

Dear Friends,

First of all, three events of note: the upcoming diaconal ordination of Brother Ed Molina, the launching of the Filipino version of "Living with Christ" (the English Missalette of Bayard) and the election of Fr. Bernard as the new President of The Asia Pacific Augustinian Conference (APAC).

The rest of the Chronicles are essentially about the daily life of the three communities of the Delegation. There is the traditional Press Review and an interview with the new Archbishop of Manila and the challenges facing the Church of the Philippines.

Good reading to you all and thank you for your friendship and your support.

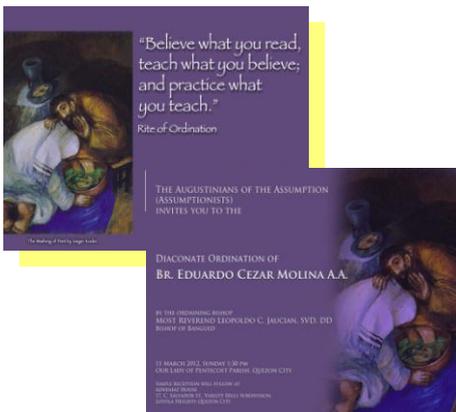
The redaction team: Bernard Holzer, Jay Lituañas, Cris Quiñal, Rex Navarro and Renju Paul, and the translators: Bernard Holzer and Leo Brassard.



The Diaconate Ordination of Bro. Ed Molina

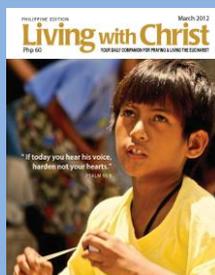
Bro. Ed Molina will be ordained to the Diaconate on Sunday, 11 March 2012 at 1:30 PM in the church of Our Lady of Pentecost in Quezon City by Most Reverend Leopoldo C. Jaucian, Bishop of Bangued, in-charge of the Chinese communities in the Philippines.

Thank you for praying with us that he may be part of a long list of men passionate for God and for man.



Launching of the Philippine edition of "Living with Christ"

On 27 February 2012, the Bayard team in Manila (Fr. Ricky Montañez editor-in-chief and president of Bayard-Philippines, Bros. Ellis Luciano and Blair Nuyda, editorial director and creative director, Fr. Bernard Holzer, theological and pastoral adviser, Fr. Gilles Blouin, contributor and Jerome Berson, volunteer of the French Catholic Cooperation, in charge of marketing and production) had the official launching of "Living with Christ" for the religious congregations of our parish. The next issue of the Chronicles will tell you more about it.



Fr. Bernard Holzer elected President of APAC

On 29 February 2012, the 11th convention of the Asia Pacific Augustinian Conference (APAC) elected Fr. Bernard Holzer as president of this forum for a period of three years. This organization brings together the religious congregations of Asia and the Pacific which follow the Rule and spirituality of Saint Augustine. This forum is an opportunity to strengthen the bonds and the cooperation between the great Augustinian family in the areas of formation, spirituality, vocations and youth ministries, education and promotion of justice and peace. Countries represented are: Australia, Korea, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines.





A Day in the Life of a Student-Brother

By: Bro. Jay Lituañas

Klang! Klang! Klang! At quarter past 5 in the morning, there goes the bell of the nearby parish church summoning people to the first Mass of the day.

In the kitchen, a brother is busy preparing the breakfast while others are preparing for their day's studies or the Lauds at 6:30 AM or doing their morning meditation. After chanting the morning prayer, the brothers and some Chinese residents take their meal. Sensing that everyone is done with his meal, the prayer presider of the week bangs the cup or plate and asks: "Do you have anything to foresee for today?" The brothers take turn to inform the community of their activities for the day such as regular classes, celebrating mass in another place, having spiritual direction and buying grocery items. Brothers, as well as residents, also take turn in washing the dishes.

By 7:30 AM, some brothers are gone for their 8:00 AM classes in the nearby Loyola School of Theology inside the Ateneo de Manila University campus. The others who remain, particularly the priests, do their regular household chores like washing linens, sweeping the garden or cleaning toilets. On certain days, team meetings like that of the Communication Team are held in the morning.

Whenever their schedule permits, brothers stay in the school library to do their reading assignments or to do research work. Some attend study-groups or photocopy certain academic materials.

By 12 noon, the student-brothers are back from school. Bong! Bong! Bong! There goes the house gong to gather community members, volunteers and guests for the 12:30 PM lunch prepared by the hired cook. At table, people usually converse with one another by sharing their experiences in school or their views on certain social, political, pastoral or theological issues. Jokes find their way into the conversation.

Lunch usually ends at 1:15 PM. Student-brothers with 2:00 PM classes usually leave the area to prepare themselves. Those without afternoon classes/activities, the priests, the volunteers and the cook wash the dishes and clean the tables. Thereafter, except for the volunteers and the cook, people take their afternoon nap. Student-brothers use the rest of the afternoon to write papers or to accomplish reading assignments or to do certain physical exercises like jogging, swimming in the pool, biking or going to the gym. Others do their chores at this time of the day or wash their own clothes too. On certain days, other team meetings are scheduled in the afternoons such as those of the Vocation Team and of the Marytown Team. On Wednesday and Friday afternoon, the Marytown Team members go to their apostolate area nearby.

At 6:00 PM, certain members of the community do their afternoon meditation while others are still wrapping up their day's work. Vespers are chanted beginning at 6:30 and the Eucharistic celebration follows thereafter. Around 7:30 PM, community members dine separately from the volunteers Chinese and Vietnamese residents. At table, the brothers talk about their day's experiences or about various concerns involving the life of the community. Jokes are a great part of the dinner.

After washing the dishes and cleaning the tables, some brothers continue with their talk while a couple settle in the community room to read the daily local and/or international papers. A few go to the TV room and follow their favourite telenovela. Meanwhile, one brother sets up the table for breakfast and prepares what he needs to cook for the following morning.

Around 9:00 PM, student-brothers lock themselves in their room poring through books and other reading materials in preparation for the next day's academic endeavour. While other members of the community are sound asleep by 10:30 PM, those who have quizzes or examinations usually stay late in the night or way past midnight or wake up early on the following day. The brothers do their night prayers individually.

A New Chinese Seminar Arrives

By: Bro. Jay Lituañas

Joseph, a 21-year old Chinese seminarian, arrived in Manila on 28th January to study English in the Assumption Language Center (ALC). He knows very little English and is excited to improve this in the coming months. He is the 5th Chinese student to join the group of Asian residents hosted in our Martin Yen Residence.

Currently, 2 Vietnamese religious priests, a Korean diocesan priest, 1 Chinese diocesan seminarian, and 3 Chinese diocesan priests comprise the group of Asian residents. The Vietnamese priests are taking up Theology courses in Loyola School of Theology while the Korean priest attends to his Korean parishioners in the Eastern part of Metro Manila in areas such as Marikina City and Quezon City. The Chinese attend English classes in the ALC.

Exposure program

By: Bro. Renju Paul

As part of postulancy program in SOJOURN (inter-congregation postulancy program) the postulant brothers had their immersion in various areas. To understand the lives of the suppressed or marginalized poor people, to appreciate them and to relate with them in the spirit of our founder Fr. D'Alzon was one of the key objectives of the immersion. Br. Sagar with the fishing people in Batangas, Br. Jomar with farmers in Bulacan, Br. Floro with the indigenous people in Pampanga and Br. Renju with the scavengers at the dumpsite in Payatas where they were initiated to the ordinary life situation of the poor people. This immersion helped them to understand the hard truths of life which cannot be understood from any classes or books. This experience was an eye opener to the brothers because it made them realize the importance of religious vocation and the prophetic role of religious with regard to the injustices suffered by the poor and marginalized people.

The 28th JSF Big Day

By: Bro. Cris Quiñal

The important role of media in today's world and its impact on the community bringing a big challenge in doing evangelization especially for the religious in this new age of social media. This is the main focus of the 28th annual gathering of Juniors-Seminarians Forum (JSF) called "The Big Day" held at Saint Paul University Gym of Quezon City on February 5, 2012. It was attended by more than one hundred junior sisters and seminarians representing various religious congregations.

The celebration has the theme "New Social Media, New Evangelization: It's Challenges to Young Religious Today." The highlight of the gathering is the talk of Fr. Stephen Cuyos, MSC. He is the Electronic Media Director of Communications Foundations for Asia (CFA). In his talk, Fr. Stephen presented the advantages and the tremendous impact of social media in this modern society. Social media can be a big tool in doing evangelization. He added that there is a new world called "The virtual world" and the call to spread the word of God to the world includes this new world. This new social media opened a new avenue of doing evangelization, a new way of proclaiming the word of God. This new way of doing evangelization is a challenge particularly for young religious who will eventually continue this work.

The challenge is on. Juniors and seminarians are called to respond to this challenge. The work of evangelization should continue in whatever form it takes.



Exposure in Payatas

By Bro. Renju Paul

I was not that curious or eager to go to my exposure area when I was assigned to go to Payatas. The information and feedbacks that I got from my seniors and fellow brothers were not so assuring or encouraging. They explained to me about the not-so appealing life-style and situations of the people there, about the various diseases that I might get if I went there and the dislike of the people there towards Indians because of the so-called 'mumbais'. I was worried about what might happen to me if I go there, or how would I live there and so on. Nevertheless, I did not have any other options.

I entered Payatas with my fellow co-postulants with a mind full of prejudices and conclusions. First, we were taken to the parish priest Fr. Rowell, a Vincentian missionary who shed some light about the people and their situation. He referred Payatas as the "promised land" where promises remained unfulfilled. I felt pity for the people. As we started to get closer to the place I could smell the bad odor of that place. My prejudices were getting the best of me.

Each postulant got one foster family each to stay and all seemed to be very happy. I was thinking how to tackle the situation because of my limitations with the native language. I reached my foster family and found out that two of my sisters could speak little bit of English. I was a bit relieved. My foster family consisted of 11 members, father, mother, 8 siblings and an uncle. By the end of the day, I was beginning to think that I was wrong about the people there. I felt like, if I keep those prejudices I am not different from other people outside who deny justice and equality to them. Something was changing inside me.

A normal day there would start very early around 3 am in the morning by fetching water from the nearby well and cleaning the house. Once it was over, I would prepare the younger ones to go to school by bathing them and feeding them. It was hard for me since I was doing this for the first time. Once the kids were gone, I would help the uncle who was paralyzed after a stroke, to do his daily necessities. Then I would wait for the parents, to come back from the Garbage Mountain after scavenging. Once the collected items were brought home, I would help the parents to segregate them into different categories. Once that was over, the segregated garbage was taken to the junk shop to sell. The daily food was bought from the earnings of the sale of garbage pieces. There would be days when there was nothing to eat.

There were days when I would wonder how could these people could be content with the very little they have. Didn't they want to save or earn? Then I realized that, for them what matters is, "survival!" The people there are struggling and at times failing to meet both ends of life. But here I am, always complaining and whining about the things I don't have when I have a lot. I was wondering, how they could be happy even when they do not have anything to eat. They sit together, say jokes, and even sing.

In the beginning, it was very difficult to adjust because I was feeling very hungry. Later, I would forget my hunger when I saw their happy faces. I realized that, it is not food or accessories that make us happy but our very attitudes. It was a realization for me that, in order to be happy you do not need lot of things. Simple things in life can make you happy.

As an aspiring religious, I have all the luxuries of life and still long for more. Nevertheless, these people taught me that I should be simple, spiritually and materially. It was a blessing for me to be immersed with those people and have a firsthand experience of their daily lives. I also realize that, my duty and obligation to them will not end just by reflecting my life with them and the realizations that I had, but only by helping them to find ways to make their lives better.



Learning and Living in the "Ordinary"

By: Bro. Rex Navarro

What is lifelike inside the novitiate formation house?

People outside might think that we as novices are living like “carthusians” or “no-vices”. Some have said it’s quite boring it all silence. No television, no internet, no cellphone, no music...how can we survive without all these gadgets? A lot of distractions that take us away from reality, how do we turn them off? How do you hear the stillness of God through all the noise that bombards us?

In this world of immense pressure and breakneck speed, we need to be able to slow down, to calm down and pray. The daily routine of life's demands can easily let us lose sight of the bigger picture. When we focus on the list of things to do, we often miss out on what we could be learning through it all.

The Novitiate is a time of conversion and the novices should have but one desire: to be transformed in Jesus Christ. (E. d’Alzon, E.S., p. 263-264). Novitiate program is forming of the heart-only Jesus.



Sitting from left: Frs. Leo and Richard; Standing from left are Bro. Rex, Fr. Joseph and Bro. John Ray

We live in a structure of daily routine. Very ordinary, nothing really new. Prayer, work, study and silence. The ordinary is viewed as too mundane, simplistic, and boring. But when you know the purpose, why we need silence, why sometimes we close our eyes, then life is not monotonous and boring. We can see so clearly the bigger picture. Every day is a blessing. Every day is a great day when you spend it fruitfully. The novice should be aware that formation begins in the crib and ends in the grave. It’s a long a life-long process. The novitiate is just the beginning. As Fr. d’Alzon put it: “a religious is a perpetual novice”.

Augustinian Family: Novices Big Day 2012

By: Bro. Rex Navarro

On 4th February 2012 the novitiate family went to La Consolacion Convent in San Juan, Metro Manila to attend an Augustinian Family gathering. It was a half-day event together with the novitiate from OSA Intramuros and the OSA sisters of La Consolacion. The topic for the gathering was “Augustine on Prayer” and was given by Fr. Andrew Batayola of the OSA Cebu Province.

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGUE

By: Bro. Rex Navarro

On 1st February 2012, the novitiate community attended the symposium on "Islam and Christianity Possibility to Dialogue" at St. Vincent de Paul School of Theology. Fr. Thomas Mooren, OFM from St. Paul University, Ottawa Canada gave us a copy of the Surah and discusses some possibilities in dialogue.

With the Globalization, we will live with Muslims side by side—the question is: How? Thus we have to talk also about our religions. What are Muslims and Christians looking for when entering into direct dialogue? Peace in the world, truth, their own perfection, survival, an effective tool for mission, or a kind of unity? We can see a bit of everything in the dialogue between them.

As two divergent Abrahamic faiths, Christianity and Islam share a long and often tragic history. By recognizing the family resemblances and learning to bear witness in mutual engagement, we can grow to respect Islam's adherents without compromising our own beliefs.

Church historian Mark Swanson has challenged Christians to "think through" Islam in four ways: "to think about things 'by means of Islam; to get Islam straight in [our] own thinking; rigorously to interrogate and be interrogated by Islam; and to bear witness to Muslims in mutual engagement."



It is very important for us Filipinos because there were many Muslims in our country as well as Asian.

EXODUS EXPOSURE 2012

By: Bro. Rex Navarro

January 16-25, 2012, the 3 novices were assigned different poor sectors. Fr. Joseph Zhang was assigned to the indigenous people of Pampanga, Bro. Rex Navarro was with the farmers also in Pampanga and Bro. John Ray was with the Street Children in Cavite.



Bro. Rex and Fr. Joseph of Novitiate

Fr. Joseph Zhang who is a Chinese Priest relates his story to us of his unforgettable experience with the indigenous people. He lived with a chieftain of the tribe but they were really poor like the other members. They had comfort rooms but do not have any source of water so he needed to fetch water from the river. His foster parents did not know that he was a priest, at first they told him to go with them in the mountain to plant "gabi" root crafts and cut some of the grass. The second day, they were able to get some of the "gabi" so they cleaned and washed it in the river before they sold it to the market where he was the seller. They did not have electricity so at night they just used oil lamps or they create a bon fire to give warmth in the coldest night. Every day they walk for an hour to cross the river and climb the mountain. Sometimes his foster family did not have food to feed him so he experienced discomfort not only with the place but also with food and drink. In their last day of stay they have what we call the "Solidarity Night" wherein they will have mass, dinner and a farewell party together with all other exposurists and their foster families. Only that time that his foster mother knows that he is a priest when he wear his habit for the mass as he is the celebrant. The family were very surprised and some of them cried when they saw him. They were very ashamed and surprised to think that they gave him some responsibilities like fetching the water and looking after their child.



He learned a lot from the exposure to think that there are many people who struggle to live below poverty line, while inside the seminary we always complain with the little discomfort that we experience.

Thanksgiving here and there

By: Fr. Alex Castro

This is what would describe my three months as an ordained priest. Most of the Eucharistic celebrations I presided were celebrations of thanksgiving be it in my parish, or former place of employment, or apostolate, or the place where I grew up.

But in all these celebrations, I was surrounded by friends, families, relatives, or acquaintances and in each celebration, there was the feeling of joy, fulfillment, pride, and happiness as they participate in my Eucharistic celebrations.

I was ordained during the time when priests here in the Philippines were very busy preparing for the Christmas celebration. Upon the request of our parish priest in Pampanga, I was assigned the *Simbang Gabi* masses as well as the Christmas midnight masses in three village chapels. These masses were somewhat tiring considering that they were celebrated one after the other but they were also a time to reconnect with relatives since the villages where I was assigned were places where my relatives live!

Right now I still continue my ministry mostly during weekends at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, in Antipolo where I had my Diaconates ministry for almost nine months. The first time I heard confessions at the shrine I was just so overwhelmed with the richness of the sacrament that I exceeded the schedule given to me by almost one and a half hours.

As a whole, I am enjoying my experiences in the ministry, and the formation I gained in fulfilling these ministries hand-on.

Margaret Silf in Manila

By: Bro. Ed Molina

Listening to Margaret Silf was like a breath of fresh air.

This was how I and those around me felt as we attended the third day of the Reflection Days with Margaret Silf sponsored by the Center of Ignatian Spirituality, Center for Family Ministries and Emmaus Center for Psycho-spiritual Formation early this year, January 26 to 29.

The crowd that gathered for those four reflection days came from varied affiliations, spiritualities and responsibilities within their own religious families. There were theologians, teachers, formators, and many lay persons who came for their own enrichment.

Margaret spoke plainly and without any pretensions. On some occasions she readily admitted before answering a question that she was no theologian and that refused to answer the question from a theological point of view.

She presented a spirituality that was at once refreshing, practical and most of all ALIVE. The images and stories that she used to speak of daunting topics like Ignatian spirituality, discernment, chaos and change, as well as spirituality for the future were vivid and vibrant with life. She was a natural storyteller and this was the way she presented and engaged her audience during those four days of reflection.

Religious week in ICLA

By: Bro. Renju Paul

The Pavel community attended the 3 day seminar for religious at ICLA about “**Apostolic Religious in Epochal Change**”. A handful of resource persons spoke about the present situation, challenges and things to change in the lives of a religious during these difficult times. It was very fruitful and gave plenty of insights to all those who attended.



The Visitors to the Delegation, the Festivals and the Encounters

Even during this “Ordinary Time” there is much happening especially because of our visitors, the Festivals and the Encounters.

Visitors

At the beginning of the year, the Delegation received several visitors:

In mid-January we received **Helen Granger** from England. She is Englands Associate Missionaries of the Assumption’ (AMA) Director. She came to visit our two AMA volunteers, Michelle and Mark O’Neil. It was a good moment of evaluation.

Then, Sister **Anne Huyghebaert**, the new superior general of the Contemplative Sisters of the Assumption (the Orantes de l’Assomption) the Or A., came mostly to visit her sisters in San Jose.

At the beginning of February we welcomed Fr. **Marcel Poirier** and Fr. **Jacques Leclerc de Sablon**. Fr. Marcel knows the delegation well since he was the Provincial of North America, who accompanied us in our first steps as a Foundation. After two terms of six years, he was recently named Provincial Treasurer. He spent 15 days with us, working ceaselessly with the treasurers especially to take up once again the budgets of 2012 and establish the budget for 2013. Simultaneously the community of Adveniat welcomed Fr. Jacques Leclerc from the Mission de France. This last one lived for more than 20 years in China and was discovering the Philippines for the first time.

Always at the beginning of February, we received Mr. **Jean-François Bouchard**, one of the associates of Bayard-Canada. He helped us with the launching of our first issue of the Philippine Edition of *Living with Christ*.

The General Assembly of the Major Superiors

On January 20, the Assembly of the Major Superiors of the Philippines invited the officers of the Bureau of Immigration to present to us the new regulations concerning the gaining of our missionary visas. The government is trying to wipe out graft and corruption in this agency and at the same time make its controls more stringent. It was agreed that the Conference of the Bishops will endorse our application and the procedures will become more simple.

The Foundation’s Anniversary

On January 25th, on the day of the Conversion of Saint Paul, each community quietly celebrated the 6th anniversary of our foundation as an Assumptionist Mission in the Philippines. This happened mostly at the time of the Masses of Thanksgiving.

Asian New Year

On Sunday, the 22nd of January, one day before the Lunar New Year common to all those who use the lunar calendar (Korea, Vietnam and China), Fr. Bernard participated in a Festival for the Chinese New Year organized by the Association of Catholic Students of Manila. There were more than 300 priests, seminarians and religious of both sexes from China where they gathered around the new Archbishop of Manila, Msgr. Chito Tagle, and Msgr. Leopoldo Jaucian who is responsible for the Chinese Communities in the Philippines and also the Representative of the Holy See in Hong Kong. After the meal, we were treated to an informative presentation of the art in China.

Monday the 23rd was a non-working day here in the Philippines in honor of the Asian New year. Members of the Delegation found themselves gathered at Adveniat for a festive meal prepared by our Resident Chinese students and the Chinese Oblate Sisters.

CHRONICLES FROM MANILA

ASSUMPTIONIST PHILIPPINE DELEGATION



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Exclusive interview with Archbishop Tagle of Manila speaks about some of the main challenges facing the Church in the most Catholic country in Asia

*Gerard O'Connell
Rome – 19 February 2012*



Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle

During his recent visit to Rome, I asked him about the challenges facing the Church in the Philippines as he begins his ministry as Archbishop of Manila.

Q. What are the main challenges you see as you begin your ministry as Archbishop of Manila?

A. To be existential about it, at the moment my biggest concern is how to slide into the new archdiocese with the weight of its history, the weight of tradition, with Manila being the centre of practically everything in the Philippines – political, economic and so. I am at that stage of getting to know the issues.

Some things are constant, of course: the formation of priests where this whole sexual misconduct problem is also related, the formation of the lay people, and the problem of the poor – the teeming masses of the poor. These are constant concerns wherever you find yourself. Right now I am in that mode of getting to know the new diocese and seeing where the calling for renewed response is to be heard.

Of course there are national issues in the Philippines, like corruption in government, making government officials accountable too for misdemeanors in the past and for the corruption etc.

Now since Manila is not the Philippines – this is one of my concerns too, especially in the Church - I do not want to make it appear that Manila dictates to all the other dioceses. I would rather the Church in the Philippines to be a Church of real communion, where the bishops would help one another. In the past, in the distant past, they would always talk about 'Imperial Manila', you know Manila dictates to the whole country, Manila gives the direction. I guess it's time for the other dioceses, especially the poorer ones, to be heard; they have much wisdom to share. And the Church's response, I think, will be much enriched if Manila listens also.



Q. Corruption is widespread in the Philippines, as you mentioned earlier. The former President is under arrest in hospital for alleged electoral sabotage, and the Chief Justice is being impeached for corruption and other offences. How is it that there is all this corruption in the most Catholic country in Asia?

A. It is a question that we ask ourselves too, and it causes us a lot of discomfort, to say the least. It is like a dagger pointed at our hearts, our Catholic hearts. How come this lifestyle of corruption seems to be widespread and also accepted?

We seek to contribute to address this problem. The Government is doing its share, and we trust this present Administration is serious about pursuing accountability and justice, but we just hope that it will not be only directed at people of the past administration, that it will really become some sort of a culture in government, that integrity be the ideal. And there we – as Church and Church leaders - really need to contribute from the spiritual, the moral perspective.

So we in the Church are also undergoing a lot of soul-searching. Where did we fail? What is happening to our catechesis? What is happening to Catholic education? Are we able to form consciences? How come that many of them are products of Catholic schools but when they get into the political system, and government service, service disappears and becomes self-serving? What has happened to the formation of conscience?

Q. So this is a very big challenge for you and the Church!

A. It is a big challenge, and it is not to be minimized. Some people want to see grand, grand things, but going into the secret, the sacred spot of the person – the conscience - is hard work. It will be harder.

Q. Poverty is a tremendous problem in the Philippines too. 11 million Filipinos have had to emigrate to other countries to seek work because of this poverty. Your revered predecessor, Cardinal Rosales, organized the collection of small coins every week to try and help the poor. How high is this problem of poverty on your agenda as archbishop?

A. It is high! I assure you that the restoration of integrity and lifestyle, and the culture of integrity, accountability is important for us from the moral, educational, catechetical and even communal dimension of the Church's mission. And that's mostly tied to poverty.

Not that corruption is the only cause of poverty, indeed poverty is a complex reality too, but again - from the perspective of the Gospel – we are disturbed, to say the least, disturbed that so many people in a Catholic country are living in squalor. What has happened to human dignity?

What makes the scandal of poverty worse is the fact that we have also some pockets of wealth. That's why in one reflection session we said: Ok, The Gospel is good news for the poor, but how can it be good news for the rich and those who benefit from a corrupt system? How could it be good news for them? How can we present the Gospel of sharing, of love, of neighborliness as really being good news for those who are benefitting from a corrupt system? That is our challenge!

Q. For many years, there has been armed conflict in the country and the army is responding in a military way as we have seen in recent days. How important is it to work to bring peace in the Philippines?

A. Again, corruption, poverty, peace are interconnected. If you look at the country, the concentration of recently reported cases of banditry and armed conflicts are found in places where poverty thrives. Even in the urban settings, in the big cities, you find high instances of violence where poverty thrives. And this is not just a poverty that is a lack of money or something to eat, but it is the poverty you see when you go to those places what they call now 'informal settlements' (but formerly they called them "squatters areas"), where there are some places where the people don't see the sun at all, they don't see the sky. What they call 'houses' are really shanties where you bump into each other. So the whole setting there generates a certain anger, a certain desire to get out. Tolerance gets low, so violence is being bred in those places.

Of course there are conflicts related to religion, to ideologies, also. But the hidden types of violence, of conflicts are very seldom reported. There is a daily violence happening in places where poverty thrives. This is another challenge that we as Church face in working for peace. And, as Church, we are called to work for peace, to be peace-makers.

A Spectacular Process

The major titles of the newspapers are dominated by the process of impeachment of the chief Justice Mr. Renato Corona, who is accused of abuse of power and an obstacle to the reform government's anti-corruption drive. The President is involving himself in this prosecution. Chief Justice Corona was named two days after the Election of 2010 and one month before the expiration of the president's term of Office. Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is herself under arrest in a government military hospital accused of having rigged the elections of 2010 of all those in power. The process is faltering...

Follow up to the typhoons in the South

The regions of the Visayas, of Mindanao and Bicol continue to suffer.

As if it were not enough to have the super typhoon "Sendong" and the earthquake at the end of the year, heavy pouring rain continued in these areas. This is totally out of character for we are in the dry season at the present time... So as you can imagine there were landslides, dikes were busted open, there was no electricity needs clarification and the forced people to abandon their homes. Many refugee camps were flooded, augmenting the trauma of those who lost everything.

The Economy

- The Filipino government encourages foreign exports, especially towards China. He tries to broaden the scope of export materials not just electronic materials assembled in the Philippines.
- The Philippines are the third country to send its workers abroad after China and India. There are 1.1 million people and to this is added 350,000 people working on ships in 200 countries. Saudi Arabia is one of them and there are 293,000 Filipino immigrants working there, follows the United Arab Emirates, then Hong Kong, then Qatar and Singapore. The foreign workers are mostly domestics, carpenters or mechanics of various categories, cleaning personnel, some nurses and other medical personnel.

The Philippines on the International Scene

After Libya, the Filipino workers in Syria had to be repatriated from the City of Homs. Many of them were domestics in homes so that when they returned from Syria they had nothing in their pockets. Their employers did not give them any severance pay for their return.

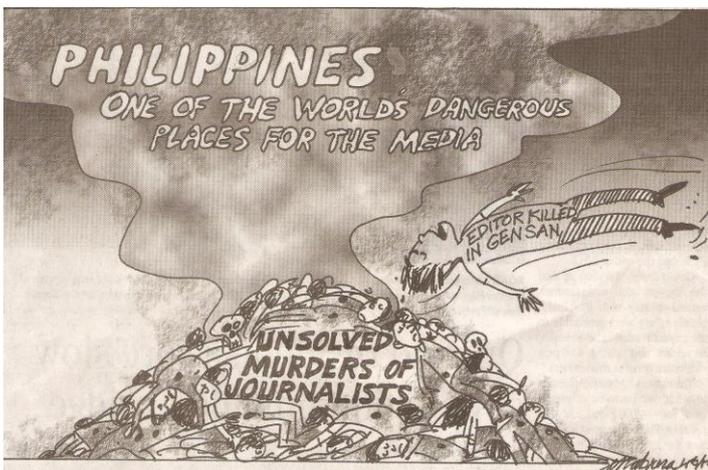
More than 296 hostesses and Pilipino sailors were on the Italian pleasure boat, la Costa Concordia, which sank in the waters of Giglio Italy. They, on the contrary, received severance pay from their employer.



Always a lot of violence

On the 6th January 2012, yet another journalist was shot when returning home with his wife and young daughter. Christopher Guarin joins the long list of 150 since 1968 of the Filipino journalists which have been killed. These crimes are rarely reported. The culture of getting off scot-free and going unpunished is rampant and hard to wipe out

At the beginning of the year again, in Sulu, in the South, the forces of Abu Sayyaf struck against the infrastructure of the province and blew up many bridges. In Basilan, near the isle of Sibago, pirates attacked fishermen and killed fifteen of them, undoubtedly because they did not cough up the monthly tax asked as a protection for the pirates. In Samar, on the eastern coast, midland in the Philippines, the Body Guard of the Mayor of Catarman was killed by the communist guerrillas, then at Albay the same rebels set fire to a bus in Castilla, Sorsogon.



FESTIVALS

On January 9th was the Feast of Jesus, the Black Nazarene. The Black Nazarene is a statue of Jesus carrying his cross, his face darkened by fire, but always coming out whole at the moment of fires and earthquakes. This year, nearly eight million men attended (this is more men than there are in Belgium) to accompany him in the streets of Manila, barefoot for the most part, in a procession which lasted 22 hours and this despite warnings about terrorist threats.



Traditionally, the third weekend of January, the Catholic Church here celebrates the Infant of Jesus. . This feast draws tens of thousands in a festive and colorful carnival. In the South, in Mindanao, for the first time some Muslims participated in the religious procession to show how peaceful co-existence between the two major religions in the country, Muslim and Christian, can co-exist.