness does not go with them into the grave. Their holiness will be felt, experienced, and relived. For me this is what a priest is—to live a holy life in today's world. Our few good priests have given us sterling examples that being good is not a rare commodity nowadays. It can authentically be lived out and shared. TL

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Priesthood and MIGRATION

by Edwin D. Corros, CS

Would priests think of migration as an option for a vocational or professional career move if they find themselves in conflict with their superiors? Why not? Such a decision could be contemplated by those still in seminary formation who are scouting for another congregation to which they may feel fit to transfer. Indeed, there are many things that could be discussed on the topic of priesthood and migration.

One could speak about the lives of missionary priests who have been sent by their congregation to another country for a different mission, but then, due to the large presence of Filipino communities in those countries, they have become instant chaplains. Many of them find more fulfillment in this ministry than in the mission to which they were originally assigned.

One could also share the varied migration experiences of priests who have been sent by their bishops to other countries for further studies. As newly arrived foreign students in an unfamiliar environment, these priests may share strange or painful experiences similar to those that ordinary Filipinos overseas have encountered. One familiar story reveals that some of the priests have refused to return to their dioceses after having completed their studies. Without judging the morality of their decision, such a case can serve as a portrait of several overseas Filipinos who have decided to overstay their visa after the termination of their contract.

Migration as a global phenomenon touches varied aspects of people's lives. For Filipinos whose government policy is to export labor for nearly four decades, priests in the country were not spared by the exodus of professionals enticed by the lure of greener pasture. Priests, whose vocation requires them to serve people, are not necessarily exempted from embracing a better opportunity when it knocks once or even constantly. The offer, coming from churches in other industrialized countries with superior packages or better stipends, comfortable accommodations including car amenities and regular vacation, becomes simply irresistible. Is priesthood to be equated to the material benefits one will enjoy when such a situation is simply part of the ordinary lifestyle of any worker in first world countries? Or, is the exodus of priests also part of the price Filipino society has to pay with the "culture of migration" that plagues the country for nearly four decades of labor migration?

In rural areas of the Philippines, it is common to meet priests who share stories about the insufficient collection that his parish is generating. Frequently, the monthly collection does not suffice to pay the parish utilities or the salary of the staff. He has just to be content with the farm produce like rice, vegetables, fruits, or live chickens as donations, while he thinks about how to fix the leaking roof of his rectory and that of the parish church. Where does he get the funds to improve the Church building? This is the priest's usual predicament. His bishop also has no funds to assist him.

Priests, whose vocation requires them to serve people, are not necessarily exempted from embracing a better opportunity when it knocks once or even constantly.

A possible solution is to approach Filipino communities based overseas. Thanks to the Filipino migrants' philanthropic spirit, the Church building will be completely finished



Migrant Workers gather at a public square in Hong Kong

or renovated. The toilets, the school building, the library, even the waiting shed and other similar structures are constructed when priests from the Philippines solicit donations from overseas. His usual approach is to request for generous donations, using his status as priest, including an endorsement from his superior.

Some structures supposedly to be built by government funds are normally financed by Filipino migrants' donations. Just like Christ, who was moved with pity in front of his people in need, Filipinos overseas will simply offer assistance, especially to aid the needs of their place of origin. Priests are often the most privileged public figures for this significant social activity. It is a common sight to see structures built courtesy of an association of Filipinos based overseas and, at times, facilitated by the initiative of priests. Conversely, one can not help but think that such an acknowledgement of Filipinos philanthropic assistance wrongly prompts many politicians to append their names on the many infrastructure projects constructed out of public funds.

Migration in the eyes of Filipinos has repeatedly been equated to remittance. In fact, the major reason for most Filipinos who venture to work overseas is founded on financial reasons. "Greener pastures" are the usual incentive why people migrate, so as to secure their futures. Did Abraham in the Old Testament leave his own native Ur to move to another country for greener pastures? How does the Church accompany migrants and their families? How does one go beyond remittances is a very challenging part of priestly ministry nowadays?

Priests who are not familiar with complex migration issues may not be able to adequately deliver their pastoral service. They might just be exposed to the danger to treat migrants merely as a source of funds. Apparently, for many Filipinos, including possibly some members of the clergy, they seemed to fail to comprehend that the option or decision of many Filipinos to go abroad is in fact influenced by the way in which the Philippines has been managed for many years. If the present socio-politico-economic situation of the country is not well understood by a priest, the lives of those Filipino migrants may not receive proper pastoral accompaniment. Hence, migrants and their families will often be treated simply as sources of funds for developmental projects.

This is similar to the attitude of most current government leaders. Remittances of overseas Filipinos are being relied upon as a source to develop the country. This makes migration, in actual fact, a current state policy, even if such an attitude violates Republic Act 8042, better known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995. While migrants undoubtedly could be partners for the country's development, they deserve better pastoral care. In addition, if migrants are perceived only to be sources of funds, why should priests need to care for them with supreme pastoral care?

In other regions of the world, priests have a different way of looking at migration and vocation. Pastoral work for migrants in Asian and the Middle East countries, where human rights are violated, requires services beyond the sacraments and religious activities. If a priest is not inclined to assist migrants in their rights and welfare protection, then his services will only be as good as the four corners of the building where he conducts his religious activities. His homily might be beautiful but devoid of real meaning for the people who truly need help. He might just end up like Peter at the Transfiguration event who wanted to erect tents for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. It is for this reason that priests assigned to chaplaincy in other countries must be aware of the socio-political and economic realties of their host countries.

Priesthood as a vocation should be free from the "migration mentality." Emerging from the strong pull of economics, the motivation for some priests to work in affluent in-

> "Priesthood as a vocation should be free from the "migration mentality." Emerging from the strong pull of economics, the motivation for some priests to work in affluent industrialized countries is tantamount to improving one's economic circumstances.

dustrialized countries is tantamount to improving one's economic circumstances. The migration of priests is not only seen as a big loss to the country, but even more so to the community, especially if the priest migrating will also work in another country as parish priest. Is not the Philippines in need of more priests than any other country in the world?

While we could acknowledge the fact that some priests are called to work in other countries, the presence, however, of a greater number of Filipino priests in United States, for instance, would always be suspect. Would financial remuneration now be considered a motive for priesthood? What happens now to the sacrifice demanded from the very vocation of service for which priesthood has been instituted? For some bishops, allowing their priests to leave and move to another country is better than keeping them in their dioceses where they suffer and become miserable. Moreover, losing their priestly vocation by keeping them in the country would not be helpful at all. Will there be wisdom in sending them out if there are other churches in need of them, hoping that some day they will resolve their own personal issues? Would this be fair to other bishops that would host them? There are many more questions to discuss rather than to simply moralize about the issue.

A change of mentality in looking at migration however has to be addressed. Migration should go beyond economics. For as long as people only look at migration from the context of remittances as in the case of most Filipinos, some priests who are not suitably prepared for the work with migrants would face problems in accompanying them. *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, an instruction from the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, notes that seminary formation should now include some units in understanding migration realities. This attempt is a welcome approach for future priests in formation to be conscious of their vocation in reference to migration realities.

There is no single approach in learning the way Christ sees the poor of society, migrants and foreigners included. If the sick and the imprisoned demand visitation while the naked, the hungry and the thirsty require clothing, food, and drink respectively, equally Christ sees us responding to His call when we welcome migrants and take care of foreigners in our midst. Should priesthood now be seen in the context of serving the poor among the migrants? A different view perhaps has been opened to see the Lord Jesus with in a different image; in this view one no longer equates remittances with overseas Filipino workers, including their families left behind. Such a renewed understanding of migration and priesthood could work well for those who are considering involvement in the migrant ministry. TL

Fr. Edwin Corros, CS is currently the Executive Secretary of CBCP's Episcopal Commision on Migrants and Itenerant People (CBCP – ECMI). He teaches Management of Pastoral Programs in Migration course at Loyola School of Theology.

STANDING

UP

by Rachel Sanchez

As a Catholic, I have been raised to look up to priests, seeing them as consecrated men, kind ministers, and representatives of Christ. From a young age, as a lay person, I have learned to regard priests as figures of authority and holiness. However, one experience during my college days shook this notion.

It was a day that we, catechists of the Ateneo Catechetical Instruction League (ACIL), had been looking forward to. It was time for our annual Mass with our kids from the apostolate area. Anticipation filled the ACIL Bus as we drove our enthusiastic passengers to the small parish church in a subdivision across from the children's poor community. This was a sort of culminating activity for everyone; extensive preparation in terms of teaching the meaning of the Mass, practicing particular songs, and having logistical arrangements were made carefully.

In the church, the *Ates* and *Kuyas* did all they could do to keep order as the children joyfully waited for the Mass to start. But the mood behind the chapel, in the parish priest's office, was different. There, for the first time, I saw a very angry priest. He and our student group leader, Ate April, were having an argument. They were both raising their voices and insisting on their own point. The parish priest was saying that he was not informed to say Mass at that time so he just wanted to stay in his office. Ate April, on the other hand, was insisting that she had called the parish office about the Mass and that the kids were actually waiting.

Fearful about fighting with a priest, I pulled Ate April aside and suggested that we just let the priest have his way and have a prayer service among ourselves instead. Her answer was one that would prove influential for the



Photo: Ulysses Cabayao, SJ



Photo: Errol Nebiado


Photo: En[illegible], SJ

rest of my life—until now. She asserted: "No. Social Justice!" She refused to back down and I admired her for standing up to that priest. The priest eventually gave in and celebrated the Mass with us.

What Ate April did was, to me, both shocking and empowering. What she did was for me unthinkable, since I was brought up to assume that priests were right since they were the religious authorities. This experience empowered me to question my old notions. It also enabled me to realize that lay people have both the right and duty to stand up to priests for the sake of charity, truth, and social justice—for the sake of the values of the Kingdom.

Since that incident, I have been open to hearing out other lay people's complaints against priests. I have heard friends expressing their frustration over priests' unsound and uninteresting homilies, unedifying conduct, as well as some decisions of priests they do not agree with; I have experienced this frustration as well. Yet, I think the frustration is not just coming from our dissatisfaction; for many of us, it is coming from our inability to tell priests themselves of our disappointment or disagreement. There is this "culture of silence" in front of authority and a "false submission" that hinders giving feedback. There is always some fear that the priest might feel offended and disrespected—and I am experiencing this very same fear as I write this article.

Lay persons should be able to exercise their right and duty to stand up to their priests without fear. For example, it is true that sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, apart from the disposition or skill of the minister. Lay people need to be able to accept that grace and celebrate the sacrament fruitfully, but it is very difficult for us to do this when the homilies do not seem to make much sense. We have to be able to tell priests that we lay people need more and deserve more.

However, after years of studying theology under priests and with classmates being formed to become priests, I have learned to have a renewed appreciation of the priesthood and a newfound respect for priests. Yes, priests are imperfect human beings and sinners too, yet chosen and called by God for ordained ministry. I realize that becoming and being a priest entails effort and sacrifice—including sleepless nights studying theology, ministering to people while away from one's own family, celebrating the sacraments and making these available to people; all these demand continually taming one's heart.

These responsibilities would not be possible without God's grace making a person capable of such response. Being holy and set apart is not easy. One can be so misunderstood and so lonely. And yet, they are priests because God has chosen them and within their limitations they dared to respond.

Thus, when I look back at my experience with this realization, I now ask: what made the priest give in? It could not have been that we were a mere annoyance; that could have made it easier for him to close his door on us. It could not have been pressure since we were just students with no bargaining power nor proof that he had been informed beforehand. We had no other leverage—no media, no political backing—we only had plain moral suasion and that seemed to work. Yes, Ate April *stood up* to the priest. However, the Mass was actually celebrated because that very angry, irritated and probably busy priest chose to *stand up with* this feisty college girl when she called for social justice.

I think I would like to believe, I even wish, that the priest chose to be humble and to love. The priest, in spite of everything, still chose to be Christ's priest to us. Indeed, I now find myself agreeing with Saint John Vianney more than ever when he said that "the priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus." The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a wounded heart, a bleeding heart, a heart in pain, which never ceases to love. This is the love by which he loves us through his priests who are also wounded people, bleeding people, people in pain. Lay people ought to make known to priests their needs and disappointments, but this would be meaningless without priests who choose to look through and beyond their own pains in order to listen to people and act with compassion.

When we, the beloved of Christ, stand up, we do not just stand up to each other, as if competing for authority, lay people versus their priests; rather, we stand up with each other for one another and for the world. This is why we are Church. We are communion, where solidarity takes precedence over authority, and where authority is an instrument of truly human and truly divine love. TL

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Photo: Reggie Mateo

Re-Imaging the Priesthood in Malaysia

by Mark Aloysius, SJ

Malaysia has always been a multi-cultural and multi-religious nation. Any attempt to disparage this complex political phenomenon is a flight from reality and signifies a retreat into the comfort of a past where racial and religious segregation was the norm. In recent years, this plurality has become even more pronounced especially with reference to political and religious freedom and due to the phenomenon of migration. Examples abound from the increasing expansion of the space for Civil Society as well as the utilization of new forms of media in order to offer an alternative view from the mainstream government-controlled media. While some of these recent developments are gratifying, it is particularly worrisome that there has been an increasing suppression of the freedom of expression through the enforcement of archaic laws, such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) that permits imprisonment by the government without trial on the grounds of national security. Upon close inspection, Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak's concept of a "One Malaysia" is but a platitude that inflicts violence upon cultural and religious plurality in the name of unity.

The "Allah" Controversy and Freedom of Religion. It is within this society into which the Malaysian priest is inserted and from which we should re-imagine the priesthood. In order that the priesthood remains relevant and effective, it is no longer possible to confine the ministries of the priest to the parish. Engagement with Civil Society and dialogue with various religions, especially with Islam, moves us to espouse a broader ecclesiology that embraces national concerns. Prototypical of this attitude in the Malaysian Church is the reaction towards the banning of the usage of the word "Allah." The Church has refused to cower in the background and has adopted a courageous stand by taking the present administration to court in order to uphold the freedom to use the word "Allah" in her publications and worship.

This is no light matter. At stake is the freedom of expression and religion, which though enshrined in the Constitution of the Federation, is gradually diminished by governmental policies that reflect a dearth in tolerance and rationality. While the outcome of the case is unclear at this stage, it is heartening that the Church has garnered support for religious freedom in concert with Malaysians of various Christian denominations (through the



Petronas Twin Towers:
Malaysia's Famous Landmark

Photo: Ramin Shoraka

Malaysian Council of Churches) and of different faiths (through the Malaysian Consultative Council on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism: MCCBCHST); all assert the right to call God "Allah."

Not all Malaysian Catholics are convinced of this determined move by the Church. Prudence, they say, dictates that we continue "silently" calling God "Allah" in our worship, in order not to incur the wrath of the government and further suppression of religious freedom. With regard to our publications, why not substitute the word Allah with God? After all, they argue, both words point to the same Transcendent Being. However, there is no equivalent substitution for "Allah" in Malay (etymologically *Tuhan* is the Malay equivalent of the word "Lord" and not "God"). Therefore, the ban on the use of the word "Allah" would deny a large number of Catholics of the right to call God in their own language. It should be clear that the issue is not merely semantic, but relates in a very real way to living out the faith; consequently, it is a moral issue that demands our courage in fighting for what is right and our fidelity to the Truth. Clarifying the Church's position among the lay is the role of the priest. He must point out myopic tendencies present in many of us that hinder us from broadening our horizons to include the concerns of all people.

Migration and Mission. Migration is another phenomenon that the re-imaged priesthood needs to grapple with in Malaysia. In a country of a population of 28 million there are 2.1 million documented migrants and possibly another 2.1 million undocumented migrants (2008 statistics). Of this 2.1 million undocumented migrants, 100,000 are asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons without any legal protection as the Malaysian government is not signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Refugees (1951). Although migrants contribute greatly to the Malaysian economy, the abuses that they suffer negate a truly Asian hospitality.

Labor policies related to migrants have resulted in the commodification of persons; this is reflected in poor living conditions, low wages, inaccessibility to legal redress over labor disputes and poor medical coverage. Asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons suffer arbitrary detention, torture in immigration detention centers, as well as the denial of the right to education and health care. Furthermore, the recruitment of the Malaysian Voluntary Corps (RELA) in order to curb the growing number of undocumented migrants has resulted in gross human rights violations.

The Church in Asia has not been silent about migration; it views the pastoral care of migrants as important because it indicates the local Church's understanding of mission. At a recent regional meeting of national directors for the pastoral care of migrants, it was stated: "The type of care for migrants that a Church provides reveals the understanding of the universal character and of the nature of mission that a Church has. Thus, increasing awareness for the needs of migrants, instead of detracting the attention of the Church from other pressing issues, produces a general reawakening on the values of the Gospel and the implications of mission. In fact, migration brings mission at our door."

Migrants truly stand at the fringe of Malaysian society. Increasing xenophobia in Malaysia has resulted in their exclusion from the broader society at all levels. In adopting pastoral programs, priests must always look to the inclusion and integration of migrants within their parishes. However, genuine concern for the migrant should move the priest to involvement beyond the confines of the parish, especially through active participation in Civil Society. Otherwise, we run the risk of being concerned only when it is convenient for us and not when it is necessary. If our vision of the Church is confined to the parish, our concern for the migrant in our midst may become superficial and perfunctory.

Priests as Builders of Unity. Multicultural politics and the phenomenon of migration in Malaysia compel us to re-evaluate and re-image our ideas of the priesthood. There is a longing for real unity, which we can address only if we broaden our conception of the priesthood. It is incumbent on the Malaysian priest to help build a unity in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society that is not the product of the silencing of differing points of view, but built rather on an openness to listen, critically and intelligently, to all views especially those of the underprivileged and marginalized.

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Malaysia currently does not offer any legal protection for asylum seekers, stateless persons and refugees like these Karenni children.

Photo: Ulysses Cabayao, SJ



Father Adolfo Nicolás, SJ
Superior General
of the Society of Jesus

Challenges and Issues in Jesuit Education

by Adolfo Nicolás, SJ

NOTE: Tinig Loyola is pleased to present excerpts from the address on education by Adolfo Nicolás, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, on the occasion of his visit to the Philippines to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the return of the Jesuits to the Philippines (1859-2009).

I am delighted to be with you this morning as we celebrate together the gift of a hundred and fifty years of Jesuit education in the Philippines. There is so much to be grateful for.... But, I am even happier that you have chosen to celebrate this century and a half of mission in education, not in self-congratulation, but in a very Ignatian way: by looking forward and by asking what *more* you can do for God's glory and the service of his people.... I aim to contribute a few thoughts, to evoke your own thinking and listening and exchange. In fact, I hope to raise more questions than to provide answers....

THE BASIC QUESTION. One of the favorite words from GC 35 that has captured the imagination of so many Jesuits and friends in mission is "Frontiers." Many in the Church, many other congregations are using it, too. We do not own the term. But, that word is a very evocative word....

I think the key to understanding the word "Frontiers" is to return to what the Holy Father said when he addressed us Jesuits during the recent 35th General Congregation. Many of you are very familiar with this wonderful speech, when Pope Benedict XVI said to us, and by extension, to all of you: "The Church needs you, counts on you, and continues to turn to you with confidence, particularly to reach the geographical and *spiritual* places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach" (*Allocution*, No. 2). "The geographical and *spiritual* places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach": these places are our "frontiers."

As you know well, we in Jesuit education do not have small goals, but an enormous dream: to assist our students to achieve what Father Kolvenbach described as "the full growth of the person that leads to action—action, suffused by the spirit and the presence of Jesus Christ, the Man-for-Others." What are the frontiers we need to "go" to in order to achieve this goal? ... I would like to propose two frontiers. They are two of my most important concerns for the Society of Jesus today, which I feel also are concerns for our mission in education.

THE FRONTIER OF DEPTH. The first frontier I would like to propose is the frontier of depth. Depth, for me, is perhaps a better translation of Ignatian *Magis*.... Ignatius was always concerned with depth....

When one looks at the Gospels, we see that Jesus always responded in depth. Look at any healing story: the way Jesus heals the paralyzed man brought in by his friends through the roof; the leper, the woman with the issue of blood. Jesus first responds to a concrete, immediate need: the healing of a sickness. But then he goes on to respond to a deeper need: the burden of guilt or the sense of hopelessness or rejection and isolation. Finally, he goes deeper still and offers what they long for most, often without knowing it: the gift of the Kingdom of God, of friendship with a God of unconditional love, in a way that transforms them at the core of their persons....

These days, in the liturgy, we have been reading from the story of Jacob and his struggle with God. His first vision is consoling, promising, full of light: he sees angels ascending and descending on a ladder to heaven. But his last vision is much darker and more mysterious because it is deeper. He wrestles with a stranger, who turns out to be God, and Jacob wins the struggle, but comes out limping, walking a little like Ignatius did. Perhaps this should be the image of what our students turn out to be: not just walking out of our schools straight, tall, completely confident and sure of themselves, but rather, limping, even a little, because they have struggled deeply....

How can we help them see more deeply, to truly see the real beyond the virtual, to see beyond these images that make false promises so that they can see the face of the hidden humanity of the poor in a way that moves them to want to serve in compassion? How deeply do we invite them to think? ... How deeply do we form their inner persons, their commitments and convictions, their faith and their struggle? ...

Depth of knowledge and, even more important, depth of experience, must mature into a depth of conviction that is able to remain peaceful and steadfast even in a confusing and hostile world. In the end, the test of whether our education is one of depth, is whether we are able to produce people who

In the end, the test of whether our education is one of depth, is whether we are able to produce people who can "decide from inside."

can "decide from inside"—which is another way of saying, the test of our education as Jesuit education is if we are able to produce people of discernment....

THE FRONTIER OF UNIVERSALITY. The second frontier I would like to propose is the frontier of universality.... Today, I think a challenging frontier for Jesuit education is to be a more universal education in the Ignatian sense of breadth of belonging and wideness of concern and responsibility....

When I travel around the world, I see the violence and suffering caused by a terrible narrowing of the sense of belonging and competitiveness. It is a paradox of globalization that as technologies allow us to grow in knowledge of those very distant from us, at the same time, there is a greater fear of the Other, the one who is different, who does not belong to my tribe or my race or my caste.... But there is nothing of this narrowness of belonging in Ignatius' vision of life....

What might this frontier of universality mean more concretely for Jesuit education in the Philippines? First, do our students, as a result of their time with us, end up with a broader sense of belonging and responsibility than their own families, classes, clans? ... Second, with regard to the schools themselves, can we break out of our narrow sense of belonging to *this* particular school? ... Third, can we break out of our particular school system and serve those outside the Jesuit system in the Philippines? ... Fourth, can we break out of our concern for the Philippines and start thinking of how more we can serve the wider world of Asia around us? ...

FRONTIERS OF DEPTH AND UNIVERSALITY FACING UNIVERSITIES. I would now like to address a special word to those involved in higher education.... When he visited the United States, the Holy Father used a very striking image to describe the Church. He said that the Church is like a cathedral decorated with stained glass windows. When you are inside the Church, with the light shining through them, the stained glass windows are glorious and beautiful. But if you see them from the outside, they seem dark and unattractive. And the Holy Father said that in today's world, unfortunately, too many people stay outside and see only the grim and unappealing exterior. Recently, my Council and I have been reflecting on this present reality of the apparent unattractiveness of the Church in today's world. It is a very serious problem....

Perhaps I can best explain by referring to some concrete ideas taken from the recent and very rich new encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (38). First, the Holy Father, reflecting on Pope Paul VI's teaching in *Populorum Progressio* in the light of our present globalized world of inter-connection, makes this striking statement: "As the society grows ever more globalized, it makes us neighbors but it does not make us brothers" (CiV 19)....

If our universities can deepen formation and intellectual work, and make more truly collaborative and universal our work together, our universities will truly serve the Church's mission of integral human development, and at the same time, give a convincing witness in today's secularized world of the presence of the life-giving love and truth at work in the Church.

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD IN HOPE. ... Before I end, however, I would like to share with you a little anecdote from the life of Father Arrupe. One of his valued possessions, I heard, was a picture given him by the first man who walked on the moon, the astronaut Neil Armstrong. It was a picture of the earth taken from the moon, and Father Arrupe kept it on his desk. It proved a very helpful reminder for him....

I think this picture helped Father Arrupe see things—our work, our service, the problems and challenges we face—from the truer perspective of God's infinitely larger point of view. What we do, how we plan and choose, matter a great deal; but something larger—God's universal plan of bringing life, hope and joy to the world—gives those specific plans and choices their true depth, value and meaning....

This thought not only challenges us, but encourages us. The problems and challenges are many, but we are reminded that in the end, we are servants of Christ's mission, and as Father Arrupe saw in this picture, we do our best, but in the end, it is all in God's hands.... Like all the first Jesuits who returned in 1859, like all the founders of your respective schools who began without road maps and guarantees but with energy and conviction, may you move forward to the frontiers with courage, trusting that you are doing a share in God's life-giving work! TL

NOTE: This edited version of the complete talk of Adolfo Nicolás, S.J. was prepared by James Kroeger, M.M. This text contains about 30% of the full address, highlighting those sections most relevant to the clientele of Loyola School of Theology.

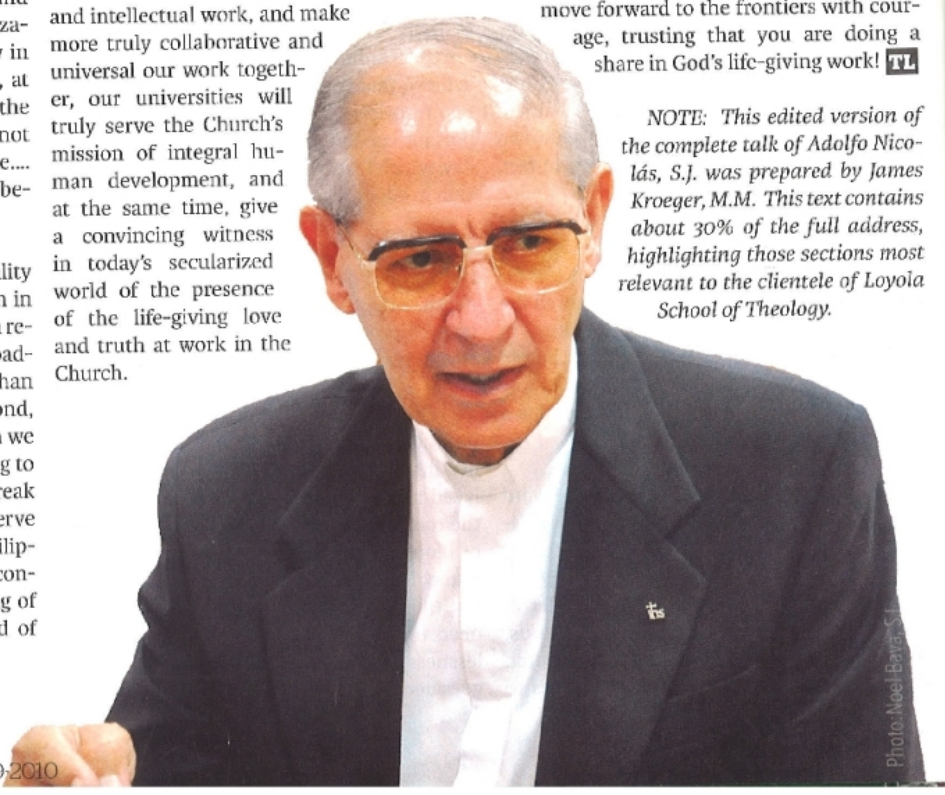


Photo: Noel Barro, S.J.

Wonder Boy Santino: REEL or REAL?



by J.K. Malificiar, SSP

Something magical happens in every Filipino household when evening comes. Family members are glued together in front of their TV screens. The usual chaos on who will take charge of the remote control comes to a halt. Everyone seems to arrive at an agreement on what channel to watch. Neither Mike Enriquez could do something about it, nor mighty Zorro who is already out of the picture—not even gorgeous Darna who is trying to sneak her way into the scene. At that moment, the latter's participation remains elusive. The *Kapamilya* station makes a big contribution to this magic. All this happens, thanks to Santino, the wonder boy of the *teleserye*, *May Bukas Pa* (There is still hope).

The story narrates how the orphan Santino makes a difference in the lives of the people in the town of *Bagong Pag-asa*. The boy, living under the guidance of a community of monks, interestingly maintains a personal relationship with Jesus, whom he fondly calls "Bro." The monks know of Santino's routine of talking to the image of Christ. They are not aware though that the image turns real once Santino talks to it alone. Santino's prominence started when people of *Bagong Pag-asa* discovered his enigmatic person, especially his ability to heal the sick and to perform miracles.

Santino's appearance on Philippine television is effective catechetical material. He affirms faith's value, especially in situations when life seems to be a heavy burden to carry. The boy's childlike trust in God counters people's usual attitude of mistrust when problems come their way. Ironically, his words give everyone an assurance that God, in times of crisis, never abandons us. Santino has his unique way of expressing it. In particular, his prayer formula constantly brings wonders: *"Bro, ikaw na po ang bahala. 'Wag n'yo po kaming pababayaan"* (Bro, I entrust everything to you. Do not abandon us).

Santino's humility is also heartwarming. He considers himself a mere instrument. He modestly points to "Bro" as the Solution. It is Santino's innocent way of introducing his friend's personal involvement that transforms complicated scenarios back to their normal state. No wonder many priests often use his story when they deliver homilies. Santino simplifies what faith does to our lives. If we can only imitate his childlike trust and humility, God's work will never cease to amaze us.

Santino's story has been generating good changes in the Filipino home. First, Santino has contributed much to better children's attitude towards prayer. Santino successfully portrays *Bro's* human characteristics. This paves the way for them to clearly recognize God's role in their lives. Oftentimes, they relate to God as a brother or a friend. Secondly, Santino has evolved into a "magic word" for children to be more obedient. By mere mention of his name, most kids cease to be obstinate and immediately yield to their parents' request. Thirdly, continuous exposition of Santino's virtues leads his character to become the Filipino icon of goodness. Television's influential aspect comes into play here. The medium's positive projection of Santino's character greatly influences many children's perception of the boy's image. He becomes their modern-day hero. What Santino does, they imitate. Since Santino has a prayerful character, most children love to learn how to pray. Since their hero has a friendly attitude, most kids seldom quarrel with their playmates. Santino is undoubtedly an obedient kid; thus, many children abide by their parents' wishes.

In addition, Santino's character teaches us how love perfectly, and it defines the nature of "Bro." Several scenarios portray forgiveness, which clearly concretize this love. Santino leads us to recognize that *Bro* offers this divine virtue as a prerequisite for peace. Since most grown-ups forget about it, Santino's innocence ironically leads them to understand the role of this virtue in mending broken relationships. As a matter of fact, this explains why the *teleserye* has kept on running for almost eight months already. As long as there will be individuals who continue dwelling on hatred in the course of their existence, expect Santino's character to stay on prime-time TV.

Santino should lead us back to reality. Our sense of goodness must not be dependent on his fictional character. Remember, the boy's life is just a reflection of our true-to-life experiences. He serves as a reminder that faith, hope, love, and forgiveness are fundamental virtues we should not forget and take for granted in our daily lives. We need to work in order for them to bear fruit in our lives. We need to respond to manifold opportunities to serve and love others.

Indeed, it is now in our hands on how to distinguish Santino's world from our real existence. Once it is accomplished, his character, even if it operates on the reel, will remain real in our lives. TL

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Prayer for Priests

by St. Therese of Lisieux

O Jesus, eternal Priest,
keep your priests
within the shelter of Your Sacred Heart,
where none may touch them.

Keep unstained their anointed hands,
which daily touch Your Sacred Body.

Keep unsullied their lips,
daily purpled with your Precious Blood.

Keep pure and unearthly their hearts,
sealed with the sublime mark
of the priesthood.

Let Your holy love surround them and
shield them from the world's contagion.

Bless their labors with abundant fruit,
and may the souls to whom they minister
be their joy and consolation here
and in heaven their beautiful
and everlasting crown.
Amen.