FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS
Quote in the Act

"Asia needs to send Japan a big thank-you note. China would not become where it is today if Deng had not made that fateful decision to move from communist central planning to a free-market system. Deng took this incredibly bold leap because he had seen how well the overseas Chinese in Taiwan, Hong Kong and even Singapore had done. Those three tigers – and the fourth, South Korea – were inspired by Japan."

Kishore Mahbubani, Dean of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, explaining the phenomenal success of leading Asian economies.

"I said she is a Marcos, so let us do it the Marcos way. We should not go to the streets because that would lead to mob rule. She is not a Marcos for nothing."

Former First Lady Imelda Marcos, relating about her advice to her daughter, Representative Imee Marcos, to shun street protests of the opposition after Congress voted to kill the impeachment case against President Arroyo.

"We’re poisoning the tigers in the cage, only to send out a mouse to face the gladiators in the arena…except now, we are even going to strangle the mouse."

Makati Rep. Teddy Boy Locsin, on asssailing the House majority bloc’s move to comprehensively junk the three impeachment complaints filed against Pres. Arroyo. Congress voted 158-51 last September 6 killing all three impeachment complaints.

"Nothing travels faster than light with the possible exception of bad news, which follows its own rules."


"For the Pharisees, Christ had become a lawbreaker. For those in God’s kingdom, he had become a sign of God’s love. To uphold the rule of law is to uphold the essence to which it was created, which is public accountability. And there can never be public accountability if the truth is camouflaged in mangled legalism and technicalities."

Antonio Ventosa, national chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), refuting Congress’ citing on technicalities as reason for junking the impeachment proceedings.
The consequences of politics are immensely potent for either construction or destruction of society. The effects or rather the damage inflicted by martial law on the Filipino people, for instance, have crippled not only the socio-economic facet of the country but even the lives of upcoming generations.

The harm that is done to the country by a corrupt congressman or any political figure for that matter imprints a lifetime suffering on people, pretty much larger than the disaster caused by Marcopper Mining Corporation in Marinduque or the Ormoc tragedy. Which is why, politics should not be left alone to a select segment of Philippine society—especially to politicians!

Of late, a woman senator has cautioned the Catholic bishops not to be meddling in politics. Invoking the doctrine of separation of Church and State—which is immediately a wrong reference—she thinks that bishops should confine themselves to spiritual matters, as if the bishops and their people, too, won’t get hurt by the selfish scheming of politicians and thieves.

It is very consoling to read Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, OP, in his Reflections on the Role of Bishops in Philippine Politics. He says: “…it is impossible to truly love one’s neighbor without engaging in politics. When we confront concrete cases of cruel injustice being inflicted on men and women, our commitment to love inevitably leads us to confrontations with those who control our politics. We immerse ourselves in pastoral visits where we witness the dehumanization caused by political corruption in our slums and neglected barangays. We inevitably find ourselves challenged by the injustices we see to take a stand on public issues. Our Christian love for the poor becomes political by its own inner logic since to practice it requires the mediation of politics.”

If there is any disaster that has befallen on the Filipino people worse than all the natural calamities combined, it is our foreign debt. It is disastrous while it looks benign. It is debilitating as it harnessed as a sanctuary to economic dearth and budgetary shortfall. And it keeps growing by leaps and bounds. The foreign debt facility has been a milking cow of thieves in the government for ages now. Msgr. Lope Robredillo writes our cover story, Forgive Us Our Debts. Read on.
Who We Are

I start my reflections with the latest CBCP Statement entitled: Restoring Trust: A Plea for Moral Values in Philippine Politics.

In this Pastoral Statement, the bishops ask themselves: “As Bishops what can we offer to our people? Can we provide some clarity and guidance in the present confusing situation?” Then, the bishops give their answer. They reply: “We can only answer these questions from who we are.”

“From who we are.” This response is an emphatic reminder that the only way bishops can give credible and authentic clarity and guidance to a confused people is by manifesting in their words and actions who they are. Our people want to know whence comes that identity which determines the teaching and shapes the decisions of their bishops.

For today, this Episcopal identity is not clear to our people. Bishops do not present a homogeneous, clearly identifiable character of who they are to our people. They read of dissent among the bishops; they listen to statements of bishops which they consider as highly political while noting the silence of other bishops; the see bishops with different preferential options, some for the rich and powerful others for the poor and powerless. They wonder why those bishops engaged in lonely battles against moral corruption seem to be without the support of other bishops. They know that bishops have different views on whether or not to ask for the resignation of the President. They hear of bishops telling media that they miss the high-profile interventions of Cardinal Sin in political issues. Have bishops, then, become part of the problem and thereby bring about confusion and demoralization among our people?

“...Who we are.” What then is a bishop? The Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Gregis answers: “The Bishop, who acts in the person and name of Christ Himself, becomes in the Church entrusted to him a living sign of the Lord Jesus, Shepherd and Spouse, Teacher and High Priest of the Church.” (No. 7) The key then to the Bishops’ identity and mission is the mystery of the Christ and the attributes willed by the Lord Jesus for his Church, “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (LG, 27). In the light of the mystery of Christ, the Bishop comes to understand ever more profoundly the mystery of the Church, in which he, by the grace of Episcopal ordination, has been appointed as teacher, priest and shepherd so as to guide the Church with the power the Bishop has received.

Gospel Defines Bishops’ Identity

Observe that the three functions are linked to a unique context, namely, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If these three functions lose their anchorage in the Gospels, they can be used to reinforce the image of the Church as an authoritarian institution where students fear teachers, where priests monopolize decisions, where those who govern become tyrants. But this is a caricature of the true goal of these functions which is—that the Bishop’s teaching imitates the patience of the Teacher-Rabbi who chose ambitious and cowardly fishermen as His first disciples; that his priestly work is modeled on the suffering Messiah and that his governance must reflect the humility of the Master who serves His disciples. In the reform and renewal of our nation’s political culture, Bishops have an indispensable role. He is the teacher of God’s mode of transforming humanity. He is the priest who gathers us in a covenant meal with God. He is the leader whose diakonia is one of humble service.

We have pointed to the Gospel as the context which gives birth to the triple functions which define the relationship of Bishops to the People of God. But these functions do not operate in a vacuum. They are affected by a context whose social, economic and political dimensions have consequences for the implementation of his mandate. This is the context of culture—the culture into which he was born and which has formed and continues to form him as a human person.

The bishop is not only a citizen of the City of God but he also is a citizen of the City of Man. He is both a Filipino as well as a member of an international Church. As a Filipino, he imbibes the culture of his people and society, its weaknesses and its strengths. The way Filipinos live, the meanings they put into their symbols and the values and models they uphold—this ensemble shapes the character of the Bishop. We are the children of our culture. Its deficiencies are absorbed into our mores. Its strengths are imparted to us. Its influence penetrates our personality and shapes or distorts it.

Filipino Culture’s Influence

Since he is inserted within two contexts—the evangelical and the cultural—it is vital that the Bishop integrates them in his person. There should be no rupture between

Reflections of Bishops in Philippine Politics

by LEONARDO Z. LEGASPI, O.P., D.D.
in the Role of Philippine Politics

Jose Rizal caught its essential spirit which he stated as: Redencion supone virtud; virtud sacrificio y sacrificio amor—redemption presupposes virtue; virtue sacrifice, and sacrifice love.

In our nation today, we have lost this precondition to leadership, the commitment to values born out of the integration of faith and life. Thus social, economic and political leadership in our days is not based on virtue. Neither do sacrifice and love make their presence palpable among our leaders.

No wonder our culture is often derided as “flawed”. No wonder that the most quoted sentences in the CBCP’s 1997 Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics are these: “…Philippine Politics—the way it is practiced—has been most hurtful of us as a people. It is possibly the biggest bane in our life as a nation and the most pernicious obstacle to our achieving full development.”

Let the words of Rizal be heard once more in every region of our land: Redencion presupposes virtue; virtue presupposes sacrifice and sacrifice presupposes love. The virtue of truth and justice; the sacrifice for the common good; the love which sees others as brothers and sisters.

These and not political cleverness; these and not legalistic arguments; these and not armed might and power make up the formula for our nation’s flight to new horizons of peace, prosperity and unity.

When Bishops Confront Politics

But in spite of the emphatic coveats against bishops participating in direct and partisan political actions, we cannot totally ignore political engagement. To the French bishops, the late Pope John Paul II said: “By reason of your mission your call is to intervene regularly in public debate and the great questions of society.” This then is the challenge and this then is the call to serve in a divided society such as ours today. It is not easy. But this is the call. In the Roman Missal we pray that a bishop may have a spirit of courage and right judgment, the spirit of knowledge and love so that he may build peace, prosperity and unity.

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Second of Three Parts

Globalization and Its Challenges to Education

by LOURDES J. CUSTODIO, Ph. D.

A Renewed Concept of Education

As a result of the emergence of a new humanism, there arises a need for a broader concept of education. In a situation of rapid and radical change with challenging international relationships, young people must be educated for a flexible and informed response. They are to live in the new millennium as citizens of a global village, where there is practically instant communication and information. They are mutually interdependent as members of a single human family and responsible for the finite resources of our planet.

Education, in its broadest meaning, is the integral development of the human personality. Thus education sets man before us as a primordial reality. The human person is central in the concerns of education. Education, when formulating its aims, mapping out its objectives, programmes and methodologies, centers all and bases all on the concept of the human person.

We need a type of education capable of situating the educand in the center of all development, increasing the self-awareness of his capabilities. This is an education that believes in the educand’s tendency towards his own self-fulfillment; that which fosters in him a sound mental stability and openness to others; that which is capable of forging new ways of growth for his conscience.

We need therefore an education that is not only concerned with imparting knowledge and information, but also with the total development of the whole person. The concern in education will not be simply teaching an accepted body of knowledge—this body of knowledge only too often becomes outmoded—rather students will be made to participate actively in the learning process and thus be equipped with the skills, curiosity and courage to continually seek out, learn and evaluate what they learn.

The educational process, obviously enough, cannot be limited to what is properly intellectual. Moral and emotional strengths are just as essential. A sense of control over one’s life and a wholesome self-esteem are necessary ingredients for young people to achieve their goals.

In an education in keeping with these ideals, inner freedom takes priority both as a means and as the goal of the entire process. Education should be able to help man to pose more freely the question on the meaning of life. This would require a formation in values, which will stir man to remove obstacles of fear and prejudices before the mystery of being and personal becoming.

From the ontological perspective, to educate means to foster positively in the individual the gradual fulfillment of his capacity to be himself the very principle of his actions, to assume the responsibility of his own deed within the social context. In this kind of education where the subject is respected, and thus maintains his category as a person, there is certainly the needed openness to the Transcendent.

As an essential part of this affirmation of the educand’s personality, we find those conditioning communitarian realities in which he is born and where he develops himself. The way he achieves a self-concept that is more internalized and more fulfilling is conditioned by how the community to which he belongs lives the values. This is the reason why the communitarian dimensions of personal growth towards maturity are considered very important in education.

Educating for responsible participation, encouraging the manifestation of sentiments of solidarity, fostering fraternal relationships, deepening in the sense of collaboration and taking an active part in social and political affairs in a spirit of corresponsibility are communitarian dimensions in education needing special attention.

(Editors Note: With permission from the author, we are serializing Dr. Custodio’s article which appeared earlier in the Philippiniana Sacra, January-April 2004 issue).
The trend is towards a more universal perspective in education. In discussing any aspect of learning and education, not to mention research in science, social science or the humanities, the centrality of the individual teacher and scholar, working with individual learners in different undertakings must always be borne in mind.

Experience shows that the tradition and ethos of a school and especially the enthusiasm and personal gifts of the teacher can inspire a pupil to glimpse wider horizons and to embark into a process of personal growth. It is one of the teacher’s tasks to help develop their pupil’s ability to form relationships and to be part of a living and loving community. This part of the teacher’s job is highly skilled. It is vitally important yet sometimes lost sight of. One of the secrets here is to recognize that a school is not simply an institution, but rather an educative community.

In this era of globalization there is a need to expand on the view that education is simply a formal process of instruction based on a theory of learning of imparting knowledge to one or more students. For the process of learning can occur with or without formal institutional education. Knowledge accumulation and the accumulation of skills for using information and communication technologies will increasingly occur outside the traditional institutions for formal education. Learning in the workplace and through collaborations that somehow span the global and at other times involve tightly knit local communities with similar interests will become more commonplace.

As the store of knowledge expands throughout the world, all of the world’s peoples should have as much access as possible. The role of knowledge within the economy is leading to a whole range of new industries and new developments in biotechnology, new materials in science, informatics, computer science, etc. There is a felt need as well highly trained technical persons but with a humanistic formation as well.

With regards to the term “education” there is a spectrum of views ranging from the narrow view of education as that which goes on in schools and universities to a definition of education as all those experiences that affect the growth and development of a person throughout life. The former view has tended to give way, with increased recognition of the crucially important part those informal experiences and relationships play in what and how an individual learns.

In the UNESCO’s vision of education in the new millennium, the four pillars of education found in its report entitled: “Learning: The Treasure Within,” the school system must be directed more toward personal fulfillment. Thus the four pillars of education were identified as follows:

- Learning to know: This type of learning is both a means and an end. A means to understand the world around us as well as an end, the joy of knowing.
- Learning to do: This requires not only learning an occupational skill but also a personal competence to deal with many situations and work in teams.
- Learning to live together: Developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence. Thus education must tend to be at the service of avoiding conflicts or resolve them peacefully by developing respect for other cultures and their spiritual values.
- Learning to be: All human beings must be enabled to develop independent critical thinking and form their own judgment, in order to determine for themselves what they believe they should do in the different circumstances of life.

Education is seen as a ferment of the ongoing maturity of personality. The UNESCO International Commission on Education in the 21st Century gives this interesting definition of Education: “Education is above all an inner journey.”

The Role of Catholic Teachers in the Renewed Concept of Education

At the outset allow me to use the terms teacher and educator interchangeably. However, strictly speaking, any one who contributes to integral human formation is an educator and a teacher is one who has made integral human formation his or her very profession.

Each type of education, evidently, is influenced by a particular concept of what it means to be a human person. The Document of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education on Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith states that in today’s pluralistic world, the Catholic educator must consciously inspire his or her activity with the Christian concept of the human person, in communion with the Magisterium of the Church. (LCS, 18).
Globalization and Its Challenges to Education

The Christian Concept of the human person includes the defense of human rights, the dignity of the human person as a son or daughter of God, made into His image and likeness. It also attributes to the human person with the fullest liberty, freed from sin itself by Christ. Likewise, every man or woman has a most exalted destiny, which is the definitive and total possession of God Himself through love. (LCS, 18).

Christian education calls for establishing the closest possible relationship of solidarity among persons through mutual love and the building of community. Finally, it proposes the mystery of the Incarnation as the key to the true upliftment of men and women. Christ, the Incarnate Son of God is for all men and women the inexhaustible source of personal and communitarian perfection. (LCS, 18).

Saint Pedro Poveda, a recognized humanist and educator, had pointedly marked this truth when he said: ”The Incarnation, properly understood, the Person of Christ, His nature and His life, give those who understand it a sure pattern for becoming holy, with the true holiness while at the same time human; with the true humanism.” (Pedro Poveda, Staunch Friends of God, 1998).

Pope John Paul II, in his address to the participants in the first joint session of the Pontifical Academies last November 28, 1996, underlines the fact that the mystery of the Incarnation has given a tremendous impetus to man’s thought and artistic genius over the past 2000 years and that he must still contribute to “creating a Christian humanism, presenting the humanity of Christ as the model for the generations of the new millennium. A splendid programme: to create beauty, to draw from the good, to understand and express truth.” He further declared: “Faith in Christ, the Incarnate Word, leads us to see man in a new light. In a certain sense it enables us to believe in man, created in the image and likeness of God, at once a microcosm of the world and an icon of God.”

The vocation of every Catholic educator includes the work of ongoing social development: to form men and women with a keen social awareness and a profound civic and social responsibility who would work for the improvement of social structures to make them more conformed to the principles of the Gospel. (LCS, 19).

In the apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Pope John Paul II calls upon Catholic Universities in include in their research activities, “a study of serious contemporary problems in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the sharing in the world’s resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level.” (ECE, 32).

One can easily see how the renewed concept of education in the world today is greatly enhanced when the Christian concept of the human person guides the formulation of its aims, objectives, programmes, methodologies, and activities.

Pope John Paul II, speaking to a group of educators, said that they are fulfilling one of the most important and delicate tasks for the future of the Church and society and added that “the first and essential duty of culture, in general, as well as of every culture is education.”

Cultural development, An Essential Task of Education

There is an enormous increase and a new consciousness as well of the complexity of the natural and social world, which must first be better understood. We also need to harness the immense promise of scientific and technological discoveries to create better learning systems by providing access to expanding universes of both information and ways of seeing. We need to create a greater awareness that each and every one of us lives in a world system in which many problems can be solved in a global scale. It also means our capacity to understand the circumstances and even the motives of others who live far away in different social, economic, political and cultural worlds. The time has come to devise new and effective ways of opening the human mind to think globally and to operate efficiently on a worldwide scale.

In this era of globalization it is imperative to reactivate and innovate our traditional concerns for international understanding, the teaching of respect for individual human rights throughout the world and peace making. If we have to devise more interactive ways to open the human mind to the global system around us, then we should expand further the reach of global education to include a broader perspective. It is of paramount importance to view development in all countries, whether rich or poor, from the new and multidisciplinary vantage point of sustainability. In other words, our traditional concerns for learning to understand and empathize with strangers, even in our own lands as a further step in our commitment to human rights and peace must now be expanded to include the complex global issues concerning humankind vis-à-vis the natural environment.

We find ourselves at a time when development will be based on what is today absolutely indispensable for human dignity: the alleviation of poverty, based on the quality of human resources. This means it must be based on education. There is only one way and that is development with a human face, it is the respect for human dignity through education, the giver of real freedom.

Education, alone, cannot solve the problems besetting our world today, but it can play its part of equipping the next generation with more insight, greater competence and deeper motivation than has so far been done.

Environmental Education, A Facet of Cultural Development

Through the initiatives of UNESCO, we find developing around the world what has come to be called environmental education, which is one facet of cultural development.
Obviously enough, cultural development includes such facets as economic, social and political aside from the environmental. However, the focus of the discussion here will be the need to build peace between people and the biosphere, the environment. This would require the education of the people.

There is for instance, a very important issue, which, as has been noted, cannot be divided into different portions like a cake. Scientists view with certain apprehensions the various initiatives related to the ozone layer; the others, concerning the sea level; and still others, concerning the warming of the climate—the greenhouse effect. These issues are all interrelated and must be taken up globally. Environment is a key global issue that cannot be dealt with in isolation but through concerted action.

Increased community-based capacities to think of the world as a multiple set of interactive systems can also help us face these problems realistically. We will be in a better position to use resources in investments that will lead to more far-reaching and permanent solutions. Political will is essential, not only in considering sustainable development as a call to action but also in solving underlying problems of illiteracy and ignorance. A new, informed civic culture must be created for the global community as a whole.

In the formation of the said culture, the following words from Centesimus Annus appear to most relevant and a wise guideline: “All human activity takes place within a culture and interacts with culture. For an adequate formation of culture, the whole man is required, whereby he exercises his creativity, intelligence, and knowledge of the world and people. Furthermore, he displays his capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity and readiness to promote the common good. Thus, the first and most important task is accomplished within man’s heart.” (C4,51).

Environmental Education With a Christian Vision

Environmental education, as has already been noted, is simply one facet of cultural development. It is a part of what UNESCO calls an Education for Life, or of an Integral Education which sees the educand not only as a recipient of information and knowledge of academic subjects but also includes other aspects that contribute to the development of the human person like abilities of a practical nature in different areas which society demands. These are education for peace, for health, for equality of the sexes, for consumer’s education and of course for environmental education. The educative horizon in this kind of education is to promote the autonomy of the students not only in the cognitive or intellectual aspects but in his or her moral and social aspects as well. This will have to culminate in the development of the student’s proper identity and the elaboration of a project of life imbued with values.

One of the requirements of environmental education, is the study of the sciences, which at the same time calls for a responsible use of technology. Now a Christian vision of reality could offer an even deeper motivation for its effective implementation.

Science education today with an emphasis on developing an ideal scientific literacy or a “citizens’ science”

Needs to be included in environmental education since an important part of this new agenda is the study of the effects of science with its attendant technology on society. Moreover, the fact that science is a human activity, which depends on human resources, culture and the genius of individuals, makes it all the more a must for environmental education.

Science and technology are indeed indispensable for the attainment of the goals of environmental education. Notwithstanding, experience has shown that they can succeed only through an integration of science and culture, which leads to a sense of purpose.

A Christian vision of man can enrich and guide such environment-related projects and protect them from losing an authentic human direction. Pope John Paul II in his Message of Peace in 1990, very incisively pointed out that: “when the ecological crisis is set within the broader context of the search for peace in society, we can understand better the importance of giving attention to what the earth and its atmosphere is trying to tell us: namely, that there is order in the universe which must be respected, and that the human person endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has the responsibility to preserve the order for the well-being of future generations.”

If we fail to redirect science and technology to fundamental needs, as pointed out in the aforementioned Vancouver Declaration, the advances in informatics, biotechnology and genetic engineering will lead to irreversible consequences detrimental to the future of human life. We cannot take for granted either the increased power of modern technology to reprocess, and in many ways, destroy the natural world. Here is a clarion call for a responsible use of technology.

Environmental education is envisioned to equip us all in the future to understand the problems, exercise judgment in political decisions about the issues and to see and accept the need for changes in one’s personal life that must be made if we are not to damage the very environment on which our life depends.

Environmentalists today tend to draw their insights from science, politics and philosophy and discover the changing attitudes towards nature and humankind’s place on earth. They are less concerned with finding specific solutions than with defining man’s role in the natural world. Here again, we see the need for education.

An environmental education as discussed above can be pursued not simply as a secular but more of a Christian task.

What is important is for the Christian educator to possess a Christian world vision.
Agricola arat... Ancilla laborat... non plus ultra. Admittedly, wrestling with the rudiments of a classical language as Latin is no mean feat. And especially for a 12-year old high school freshman.

No denying at all, I’ve spent four years of high school in a Minor Seminary. Not only that, I’ve even reached the penultimate eleventh year of my Seminary formation, but yet not having been afforded the coveted bliss of a priestly ordination -- not until I decided, with resolute candor, to swing to the marital state. And even so, nay has there been any queasy feeling, or any regret, in me – of not having been ordained a priest, or at the least, of having entered the Seminary.

Yes, there’s no arguing that entering the Minor Seminary, or that Minor Seminary formation, is no guarantee at all to yielding more priests – neither quantitatively, nor qualitatively. Quantitatively not, because apart from obviously being yet too far or remote from the pinnacle of priestly formation, indeed very few – as statistics aptly reveal – of those who enter the freshman year in the Minor Seminary successfully slug it out into the ordination proper, which finally occurs only after completing the 12th or 13th year of the entire priestly formation. Fr. Rico Garcia, Rector of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Archdiocesan Minor Seminary in Makati City, could only agree no less, “Yes, indeed that’s true. Barely a few would really make it to the ordination. In our batch, for instance, out of 24 us who finished High School from the Minor Seminary, only 6 were ordained. And that’s already a good number, compared to other batches who finish with only one, two, or even zero.”

Likely perhaps thus is the reason that while the Church generally prescribes that Minor Seminaries be preserved, their expediency is best left to the discretion of the diocesan bishop or local ordinary. And truth is, minor seminary formation does not constitute a necessary requisite or a sine qua non to priestly ordination. Canon 234.1 of the Church’s Code of Canon Law appropriately provides, “Minor seminaries and other similar institutions provide special religious formation together with instruction in the humanities and science. Where the diocesan bishop judges it expedient, he is to erect a minor seminary or similar institution.” Accordingly so, not only a few, or a conspicuously good number, of minor seminaries have yet thus continually thrived or been “preserved” throughout the country – to reckon, for instance, there are about 16 or so Minor Seminaries in Luzon alone, mostly Diocesan and including a few run by religious congregations.

And neither that minor seminary formation holds the monopoly of producing “quality” priests, more than those who have not gone through the Minor Seminary – this, to say the least, plainly smacks of oversimplification. Veritably so, the qualitative character of an individual priest is no way dependent on his having completed the minor seminary or not – but rather, yes, on his person. Fr. Rico readily admits, “That always depends on the person, formation comes only at the periphery. Really, what largely counts as to how a priest will qualitatively live up to his being a priest is himself regardless whether he comes from the minor seminary or not.”

But, just so as priestly quality indeed lies on the person, is there yet an edge for one who has undergone the minor seminary formation than somebody who has not, in terms of formative preparation? Rightly so, says Fr. Rico. “For one who went through minor seminary formation, he has an edge because he already has a feel of what the Seminary is, what a Church or Diocese is, what service is, and what does it mean to become a priest. Besides, though it really depends on the person or the priest himself, experience likely shows that there is a higher percentage that those candidates who started from the minor seminary become better priests or servant leaders, so to speak.”

Granted, minor seminary candidates are likely better prepared for the priesthood. But again, on the whole, that doesn’t yet spell a plausable conclusion for minor seminary formation to unmistakably produce priests – qualitatively and quantitatively. Whilst so, where then doest the difference lie? What significance or relevance minor seminary formation may yet contrive?

Unassumingly, albeit partly due per-
I am inclined to reckon that minor seminary formation may yet as well offer a good dose of difference or relevance – that is, more than just yielding ‘quantitative’ or ‘qualitative’ priestly ordination. At the very least, it ain’t passé at all for minor seminary formation. Notwithstanding likely the risk of oversimplification, it is worth noting to identify a few indicators of relevance, if not ‘difference,’ of minor seminary formation.

Quality Catholic education and formation is one. Apart from the discipline and regimented life in the Minor Seminary, the rigors of academic formation are likewise indubitably exacting. No less, aside from the regular secondary academic subjects, the young seminarian has to grapple with such classical languages as Latin, Spanish, and even Italian, Hebrew, or Greek, not to mention yet the rather ‘theological’ religious instruction. This is particularly one edge that the Our Lady of Guadalupe Minor Seminary can be proud of, says Fr. Rico. “You see, because there are only an ideal few number of seminarians in each class, we can better attend to them individually, and thus the quality is enhanced. At OLGMS, we’re even teaching not only Latin and Spanish, but also Italian and Hebrew to our high school seminarians. We’re indeed at par, qualitatively speaking,” added Fr. Rico.

But note further, -- and yes, no mistake about it – at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Minor Seminary or OLGMS, not only seminarians are exclusively undergoing the formation, but parents and other family members as well. Banking principally on the basic fact that the family largely contributes to the priestly vocation and formation of seminarians, the OLGMS formators have taken the bold step of including or integrating the individual families of seminarians into their so-called ‘integral’ seminary formation. Thus, apart from the regular family visiting days, family members – the parents, particularly – are no less required to actively participate in the formative activities in the Seminary. “We’re not taking our seminarians out of their parents’ responsibilities. In our tri-focal formative orientation – consisting, namely, of the Seminary formators, the family, and the quality of education or formation – we do recognize the very important role of the family in our seminarians’ formation,” Fr. Rico explained.

But, more than just directing minor seminary formation towards the priestly ordination – and, obviously too, as most stop short of reaching the priestly ordination – another likely difference that minor seminary formation makes is producing quality lay Catholics and servant leaders who, most often than not, become effective agents of evangelization and transformation in the larger society. “Our experience with most of our alumni who did not make it to the priesthood is that eventually, as ex-seminarians, they excel in their respective fields, they become good examples of being family men, they become good religious lay Catholic leaders, and some even build prayer communities. We may not have produced a big number of priests but certainly we were able to produce or inculcate the quality of Christian life in the hearts of our alumni. I believe that’s one big thing enough for society,” Fr. Rico says.

And, Fr. Rico adds, “These ex-seminarians are even replicating vocations by likewise sending their sons to the Minor Seminary.”

Finally, I do reckon as well that, contrary to Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw’s postulate that “the youth is wasted on the young,” my four-year stint in the Minor Seminary had not deprived me then of the joys of youth. Back then whilst in the Minor Seminary, even as I tilted then at the windmills of the rigorous spartan seminary life, I knew so well they were the best years in my life, then the prime of my youth – indeed well-spent and perfectly normal. For, even then, minor seminary formation was no longer – contrary to the pre-Vatican II orientation – a ‘transcendent flight’ from the immanent world. In fact, even as early as 1965, minor seminary formation had already come of age, as Pope Paul VI, in his Decree on Priestly Training, “Optatam Totius,” fittingly exhorted, “In minor seminaries erected to develop the seed of vocations...Under the fatherly direction of the superiors, and with the proper cooperation of the parents, their daily routine should be in accord with the age, the character and the stage of development of adolescence and fully adopted to the norms of a healthy psychology. Nor should the fitting opportunity be lacking for social and cultural contacts with one’s own family.”

Yes, indeed, minor seminary formation makes a difference – and the difference lies not in producing an innumerable number of priestly ordinations, but more so in the hearts of all those who have passed through the Minor Seminary’s hallowed walls, upon which are etched the rudiments of genuine quality Christian life and ideals, and reverberated into eternity.
No arguing, Philippine economy is yet stuck in the doldrums—and, worse yet, amid the backdrop of the hurting crunches of sky high oil prices and political impasse, it even seems more plausible than not that the country is floundering to the seams, if not may simply plunge over the brink.

Not just long ago, the Philippines had earned the economic status as the “Sick Man of Asia.” This has been likely attributed to the fact that while other Asian countries—not only the “four tigers” but even the once almost decapitated ones due to ravages of war or lateral strikes, as Vietnam—have conspicuously, and surprisingly, emerged to become dynamos than dominos, the Philippines has remained wallowing in the muck. Whereas the Philippines then tagged as “sick man of Asia”—not anymore, simply because it may have even grown worse to become a “Dying Man” by now.

Stymied by the debilitating economic condition, Filipinos can only sigh in gasping lamentation over crunching stomachs and fancifully yearn for the times back in 1960s when the country was yet in robust shape, next only to Japan. But now, people have even become more cynically desperate about the wrenching economic condition. According to a nationwide survey conducted by IBON Foundation, an independent think-tank, people’s perception of the economy had dramatically turned from bad to worse during the first and second quarter of 2005. Asked about the country’s economy this first half of 2005 as compared to the first half of last year, 67.88% registered a “worse” answer, while 25.89% answered “same”, IBON survey reported.

Government officials, however, claim that the economy is relatively fairing well despite the runaway oil prices and the lingering political crisis. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board, GDP (Gross Domestic Product) grew 4.8 percent year-on-year in the second quarter of this year, well within the government’s projected range of 4.7 – 5.1 percent. “The gloomy scenario of unabated spike in oil and consumer prices, sluggish external trade and the lethargic performance of the farm sector failed to dampen the Philippine economy,” said Romulo Virola, NSCB secretary-general.

Moreover, according to Economic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos, the government is even yet optimistic that it can still achieve its full-year target of 5.3 percent.

That the economy is fairing well according to government assessment, economic analysts, and labor and people’s organizations believed otherwise.

Economic experts said, in a forum at the School of Labor and Industrial Relations (SOLAIR) at the University of the Philippines-Diliman last July 13, that the Arroyo administration is indeed experiencing another bout of economic decline. Particularly, experts said, the country failed to realize two goals of economic development: increase production via industrialization and effect more equitable income distribution among classes and regions.

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Admittedly, on the whole, in such times of national survival – no proposal or suggestion, even in its slightest frivolity, is deemed dumb as to benefit the greatest interest of the greater number of people; and no idea as sublime and wise as to render the already despicable condition to perpetual folly.
more “endemic” ones.

There’s no denying perhaps, economists—dumb and wise alike, that graft and corruption, and patronage politicking have undoubtedly dragged and kept the economy in deep rut. Bob Martin, in his online article (kgma.7.forumer.com, August 5, 2005), aptly noted, “While its neighbors and trading partners are busy investing and improving their economies, the Filipinos are busy with political bickering, graft and corruption, and fighting amongst themselves.” Economic experts and analysts believe that some billions of pesos are wasted annually by the government to graft and corruption alone.

Macroeconomic mismanagement is likely another culprit. For whatever reasons, it enthralls no end to reckon what’s keeping the country’s leaders at bay in implementing sound economic fundamentals to prime up a competitive growth. Instead, and perhaps partly due to government bureaucracy, a host of negative consequences are conspicuously observed rushing to the surface: steady deterioration in terms of trade due to poor corporate governance, inefficient industrial structure, price and wage imbalances, and a lot more.

Then also, there is the onerous menace of the foreign debt servicing. The country’s foreign debt had been estimated to stand tall at around 55-60 billion dollars by far—and, verily, so deplorable indeed it is that the country’s destitute populace are unwittingly condemned to ignominious poverty because of debt servicing.

The government’s budget for next year is expected to be around 1.05 trillion-pesos, of which one third will go to interest payments on debt, or an incredibly P931 million daily! Kaput!

Amid the present economic quagmire—pray so, isn’t there just any way out?

For one, with the staggering abattoir of around 55 billion dollars foreign debt eating up an incredibly one-third of the government’s budget—so grossly profligate as even House speaker Jose De Venecia admitted that “servicing this debt will cost the Filipino people roughly 245 billion pesos in interest and principal payments this year”—a “debt-for-equity” proposal with the lenders may just as well provide a relative respite.

Another, what with the runaway oil prices in the world market, some may yet push for scrapping the oil deregulation law (RA) 8180, thereby disallowing the private and foreign companies to have a monopoly over the local oil sector.

Also, others—particularly for the proponents (a group of academic and civil society leaders) of the “Blueprint for a Viable Philippines”—a shift to a simplified, universal and equitable gross taxation system may yet improve the country’s fiscal picture.

Still, others may yet spin a patent tack of following the formulae modeled by other Asian “miracle” economies—the dictatorial discipline and hard work of Singapore and South Korea, the national pride and resiliency of Vietnam, or the cultural confidence of India and China.

Admittedly, on the whole, in such times of national survival—no proposal or suggestion, even in it is slightest frivolity, is deemed dumb as to benefit the greatest interest of the greater number of people; and no idea as sublime and wise as to render the already despicable condition to perpetual folly.

Yes, in the doldrums where now lies the “Dying Man” of Asia, the Philippines is yet not bereft of a national leadership, no matter how beleaguered or badgered. And whatever economic plan or design there is—dumb or wise—unless the national leadership, or the powers that be, will take the noble sacrifice of taking the lead, and of course starting it themselves, in bringing about tangible reforms and uprooting the endemic culprits or causes of the debilitating muck, no economic “miracle” will ever descend. And worse, the “Dying Man” of Asia might just pass out and succumb to its fateful death.
Administration solons successfully junked the impeachment complaint. For the opposition, however, the real battle to topple the Arroyo regime had just begun.

“Far from Over”

by Roy Lagarde

“Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, hindi na ako magkukunwari at magsasabing may pag-asa pa ang impeachment complaint. Malinaw na pinaslang ito nung nakaraang lingo, at ngayon ililibing na ito dito sa Kongreso (Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, I can no longer pretend and say there is still hope for the impeachment complaint. Clearly enough, it was already killed last week and it is just about to be buried now here in Congress). All the same, Mr. speaker, despite the shocking murder of the impeachment complaint against Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the campaign to remove and replace the corrupt and illegitimate presidency is far from over,” said Rep. Crispin Beltran explaining his vote on the Justice Committee report on the impeachment complaint filed against Arroyo last September 5.

After an overnight marathon of sleepless deliberations, the seemingly expected mournful scenario for the pro-impeachment legislators ensued. Voting 158-51 with six abstentions at the plenary, the House ratified on September 6 Justice Committee’s report dismissing in toto the impeachment complaints against Arroyo.

Apparentl, the proceedings were dominated by Arroyo loyalists when it issued four straight rulings. Initially, it affirmed that the complaint filed by Atty. Oliver Lozano, Jose Lopez, and the amended complaint filed and endorsed by the members of the opposition were to be treated disjointedly. Then it ruled that the Lopez and amended complaints be excluded. Again, it ruled also that the Lozano complaint was sufficient in form. Eventually, however, the committee declared that the Lozano complaint was deficient in substance.
Criticized by the opposition congressmen, Lozano visibly distanced himself from the hearings. Arroyo allies then delivered the finishing blow by dismissing the Lozano complaint for “lack in substance”, followed by Lozano’s appeal to accept defeat and the rule of law.

If allegations of “cover-up” to save Arroyo are true, then the House leadership evidently manifested apathy for the truth. “They harp on the Rule of Law but they obviously violated, misused and misinterpreted the Constitution and other laws in protecting Arroyo,” says Rep. Satur Ocampo.

“The house failed this signal moral and political test that sought their setting aside partisanship in favor of the greater food and the demands for truth, justice and public accountability,” he added. “The events confirmed yet again the widespread public perception of the House as a most reactionary institution, a chamber of patronage, a safe haven of and for the worst traditional politicians, protector of rogues, if not a rogue gallery itself.”

A congressman who voted “yes” for the dismissal of the complaint but requested anonymity told IMPACT saying: “I’m sorry! This is the first time that I went against the truth.”

The opposition has another option after they failed to fetch the complaint to the senate—to appeal the matter to the Supreme Court (SC). But many of them sense a slim chance because of the recent and successive questionable judgments of the SC referring to the decisions allowing foreign mining companies to operate in the country and the constitutionality of the E-VAT.

Meanwhile, if people searching for the truth are to be asked, the game ain’t over yet versus Arroyo. The murder of the impeachment spells more strife than stillness. They cautioned the president that it’s too early for her to celebrate in her victory over the growing united opposition. Many of them are convinced that the junking of the complaint constitutes a big blow to the people’s right to know.

Arroyo was then quick to respond with the result of the voting at the House and offered her hand to the opposition in reconciliation for the “national interest.” “This is a grand display of political maturity that seals our stability and resilience as a nation battling the vagaries of a challenging age, and poised for takeoff,” she said in a statement.

But her offer for reconciliation is a “big joke” for her political opponents believing that it only aimed at keeping herself in power.

The mere fact that Arroyo asked the Filipino people to make some sacrifices instead of curbing oil prices, rising electricity rate, high tuition fee, increasing unemployment rate, alarming human rights violation, and implementing E-VAT instead of increasing the salaries of workers, how then could she expect stability from people asking for her resignation?

President Arroyo had totally resisted to resign or at least allow to be investigated by her allies. She herself very well knows whether she won fairly and squarely or otherwise.

The anti-Arroyo groups have no less reiterated that the death of the impeachment complaint did not put an end to the people’s cry to know the truth but just the beginning of a tougher fight in the streets. For them, Arroyo and her allies have only taught the people of the most effective strategy to oust a president—“people power,” the remaining arbiter of truth.
by Lope C. Robredillo

Under the proposed budget for 2006 that Malacang submitted to the House of Representatives on August 24, 2005, the government will set aside P931 million daily in interest payment. The total budget is P1.05 trillion, and one-third of it, which is P340 billion, is earmarked for servicing the country’s debt.

However, Rep Rolando Andaya, chair of the House appropriation committee, is quoted by the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) to have bared that the real debt service allocation would jump to P721.7 billion, which is P8,306 a year for every Filipino, if the proposed budget for principal amortization of P381 billion was included in the General Appropriations Act. Putting the figures in a different perspective, Cielito Habito said that next year the government would spend an average of P1.98 billion daily, which is enough to build 7,920 classrooms or 250 kilometers of road or P23 per Filipino per day!

If 1/3 of the 2006 national budget goes to interest payments on the debt of the Philippine government, it is because the country owes a lot of money from creditors. As of January 2005, the total debt stood at P4.01 trillion, of which P2.04 trillion came from domestic sources, while the remaining P1.97 trillion was secured from abroad. The debt increases every second, of course. By the end of February, the total debt has reached P4.08 trillion!

The figure alone boggles the mind! How does the government service its debt? Since it is part of the 2006 budget, funding for the debt service would come from the expected revenues of P968.6 billion and, since there is a revenue gap of P124.9 billion, from foreign loans. In other words, the government cannot avoid borrowing to pay its debt. And this has been the practice for many years. To keep the government afloat and service its debt, it resorts to borrowing from foreign and local creditors. No wonder, we continue to sink deeper in debt!

Brief History

But, how come we incurred such a humongous amount, in the first place? The story behind it is too complex to present in a short space such as this, but at the risk of oversimplification, one can say that in 1961, departing from the nationalist policies of his predecessor Carlos Garcia, Diosdado Macapagal embraced the virtues of free enterprise, and opened the door to foreign investment, gearing up the economy for global competition. In return, the United States, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) offered the government huge loans. It was thought that foreign capital could be a catalyst of development. That embrace, however, was probably our entry into the debt trap. The pressure of the IMF and the WB was already being felt. When he became president in 1965, Ferdinand Marcos continued Macapagal’s economic liberalization policies. The outcome was that the total external debt rose from $277.7 million at the beginning of Macapagal’s presidency in 1961 to $840.2 million at the end of Marcos’ first term in 1969.

When Marcos imposed martial law, the trend toward economic liberalization accelerated in the absence of opposition from nationalists, like Tañada, Recto, Garcia, and Diokno, and he borrowed from outside to finance deficit. This resulted in the increase of external debt from a little over $1 billion in 1972 to $28 billion in 1986, when he was forcibly removed from power. But it would be wrong to blame Marcos for all our staggering debt. His successors, from Cory Aquino to Gloria Arroyo, were not able to rescue the country from the debt trap. When Aquino ended her term, the foreign debt stood at $30 billion. Fidel Ramos increased it by $15 billion in six years, Joseph Estrada by $7 billion in 1½ years. Almost twenty years after the end of the Marcos regime, the foreign debt has nearly tripled—from $28 billion to $69 billion.


Various Approaches

As the figures indicate, the debt continues to snowball. There is no evidence that it will ever significantly decrease in the near future. The proof of the pudding is that the money saved for debt service balloons every year. The proposed interest payment next year, for instance, is P38.3 billion bigger than this year’s P301.7 billion. Correspondingly, the allotment of the country’s debt service in the national government expenditure keeps on rising—from 46% in 2002 to 81% in 2004. For 2006, it would probably be the same, though some would expect it to be at 85%.

Quite apart from the ever increasing debt service and percentage in government expenditure, the country’s debt affects the life and death of every Filipino. The quagmire we are caught in is its best evidence. On the other hand, each Filipino taxpayer coughs up for the financing of debt service. The deterioration of the quality and quantity of service that the government delivers to the people is not without relation to the amount it apportions for debt service. One, then, finds it strange that such an important issue is removed from the agenda of public debate. It is not even mentioned in the major rallies by national candidates during the election period. Worst, in a country that parades itself to be democratic, the issue is not even known by most.

Various approaches to the debt problem have been adopted. Understandably, the government line is to honor the debt to preserve creditworthiness, even if economy is throttled. As Press Secretary
Ignacio Bunye explained, the past and present obligations must be paid, if the country is not to face sanctions that would ruin the economy. To recall, Ferdinand Marcos issued Presidential Decree 1177 that automatically appropriates fund for debt servicing. Part of the reason why President Arroyo pushed for the passage of the value-added tax (VAT) reforms was to generate P60 billion to wipe out the budget deficit and solve its debt woes. In *The Manila Times* [March 12, 2005] report, World Bank country director, Joachim von Amsberg and Gabriel Singson, former Bangko Sentral governor, urged the government to hasten the enforcement of fiscal reforms, such as passage of value-added tax laws and step-up of tax collection efforts.

Others hold the exactly opposite view—the Philippines must repudiate the international debt, considering that full compliance with the debt obligations pulls the country deeper into the quagmire of destitution. The PAJCAD Visayas-Mindanao Jubilee Conference, for instance, urged the Philippine government “to repeal PD 1177 that provides for automatic appropriation for debt service,” pressed “for the immediate repudiation of all loans incurred by the Marcos dictatorship,” and demanded “the recall of the Philippine Ombudsman’s decisions exonerating Marcos and cronies on behest loans and economic crimes.” More recently, two Catholic bishops in the Philippines, according to Belinda Cunanan (“Political Tidbits,” *PDI*, May 5, 2005) “called on the administration to repudiate those policies [of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization], especially our foreign debts.”

Between these two extremes lie other options. Prof. Walden Bello, for instance, is quoted by *The Manila Times* (March 12, 2005) as urging the government “to consider freezing payments to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, freezing payments for illegitimate debts
and negotiating to devalue the country’s debts like Argentina did,” in order to help “free up money that can be used by the government for capital expenditure to boost the country’s economic growth.” But as in the position of PAJCAD Visayas-Mindanao Jubilee Conference, he asked the government to “consider repealing the automatic appropriation mechanism for debt service under the General Appropriate Act,” which immunizes it from any debate in Congress. As is well known, Solita Monsod, former director of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), wanted to limit service payment, since it was futile to follow the recovery program dictated by creditors, but her option was not accepted during the Aquino regime.

Another view advocates renegotiation. Typical of this position is that of the PDI editorial (Oct 24, 2004, “Debt Relief”), urging the government “to renegotiate—not merely to arrange longer payment periods or lower interest rates, buy to reduce—the national government’s overall debt stock.” Far from the government unilaterally announcing it would launch an aggressive renegotiation, the editorial had this suggestion: “If the country’s business leaders spearhead the campaign to raise the possibility of debt renegotiation, they bring their international credibility, their business reputation, to bear on the matter. They will be in a better position than government ministers to make the case for the Philippines.”

**A Christian Once-Over at the Debt**

But how is a Christian to look at the debt? Of course, the problem is quite complicated. A layman finds it difficult to grasp. As Edgardo Espiritu showed in his Manila Times (March 3, 2004) article, “Some facts about our foreign debt,” the size of the debt does not tell the whole story; it has to be understood in the light of what happens in the entire economy, and viewed in relation to the trends in global economy and financial system. Even so, our enormous debt is not independent of our human existence; it so much intertwined with the life and death of every Filipino that it cannot be looked at simply in terms of economics. So pervasive are its effects on the daily life of Filipinos that it cannot be left alone to economists or technocrats! All voices must be heard. It has to be examined from all angles. And a Christian looks at it in the light of his community tradition that is determinative of his existence and that of his community.

But what has Christian tradition to say of indebtedness that instead of helping the country prevents it from realizing its potential, in the end weakens and enslaves its economy? First of all, the Bible provides some basic orientation that can guide him in his reflection and attitude toward the gargantuan debt. It appears that in the Old Testament period, many people had little economic security. Even when families owned land, a drought, war, or locust could interfere with harvest, and send people to lenders who could demand high interest rate. When they could not pay their debts, they sold their land or, worst, became slaves. This resulting social disarrangement, however, had to be corrected, because “there must be no poor among you” (Deut 15:4).

In order to forestall the establishment of slavery on account of indebtedness and poverty, God instituted the Jubilee, in which all lands went back to their original owners, and all Israelite slaves were freed. Monopoly of land by a few was contrary to the will of God. Debts were all cancelled. “The purpose of the Jubilee laws,” says biblicalist Kathleen O’Connor (“Jubilee,” The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology) “was to ensure justice in the community. Compliance with the Law would prevent the development of a landless class. By redistributing the land, the community would share it equitably, and theoretically at least, no one would be deprived of home and/or livelihood.” In the gospel of Luke (4:16-30), Jesus is portrayed as proclaiming the Jubilee Year! Biblical scholar Sharon Ringe, in her book Jesus, Liberation and the Biblical Jubilee, even goes to show that Jesus clothed his proclamation and ministry in terms of Jubilee Year implementation.

It is interesting to note that lending without interest is the Old Testament ideal. A few examples: “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him” (Exod 22:25); “To your brother you shall not lend at interest or take any increase” (Ezek 18:8). Of course, under the present economic structure, these cannot be cited as grounds for a universal prohibition or interest, but the point remains valid: the care—commented Bruce Chilton—for the community that God had liberated from slavery.

**John Paul II’s Exhortations**

In recent years, John Paul II adverted to the biblical theme of Jubilee in connection with the international debt. In preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000, he said, in his apostolic letter, Tertio Millennio Adveniente (no. 51), that “a commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee. Thus, in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12),
Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor in the world, proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially, if not canceling outright, the international debt which seriously threaten the future of many nations (underscoring mine).

In his apostolic exhortation, Ecclesia in Asia, he repeated the same theme: “The approach of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is an opportune time for the Episcopal Conferences of the world, especially of the wealthier nations, to encourage international monetary agencies and banks to explore ways of easing the international debt situation. Among the more obvious are the renegotiation of debts, with either substantial reduction or outright cancellation, as also business ventures and investments to assist the economies of the poorer countries (underscoring mine).”

In these and other documents, the late Pope did not address the debtor nations to make unilateral declaration of debt cancellation or to espouse the policy of faithfully honoring the debts.

Rather, he addressed the rich nations and world organizations to consider substantial reduction, if not outright cancellation of international debts. The reason for this is quite obvious. The poor nations are not in a position to do so. On the contrary, they are even scared to mention the words “substantial reduction” or “outright cancellation” lest they court the anger of the rich nations, the IMF and the WB. “The lion has roared, who will not fear?” (Amos 3:8a).

Understandably, when the late Fernando Poe, Jr. uttered the word “restructuring,” his critics called him reckless, equating it with unilateral repudiation.

Morality

But why did John Paul II keep harping on the theme of forgiveness of debts? In Ecclesia in Asia, he said: “in many cases, these countries are forced to cut down spending on the necessities of life such as food, health, housing and education, in order to service their debts to international monetary agencies and banks” (no. 40). The proposed budget for 2006 clearly illustrates this. Rep Andaya said, for example, that the total debt payment of P721.7 billion was 80% of what the government plans to spend; on the other hand, education has an allocation of only P134.88 billion, health 10.6, environment and natural resources 6.3, and justice 5.3, to mention a few. Is anyone surprised that he is not offered cotton or syringe for free in government hospitals?

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago hit the nail on the head, when she observed, “the Philippines is caught in a debt trap. Last January, when we were deliberating over the 2005 budget, interest payments forced the Senate to divert most of the meager Philippine funds that should have been allocated to health, education and food security.” No wonder, she could say that the main source of poverty among poor countries, including the Philippines, is debt servicing. According to the Holy Father, “many people are trapped in living conditions which are an affront to human dignity” because of debt servicing.

The debt morass that traps the Philippines is immoral because it condemns people to hopeless poverty and misery. In making debt servicing the top priority of the budget, the government practically ignores the welfare of the people. If it is not moral to demand payment from a person who cannot pay without harming his life, neither is it morally correct to service a country’s debt by compromising the vital needs and the welfare of its people. Asserted Jean Somers, Coordinator, Debt and Development Coalition Ireland, in “Cancelling the Third World Debts,” Irish Times (Aug 3, 2002): “It cannot be right, nor does it make any sense, to demand debt repayments from countries such as those in southern Africa facing severe famine… The debt crisis has been draining desperately needed resources from African countries over two decades, weakening their economic and social infrastructure and therefore their ability to respond to crises such as HIV/AIDS, drought and famine. It is time these debts were cancelled.”

The problem with international debt is that, instead of making the debtor countries economically self-reliant, they wind up more dependent than ever on the rich nations, because the loans are usually intended for projects that make them buy more goods and contract more debts. Pedro Salgado, OP, in his commentary on Centesimus annus, argued that the Philippine request of loan for the construction of an integrated steel factory was never approved, for with it Filipinos would not be importing steel from the wealthy countries. It is easier for them to give loans for roads and irrigation projects, for roads would insure the sale of their cars and trucks, at the same time facilitating the entry and sale of foreign goods into what were, before the roads were constructed, hinterlands. With irrigation, on the other hand, they could sell their tractors, fertilizers, pesticides, driers and mills.

Last March 2005, some senators and congressmen denounced the World Bank’s warning that international agencies would not increase their aid to the country unless the government speeded up the passage of fiscal reform measures, like the value-added tax (VAT) bill. According to the Manila Times report, Juan
Ponce Enrile said that they cannot tell the lawmakers how they would pass the law, for they would do so according to their judgment of what the law should be. That might be well, but the truth is, ever since the foreign debt increased in the 1970s, Marcos and the technocrats had to agree to the IMF and the WB guidelines for restructuring the various aspects of Philippine economy.

Wrote David Wurfel in his book, Filipino Politics: Development and Decay: “Bank influence has always pushed policy in the direction of ‘freeing the market of controls’ and ‘removing barriers to free trade.’” IMF pressure imposed devaluation on Marcos in 1970, a severe blow to Filipino manufacturers for the domestic market who mainly imported foreign components. In 1976, the Marcos regime committed itself to three years of ‘close economic supervision’ by the IMF in exchange for a $280 million loan. A 1979 loan of $190 million to cover a balance-of-payments shortfall had similar restrictions. The Philippines was required to abolish price controls, tighten credit, and sharply reduce tariffs, which helped cause unemployment. Similar conditions were attached to loans in the 1980s.”

But what is wrong with international debt does not only come from its heavy and deleterious consequences. In some cases, debt itself is odious. The term “odious debt” comes from Alexander Sack, world’s pre-eminent legal scholar, who gave shape to its legal doctrine. According to him, “if a despotic power incurs a debt not for the needs or in the interest of the State, but to strengthen its despotic regime, to repress the population that fights against it, etc., this debt is odious for the population of all the State.” The odious debt is not an obligation of the people; it is the regime’s debt. It was incurred without the people’s consent, it did not benefit them, and the lenders must have been aware of those two conditions. The United States used this doctrine to repudiate Cuba’s debt to Spain.

Some have suggested that some portions of our foreign debt are odious, and therefore should be cancelled. In an article, “Fiscal Crisis Takes a ‘Creative’ Turn in the Philippines,” by Lisa Peryman (Odious Debts Online, March 4), Manuel Villar seemed inclined to make such classification under his proposed debt relief act. Wrote Peryman: “The Philippines’ staggering debt load is largely attributed to economic policy under the corrupt administration of former President Ferdinand Marcos. According to the PDI, foreign loans were a ‘rich source of funds’ for Marcos and his cronies who used monies generated in loans to line their own pockets.” Indeed, a significant part of this debt is known as behest loans which Marcos granted to his cronies, and which later on were assumed by the government.

Moreover, some of these loans are immoral because of their inherent deceit and corruption. They are illegitimate. The classic example is the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, which accounts for 5% of the total debt of the country. It was constructed in 1975 and completed in the mid-1980s. However, in 1986, a team of international inspectors declared it unsafe and inoperable. Without producing a single watt of electricity, it costs $2.3 billion, which is three times the price of a comparable plant in South Korea. Marcos is accused of making $80 million in kickbacks, according to Jojo Robles, in his article, “Debt, Power and Imee Marcos,” Manila Standard Today (Aug 26, 2005).

Robles quoted a respected British publication that cites the plant as an example of a debt that should not be repaid: “First, it was a grand scheme of the late dictator that never benefited the people and is thus an ‘odious debt’ under international law. Second, the children of the Philippines are being asked to pay for bribes to Marcos and excess profits of the contractor. Third, the company should take the responsibility for building a nuclear power plant station just 60 miles from the sprawling capital Manila, near several earthquake fault lines and at the foot of a dormant volcano.” Understandably, Supreme Court Associate Justice Reynato Puno, speaking on April 19, 2005 at the 10th national convention of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, urged the government to consider stopping payments for loans that Marcos borrowed to build it.

Theology

Quite aside from the moral point of view, our debt has to be seen also from a theological vantage point. For one thing, wealthy nations and those who hold international bodies could consider it as an opportunity and a challenge, in the words of John Paul II in his Ecclesia in Asia, “to value the human person and the lives of millions of human beings more highly than financial or material gain (n 41).” The 1998 CBCP Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Economy singled out the principle on the primacy of the human person in economic development (nn. 40-41), on the basis of which one can ask for the cancellation of debt because its servicing violates the right of millions of human beings.
to be more (cf John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, n 44). Profits over the broken bones of humanity are simply immoral!

In this connection, one may quote the US Catholic Bishops in their pastoral letter, Economic Justice for All. “The [debt] crisis, however, goes beyond the system; it affects people. It afflicts and oppresses large numbers of people who are already severely disadvantaged. That is the scandal: it is the poorest people who suffer most from the austerity measures required when a country seeks the IMF ‘seal of approval’ which establishes its creditworthiness for a commercial loan (or perhaps an external aid program). It is these same people who suffer most when commodity prices fall, when food cannot be imported or they cannot buy it, and when natural disasters occur. Our commitment to the preferential option for the poor does not permit us to remain silent in these circumstances. Ways must be found to meet the immediate emergency—moratorium on payments, conversion of some dollar-dominated debt into local-currency debt, creditors’ accepting a share of the burden by partially writing-down selected loans, capitalizing interest, or perhaps outright cancellation [n 274].”

The underlying principle involved is the solidarity of all peoples. In his encyclical letter, Solicitudo rei socialis (n 26), John Paul II noted: “Today perhaps more than ever in the past, people are realizing that they are linked together by a common destiny, which is to be constructed together, if catastrophe for all is to be avoided. From the depth of anguish… the idea is slowly emerging that the good to which we are all called and the happiness to which we aspire cannot be obtained without an effort and commitment on the part of all, nobody excluded, and the consequent renouncing of personal selfishness.” The world is the big family of God, and we are all our brothers’ keepers. It would be immoral for rich nations to enjoy the blessings of the world while poor countries wallow in misery.

That is why, John Paul II declared in his encyclical letter, Centesimus Annus (n 35): “The principle that debts must be paid is certainly just. However, it is not right to demand or expect payment when the effect would be the imposition of political choices leading to hunger and despair for entire peoples. It cannot be expected that the debts which have been contracted should be paid at the price of unbearable sacrifices; in such cases it is necessary to find—as in fact is partly happening—ways to lighten, defer or even cancel the debt, compatible with the fundamental right of peoples to subsistence and progress.”

On the other hand, in canceling a huge amount of debt, one imitates God who generously forgives. In the Matthean parable of an Oriental sultan who audited the operation of his governors, one was found to have defrauded him P50 billion. It was expected that as a despot he would inflict the most degrading punishment—imprison him and sell his family into slavery. When the defrauder offered a proposal for restitution, he got the surprise of his life—his debt was generously forgiven! As Douglas Hare in his book, Matthew, has correctly commented, the theological center of the story is the astounding magnanimity of the king. “So it is with the kingdom of heaven. Those who wish to be part of that kingdom must imitate the incalculable patience and generosity of its sovereign.” If God is rich in mercy, so must the rich countries and international institutions toward the poor humanity.

**Hope**

Looking at the history and nature of our international debt in the light of his tradition, a Christian cannot but hope that all our debt is forgiven. But is cancellation of billions of dollars that the Philippines owe to wealthy nations, the IMF and the WB impossible? It is interesting to note that last June 2005, the world’s leading industrial nations—Britain, United States, Canada, France, Germany, Russia, Japan and Italy—agreed to write off the multilateral debts that the world’s poorest nations, mostly African, owed to the tune of $40 billion. In the next 18 months, 11 more countries will be included in the list of beneficiaries to bring the total debt forgiven to $55 billion. Some leaders have, of course, reservations about the debt relief, knowing too well the possibility that the program could be subject to some conditions that would undermine the sovereignty of the debtor-nations.

Still, this augurs well for poor nations like the Philippines, even if the sum is paltry. At least, one is beginning to wonder if indeed creditors have a human heart, after all. “It may be too much,” says the PDI editorial (June 16, 2005, “Debt relief”), “to expect the country’s creditors to write off all its debts. If the rich nations were to extend this privilege to every debtor nation, the IMF, the World Bank and other international financial institutions would probably have to shut down. But now that they have seen the urgency of extending debt relief to the poorest nations, they should consider a similar program for other heavily indebted nations. It doesn’t have to be a complete write-off. In the Philippines, for instance, a good start would be the condonation of write-off. In the Philippines, for instance, a good start would be the condonation of loans tainted with fraud, like the financing for the construction of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant that has never been used.”

And yet, who knows, such a small beginning could wind up with total cancellation of debts? Who knows, representatives of the First World and the leaders of IMF and WB will finally sit down with the Vatican and heed the Pope’s call, in his Ecclesia in America (n 59), to “seek ways of resolving the problem of foreign debt and produce guidelines that would prevent similar situations from recurring on the occasion of future loans?” Who knows, guided by the Christian tradition and reflection on debts—not by pragmatic and selfish interest—the wealthy nations and financial institutions will eventually correct what is wrong with the international economic order and set up a system and mechanisms capable of ensuring an integral development of the poor countries? Then, the Philippines can really start a new economic policy, no longer import dependent and export oriented, no longer tied to foreign interest and to the unjust economic order!
The Unity We Need

“There is the power of God brought it about that the people were of one mind to carry out the command... in accordance with the word of the Lord.” (2 Chronicles 30:12)

Once again, we, Filipinos, find ourselves going through very hard times. Many are poor, hungry, searching for a better life for themselves and their families. If only we would just focus our minds and hearts, and work together to find solutions to the poverty that has not ceased to plague us, we might find ourselves moving forward as a nation. Instead, our national attention and energies are taken up by the division and altercations. Serious charges have been made against our leaders and officials. Despite expression of regret, many remain angry, confused, hurt. In this situation, as your shepherd and pastor, I wish to call to mind fundamental principles that should govern our search for solutions to our present crisis.

First, let us remember that the offended cannot simply be consoled by expressions of regret. Forgiveness does not eliminate the need for justice, nor should it block the search for truth. Genuine forgiveness demands more than apology, and those who seek forgiveness should be ready to be called to accountability.

Second, the pursuit of truth regarding the grave charges against leaders and officials should be conducted within the provisions of our Constitution and should respect the laws of the land. Any proposition that disregards our constitutional and legal systems weakens our institutions and paves the way for a graver instability that can cause more profound suffering to our people.

Third, any proposed solution to our present situation that relies on or leads to violence is unacceptable. Violence harms the innocent and inflicts wounds so deep that will take generations to heal.

Fourth, we ask our leaders to give our people hope, by giving immediate attention to authentic reform. Political systems that are prone to corruption must be swiftly and decisively reformed, and institutions built that can effectively respond to the aspirations of our people for a better life.

Finally, in these confusing times when people are easily swayed by emotions and led astray by quick fix solutions, may cooler heads prevail. Let true lovers of the Filipino people come together to discern carefully before God, what is truly for the immediate and long-run good of our country. Let us not fall easy prey to those self-seeking politicians from all the different political parties, who have held the country’s future hostage to their own ambitions, and have brought us to where we sadly find ourselves today.

Let us not also give in to despair, seeing only what is wrong in our country, when there is, in truth, so much that is good done daily by Filipinos from all walks of life to build up the nation. Our recurring problems of political instability may cause us to lose hope, but if we humbly accept that we are all sinners and in need of conversion, it will be easier for us to unite.

I ask then that, in these times of uncertainty, we join in fervent prayer and prayerful reflection, that the Lord show us the way forward, as He has done in the past, and that He may give us yet another chance to be one. Let us place our trust in His continued love and care for our people, especially those who are poor. May our Blessed Mother find the joy in the Filipino people, for she loves to see us listen to her Son.

+ GAUDENCIO B. ROSALES
Archbishop of Manila
And the Bishops of the Metropolitan Province of Manila
BELOVED PEOPLE OF GOD:

The Church joins the nation in its celebration of Family Week on September 19-25, 2005 to call on all families to reflect on the theme “KARANGALAN NG BAYAN, PAMILYA ANG PAGMUMULAN”.

Aware that the well-being of the Philippine society and the nation are intimately tied to the god of the family, the Church invites all Catholics to take heart the plan of God for marriage and the family as the only way to achieve genuine human and Christian development as well national development.

The Filipino Family is the only hope for the nation today. The family has been designed and structured by God Himself. The Christian Family is the domestic Church in which the life of grace flows.

As events move many of us to reflect on the fate of our country now beset by so many crises, it is time to ask ourselves, “What is the Lord trying to tell us?” or “Is this the Will of the Lord for our families and for our nation?”

During FAMILY WEEK let us recall the Psalmist words: If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor. With Pope Benedict XVI, we believe that indeed, a sound society is born from the commitment of all its members, but it needs the blessing and support of that God who, unfortunately, is too often excluded or ignored. (Pope Benedict XVI)

What happens most of the time is that we have become too independent that we do not realize that we have our own limitations and that we need to depend on God’s grace. Yet with the Lord, everything is possible. We recognize the importance of our human efforts but without the blessings of God, human endeavor is inadequate and sadly often misdirected. Ora et Labora, St. Benedict admonishes us.

Dear families, let us bring back prayer into our homes. Parents as the first teachers are reminded that they have to answer to God for any negligence as parents. Parents must bring back Christian values in rearing our children and building our homes.

The Filipino family, the basic unit of society, can change the course of this nation only if it is rooted in deep prayer before it goes to proclaim the Good News to everyone. Prayer and Work go hand in hand.

Last February 15th, a committee in Congress approved HB 3773, a bill on population control, “reproductive health”, sexual rights for young people, and mandatory child sex education, among others now scheduled for voting in the Plenary Session in Congress. The measure imposes fines and imprisonment for parents, spouses, and health professionals who impede “sexual and reproductive rights.” It creates a program for fertility control by encouraging the limitation of family size to two children. It gives incentives to 2-child families. Women—married or single—will be taught “all methods and techniques to prevent pregnancy.” The sponsors have called the proposal “responsible parenthood” and “population management.”

Families be alert to legislative initiatives such as HB 3773 which will destroy the family, and the nation, in the long run! The Family and the nation will not be blessed by such initiatives.

For we know by our Faith what is authentic “responsible parenthood”: It means respect for one’s generative functions. It calls upon married persons to use discernment and generosity in their decisions. It calls for due regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions in deciding “to raise a numerous family.” It includes the spouses’ decision “based on grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth.” Responsible parenthood makes parents “free and responsible collaborators of God the Creator.” (Human Vitae)

As we join the nation in celebrating Family Week let us review the family’s mission and the four general tasks for the family:
1) forming a community of persons;
2) serving life;
3) participating in the development of society;
4) sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

The educational role of the Christian family therefore is very important. In this sense, the renewal of the Catholic school must give special attention both to the parents of the pupils and to the formation of a perfect educating community. The right of parents to choose an education in conformity with their religious faith must be absolutely guaranteed.

The State and the Church have the obligation to give families all possible aid to enable them to perform their educational role properly. Therefore both the Church and the State must create and foster the institutions and activities that
Truth is a formidable enemy. Suppress it and it does not disappear. Hide it and it shows itself sooner or later. Muffle truth and it ultimately manages to be heard.

Truth is a big problem for those who lie and deceive. Truth does not only survive the lie and the deception. It even outlives the liar and the deceiver.

In the last analysis, an impeachment process is a search for truth about mere allegations. It is the pursuit of what is true—or otherwise—about serious accusations.

The accused has all the right to be defended, to be heard, and to be acquitted if found not guilty of any charges made. Otherwise, the accused remains suspect, lose the trust of people, lives with doubts from others, leads with difficulty.

It is anything but fair for the President not to be allowed to have her side aired. She can have the best counsels. She can be favored with the finest arguments. She will have the support of all those who trust and believe her.

Now, the impeachment process is virtually dead. The allegations and accusations remain unanswered, the doubts and suspicions about the person and the Office of the President continue. The rallies and marches against her go on. The economy suffers. Social peace is far from sight.

That was why the CBCP endorsed the impeachment process. That was why the President herself welcomed it. That was why Congress began working on it. That was why the Senate was in a standby mode.

But now, people are kept guessing and wondering. The President is left to live with all the unresolved impeachable complaints made against her. The country is having more and bigger economic problems.

All this is because the truth is chained, gagged and canned. But it will not, cannot be this way forever. This is because truth will ultimately make itself known. When this happens, then we as a people will be set free.

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The jueteng hierarchy remains intact. The jueteng lords are safe and sound. The illegal numbers games are up and about. And there are three salient lies being peddled long since to rationalize or justify this sad state of the country on the matter of illegal gambling.

Lie one: Jueteng is here to remain. It has been in the country for centuries. It has long since been part Filipino life. It is a social reality the country has lived since time immemorial. Any attempt to stop it is but an exercise in futility.

False: Jueteng is readily vincible. If only those in public authority would want to get rid of jueteng, then this is gone for sure. There is no need of bullets and guns, of brute force and martial approach. The official and deliberate will to make jueteng disappear is enough.

The national crusade against jueteng awarded last year some 106 city and municipal mayors who cleansed their places of jueteng. Everyone of them said that there was no jueteng in their cities and municipalities simply because they did not want it. And jueteng was gone.

Lie two: Jueteng is gambling and gambling is already a part of the Filipino culture. In fact, it is said that gambling has already become ingrained in the Filipino psyche. Any effort to eradicate jueteng and other illegal numbers games in the country would go nowhere.

False: Jueteng is a vice. A vice does not become a virtue just because it has aged, it has become common and widespread. Any vice is ultimately the undoing of an individual, a family, a community.

Deceit and greed, infidelity and dishonesty, graft and corruption have long been with the Filipinos. Cheating in elections, in business, in industries are fixtures of Filipino life. But such long standing agenda do not make them legitimate and acceptable.

Lie three: Jueteng should be legalized. This would make jueteng subject to government control. This would bring money to the public coffers. This would protect the bettors, do away with jueteng lords, stop jueteng payolas.

False: Should Masiao, Tupada, Lotteng, Bookies, Last Two, Letreng and Many other illegal numbers games be also legalized? And since when has government been successful in controlling illegal activities? Since when has government spent well public monies? Since when has government stopped paying, bribes and other shadowy public deals? The jueteng hierarchy remains intact. The jueteng lords are safe and sound. The illegal numbers games are up and about. And there are three salient lies being peddled long since to rationalize or justify this sad state of the country on the matter of illegal gambling.

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To consider impeachment merely as a political exercise is to disregard the intent and spirit of the law. To think that impeaching no less than a President is merely a showdown of partisan interests is to convert the serious to the ridiculous.

Impeachable offenses are not purely political in nature. They are accusations of grave dereliction of duty and/or commission of serious misdeeds contrary to the fundamental law of the land. And these are highly charged moral issues.

Even the over-all accusation of betrayal of public trust is anything but simply a political matter. This is especially true when the betrayal is said to come in form of lying, cheating, deception. To hide the truth, to cover the fact, to forward falsehood are all basically immoral actions even if done by a key political figure.

When impeachable offenses are attributed to no less than the President of the country, this has the basic right to defense and to be absolved if the accusations are disproven.

It is so unfair for someone to be accused with grave offenses only to be subsequently told that everything is all right—without benefit of trial. The accused then remains always suspect, discredited, distrusted.

That is why the quest for truth is imperative in the presence of an impeachment complaint. And truth knows no party. There are no party lines when the pursuit of truth is called for. This is especially true when a good number of citizens want to know the truth—which is their rightful demand.

In fact, the test of the integrity of Congress and of the Senate is when they abide by the known dictum “my loyalty to my party ends when my loyalty to my country begins”. And the testing is on.

At the end of the day, no politician answers to the party but to his conscience. The party simply discards the politician who can no longer serve its interests. This is standard practice. This is the lesson of history.
As Vatican II states: “The faithful, therefore, must learn the deepest meaning and value of creation, and how to relate it to the praise of God.” (LG, 36).

The Catholic Teacher and Environmental Education

A teacher with a Christian vision is one who has a positive affirming attitude to life; all human life is made to the image and likeness of the Creator. Harmony must exist between humankind and the natural world. This emerges from the understanding of the interdependence of human beings and the rest of creation. This call to stewardship is a privilege on humankind by God and is therefore a responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. If men and women are caring and cultivate harmony in all their dealings with each other and the earth itself, then they grow in the image and likeness of God (Sean Mcdonagh, To Care for the Earth: A Call for a New Theology, 1990).

A teacher with a Christian vision, likewise, lives the transparent Presence of God in the world itself and believes in the transcendence of our existence, loving life in oneself and in others even as Christ preached and practiced; he or she knows as well that he is called to respond responsibly to all of life, illumined by hope in the Risen Lord.

A Catholic teacher gradually forms this Christian vision of the world through a continuing and profound religious education, with a prayerful life as well. Moreover, we know that an education in a faith-context “forms men and women capable of rational and critical judgment and conscious of the transcendental dignity of the human person.” (ECE, 49).

In environmental education then, and in fact, in education in general, we can see the far-reaching role that a Christian educator can play. This is why the Church calls upon the lay faithful “to be present as signs of courage and intellectual creativity in the privileged places of culture, that is, the world of education – school and university – in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities.” (CFL, 44).

Globalization / from p. 9

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glected barangays. We inevitably find ourselves challenged by the injustices we see to take a stand on public issues. Our Christian love for the poor becomes political by its own inner logic since to practice it requires mediation of politics.

But would this position not be against the admonition to Bishops not to engage in politics? But when we become involved in the defense of victims of injustice, we are in effect engaging not in the politics of Caesar but in the politics of the Gospel. Proof of this is that the principles that guide us in these situations are the counter-values of the Gospel. We choose love rather than hatred. We choose non-violence rather than armed conflict. We believe in the world derides and rejects, namely, the power of forgiveness to bring about reconciliation among Filipinos.

We have contemporary examples of bishops deeply involved in issues that could be mistaken as political. Archbishop Cruz in jueteng; Archbishop Capalla in the coconut levy and Archbishop Aniceto and Bishop Cinense in the agrarian issue in Hacienda Luisita. All these bishops have been criticized as engaging in political matters. But I reject this accusation. Their involvement is that of facilitators who bring in the justice of the Father and the love of Christ and the peace of the Spirit and the reconciliation of the Church among contending parties. Their involvement is a logical extension of their evangelization which demands that they speak of a God of and for those who labor and are heavily burdened. Bishops can no longer be accused of enjoying the irresponsible life of the disengaged.

People then see the difference between the motives of bishops and politicians. Bishops do not engage in politics with the mindset and values derived from political power plays. When Archbishop Cruz becomes deeply involved in a crusade against jueteng, he does not do so because it is a politically correct maneuver but because the demands of the Gospel to protect the poor from folly moves him. When Archbishop Capalla participates in meetings of farmers on the coconut levy issue, he does not do so because this will give him political influence but because the demands of the Gospel impel him to seek justice for the marginalized. When Archbishop Aniceto agrees to facilitate negotiations between the owners and the peasants of Hacienda Luisita, he does not do so to ingratiate himself with media and the elite, but because the demands of the Gospel of Jesus Christ press upon him to bring reconciliation and justice into this festering agrarian problem.

And because their motives differ from politicians, their language of discourse must also differ. Because their acts have the Gospel of Jesus Christ for their source and inspiration, then it follows that the language of Bishops should be marked by civility, charity, understanding, compassion and forgiveness. Their utterances do not demonize political opponents; their words do not close the door to reconciliation and conversion. The sarcastic phrase, the sharp retort, the ridicule of persons -- this is an idiom that must not be heard from the mouth and heart of bishops. From the depths of the Gospel there can only rise words that give peace and unity, sentiments that lead to compassion and understanding. This is the only form of rhetoric that fits the vocation and apostolate of bishops.

Karangalan / from p. 23

Let our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Family, be our loving Advocate in these challenging times. Entrust her to our families. Let us pray for the graces which the Lord promised to those who invoke her in this Eucharistic and Marian Year.

For the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines:

(Sgd.)+FERNANDOR. CAPALLA, D.D.
Archbishop of Davao
President, CBCP
September 18, 2005

(Protestant)
An earthquake topples and devastates a Church high in the mountain forest of Romania to reveal an entrance to a hidden cave. A group of about a dozen scientists and adventurers led by Jock (Cole Hauser) decides to explore the cave with its hundreds of miles on uncharted underground tunnels and labyrinth passages abounding with as yet to be studied variety of species of animals and fishes. The group is merrily doing its work when a huge predator attacks and kills its members one by one. Jock himself is attacked, wounded and infected. And more and more, he becomes short-tempered, withdrawn and exhibiting the external manifestations of the monster. He insists that the group remain united under him if they wish to see the sun again. But the group divides anyway into two groups with Top (Morris Chestnut) Jock’s brother torn between his loyalty to his brother and Kathryn (Lena Headley) his lover. Top’s intervention saves Kathryn but could have unleashed a greater evil to escape into the world.

The story is interesting, the location shooting truly magnificent and the sound and visual effects mesmerizing. A kind of rattling sound precedes and announces the presence of the predator. The dark and gloomy interior of the cave is offset somewhat by the attractive physical features of the actors. The story unfolds slowly at first, lulling us with the scenic and serene landscape of Romania’s forests and rivers. Then, it gains crescendo until the final shot of a 360-degree camera movement showing of a crowd of people in a frenzy, unaware that a great evil is loosed in their midst in the form of a beautiful woman. Then the camera grinds slower and slower until it finally freezes the whole scene. That brilliant shot is saying that evil could be first subjective and internal before it explodes into violence and death.

The film is a profoundly moral tale rich in metaphor and symbolism. The Cave could stand for the dark arena where the forces of good and evil are fought. The monster-predator could be the Devil lurking about to devour men and women. The earthquake toppling and devastating the Church could mean the advent of modernism and scientific methods rocking the very foundations of our sacred institutions. The unsealing of the cave’s entrance means that the Devil, that ancient evil which was once controlled, restricted and contained by the Church is again free. And, Evil has a way of wounding, infecting and confusing us. We have become divided and unable to discern who among our leaders could lead us to the Light. Too much for a movie to say? But when you’re thrust in the company of a handful of stressed-out characters in a claustrophobic space where an unknown predator rules supreme, can you escape all that nervous energy?

Reviewed: 02 September 2005 © cbcpworld.com/Cinema
When things in your life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar... and the coffee.

A professor stood before his Philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was. The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar.

He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was. The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous “yes.”

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed. “Now,” said the professor, as the laughter subsided, “I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life."

The golf balls are the important things—your God, family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favorite passions; things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.”

The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, and your car. The sand is everything else—the small stuff. “If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued, “there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life.

If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children.” Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. “Play another 18. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand. One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented, the professor smiled. “I’m glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there’s always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend.”

The CEO is distressed about the money he’s spent in training them. He’s distressed because he can’t figure out what happened. Why did this talented employee leave despite a top salary?

Arun quit for the same reason that drives many good people away. The answer lies in one of the largest studies undertaken by the Gallup Organization. The study surveyed over a million employees and 80,000 managers and was published in a book called "First Break All The Rules". It came up with this surprising finding: If you're losing good people, look to their immediate supervisor. More than any other single reason, he is the reason people stay and thrive in an organization. And he's the reason why they quit, taking their knowledge, experience and contacts with them.

"People leave managers not companies," write the authors Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. "So much money has been thrown at the challenge of keeping good people—in the form of better pay, better perks and better training—when, in the end, turnover is mostly a manager issue." If you have a turnover problem, look first to your managers. Are they driving people away?

Beyond a point, an employee's primary need has less to do with money, and more to do with how he's treated and how valued he feels. Much of this depends directly on the immediate manager.

And yet, bad bosses seem to happen to good people everywhere. A Fortune magazine survey some years ago found that nearly 75 percent of employees have suffered at the hands of difficult superiors. You can leave one job to find—you guessed it, another wolf in a pin-stripe suit in the next one.

Of all the workplace stressors, a bad boss is possibly the worst, directly impacting the emotional health and productivity of employees.
**TECHNObabble**

**BPS** - Bits per Second

**BPSK** - Binary Phase Shift Keying; a type of constant phase modulation.

**Bridge** - A device that connects two or more physical networks and forwards packets between them. Bridges can usually be made to filter packets, that is, to forward only certain traffic. Bridges do not make traffic routing decisions.

**Broadband** - Refers to networks capable of delivery high bandwidth typically at speeds greater than 1 Mbps. In the digital domain, all content is digitized and hence the bandwidth is usually measured in bits-per-second (BPS).

**Broadcast** - A delivery system in which all receivers have the same content delivered to them in a single transmission stream.

**Burst Mode** - A method of data transmission in which data is collected and then sent in a single high-speed transmission.

**Byte** - One byte of digital video information is a packet of bits, usually but not always eight. One thousand bytes is one kilobyte (kb) and one million bytes is one megabyte (MB).

**Caching** - A form of data replication in which information learned during a previous transaction is used to process later transactions.

**C-Band** - The frequency band between 4 and 8 GHz with the 6 GHz band being used for satellite communications.

**CRC** - Cyclic Redundancy Check; the value obtained by applying a mathematical function to the bits in a frame and appended to the frame. The CRC is recalculated when the frame is received. If the result differs from the appended value, the frame is discarded.

**Cookie** - A piece of information issued by the server to the client, stored by the client, and later sent back to the server. Cookies allow information to be saved in the client, instead of the server having to allocate resources for doing that.

**CSU** - Cyclic Redundancy Check; the value obtained by applying a mathematical function to the bits in a frame and appended to the frame. The CRC is recalculated when the frame is received. If the result differs from the appended value, the frame is discarded.

**DAMA** - Demand Assigned Multiple Access - a highly efficient technique for sharing satellite bandwidth among many users.

**dB Decibel** - A unit of signal measurement that expresses a ratio between two electrical signals or levels logarithmically.

**dBW** - An expression of power in dB relative to one watt.

**DCE** - Data Circuit-terminating Equipment (DCE); Equipment required to connect a DTE (data terminal equipment) to a line or to a network.

**Demodulator** - Equipment that converts the RF signal from the carrier into baseband signals (video, audio, or data) for further processing or amplification.

**DES** - Data Encryption Standard (DES): A symmetric encryption
VATICAN CITY

Long-term relief program mulled

Caritas representatives from areas worst hit by last December’s tsunami in Asia, donor agencies and other officials will meet September 20-21 at the Caritas Internationalis headquarters here, to discuss measures to effectively implement long-term efforts at rebuilding houses, job creation and social assistance. It was revealed that Caritas had already committed to building 26,000 of the 90,000 houses in Sri Lanka. Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of Catholic relief, development and social service organizations, has already raised $450 million from donors as part of the Church’s commitment to support people in the affected areas.

AFGHANSTAN

Gov’t signs UN Convention on Status of Refugees

Afghanistan, a country considered to be one of the world’s largest sources of refugees and asylum seekers has joined the United Nations 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees relative to the Protocol of 1967. The act was the result of months of close collaboration between the Afghan authorities and the UN High Commission for Refugees. Afghanistan is the 146th country to join the Convention signed also by Iran which has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for years. After the fall of the Taliban regime at the end of 2001, more than 3.5 million Afghan refugees have returned from the neighboring countries Iran and Pakistan in one of the largest repatriation operations by UNHCR in its 54 years of activity. (Fides Service).

INDIA

Vicar General’s murder denounced

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India denounced the brutal murder of Msgr. Matthew Nellickal, 65, the vicar general of the Diocese of Tezpur, and appealed to the authorities to probe the killing. He was killed last September 2 in a storeroom adjacent to his bedroom in the bishop’s residence. Father Babu Joseph, bishops’ conference spokesman said that “it is sad that Church leaders are attacked despite the social work they undertake in the area.” He also said that Msgr. Nellickal’s murder should be viewed in the context of the rising incidents of atrocities against Church officials, institutions and missionaries across the country.

INDONESIA

Church works vs. terrorism in Moluccas

Catholics in Moluccas are resolved to upholding harmony and reconciliation, and making sure terrorism is conquered. Fr. Carl Bohm said that life in Ambon is back to normal after the bomb explosion on August 25 in the market in which, until now, the perpetrators remain at large and believed to be “anxious to plunge the Moluccas back into disorder, instability and conflict.” Fr. Bohm however countered by saying that since rumors of the presence of terrorists in Moluccas have yet to be confirmed, people should not fall into the trap. He said that people “must carry on with the work of civil and moral rebuilding to consolidate social and religious harmony.”

HONG KONG

Caritas seeks aid for N. Korean mission

Caritas Hong Kong has launched an appeal to accumulate 2.5 million dollars to continue its mission in sending humanitarian aid for North Korea this year 2005-2006 where daily life is a struggle for 70% (about 22 million) of the population and every next meal is a problem. Reports revealed that the situation in North Korea is getting more complicated for the more vulnerable sectors, children, pregnant mothers, old people and the sick, as well as people in rural areas. Caritas Hong Kong pioneered in sending humanitarian aid to the area. It was in 1995 when the country, then in the grip of serious food shortage, opened its borders to humanitarian aid, and Caritas was the first NGO to launch said aid program. To date it has already supplied North Korea with food aid for a total 27 million dollars. (Fides Service)

JAPAN

Diocese sends priest on overseas mission

“We want to be a Church that transcends nationality,” said Bishop Umemura Masahiro of Yokohama. And this time, another diocesan priest was sent to Brazil in an experiment of “reverse mission.” Bishop Masahiro is convinced that the overseas mission experience will serve also to promote renewal in his local diocese in Japan. The diocese already has priests in Italy, Canada and Uganda engaged in research, study and evangelization. Fr. Ishikawa Hiroyuki who also had mission experience in the Philippines during the Marcos regime and in India believes that the experience will enhance his personal formation and will make him as well a true Christian witness in foreign communities. (Agenzia Fides)

NEPAL

Maoist rebels declare truce

The three month truce announced by Maoist rebels is a shot in the arm for Nepal, but solutions must be forged for the more serious problems of violence and millions of displaced persons, local Catholic Church sources told Fides Service. In a statement issued on 3 September announcing a cease fire, the rebels said that for three months they will “remain in defence positions” and “refrain from unilateral offensives”. The announcement came after a recent meeting between the rebels and the leaders of the seven main democratic opposition parties to discuss collaboration between the insurgents and King Gyanendra, who had been accused of using antidemocratic, authoritarian and repressive methods. (Fides Service)
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