

este

“COMMUNICATING HOPE AND TRUST IN OUR TIME.” - POPE FRANCIS

Borongan diocese prepares for return of historic bells

By Roy Lagarde

THE parish of St. Lawrence the Martyr said they're putting the Balangiga bells' security at the heart of their plans for the much-anticipated return of the religious artifacts.

Many people and tourists are expected to make their way to Balangiga to see the three bells that were used as "war booty" by American soldiers in 1901.

Father Serafin Tybaco, parish priest of Balangiga, said local preparations are underway as the United States government has started the process of returning the bells.

"Among our concerns is the security of our place because we need people who will guard the bells round the clock," Tybaco said.

The Diocese of Borongan is coming up with plans on the eventual turnover of the bell and its permanent location in the parish church of Balangiga.

"It will depend on the developments from our meetings in the diocese with the local and national governments," Tybaco added.

On Thursday, a ceremony attended by Pentagon chief Jim Mattis and Philippine Ambassador Jose Manuel Romualdez at the F.E. Warren Air Base in Wyoming was held for the symbolic turnover of the Balangiga bells to the Philippines.

Romualdez said the two bells in Wyoming will first be brought to Philadelphia where it will be refurbished.

He said the bells will first be brought to Korea where the third bell is being kept before being repatriated to the Philippines.



The parish of Balangiga plans to temporarily install the three Balangiga bells on the concrete round pedestal beside the church during the turn-over ceremony anytime December this year. Prominent on the side of the Church of St. Lawrence the Martyr in Balangiga, Eastern Samar is the empty belfry where the bells will be permanently instated and put to proper church use. (Photo by Fr. Serafin Tybaco, Jr.)

Never be agents of “hukip” distribution, bishop warned priests

By Fr. Edmel Raagas

THE bishop of Borongan told his priests to be cautious of the possibility of being used by local politicians to buy votes.

In a recent circular, Bishop Crispin Varquez exhorted his priests not to get involved in partisan politics so as “not to add to the confusion and division among parishioners.”

Varquez read the circular to the clergy and religious during the diocesan closing of the Year Clergy and Consecrated Persons held at the Bishop’s Residence in Borongan City on October 22, 2018.

He stressed that clerics “should not be an agent of “hukip” distribution, either directly or indirectly, and other similar activities.”

“Hukip” is a popular binisiya term which means an amount given to buy votes.

The bishop admitted that politics could be very divisive and could “draw a wedge even between close

kinsmen and alienate even the most intimate of friends.”

“This is aggravated by the sad reality that many of our brethren, both among the candidates and among voters, are still immature in their political attitudes and behaviors,” he added.

Towing the social teaching of the Catholic Church, Varquez pointed out that priests must remain neutral and non-partisan and “become instruments of unity and peace before, during, and after the election period.”

The bishop admonished his priests to be “uncompromising when it comes to Christian doctrine and morals and zealous for the Church’s social teachings.”

Varquez further emphasized “we should exercise the necessary tact and leadership skills in order that we will be truly unifying pastors and spiritual fathers of our flock.”

The bishop gave specific and strict guidelines that must be followed by his priests.

The bishop decreed that “no special Mass or Blessing sponsored

or requested by politicians is to be allowed.”

“Should any candidate or political party seek prayers or Mass intentions, they should be done within the regular Mass schedule and not as a separate special event,” he said.

“Clerics must observe extra prudence so that our ministries and the Church’s liturgical celebrations will not be unduly taken advantage of for the purpose of political mileage or spectacle,” he said further.

The bishop strongly admonished his priests neither to accept additional mass “stipends” from politicians or their representatives nor to give in to special perks or favors from them in the form of trips, social events, and the like.

In the end, Varquez encouraged his priests to remain as moral guardians and spiritual leaders by “exerting more pastoral creativity and enthusiasm in our evangelization of the political life of our country.”



(Este News)

The Diocese of Borongan has concluded the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons on October 23, 2018, a month earlier than the national schedule. The whole-day event started with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist that was presided by Borongan Bishop Crispin Varquez and attended by almost a hundred priests and religious men and women working in the diocese. A sports fest was held thereafter with the three teams of priests and religious competing, namely, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. A cultural night capped the day. (Este News)

Social media without God is ‘destructive’, says archbishop

A ranking Catholic leader said that social media is a “blessing from God”. But he has some words of caution.

“Social media without God is destructive,” said Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan. “We cannot have social media without God.”

In his message for the Catholic Social Media Summit (CSMS) 2018, the archbishop noted the downside of the modern communications.

He warned that If not used responsibly, it can “divide and misled” people and could lead to the “slow death for our cherished

values and virtues”.

Villegas, a former president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), said that social media without ethics “spoils human progress and renders development meaningless.”

“We need social media with God, for the service of God and for the glory of God. Then and only can this latest of human inventions also become the best of human creations,” he said.

The archbishop added that social media is power because it facilitates the sharing of information and links people together.

“Social media is power because it can teach, it can ignite, it can inspire. It is a powerful human invention that continues to evolve and get better every minute,” he also said.

This year’s CSMS with focus on the theme “#Activate” will be held at Siena College in Quezon City on Nov. 17.

CSMS is an initiative of YouthPinoy, a group of “online missionaries” in collaboration with the CBCP Media Office and Areopagus Communications.

YouthPinoy president Michael Laxina said the event will help online missionaries “as they discover strategies on delivering truth

in social media”.

First held in 2012, among its previous speakers were Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, Bishop Paul Tighe from the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Social Communications and Sean Patrick Lovett of Vatican Radio.

After the summit, Youth Pinoy will hold the Catholic Social Media Award (CSMA) on the same venue.

Now on its fourth year, the CSMA aims to recognize the best Catholic communicators in various social media platforms. (CBCPNews)

5 million people turn out for Bishop deplores killing of Negros sugar workers



The visit of the heat relic of Saint Padre Pio came to an end Friday after a farewell Mass held at the National Shrine of St. Padre Pio in Santo Tomas, Batangas. ROY LAGARDE

An estimated five million people flocked to venerate the incorrupt heart relic of Saint Padre Pio as its three-week visit to the Philippines came to an end Friday.

The turnout is thought to be the largest relic visit event in the church’s history.

Fr. Jojo Gonda, rector of the National Shrine of Saint Padre Pio in Santo Tomas, Batangas, said that authorities estimated that between four to five million people venerated the relic.

“My gut feeling for the whole visit around the country is four to five million because I was there all the time,” Gondo said.

The Philippines is the fourth country visited by the relic after the United States, Paraguay and Argentina.

It was brought to the country by the Capuchin friars who run the Shrine of Padre Pio in the saint’s hometown of San Giovanni Rotondo in southern Italy.

But the visit to Asia’s largest

Catholic nation holds the distinction of having the longest time the relic stayed in a country and with an unprecedented crowd.

Italian Fr. Carlo Laborde, Superior of the Franciscan Capuchin Community of San Giovanni Rotondo, said that being in the Philippines was an experience of “extraordinary faith”.

“The heart of Padre Pio has visited various countries in the world attracting numerous crowd... but (the visit) in the Philippines has been unprecedented,” he said.

“Our heart has been moved to see huge crowd everywhere,” said Laborde.

From October 6 to 26, the saint’s relic moved around the country, stopping in Santo Tomas, and the cities of Manila, Cebu, Davao and Lipa.

Though it rained in some days, the weather did not dampen the spirits of the faithful, motivated to

see the relic that they believe is an answer to their prayers.

Crowd lined the streets patiently and calmly, with many queued for three to five hours just to venerate the relic.

“It seems they found something unique and different with the heart relic because this is the only heart relic that visited us,” Gondo said.

“At this time when people are suffering from inflation, poverty, extrajudicial killings they want a meaningful symbol or will give meaning to what is happening to them,” he said.

The relic left the national shrine after a farewell Mass presided over by Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato.

It was immediately brought to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport where it was displayed for public veneration for the NAIA’s employees and other government officials.

The relic departed for Italy at 6pm. (Roy Lagarde / CBCP News)

A Catholic bishop has condemned the murder of nine sugar farmers in Negros Occidental province and joined in the call for justice for the victims.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos said the killings only unmask the long standing violence that farmers under hacienda system have been subjected to.

“The tragic incident reveals the ugly face of the prevailing agrarian problem in Negros that remains unresolved,” he said.

The victims were reportedly eating dinner inside the tents when they were shot by still unidentified gunmen at a hacienda in Sagay City’s Bulanon village on Saturday.

The attack claimed nine lives, including four women and two minors.

The National Federation of Sugar Workers, where the victims belong, said the attack occurred on the first night of the land cultivation area or “bungkalan” in the hacienda.

Under bungkalan, farm workers would occupy and collectively cultivate lands covered by the government’s agrarian reform program to help farmers survive

the “dead season” in the sugar industry.

The group said that of the 424,130 hectares of sugar lands in Negros Island, 33.99% with 50 hectares or more are owned by only 1,860 big landlords, 30% with 10 to 50 hectares are owned by just 6,820 big and small landlords.

While the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was only at 40%, the NFSW estimates that majority of 53,320 farmers and agricultural workers only own 36% of the sugar lands.

And due to lack of support services, the progressive group estimates that 70% of sugar lands that have been distributed by the government had been leased.

The NFSW also noted how sugar workers in haciendas, on the average, get P80-P120 daily despite the minimum wage pegged at P245 per day.

“It is morally right and just for the sugar workers and peasants in Negros Occidental to undertake their Land Cultivation Areas,” said Alminaza.



Farmers protest the killing of nine sugar workers outside the Department of Agrarian Reform office in Bacolod City, October 22, 2018. PHOTO FROM NFSW FACEBOOK PAGE

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More assistance needed in Jipapad town after heavy flooding



Photo: Jipapad FB page

THE residents of Jipapad, Eastern Samar called for help after tropical depression Samuel caused massive flooding on Wednesday, November 21, 2018.

According to the residents it was the worst flooding they have experienced, as waters reached the second floor of their houses. Even the prepositioned food packs of the municipal government did not escape the flood waters.

The Provincial government has delivered food and other relief items to flood affected residents of Jipapad.

Ms. Evelyn Caliba of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and

Management Office said that they transported the goods to the northernmost town of Eastern Samar on November 23 as an immediate response to the request for help.

Provincial Administrator George Erroba told Este News last Wednesday that it was Board Member Joji Montallana who called him to report on the situation.

The PDRRMO team brought rice, noodles and canned goods for 2,000 families, which should be enough for three days.

Hygiene kits, jerry cans and medicines were sent by the Provincial Health office, and the Department of Health also sent water,

sanitation and health resources to the affected communities.

The disaster office is still consolidating data collected from the affected areas to determine the extent of damage caused by the floods. Initial reports said around 50 houses were totally damaged, and more sustained partial damage.

Incessant rains triggered by tropical storm Samuel also caused flooding in Oras, Arteche and other towns in the northern part of the province causing landslides, damaging houses, infrastructure and agriculture. **(Eden Cidro/Este News)**

Leyte, Samar mark 5 years since typhoon Yolanda

THE victims of super typhoon Yolanda were remembered today during a Mass to mark the 5th anniversary of the Philippine's deadliest typhoon on record.

Bishop Emeritus Filomeno Bactol of Naval in his homily at the shipwreck in Barangay Anibong, Tacloban City, called on the faithful to continue their care for the environment.

According to him, the strong typhoon was the cause of the total neglect for the environment.

He asked the faithful of their obligation for the care of the Mother Earth and for being

responsible Christians.

In Guiuan, Eastern Samar, where Yolanda made first landfall, an interfaith prayer was held at the town's public plaza for the more than 100 people killed by the typhoon.

In various parts of Leyte, masses in mass grave sites were also offered by priests of the Archdiocese of Palo.

In Tanauan, Leyte, the local officials led a prayer at the mass grave site along the national highway of Brgy. Calogcog where hundreds of the victims were buried. **(Nestor L. Abrematea / Visayas Times)**

YFC Eastern Samar holds 3-day Youth Conference

THE members of the Youth for Christ (YFC) gathered for the Provincial Youth Conference in Quinapondan, Eastern Samar on October 26-28, 2018.

Around 400 delegates joined the conference with its theme, "Exemplify" inspired by Philippians 2:3-8.

According to Marvin Sanchez, Provincial Youth Head: "We are here to live and share Christ - to live out the vision of the organization."

Sanchez added that the gathering is a way to express the 4 Fs of YFC namely: Fun, Freedom, Friendship

and Faith.

The said event showcased activities such as 100% free party, workshops and sessions highlighting Faith in the Lord and Youth empowerment.

Youth For Christ is the youth arm of Couples For Christ (CFC) - a pontifical catholic christian movement "intended for the renewal and strengthening of christian family life."

Conducted every two years, the next conference will be held in San Julian, Eastern Samar. **(Alren Beronio/EsteNews)**



Msgr. Pepe Qutorio updates the priests of Borongan about the campaign for the return of the bells of Balangiga during their regular clergy assembly on October 24, 2017. The initiative of the Diocese of Borongan for the repatriation of the historic bells started in 1998 when the Ramos administration sought the collaboration of the Catholic Church. The bells were brought as war trophy by the US soldiers in 1901 during the insurrection of the Philippine insurgents against the American government. Two of the bells has since then been enshrined at the F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming while another one is kept at the U.S. Army's Camp Red Cloud in Uijeongbu, South Korea. **(Este News)**

Prioritize the “kingdom of God,” not your own kingdom, bishop reminds priests

THE bishop of Borongan reminded the 370 priests who are attending a region-wide retreat to always learn to prioritize their values.

In his homily at the second day of the gathering, Bishop Crispin Varquez urged everyone to always prioritize the “kingdom of God.”

According to the bishop, priests who have distorted values may sacrifice God’s kingdom by building their own kingdom.

“Our top priority is the kingdom of God. We must not make excuses. We must learn to sacrifice ourselves for this highest value,” he said.

Varquez said this would only be possible if priests would have a deep and close encounter with Jesus especially through meditation.

The bishop said nothing is more important than meditation in the life of priests.

“This is the way we can easily overcome the countless difficulties we have to face day after day, which, after all, are part of our work: in meditation we find the strength to bring Christ to birth in ourselves and in other men,” he added quoting saint Charles Borromeo.

To end the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons, this retreat is conducted by the metropolitan province of Palo with its suffragan dioceses: Borongan, Calbayog, Catarman and Naval from November 5 to November 9, 2018. *(Este News)*



Eucharistic celebration during the Clergy Retreat attended by priests of the Metropolitan province of Palo that include the dioceses of Calbayog, Borongan, Catarman and Naval; held on November 5-9, 2018 in Cebu City. (Fr. Neil Tenefrancia / Este News)

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Credit: Philippine Embassy in Washington

The bells of Balangiga in our hearts

By Fr. Euly B. Belizar, Jr., SThd

“Therefore, send not to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”
— John Donne, “No Man is an Island”

INDEED. The bells of Balangiga toll not simply for its people but also for every Filipino, nay, for every adult man, woman, young person and child who goes beyond the ups and downs, the ins and the outs of their return and rather asks the why behind the bells themselves.

The government says that the bells belong to our national patrimony.

The counterpart government that once kept them said that they were a war booty.

The local Church, the Diocese of Borongan to which the Parish of St. Lawrence of Rome, Martyr, in Balangiga, Eastern Samar belongs, has long been saying, with unceasing insistence, that the bells are really instruments that call people to prayer and worship, of which the Eucharist is the highest form. They have nothing to do, at all, with war.

In the final analysis, this last is the narrative that may have brought the bells back where they belong. It held sway even over the most zealous opposition to their return. For even if we grant that the bells were misused by Filipino revolutionaries to signal the attack on their foreign occupiers, this does not at all detract

from the truth that the bells belong to the Church, a sign of “mankind’s union with God and the unity of all mankind” (LG 1), not to any of the warring parties. Even the very principle of separation of Church and State already precludes holding them as war trophies.

That said, I propose that we turn up some stones to find a few potentially missed opportunities.

First off, could not the bells’ return be an urgent reminder and invitation to the nation (ours) and to the nations (the world) to go back to the worship and prayer addressed to the true God, and not to money, power, sex, fame, science and technology, or today’s overpowering obsessions—the internet and social media? Don’t the bells, in their antiquity and durability, take us to the “Beauty ever ancient, ever new” who is God himself in contrast to our ever temporary and passing selves, our impermanent fashions and passions? I wonder if the bells do not, in fact, express the psalmist’s words: “Give unto the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Ps 29:2). In a word, do not we hear the bells say: “Stop worshipping yourselves and your world. Start worshipping the One real worship is for”?

Second, if prayer and worship are what the bells are for, then our real heritage that they represent is the cultivation

of our prayer life as individuals and as communities. At this point in their story, I am afraid the Balangiga bells could become museum artifacts or tourist attractions in the days ahead. They could add to the enhancement of the local economy or to the adulation of local or national heroes and personalities. But whether or not they lead more people to an ever deeper encounter and communication with the One who loves them most is a hundred-peso question. Call it impertinence but the truth is, there are things for which the bells do not toll.

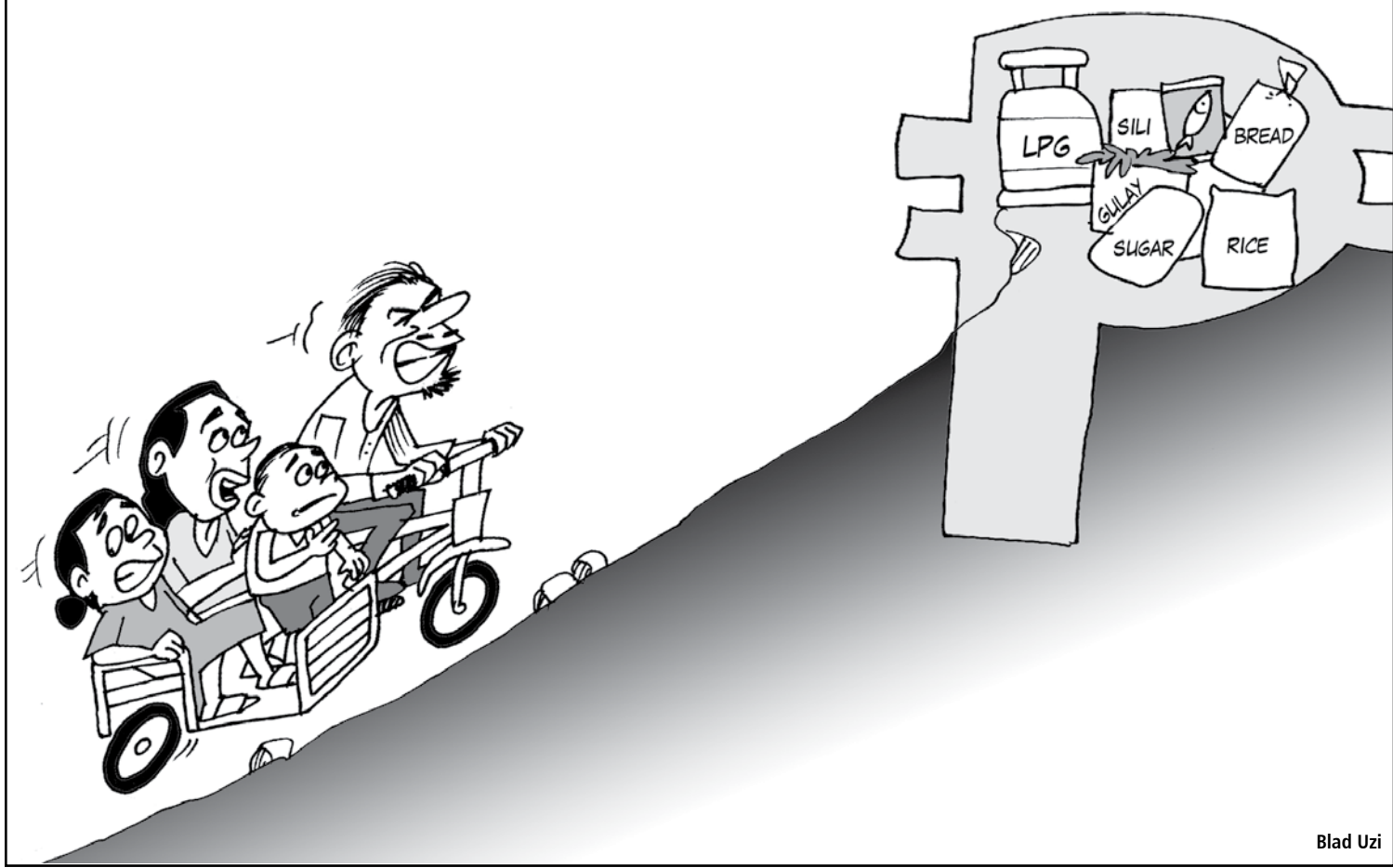
Third, while the bells’ tolling reach our ears, the bells’ meaning should reach our hearts. After all, as St. Therese of Lisieux powerfully put it, prayer is “the surge of the heart; it means the lifting up of one’s eyes, quite simply to heaven, a cry of grateful love, from the crest of joy to the trough of despair, it is a vast, supernatural force that opens out my heart and binds me close to Jesus.” Ultimately the Balangiga bells, therefore, belong in our hearts. They do not belong in museums or tourist shrines. There is an added advantage in taking on this point of view in that though the bells may not occupy all belfries or places of worship and prayer, they could be rightly in everyone’s hearts. There is where prayer and worship begins.

Fourth, if the bells are inseparable from prayer and worship, prayer and worship

are themselves inseparable from life. The bells, in a word, toll for our continual conversion. St. Alphonsus Liguori makes a strong reminder: “Whoever does not give up on prayer cannot possibly continue to offend God.” More specifically St. Teresa of Avila declares: “I would never want any prayer that would not make the virtues grow within me.” No one can say that the Balangiga bells are part of our heritage without renouncing not only corruption and the drug menace but also the drugs-and-politics-related killings, the use of fake news as self-defense or self-promotion, fanning hatred by public cursing and shaming of enemies, generating political and character assassinations etc.

Finally, it is not certain at all if the Balangiga bells will be rung the way they used to be before their captivity. They may prove too old or their tolling too dulled by disuse. Or the local Church may decide that their purposes are better served by simply seeing them as mute witnesses not only to history but especially to the eloquence of God’s love that needs to be adored in silence. And whether or not they will be heard again by our ears is not as important as whether or not they will be heard by our hearts.

For the bells are meant to also bring us the words of the psalmist: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Ps 95:7).



Simple and humble thoughts

Bishop Crispin B. Varquez, D.D.

Month of saints and the rosary

IN this month of October, we celebrate the feast days of many great saints who teach us about the value of true wealth over material possessions.

First, we have St. Francis of Assisi who renounced his paternal wealth and committed himself to God. After a carefree youth, he lived a life of evangelical poverty and preached the love of God.

Second, we have St. Teresa of Avila who, after many years of living in vanity even as a cloistered nun, discovered the 'Way of Perfection' and influenced the Church by her conviction that 'God alone suffices'.

We also have the Little Flower, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, whose spirituality is a testimony to the Church and to the world that true greatness is in living our 'littleness' in the arms of God, our Father.

We are in a world wherein material prosperity is extremely valued by people. Kung materially mayaman ka ikaw ay sikat, influential, madaling manalo sa mga elections, powerful, maraming kaibigan, masarap ang buhay, etc. Dahil dito, may maraming taong nalulungkot sa buhay kasi akala nila na kung mayaman ka lang saka ka nagiging masaya.

Hindi naman masama ang

kayamanan. Nagiging masama ang kayamanan kapag nagiging alipin nito ang tao. Masama kapag ang tao ay gumagamit ng tao para magkapera. Tandaan natin na ang pera ay dapat gamitin para sa kabutihan ng tao.

Dahil sa maraming tao ang nagiging alipin sa pera, lumalaganap ang corruption. Malala na ang corruption kapag nagiging bahagi na ito ng sistema. Distorted na ang values ng mga tao. Ang masama ay nagiging tama at ang gumagawa ng tama ay siya na ang nagiging masama.

Malapit na naman ang election. Tandaan natin na ang election is piniliay hindi pinalitay. Kung hindi magbabago ang Filipino, walang mangyayaring mabuti sa ating bansa.

We need to sacrifice for the transformation of our society. We need to decide for a change. Money will just come and go. Do not give in to corruption just because of the love of money. Do not give in to corruption just because you want to live a comfortable life. Remember Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said, "The world offers you a 'comfortable life' but you were not made for a comfortable life. You were created for greatness."

The basic human longing is to be happy. Remember, a happy person is not he who has everything in life but he who makes the best of what he has. The happy person is the one whose wealth is God alone. The saints have given us the best example of how to live happily and meaningfully in this world through detachment from worldly pleasures and through a commitment to love God and neighbor. That is why the saints are joyful. Their only treasure is God.

October is also the month of the Holy Rosary. The inspiration and ultimate model of the saints is the Lord Jesus Himself. During this month, we give a special emphasis on the praying of the Holy Rosary. We do not only focus on the recitation but, more importantly, on the meditation of the mysteries. In every mystery, the Blessed Virgin Mary helps us to see the greatness of God's love, the wealth of those who are close to Him. If we notice, the mysteries are joyful, luminous, sorrowful and glorious. Of the four mysteries, only one is sorrowful. So if we follow Jesus and Mary, it is necessary to experience sorrow but most of our experiences would be joyful, luminous and glorious. Kaya mas masaya pag kasama si Hesus at Maria!



Antigo

Msgr. Lope C. Robredillo, VG

Cornelio Sison—the longest serving mayor of Guiuan

THE town executive who served the longest in the entire history of Guiuan is Cornelio Macabasag Sison. He was mayor for a total of 29 years (1967-1986, 1988-1995, 2001-2004). Born on September 14, 1934 to Ramon Sison of Catbalogan, Samar and Segunda Odang Macabasag of Guiuan, he died at the St Luke Medical Center in Manila on January 22, 2011 at the age of 76. He was a man of dreams and left many legacies to the Guiuananons.

BIG DREAM. One of his dreams for Guiuan was to make it the tourism hub

of Eastern Samar by developing Calicoan island. As a step toward its full progress, he worked for the consolidation of the island into an integral unity. The tourism advance began with a partnership with Atty Manuel Go, developer of the ABCD Surfing Camp Resort, who set up several structures on the island.

But, in order to ensure a large-scale development, he negotiated with a Singapore-Macao Group so the island could be a resort destination, with hotels, golf courses and entertainment

complexes. His purpose was, just like what transpired in Bohol which invited foreign investors to transform the province into a tourism island, to bring jobs and businesses to Guiuan and make it prosperous, thereby generating billions to the government coffers through revenues and taxable improvements.

LEGACIES. Mayor Sison had many accomplishments to speak of, even at a time when there was no Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) to finance his projects. Among them were barangay halls,

Cornelio / 11

Editorial

Will children with rosaries stave the killings?

IN the morning of October 18, thousands of Filipino children will join the global initiative of one million children praying the holy rosary. These are children from 700 Catholic schools and 1,200 parishes from about 41 dioceses nationwide. This includes the Diocese of Borongan led by the students of St. Mary's College.

This prayer initiative is known as "One Million Children Praying the Rosary Campaign" which was started by a small group of children in Venezuela in 2005. Since a couple of years back the pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has become the main promoter of this campaign which has become global. According to ACN, the aim of this prayer initiative is "to show that the trusting prayer of children can fly like an arrow straight to the heart of God and consequently has great power."

In the Philippines, this initiative will have a very substantial twist. Children who were left orphans by the Duterte government's war on drugs will be joining in. The hundreds or even thousands of them will presumably be storming the heavens with their rosaries for God to intervene and put a stop to the wanton killings. According to media reports, over twenty thousand people have already been murdered over the last two years and there seem to be no end in sight to the killing spree. The number of pitiful orphans is surging by the day which, by the looks of it, is feared to beget bigger problems than the drug menace the government is trying to solve—problems that will swell until the next generation.

Established civil and Church institutions seem to be helpless in the face of extra-judicial killings that occur daily in many areas of the country. Now we have the children praying the rosary. Saint Padre Pio was once quoted as saying, "When a million children pray the rosary, then the world will change." At the press conference to raise awareness of this prayer initiative, Kalookan Bishop Pablo David said, "The Lord listens to the Children and their prayers are very powerful." Bishop David, whose diocese has become a killing field, is very active in helping form support groups for widows and children left behind by fathers that were killed extra-judicially.

Believe it or not, God is not going to turn a deaf ear to these children who are brandishing holy rosaries.

EASTERN SAMAR NEWS SERVICE

este

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A Thought For A Thought

Rev. Eutiquio B. Belizar, Jr., SThD

Priestly brotherhood

“With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:2-3)

IT is a strange thing. They are not related by blood, except perhaps for a few. But they call themselves brothers.

And their brotherhood is anchored in something other than ideology, membership in an organization or even friendship. They are brothers because they have received the same sacrament not always accessible to most Catholic males like them—Holy Orders. It is a sacramental brotherhood. What else could be more outlandish than that?

The priests of the five dioceses of the Metropolitan Province of Palo came together as a big assembly to celebrate this brand of brotherhood in a retreat from Nov 5-9, 2018. Serving the archdiocese of Palo and the dioceses of Calbayog, Borongan, Catarman and Naval, we call our ecclesiastical aggrupation PACAL-BOCANA from a combination of the first two or three syllables of our diocesan names: PALo, CALbayog, BORongan, CATarman and NAval. True, a lot of us complain of HIV or HAIR-IS-VANISHING syndrome. But we take it to mean a helpful contrast to something we also have that does not vanish: the indelible character of the priesthood itself. “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,” as some ordination posters and streamers remind us.

Sacramental brotherhood takes us to the original story of

our call by God. Stories have different details but always a common experience of an awareness of a pull toward the priesthood. Archbishop John Du of Palo reminded us on the first day of the retreat that our response to God’s call is a reason for celebration. At the same time it is a challenge to deepen our “interior life” and rediscover the dignity of our common vocation and life.

Bishop Crispin Varquez of the Diocese of Borongan, for his part, pointed out the core ground of the priestly life and ministry: giving witness to the priority of God’s kingdom. He cites the example of Jesus himself, how for the sake of the kingdom he emptied himself and took the form of a slave as a human being, even obediently embracing death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-11). Taking a cue from his own life, the bishop further reminded priests of the imperative of sacrifice in the ministry according to the manner of Christ’s own for the sake of the kingdom.

On the other hand, realities at work among priests can and do affect immensely the state of their brotherhood. When some priests do not submit to ways of financial accountability as required by their dioceses, they compromise the greater good and the demands of the Church’s evangelizing mission. They also jeopardize their own interior life by the stain of injustice.

When some priests use the heavily influential but sacred power of their office for self-oriented goals, they also bring to havoc not only their own reputation but even the good name of their fellow priests, not to

say of the Church herself. Their own wrongdoings also wound the brotherhood of priests and of the faithful in general.

Priestly brotherhood becomes alive and well when priests live out several ironies in their life. One, although they received a personal call, their response should be directed to the communal good of fellow believers. Two, formed to make the demands of the kingdom their priority, they must also bring their responses to the daily grind of the people they serve. Three, as agents of the things of the Spirit, they must also be conversant with matters of a just and peaceful society to which evangelization aspires. Four, to do so, their life of contemplation must be tempered with action, and vice versa. The brotherhood is nourished by both sources.

Finally, priestly brotherhood is a matter of faith in an increasingly secular world that disdains belief. Faith is the backbone that makes priestly brotherhood stand and keep on going. Faith gives color to the priestly brotherly relations that go by Christian love. Once as a guest of an Irish-American priest, I was humbled by his trust when he left me the keys to the rectory and his own room. He also trusted me to fulfil for him his Sunday responsibilities. I being a stranger tasked to do a mission appeal, I saw his conduct as coming from seeing me as a brother priest, bonded with him by faith and the ministerial priesthood. I tried my best to do my part. I resolved never to dis-appoint a brother.



Balik-balay

Sarah Mabansag Puno

Beads of faith and love

ONE very early morning I was awakened by a call of my daughter that her helper is seeing a man who is inviting her to go out. But she alone could see the man. The helper was shaking in fear because of the frightful appearance of the man. My immediate reaction was to grab my rosary near my bed and led the prayer through the phone with my daughter and other family members. After the litany, my daughter said, “Mama, she is already asleep.”

During the Typhoon Yolanda, I was anxious because of my daughter who was out there in the typhoon area having her duty at the hospital before the landfall .There was no signal to be able to know how and where she was. I just knelt down and prayed. While praying the rosary I heard my daughter’s voice saying “Mama I am with Jiggy.” (Her boyfriend, now her husband). We thanked the Lord she is alive and we were guided where to look for her.

A very close friend hated her husband so much because of his infidelity. She slept that night with a bitter heart towards him. She was awakened by a very deep voice telling her to kill her husband. She woke her husband up beside her and told him about the voice that was getting louder. The husband got a rosary

from their altar and led the prayer to drive away the evil spirit. She was calmed down as the voice left her. The rosary was placed on her neck after the prayer.

My mother was a public school teacher. She was once assigned to a barangay far from the city where our Filipino brothers from the mountain would often visit for “revolutionary funds”. One morning while waiting for her pupils, she heard firing very near her school. She was in the middle of cross-firing between the NPA and the military. She held on to her rosary upon her breast and prayed hard for protection. What a miracle! Amazing! She was protected by both the NPA and the Military to be able to go out safe, even addressing her ‘Ma’am’ with respect.

So many testimonies of deliverance, healing, calming, peace and protection while praying the Holy Rosary, that indeed we could say that we Catholic Christians are so lucky . The Holy Rosary is a gift to our faith.

We may wonder why this is so. Because in faith we stand by it and carry the name of Jesus, the name above all names and His life. By just His name the enemies are terrified. By His life we are enlightened and strengthened. In praying the Holy Rosary we are not alone. It is a prayer

Beads / 11



The Millennial Catholic

Mau Obon

At My Rope’s End

MY dog has a fever and can’t eat properly for the last five days. I worry about him from time to time that it sucks out a lot of my positive vibes. I’ve also been working on my office papers for the last two weeks, only to find out today that I erred in one document. The worst part is, I received the notice more than a week ago, I just didn’t think of opening the mail. I could have corrected it earlier! Because of this blunder, I might not be able to submit my papers on time. Puff, there goes my money and time, wasted away, thanks to my delaying habits. On my way to the office today, one door of my car got jammed. I also passed by an ATM machine to check if I had any money left, well, my card needs to be changed. Did I mention that I have an article due today? All these patience draining incidents hit me in a matter of three hours. The day is still young and I’m wondering what could possibly happen in my next 15 waking hours.

My “problems” aren’t that big, but when tiny life’s glitches happen one after another in a few hours, stress levels skyrocket, and tears start to well up. The

easiest way to go is to whine and just give up. But, going the easy way is kind of boring, fighting until the end is more exciting.

Fortunately, I recalled parts of Philippians 4:6-7, which tells us to pray more instead of worrying. So, I checked my Bible app to see the full passage and it says: “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

I love how this verse nudges me from gloom to bloom. As I see it, it reveals a formula on how to have “peace” amidst difficulties. It’s PRAYER + SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING = PEACE.

When we pray, we express our belief that God is in control, that we don’t have to do everything ourselves. This doesn’t mean though that we will just chill, no way! We do everything we can within our reach, but at the same time, have the faith that God will take care of those that are beyond us.

When we pray, we express our

trust in God, such that, whatever happens, whether we will like it or not, we will get through. We are confident that God loves us so much that He only wants the best for us.

I consulted Google to see what supplication means, and it said: “the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly.” We make known our request to God humbly. Firstly, it’s a request, not an order. God is not our servant. Lastly, we do it with utmost humility. We cannot have that sense of entitlement and insist that we deserve what we are praying for.

It’s so hard to be thankful when we feel like our life is screwed. But gratitude actually has the power to change our perspective. When we start focusing on our blessings positive feelings swell within us. Trust me, facing our problems is a lot easier if we are feeling optimistic.

Right now, I’m five hours away before my day ends. I’ve managed to finish writing for this column after a two-month hiatus. Yes, today is my deadline. I was able to change my ATM, and while at the bank, I met the person I needed to talk to for a

Rope / 11



Points to Ponder

Atty. Ceferino Baquilod, Jr.

Another Sick Joke

AS far I can remember, All Saints Day and All Souls Day have been observed by Catholics yearly to honor our saints and commemorate our faithful departed, respectively. All Saints Day is a holy day and is recognized by our government as a national holiday because it is a day considered sacred, meaningful and of great importance to Filipinos. As Catholics we believe that Saints have exceptional degree of holiness or likeness to God. For the President to make fun of saints by calling them fools and drunkards, is just too offensive, repulsive and unacceptable. A sick joke from a sick man, according to an FB post.

Bureau of Customs and Shabu Proliferation. The smuggling of tons and tons of shabu thru the Bureau of Customs has undoubtedly resulted in the proliferation of more drugs in the country. Everyday we hear more news of drug users and pushers being arrested and/or killed.The 2 biggest shipments of the drug were under the watch of 2 BOC heads with military background, to wit, Nicanor Faeldon and Isidro Lapeña. Despite their blunders, they were never fully investigated and prosecuted. To the consternation of many, they were given new assignments. Lapena was even promoted. No wonder so many believe that they were in cahoots with drug syndicates and protected by no less than someone so formidable in the government.

Because of unrestrained corruption at the Bureau of Customs, the president decided to have the military take over its operations. It should be noted however that for any organization to run smoothly, those manning the various offices need to have appropriate technical knowledge and experience. Military people have military training and experience, and have no clue on

customs operations.

According to some observers, the reason why the big shabu shipments slipped in, despite the new customs heads with military background (Faeldon and Lapeña), was precisely because those two had no sufficient knowledge of what was really happening. ‘Nalusutan daw’. Hence, some feel wary about the current situation at BOC. Moreover, military people are not incorruptible.

Over 2 years ago based on intel reports, Duterte announced the drug involvement of 5 generals and other of military officials and personnel. In one news item, it was reported that the generals were actually linked to the ‘high-level Chinese drug triad’, where Peter Lim, the president’s ‘kumpare’ and campaign contributor, operated in the Visayas. Duterte himself identified Peter Lim as one of the ‘biggest drug dealers in the country’. Surprisingly, after the president and Lim met in Malacañang, the drug charges against Lim and Kerwin Espinosa together with 6 others filed earlier by CIDG, were dropped by DOJ Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre. Because of the controversial case dismissal and ensuing public uproar, Aguirre had to be eased out. The new DOJ chief Menardo Guevarra reinstated the charges. A warrant of arrest was also issued but Peter Lim has since disappeared and until now is still missing.

Chinese Businessman as Presidential Adviser. Another controversy now brewing is Duterte’s hiring of Chinese businessman Michael Yang as Presidential Economic Adviser. Perhaps fearing legal repercussions for hiring a foreign national, Duterte initially denied this. He explained that it could not be possible since Yang is Chinese. Of course now that Yang’s hiring contracts were

Joke / 11

(The following article was written when the Diocese of Borongan was starting to campaign for the return of the Balangiga bells)

The Bells of Balangiga

An Appeal for Support



The parish church of Balangiga in Eastern Samar. (Photo by Christopher C. Zamora)

By Leonardo Y. Medroso, D.D.

THE Diocese of Borongan is bringing to the attention of the entire Philippine Church its struggle to recover the bells which one hundred years ago were taken as war booty from the church in Balangiga town. In its urgent appeal for support in this struggle, the Diocese is asking the bishops, the clergy and religious, and the lay faithful throughout the country to take a close look into the issue of the Balangiga Bells, and thereby appreciate its implications as a nation and as a Church.

The Issue

In a nutshell, the Bells of Balangiga are Church bells. They are religious artifacts with considerable significance in the Catholic tradition. Among many other uses, they call people to prayer and worship. As such they are inappropriate trophies of war. Hence, they should be returned to the place where they belong and to the purpose for which they were cast and blessed. And since these bells belong to the Roman Catholic Church of the Parish of Balangiga, they should be returned to the Catholic community of Balangiga.

The US government will not give up the bells. Its reason is simple: the bells are the property of the US government. Capt. Kathleen Cook of the Warren AFB public information office puts it this way: “The Catholic Church has no say in the matter. The bells are property of the US government. Only Congress can change the disposition of the those bells” (Marguerite Herman, *Wyoming Catholic Register*, December 1997)

These Church bells, seized as war booty in 1901 by the US troops in the Philippines and presently enshrined at Warren Air

Force Base in Cheyenne, have taken on a special meaning both for the people of the Philippines, who seek their return, as well as those in the United States of America, for whom they are sacred to the memory of the troops who died in Samar nearly a century ago.

Currently the matter is under congressional investigation. Recently, Sen. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo), again attempted to stonewall the return effort by introducing language in the Defense Authorization Bill, S. 1055, that would prohibit “the return of veterans’ memorial objects to foreign nations without specific authorization law.” Without expressly naming either the object or the country this refers to the Bells of Balangiga.

Historical Background

The Bells of Balangiga issue goes back to the American involvement in the Philippines, which began with the Spanish-American War in 1898. The Philippines was then a Spanish possession. After the defeat of Spain, however, the United States decided to retain possession of the Philippines rather than grant the nation its independence. An insurrection followed, which lasted more than three years and cost the lives of 4,200 US troops and some 20,000 Filipino combatants. Thousands more Filipino died as a result of famine and disease caused by the war.

The most infamous incident of the war occurred on September 28, 1901, in the town of Balangiga, located some 400 miles southeast of Manila on the island of Samar. The church bells in Balangiga were reportedly used to signal a surprise attack by Filipino insurgents, many using machetes on an American garrison posted in the town.

The attack left more than 50 US soldiers dead and led to American reprisals. It was so severe that they resulted in the reprimand of the American commander, Gen. Jacob Smith. But it was also effective as it shortened the insurrection to six months.

Among the actions taken by the American troops during the reprisals was the razing of several Catholic churches in the area and the confiscation of the Bells of Balangiga as trophies of war. They now hang in a “trophy park” at the Warren Air Force Base.

Current Positions

1.The Diocese of Borongan, to which the Parish of Balangiga belongs, lays rightful ownership to the Bells of Balangiga. Bishop Leonardo Y. Medroso, in his letter to Bishop Joseph Hart of Cheyenne Diocese, wrote: “I, however, resolve to write you this letter of request for the simple fact that my people in the town of Balangiga have more reasons to reclaim and recover the possession of the said bells. Records tell that the bells were property of the local church in Balangiga when they were taken by the American forces. As such they kept my people in touch with lives of their parents and grandparents, their past, their origin, their religious sentiments, their culture. The market value of the bells may not be that high, but the collective sentiments that they have borne and symbolized are priceless. It is for this that through the years my people in Balangiga have been longing to retrieve their church bells.

2.The American legions, the Amvets (American military veterans), and some state legislators would not have any part of that claim. They say that they belong to the US government as they are legitimate spoils of war. These bells enshrined the memories

of their dead ones, mercilessly massacred by treacherous attacks.

3.The Philippines delegation, led by former President Fidel Ramos and Ambassador Raul Rabe and supported by some American legislators, has taken a compromise position, namely, to have the two bells recast and then give one original and one replica to each country. This is the position that is accepted and supported by the members of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC). The Diocese of Borongan, with much reluctance, agrees to this arrangements.

During its Plenary Assembly held on July 10-12, 1999, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has taken the position of the Bishop of Borongan.

But the American veterans are adamant. The Bells of Balangiga have to remain in F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In fact, this is the reason for the action of Sen. Craig Thomas in introducing language in the Defense Authorization Bill, S. 1055, that would prohibit “the return of veterans’ memorial objects to foreign nations without specific authorization in law.”

Plea

The struggle to retrieve the Bells of Balangiga and to restore them to their rightful owner is raging on. The Diocese of Cheyenne is supporting us; the National Bishops Conference of America is behind us; some US legislators are sympathetic to our cause; our government is not only active in its support, its is initiating activities towards the return of the bells and closely coordinating with our own activities to retrieve them.

Now, we are asking, pleading for the support of the entire people of God in the Philippines.*



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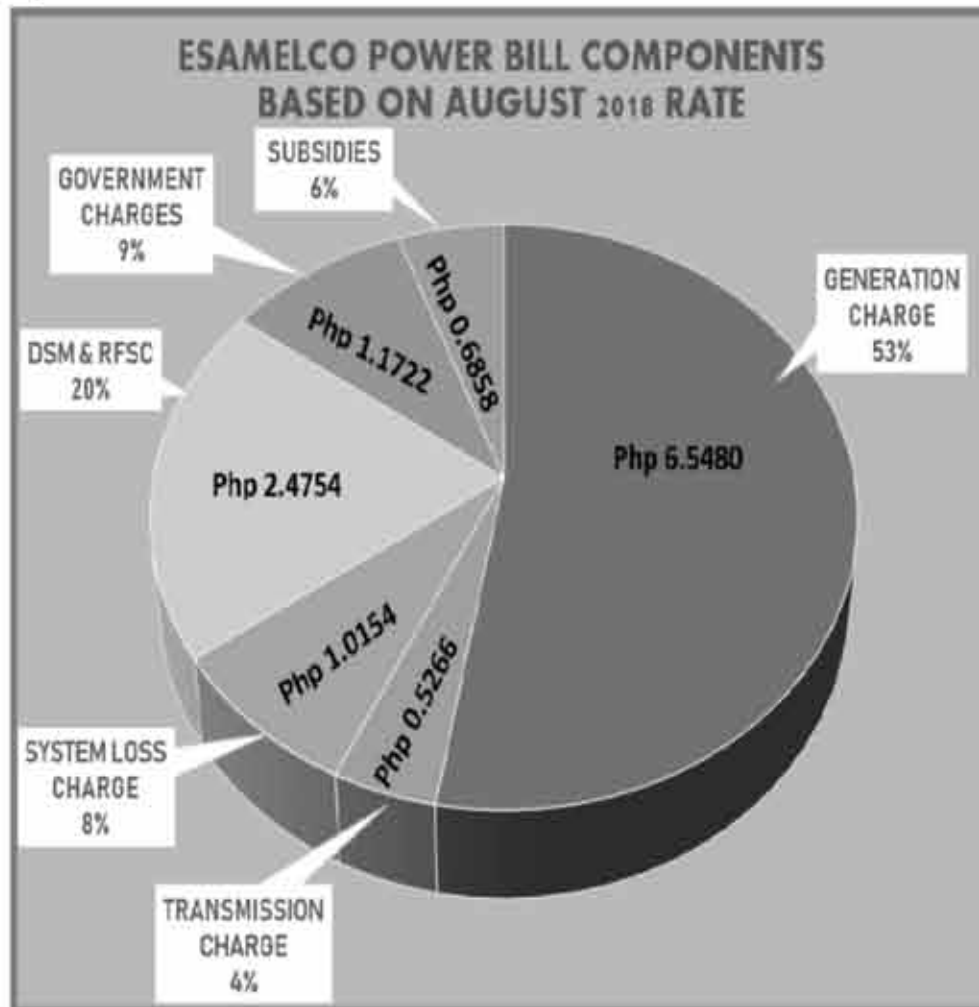


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Ang **Reinvestment Fund for Capital Expenditures (RFSC)** naman ay kontribusyon ng mga consumers para sa pag-upgrade at pag-rehab ng "distribution system" ng ESAMELCO.

Cornelio / 6

basketball courts, barangay kiosks, roads and bridges, the Guiuan gym, drainage system, etc. A few could be pointed out, however.

[1] Economy. Easily identifiable was the Public Market (the buildings of which were, unfortunately, not spared by Yolanda), together with its circumferential road, because this was and continues to be the lifeblood of the municipality.

[2] Education. Informed in 1994 of the impending closure of the Msgr Guimbaolibot Memorial School by the Diocese of Borongan, he promptly decided, with the consent of the Sangguniang Bayan, to open the Guiuan Municipal High School (1995), with the old ABC Hall as its first home, his wife Caridad as its Administrator, Mrs Corazon Obsequio as its first principal. Today, it is known as Guiuan National High School (1997). He also worked for the creation of Homonhon National High School (1984) and Sulangan National High School (1993).

[3] Public Health. Back in 1988, he broached the idea of a centralized water system for the whole town, and set his heart on the creation of the Guiuan Water District until the end of his term. Other mayors (Cablao, Naputo) shared his vision, and it became fully operational under the administration of Mayor Annaliza Kwan.

[4] Transportation. Guiuan being the final destination of vehicles coming to the south, and with the increase of vehicles plying the route, Mayor Sison proposed to the Sangguniang Bayan the establishment of a Transport Terminal. The Municipal Development Fund Office (MDFO) endorsed the project to the Local Government Finance and Development Project (LOGOFIND) of the World Bank. Several sites were proposed to this agency, but it approved Bgy Cogon as the only

right location. Still, during the last months of his term, the project suffered several setbacks. At any rate, the project was pursued by the next administration, though in a new location and under different terms.

[5] Creation of Barangays. During Sison's administration, a total of 9 barangays were created: Banaag (in Manicani island), Canawayon (in Homonhon island), San Antonio (in Tubabao island), San Juan (in Tubabao island), San Pedro (in Tubabao island), Sto Niño, Tagporo and Victory (in Victory island). Among other benefits, their founding made the government more accessible to barrio folks.

[6] The people's mayor. Nevertheless, it seems that if the legacy that lasts lies ultimately in the heart, Mayor Sison is best remembered for his humble character—his endearing treatment of the common people, his special rapport with employees, making the most lowly one feel important, among others. The fact that he was able to serve as mayor for almost three decades, and the fact that a multitude of people paid their last respect to him at wakes and during his internment on February 12, 2011, say a lot about the qualities and disposition of the man. But, of course, probably the best barometer of his character is the fact that, in the 29 years of his being executive, he never converted his political power to economic power. In plain language, he did not become rich.

Cornelio, or Mano Nelly as he was fondly called, is survived by his wife Caridad Abrera, who serves as Administrator of Immaculate Conception School (in Guiuan), and his sons and daughters—Neil, Maricar, Janet, Ricca, Juliet, Tomtom and Karen.

Beads / 7

of connected souls.

Praying the Holy Rosary is embracing what we believe in and being connected to our God with the intercession of Mama Mary to whom we are entrusted to by her son, our Lord Jesus Christ as her children, and she our mother who is joining us in our prayer. Mama Mary our intercessor is the nearest to the heart of Jesus her son, our Savior and our God.

The Holy Rosary is the favorite devotion of saints, so as we pray we are joining with them

Rope / 7

case I'm working on. This person is not in my phonebook, and it is only by God's providence that we happened to walk into the same room. The perks of facing troubles instead of having tantrums, yay! Well my dog's appetite isn't back to normal yet. But I'm grateful that he is still playful and drinks a lot of water. As for my office papers, well, the deadline is coming, like it or not. I've

Joke / 7

exposed by Rappler (ironically using Freedom of Information Executive Order issued by the president), Malacañang admitted that indeed Yang is a Presidential Adviser.

One wonders what kind of advices Michael Yang is feeding the president considering that he is a Chinese national and has no allegiance to our country and to our constitution. We cannot help but think that Yang is the reason why our president is so friendly with China despite the latter's encroachment into our territory and it's defiance to the UN Arbitral

.As we lift our concerns, our thanksgiving and petitions, we are connected to our God, we express our love and trust in Him, same time our love and concern for our loved ones, families and others through the intercession of Mama Mary with the saints.

The Holy Rosary is not only for the living but also for the departed for them to be glorified for eternity. And in turn they are also praying for us.

The Holy Rosary is NOT of NO IMPORTANCE because in all of Mama Mary's apparitions she

requested for a new and corrected document today. As to whether I will be able to receive it on time, I'll leave it up to God. What about my jammed car door? There was nothing wrong with it, the baby lock was just accidentally pressed.

Sometimes we tend to exaggerate our worries, making us more upset than we should be. When negativity gets the better of us, we tend to give

Tribunal's ruling that indeed Philippines has exclusive sovereign rights over West Philippine Sea. Instead of enforcing the ruling, this administration has given China rights to the WPS thru a joint exploration agreement. China has also continued to be a major source of illegal drugs in our country, based on media reports. There is also an alarming increase of Chinese workers in the Philippines. Some of them have been apprehended for various illegal activities including drug trafficking. And not to be forgotten are our multibillion dollar loans from China which have

is telling us to pray the Holy Rosary, she who is glorified, the Mother of God and the Queen of Heaven and Earth. It is because of her concern and love for us all that we all be covered by her blue mantle of love. This is for our salvation and eternity.

As we aim for holiness, we follow our fellow earthly sojourners who are already glorified, the saints to pray their favorite, the Holy Rosary for the love of God and others through Mama Mary to Jesus.

up. We accomplish nothing as a result. In fact, it drives us further into misery. This is why we need to pray more. We can't help ourselves from worrying, but we can make ourselves pray more, right? When we are at our rope's end, pray. It's the only way to have peace. When we have peace, we do not overestimate our troubles. Then overcoming setbacks becomes a lot easier.

been described by some experts as onerous, lopsided, and harmful 'debt-traps'. Yang must have done a really good job as can be gleaned from all these developments. Even before Yang was officially contracted, he had already been rubbing elbows with the president since he owns businesses Davao.

It is quite interesting to note that Duterte had information and in fact announced publicly that Michael Yang is a drug addict. What a mess. Our president, who claims to hate drugs and has a so called 'drug war', is being advised by a drug addict.

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Simula October 1, 2018

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