IMPACT
Asian Perspectives on Human Transformation

The Scourge of Legalized Gambling

Reason for the Season
“In their system, the high-ranking cadre is on a pedestal, traditionally in a curtained sedan chair. Yes, they can pick up pointers from us, but they cannot change the ‘magistrate-in-the-sedan-chair’ culture so easily.”

— Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s Minister Mentor, speaking in Manila on December 24, 2005.

“An accountable leader doesn’t sweep the truth under the carpet.”

— Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), in his speech delivered before the 24th National Prayer Breakfast held in Manila on December, 2005.

“I just want to ask, ‘Is this jihad? Is this jihad against Iraqis?’ I want to ask the mujahedeen, ‘Do you slaughter your brother in the name of jihad?’”

— HASSAN DAWOOD, Iraqi teacher at Baghdad’s main police academy, after suicide bombs ripped through the academy killing 36 police officers and wounding 72 others.

“China is aging faster than any other country in history. It is growing old before it has grown rich.”

— Kamal Nath, forecasting India’s young workforce population to potentially outstrip China’s economic pace.

“If you talk to God, that’s a prayer. If God talks back to you, that’s schizophrenia.”

— Archbishop Oscar Cruz, commenting on the report that President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has claimed to have had conversations with God on political issues.

“It can be said that the competition for becoming the next East Asian tiger would be between Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam and the Philippines. And the empirical evidence favors Vietnam, not the Philippines.”

— Antonio Abaya, newspaper columnist, on assessing Philippines’ potential as economic tiger as yet far than sooner.

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The Aguinaldo Masses, which are traditionally celebrated by Filipinos at dawn starting December 16, complete the nine-day liturgical preparation for Christmas. Significantly enough, these well-attended celebrations are offered in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary who journeyed in faith for nine months gestating the Word that became flesh. The parallelism of number gives an insight of how every Christian may best prepare for Christmas: gestating the Word received at baptism and finally giving birth to it—which is to say, allowing Christ to incarnate in one’s life, just as Mary did.

But Christmas which is perfected in Easter has come to mean a lot of things to a lot of people. For some, it has been too over-stretched to mean anything more serious than commerce and the romanticism of a secular world. One’s reason for the season may just be as good or as bad as anybody’s. Comfortably, the relativism of perceptions and beliefs has become the lingua franca of the present—wrongly or rightly.

Come to think of it, it was in this context that the Christ was born. His flickering light dispelled the prevailing darkness. His simple truth vanquished all the lingering lies. His giving up of himself uprooted the tenacity of selfishness. His self-effacing weakness unseated those who held on to the ramparts of power.

The socio-political realities of the Philippines today have all the makings of a very meaningful Christmas. There stands a president whose credibility is being eroded as fast and as determined as the miners and loggers pillage the environment. There sit both the houses of congress that sadly looks emasculated by the strength and scheming of the Executive. There lay government programs fished out from the remains of corruption and futility.

And here we are yawning and watching the world go by like guilty bystanders. Do have a merry and exciting Christmas!
The traditional family is under siege; Christian marriage is under attack. The assault is getting more and more searing through the passing of each day. Forces from many differing sectors are out to destroy it. A tragic situation no doubt, for we know how noble and important the family is.

Marriage and family is an institution that is based on human nature with objective criteria drawn from the nature of the human person and of his acts” (cf. GS, n. 48). God himself is its author and the Church is the staunchest defender and promoter. Its existence and its concomitant rights are duly protected and shielded. In fact, there is no other single subject which is treated more extensively with so many canons in the Code of Canon Law than that of marriage and family. That is how the Church appreciates and gives premium to the nobility and importance of marriage and the family.

The Nobility and Importance of the Family

The family is the most basic unit of society. Based on the marriage of one man and one woman, it is a nuclear community of persons that is open to the transmission of life and is committed to the rearing and education of children. As such it is the first and the most important setting in which every single person has to pass through.

As John Paul II eloquently puts it: “It (family) is a path common to all, yet one which is particular, unique and unrepeatable, just as every individual is unrepeatable. Indeed, a person normally comes into the world within a family, and can be said to owe to the family the very fact of his existing as an individual... Even if someone chooses to remain single, the family continues to be, as it were, his existential horizon, that fundamental community in which the whole network of social relations is grounded, from the closest and most immediate to the most distant” (N. 2, Letter to Families, 1994).

The family is therefore the natural setting in which the genealogy of every individual person begins. Cardinal Sin with his characteristic way of describing reality in crisp and simple lines puts it: “I would like to consider the family always a place of joy, serenity and peace. But it is not a static milieu. In the family there is a great deal of interaction, of interpersonal relationships. Our parents, brothers and sisters, and other relatives, all contribute to our fulfillment as persons. If we trace the history of each one of us, we can easily see that it is in the family that we learn the basics of life” (Address, The Family: At the Center of Human development, published by the Office on Women, CBCP, 2001, p. 1).

Furthermore, the late Pope John Paul II, reflecting more intently into this role of the family in each individual person living on earth, saw the family as a sacred place and without apprehension called it the “sanctuary of life”. It is here that life is transmitted and nurtured. It is here too that faith and love of God is handed over. It is a Church, a domestic Church (see LG, 11).

The family therefore has a very important role to society. It bears a very sensitive function to humanity. Family founded on marriage is a patrimony of humanity, a great good of priceless value, necessary for the life, development and the future of peoples. As the late Pope John Paul II often put it: “The future of humanity passes by way of the family.” (cf. Familiaris Consortio, 86).

Family Threats

This is the institution that is under attack, the basic unit of human society that has to parry the external threats for its continued existence and survival. The threats come in different guises and in differing modes. Sometimes they come in the form of legislations in the name of common good; at other times in the guise of medical necessity or psychological needs. The delegates of the International Interfaith Conference on the Family held in Manila last 28th March 1999 in its collegial statement enumerated some of these threats to the family, namely: 1. Attempts to replace the traditional or natural family...
with new “family forms”; 2. Attempts to propose new “gender forms” to include homosexuals, lesbians, and so-called transsexuals, same-sex “marriage; 3. The introduction of the most violent forms of population control such as sterilization, abortion and euthanasia; 4. The downgrading of motherhood in the name of “women’s rights”; 5. The rejection and denial of ethical and moral considerations in favor of the economic in resolving family-related issues (cf. op. cit., The Family: At the Center of Human Development, p. 241).

The Church identifies these threats as the logical offshoots of the civilization of death. At the root of this culture, he observes, is the crisis of concepts, the wrong conception of truth. Because of that, the language of the family founded on marriage do not carry anymore the essential meaning that it originally has. “Freedom”, “love”, “gift of self”, “human rights”, “rights of persons” are all distorted by one whose mind is soaked in the philosophy of utilitarianism, pragmatism, positivism.

As John Paul II rightly observes: “At the root of these negative phenomena there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God’s plan, for marriage and family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one’s own selfish well-being” (Familiaris Consortio, n. 4).

In his “Letter to Families” on the occasion of the 1994 celebration of the Year of the Family, he again brought out the main cause of all these threats to the family. He said: “Utilitarianism is the civilization of production and of use, a civilization of “things” and not of “persons”, a civilization in which persons are used in the same way that things are used”. In the context of civilization of use, woman can become an object for man, children a hindrance to parents, the family an institution obstructing the freedom of its members” (Letters to Families, n. 13).

In his Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, 27 January 1997, the late John Paul II after expounding the necessity of putting the person in the center of the juridical appreciations and applications of laws on marriage and family, again cited its prime antagonist: “At the root of such an attitude (against the essential properties of marriage and family) we see an individualistic culture, which is antithetical to a true personalism. Individualism presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to establish the truth of whatever he finds pleasing or useful” (L’Osservatore Romano, February 5, 1997).

In Defense of the Family

In the face of such diverse and serious threats to the family, the Church has come out strongly with its response. The response came out in three forms: 1) Doctrinal, that is, the Church, basing itself securely in the theological and anthropological reality, expounded in clearer language certain key points of her doctrine on marriage and the family; 2) Structural, that is, establishing juridical structures and initiating programs and activities that defend and promote family values; 3) Pastoral, that is, making appeal to all people of good will (whether Catholics or Christians, baptized or non-baptized) as well as to some groups and sectors of society to uphold the traditional values of the family.

Doctrinal Response

The Second Vatican Council in its document Gaudium et Spes already spelled out certain salient points of the Church doctrine regarding the family. Its purpose is to support and guide those who are struggling to preserve and promote the dignity of the family and its superlative value. The Code of Canon Law of 1983 dedicated one hundred eleven canons on marriage and family (cc.1055-1165). The influence of the conciliar constitution Gaudium et Spes is evident. Obvious too is the personalist approach of some canons. Take for instance canon 1055. It conceives marriage as ordered by its very nature for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. The hierarchical ordering of the ends of marriage as found in the
Once again, ‘tis Christmas time, the season ain’t only gushing forth December’s cold winds but, no doubt too, the euphoric hustle-and-bustle and thousand-and-one ways—all but fashioned in commercial alacrity—of celebrating Christendom’s 2005th anniversary of Christ’s birth. But far from reckoning—with spiritual candor, better so—on the true meaning of Christmas, the season’s contemporary holiday flurry has, more likely than not, drifted so far and so frivolous from the intrinsic truth or reason of the first Christmas, the reason and significance of Christ’s Incarnation.

Conspicuously, the contemporary milieu rather spawn with a consumerist or commercialized view of Christmas that skew its lofty significance, or simply with the egregious socio-economic-political conditions that render, if not handcuff, the true message of Christmas as futile or irrelevant. For some, if most, Christmas has inevitably become synonymous with: giving and receiving material gifts (albeit the current economic crunch has increased the propensity for receiving than giving), extravagant meals, parties, ornaments, decorations, holiday trips, credit card debts—and a lot more forms of corporate or consumerist interpretations of Christmas. Similarly, on the other hand, the country’s overwhelming problems—the wrenching economic and political crisis largely precipitated by patronage politics and profligate graft and corruption, the escalating social inequities, unemployment and stagnating incomes, debilitating poverty, and not to exclude, the abattoir of moral crisis—have all but impeded the relevance or significance of the message of Christmas or Christ’s coming.

Indeed a flinching paradox it is, today’s season of Advent is the favored time of year that gushes in—yes, not only December’s cold winds—but even also some despicably formidable tragedies for the country or humanity. The November of 1992 Ormoc disaster, the LRT bombing of December 2000, the December Asian tsunami and Quezon floods of last year, this year’s Mindoro floods—and even perhaps, God forbid, the brewing coup plots against the Arroyo government of the moment—all but sharply hewed to the season of Advent. No, they pose not as grim foreboding of things to come, but there is no arguing that such crushing events do not at all herald glad tidings for the season.

Whereas whence, worth reckoning it is, the account of Jesus’ birth (Lk.1-21), for the first Christmas, may well provide some significant elements, among others, from which we could yet draw—at the risk of oversimplification—some ‘reasons for the season.’ One, for instance was the reigning ‘peace’—Pax Romana—at the time of Jesus’ birth; and, fact is, the angels appeared and announced Jesus’ birth to the shepherds in the ‘silence’ of the night. Christmas, veritably, thus celebrates the coming of the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Christ, who bestows the all-encompassing peace—not the ‘elusive’ one (akin, for example, to paltry alliances or pacts—political collaboration spins, business or corporate complicities, inequitable trade accords as GATT and WTO—all forged with vested interests) for man and to the world. And ‘silence’, not the cacophonic hustle-and-bustle of the Christmas season, may just be a worthy requisite to heeding God’s word, as Kierkegaard once noted: “If I could only prescribe one remedy for all the ills of the modern world, I would prescribe silence. For even if the word of God were proclaimed, no one would hear it; there is too much noise. Therefore, create silence.”

Another meaningful element of Christ’s birth is His having been born in a manger. Christ’s gift—of Himself—to humanity is wrapped in “swaddling clothes and laid in a manger” (Lk.2:7). Appropri-
Messiah or the “One who is to come,” is an undisputed article of faith enunciated or proven by the basic sources of Revelation—Holy Scriptures, Church’s Magisterium, and Sacred Tradition—all pointing to the reality not only of Christ’s concrete historical existence but more so of His divine nature, attributes and person, as Redeemer and Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. But, again, why does God has yet to become man in order to save man? Unmistakably, the answer exudes being theologically profound as likewise logically relevant. Adam—the first man he was and yet oblivious, if not simply ‘unconsenting’, of his own humanity—wanted to “become like God,” and fell (Gen. 3:1-13). But Christ, the second Adam, who was already God (“Though being in divine nature…” Philippians 2:6), deemed to become man, suffer and die as man. Accordingly hence, this paradoxical analogy between Adam and Christ explains God’s salvific design for man through Christ’s incarnation: God, by becoming man in Christ, expressly demonstrates that man should—first, acknowledge or accept himself as man, helpless and in need of God, and will never become God, and, second, accept God as God or the “Godness” of God. Logically indeed so—because for man, in order for him to acknowledge the “Godness” of God, must first recognize or acknowledge the truth of his own humanity or his being man. Ergo, Christ’s incarnation, as celebrated during the Christmas season, brings to fore two incontrovertible truths: one, the reality of man’s imperfection, helplessness or sinfulness, and; two, the truth of God’s all-encompassing salvific love.

Very well, such profound ramifications may indeed suffice— theologically, rationally, or meta-rationally—to contrive an explanation for the ‘reason for the season’. But still, where does one find the season’s reason of God’s message of salvation in today’s commercialized Christmas banalities? More likely rather, amid the holiday flurry or hustle-and-bustle (true to these days of fast food, the fast lane and the quick fix), neither God’s message of salvation nor one’s sinfulness particularly slips to the fashionable Christmas bazaars and shopping sprees, the nauseating holiday parties and trips, the glaring lights and fireworks that insistently defy the grim reality of the prevailing economic condition. Apparently so, modern-day Christmas conventions tend to displace, if not boot out, the baby Jesus from the manger, change His swaddling clothes with expensive signature-tagged ones, then lay Him into a sedan couch, and gleefully roll out to the party.

But, truthfully, such was not the essence of the first Christmas. The panoramic story of Christ’s life depicts a rather not glitzy epic “from the manger to the Cross in Calvary,” devoid of glamour and worldly sophistication: born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes; first visited by simple shepherds: grew and toiled under Joseph’s carpentry work; mingled not with the high and mighty but with the poor, lowly, oppressed; despised, ridiculed, suffered, and died on the Cross. Kenosis, or ‘nothingsness’, was the hallmark of His life. Verily, hence, Christ’s lowly origin and birth are but an allusion to His suffering in Calvary, which likewise is a sine qua non to His glorious resurrection, ascension and total glorification—all constituting the entirety of Christ’s Paschal Mystery.

Wherefore, nay the pompous merry-making of the Yuletide season, the reality of deprivation or suffering may likewise be correlated to the meaning of Christmas or of Christ’s coming.

Peace, therefore, to those who are poor, suffering, oppressed and deprived. Blessed art they, Christ’s coming is meant—as it is for humanity—for them too, for their deliverance from the darkness of suffering, poverty, or sinfulness. Yes, bereft may be of the sumptuous meals or parties, fancy clothes and gifts in this season of “Crisis-mas”, theirs certainly belong the good news of Christ’s coming and deliverance—both the joyous Christmas of Christ’s birth and the hopeful Christmas of Christ’s resurrection and final glorification.

“He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will, he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross. For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. And so, in honor of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, and will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:6-11).

*Gloria in excelsis Deo!* A blessed Christmas.
One of the nicest things about spending Christmas here at home is that I don’t have to shovel snow (I know most people wouldn’t appreciate that), like I did two years ago when I was in New York City for a research mission (with apologies to my friends, priests and lay there). I would shovel snow with my pastor around St. Barnabas Church in Woodlawn, the Bronx, where I was staying, to clear them for Church services. Not that I hated snow (one of my sisters would tease me from the Philippines, “Just make halo-halo during your breaks”). It just didn’t feel like I was in my natural habitat; I was no different from a fish out of water. Before returning to the Philippines on Thanksgiving Day of 2004, I teased some of the church-goers in Woodlawn, “Remember me when you shovel snow this year, I’ll remember you on a beach somewhere in the Philippines”. One of them said, “Oh, Father, that’s a cruel joke to say!” After that it occurred to me that among different people with different family, cultural, racial or social backgrounds, there seems to be a consensus: Being on a beach is a much better thing than shoveling snow. I wouldn’t be honest if I don’t admit that I used to dream of a snowy white Christmas as a child but two weeks of it in NYC and Long Island during my first wintry Christmas in the 1990s nearly sent me packing for an early flight back home.

I actually love winters and rainy seasons, except that they could cast so much pall of gloom. It used to give me much amusement to see some of my American friends’ incredulity whenever I’d answer their question, “How do you spend Christmas Day in the Philippines?” by saying, “Remember me when you shovel snow this year, I’ll remember you on a beach somewhere in the Philippines”. One of them said, “Oh, Father, that’s a cruel joke to say!” After that it occurred to me that among different people with different family, cultural, racial or social backgrounds, there seems to be a consensus: Being on a beach is a much better thing than shoveling snow. I wouldn’t be honest if I don’t admit that I used to dream of a snowy white Christmas as a child but two weeks of it in NYC and Long Island during my first wintry Christmas in the 1990s nearly sent me packing for an early flight back home.

I actually love winters and rainy seasons, except that they could cast so much pall of gloom. It used to give me much amusement to see some of my American friends’ incredulity whenever I’d answer their question, “How do you spend Christmas Day in the Philippines?” by saying, “After the Mass we go straight to the beach to party with family and friends.” They thought I was pulling their leg. But I actually spent Christmases in Eastern Samar that way, especially in my hometown where beaches (no, not exactly like Boracay but they do) abound. Besides, I’d tell them, don’t forget we’re in the tropics.

But let me go back to the pall of gloom at this season. It doesn’t mean that places where there are winters have the monopoly to gloom during Christmas. Especially in the Philippines the gloom this Christmas is particularly uninviting, what with the credibility of the incumbent president still in question, with the overseas Filipinos practically saving our economy by their Christmas remittances and keeping us afloat, with seemingly endless political squabbling on our daily horizons, with a growing number of unsolved crimes and killings perpetrated by people with connections to the military, with the specter of a seesaw of oil price and that of other prime commodities. One could actually go on. There is gloom in the country, in the planet. In the U.S. I could just imagine the continuing gloom from the Iraq war, questions on President Bush’s war on terror etc. Which reminds me of a story of an old man who asked his grandson to take him to the beach one early Christmas morning. It was just past five. The grandson asked, “Are you there for exercise, Lolo?” The grandfather answered, “No. I’ll just watch the sun rise.” The grandson gave his grandfather a perplexed look and said, “Oh. I thought it was something more interesting.” The grandfather resented the remark. “Nothing is more interesting than that. Don’t you want to see how, when the sun rises, darkness is gone?”

It’s sad when people
It's again Christmas! This year though, the mood seems to be a bit subdued, the atmosphere toned-down. The blinking lights and other garish decors appear to be concentrated only in the malls waiting to be bought.

Economists, of course, are quick to explain. People are wary about our current social, economic and political situation, they say. In spite of the heavy cash inflow from our OFWs, our heroes and saviors, people tend to be Scrooges this time.

Just as well. True Christian believers welcome this predicament, since it can help us in savoring the authentic spirit of Christmas. They believe that everything, no matter how considered humanly, will always work for the good.

Sometimes hardships and sacrifices occasion deep spiritual realizations and sharp insights of faith. They help us in getting liberated from the clutches of a purely materialistic, if not thoroughly sensual world.

They can launch us to the far richer world of the spiritual and supernatural, using the language of faith and piety. That's why Jesus' life was one of suffering and privations. He asks us to carry the cross and to enter by the narrow gate.

Pope Benedict recently echoed what we already know quite well. "In present day consumer society," he said, "this period suffers, unfortunately, a sort of commercial ‘contamination,’ which runs the risk of altering its authentic spirit."

To Pope Benedict and all the other faithful followers of Christ, this authentic Christmas spirit is characterized by recollection, sobriety, a joy that is not exterior but profound.

These, indeed, are conspicuously missing these days. The challenge we have now is how to welcome Christ into our hearts not only during Christmas, when he comes to us a helpless little child, but also all throughout the year.

This is the challenge of many of the nominal Christians. We have to learn to look for Christ, find him, and love and serve him every minute of our life. And this in a clearly strong and determined way.

We cannot afford to be complacent about this. Some even dare to be cavalier about this, not realizing that they are making a fool of themselves. No, no. We need to be clearly strong and determined in this effort.

Especially now when we are constantly bombarded with impulses—images, sounds, shows, sensations, etc.—that tend to kill the spiritual life while heavily stimulating the bodily if not animal life we also have.

Just looking at many TV shows, reading newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio, this is what we can readily conclude. There's a systematic effort, almost like a devil's plot, to stick us to the material and the sensual, the here and now.

There's no mention of God, or at least any reference or allusion to God. Art and creativity are purely inspired by earthly values, driven by passion and not by faith, pursued mainly with selfish ends rather than by charity that should imbue all our actions.

Such art and creativity generate a spiral of evil, a dynamism of sin, where bickering, hatred, envy, lust, and a long, endless et cetera dominate. There's no peace, inside nor outside. There's no real joy, an abiding sense of being in living communion with God and with everybody else.

Yes, there can be blinding lights, breath-taking colors and experiences, absorbing dramas, addictive highs and numbingly comfortable lows, but we are all reduced to the life of the senses alone. The spirit gets lost.

The real challenge of Christmas is when we truly welcome Christ in our hearts such that we become Christians through and through, knowing how to be both human and divine, natural and supernatural, practical and spiritual.

All our actions, our thoughts, our plans, our projects, our shows, our politics, our business, etc., etc., while being truly human and fully engaged with all the requirements of our nature, should never fail to have the Christian savor.

Somehow, while we are still on earth, we already taste the joy of heaven. And this is just natural to us.
Mary, Witness to the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Mission

Mary Receives and Brings Jesus to Others

Remember how in our catechism classes we were told that we are all apostles because to be an apostle means to be ‘sent’? I was once sent by a priest friend to a hospital to celebrate Mass in his place. Since it was my first time at the hospital I had to introduce myself to the hospital sacristan. I said, “Father So-and-so sent me here to celebrate Mass in his place because he has to attend to something.” The sacristan said, “Yes, he told me you were coming, Father.” It was easy because the person who sent me and the person who talked to him is one and the same person. Jesus in the Eucharist and Jesus who went through the Paschal Mystery is one and the same person sent by one and the same Father. That is why the document Ecclesia de Eucharistia says, “The Church’s mission stands in continuity with the mission of Christ: ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I send you (Jn 20:21)’” (EdE 22).

Through the Eucharist I celebrate as a priest I bring Jesus to others. But even before the sacrament was first celebrated its essence is made manifest in Mary. First of all, she receives the Word in herself and in herself the Word is made flesh. She is the first to unite with the Word-made-Flesh by her “I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). But having received the Word and being in communion with him does not leave Mary in a state of suspended ecstasy. Luke the evangelist tells us that the first thing Mary does is to “set out for a town in the hills of Judah” at which she “entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and, giving a loud cry, said, ‘You are the most blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!’ How is it that the mother of my Lord comes to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby within me suddenly moved for joy. Blessed are you who believed that the Lord’s word would come true!” (Lk 1:39-45).

We must note that Mary who visits Elizabeth has Jesus within her. In Eucharistic language Mary is first in communion with the Savior who unites her with God and with God’s People. This is the first sine-qua-non of the mission of the Church.

We cannot give what we do not have. Mary has Jesus first and, that is why, when she sets out to her cousin Elizabeth she brings her as well as Elizabeth’s child in her womb joy. It is the presence of Jesus in us that brings joy to others. He is the Good News, the real gospel of joy which comes from the salvation Jesus brings.

The Living Body of Jesus, Mary’s Son, in the Eucharist is Source of Spiritual Power for the Church’s Mission

I used to travel to and from Tacloban via Buray, Western Samar. It was a long, long trip to Borongan. I often got tired and hungry on the way home. Thank God, there were restaurants in Buray. Together with other passengers and the bus drivers and conductors it was standard procedure to stop and eat at the restaurants. Only after eating did we find the strength to continue the long journey. Evangelization in many ways is a long, long journey of bringing the gospel of God’s life to people and people to the gospel of God’s life. While on the road of life we need the strength and power to continue our journey and its task. It is the Eucharist which gives us that power. Pope John Paul II says of this: “From the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and her communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church draws the spiritual power needed to carry out her mission” (EdE 22). In his apostolic letter Mane Nobiscum Domine (Stay With Us Lord), Pope John Paul II sees the link between the Eucharist and the Church’s mission by way of the experience of the two disciples at Emmaus. The whole dynamics of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth is also at work in them. Once Jesus’ words and his breaking of the bread ‘opened’ their eyes, these disciples, “upon recognizing the Lord, ‘set out immediately’ (Lk 24:33). Once we have truly met the Risen One by partaking of his body and blood, we cannot keep to ourselves the joy we have experienced. The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian an urgent summons to testimony and evangelization...based on the words of Saint Paul: ‘As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes’ (1 Cor 11:26). The Apostle closely relates meal and proclamation: entering into communion with Christ in the memorial of his Pasch also means sensing the duty to be a missionary of the event made present in that rite. (22). The dismissal at the end of each Mass is a charge given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values” (Mane Nobiscum Domine, No. 24). Mary set out to the hill country of Judah; the disciples of Emmaus set out to the apostles; we, too, must set out to bring Jesus in the Eucharist to others.

Mary’s Communion With Christ Embodies the Goal of the Mission of Evangelization, Realized and Expressed by the Eucharist

A school superintendent told some graduating students that in her observation, even as confirmed by surveys and studies, people who have a goal and a plan of life prove to be the most successful. She reminded me of a certain philosopher named Nietzsche who said: “He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how.” Do we know what our goal in life is? Do we know what our goal as people-sent-in-mission is? It is to bring people into communion with the Source and Summit of the Church.

Jesus who went through the Paschal Mystery is one and the same person. Jesus in the Eucharist and the person who talked to him is one and the same person sent by one and the same Father. That is why the document Ecclesia de Eucharistia says, “The Church’s mission stands in continuity with the mission of Christ: ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I send you (Jn 20:21)”’ (EdE 22).
Jesus Christ is also achieved in the Eucharist which cements the very experience of Mary. The goal of our mission of evangelization is, as it were, already accomplished in Mary; but it is especially realized and expressed in the Holy Eucharist where we get into communion with Jesus who puts us into communion with the Trinity and with his whole Body. Hence, Pope John Paul II could say: “The Eucharist thus appears as both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit” (PO 5; EdE 5, 22).

If the goal of our mission is already realized and expressed in the Eucharist, we ask: What is the point of our continuing the mission of evangelization after the example of Mary? It is to extend to the whole of mankind our experience of communion with the Trinity in Christ as well as our communion with one another. It is to share real joy. As a saying goes, “Sorrow shared is sorrow cut in two; joy shared is joy doubled.”

Conclusion

We draw here the insight that, as in Mary, our communing with Jesus in the Eucharist and through him with the Triune God has some consequences on our life and mission. Says Pope John Paul II in Mane Nobiscum Domine (Remain With us Lord): “The Eucharist not only provides the interior strength for this mission, but is also—in some sense—its plan. For the Eucharist is a mode of being which passes from Jesus into each Christian, through whose testimony it is meant to spread throughout society and culture. For this to happen, each member of the faithful must assimilate, through personal and communal meditation, the values which the Eucharist expresses, the attitudes it inspires, the resolutions to which it gives rise” (MND 25).

In the Philippine context, true Alay Kapwa is the fruit of receiving Jesus Christ’s Alay-Sarili (Gift of Self) at the Eucharistic communion. Ernest Southcott once said: “The holiest moment of the Church service is the moment when God’s people—strengthened by preaching and sacrament—go out of the church door into the world to be the Church.” The heart of the Eucharist is God’s love for us as shown by the greatest self-giving sacrifice of Jesus. How do we show this love by which we are redeemed to others? St. Augustine once tried to answer the question: “What does love look like?” His answer: “Love has hands to help others. It has feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of others. That’s what love looks like.” We see this love in Mary setting out to visit Elizabeth her cousin to be at her service (Lk 1:39–45) or in Mary telling Jesus how a newly married couple just ran out of wine (Jn 2:1–11). Do people see this love alive in us?

by Rev. Fr. Eutiquio ‘Euly’ B. Belizar, Jr., SThD

MARY, Witness to the Eucharist as Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission

Last Part
Manhattan and Dapitan are symbols of two realities. We need to understand both to educate the young. Manhattan would be the pinnacle of “globalization”, whose heart is abstract. It is a finance market where shares, currencies, and derivatives at $3 billion daily moved on dealers’ screen in email time. A digital ticker tape proudly proclaims at Wall Street, “The world puts its trust in us.”

Dapitan is one of the four streets which bound the University of Santo Tomas (UST). Behind the world food chains are bed spaces, housing UST students and employees. Dapitan is a microcosm of the Philippines with an entrenched income pyramid. The poorest 70% have to make ends meet with a declining portion of income from 37% in 1998 to 34 percent in 2000. The top continue to gain from 36% to 38% for the same time period.

Manhattan represents turbo-capitalism when products, services and news as well as capital and labor power attain a new level of mobility and acceleration. Dapitan represents dualism, typical of developing economies. The “modern sector” like the global food chains conforms to international standards of hygiene, work hours, and processes. Since the majority is excluded from such narrow enclaves, they have to create income opportunities to survive. They constitute what is known as the “informal sector.”

In Manhattan, the “blossoming of the human potentials” is possible. Dapitan evokes a sense of belonging and identity. For us in UST, Dapitan is home with its dualism, its street food, and friendships we have forged while living there or earning a living near there.

By Jeanette V. Loanzon, Ph.D.

From Manhattan to Dapitan:

Responding to the “Signs of the Times” in a Business School
Education is seeing connections. What happens in Manhattan influences the way we are to educate our students. To cling to the familiar Dapitan neighborhood while ignoring distant Manhattan could lead us to irrelevance in today’s world. As educators, we help our students see these connections. When we do this, we remind them of expectations from them which constitute obligations. The Second Vatican Council exhorts our graduates to be outstanding in learning, ready to shoulder the burdens of society, and witness to faith. Parallel to these goals in UST, we try to develop competence, compassion, and commitment among our students.

2005 marks the 40th anniversary of Gaudium et Spes. The Catholic Church shares in the joys and hopes of people, helping dry their tears and calming their anxieties. Responding to the “signs of the times” is a theme taken from Gaudium et Spes. John XXIII and the Vatican Council used it to promote the pastoral purpose of the Council as well as the openness to dialogue with the world. A sub-committee was set up to study the concept and, without diminishing the scriptural sense, understood “the ‘signs of the times’ to be the social, political, economic and cultural, and religious phenomena that occur so frequently and pervasively in human life that they seem to characterize a given period and seem to express both the needs and aspirations of humankind at the time; these are not simply events or phenomena, but somehow signs of the presence and activity of God in human history, signs of the presence and activity of God in human history, signs that need to be recognized, interpreted and responded to” Edward J. Sullivan, C.S.B., The Use of the Concept “Signs of the Times” in Papal and Conciliar Texts, 22,47 (Quoted in Bisson: 2004, p.1)

Globalization and popular movements stressing local roots are “signs of the times” in our world today. The Catholic University is born from the heart of the Church (Ex corde ecclesiae). Since our business school is an integral element of a Catholic University, we would like to respond to these related phenomena.

Dimensions of globalization

Global integration has been rapid but unbalanced. Nowhere is this more dramatic than in transportation and communication. During the 1930’s, air revenue per passengermile was 68 cents. Contrast this with 11 cents for the 1990’s. A telephone call, three minutes from the New York to London, was billed at $245 in the 1930’s. In the nineties, the same costs a measly $3.00.

Barnet and Cavanagh identify four global webs: the cultural bazaar, shopping mall, workplace, and financial network. The global cultural bazaar is the newest and most nearly universal. Films, television, radio, wire, magazines are included, whether for education or entertainment. The dazzling array of what we eat, drink, wear, and enjoy are in global shopping mall. The global workplace includes factories, law firms or hospitals. The maze of credit cards as well as currency transactions—forward or swaps—comprise the global financial network.

Reflections on Globalization

Noreen Hertz (2003:8-9) argues that global business have been successful in their “silent takeover” of national economies as well as politics. Business is in the drivers’ seat and determines the rules of the game while governments have become referees, enforcing rules laid by the others. The final stage is the end of politics itself, collapsing into cycles of protest, repression, and despair. Barnet and Cavanagh (1994:19) contend that the “formidable power and mobility of global corporations are undermining the effectiveness of national governments to carry out essential policies on behalf of their people.”

Friedman (2000:34) opines: “How the age-old quests for material betterment and for individual and communal identity...play themselves out in today’s dominant international systems of globalization. This is the drama of the Lexus and the olive tree.”

The Lexus, the Japanese luxury car produced more by robots than humans, stands for material betterment. The olive tree symbolizes our roots, our communities, or our tradition. If we are to function well, preserving the olive trees while working towards the Lexus becomes necessary. We cannot be persons alone and hence, we need to be rooted in an olive grove. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner interprets a scene from One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Marquez: “…if we forget whom we belong to, and if we forget that there is a God, something profoundly human in us will be lost” (quoted from Friedman, 2000:33).

Finally, Pope John Paul II reminds us: “The church cannot but express profound concern that our world continues to be divided no longer by the former political and military blocs, but by a tragic line between those who can benefit from these opportunities and those who seem cut off from them.” (Remarks to President Bush, March 12, 2000)

Responding to the “Signs of the Times” in a Business School

Gaudium et Spes is the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World. It is here that we encounter the “signs of the times”. As Christians, we are challenged to observe, judge, and act in the tradition of Catholic Social Thought. Manhattan could symbolize the heights of affluence while Dapitan could...
represent the depths of want. In both, there is likely to be unequal opportunities, a contradiction of the Gospel truth of equality as children of God. As globalization gallops in Manhattan, we need to be more rooted in Dapitan, where we are obliged to fulfill our life mission. In response to the worsening economic situation in the Philippines and the attention needed by those cut off from globalization, we revived a major area in entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship and Ethics education toward Equity (Triple E).

We realize that globalization is both pervasive and pernicious. One way to embrace it, while avoiding its pitfalls is to link arms with people of goodwill to help shape a better world, infused with human values.

**Linkages**

The first is a research linkage of four universities bonded by their Thomistic beliefs and values:
- UST Manila: economically developing country
- The Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Ukraine—also with participation from the St. Thomas Institute in Kyiv: ex-communist country
- The UST, Minnesota, USA, in particular, the Center for Catholic Studies: Midwest US
- The Pontifical University of St. Thomas (Angelicum), Rome, in particular, the Faculty of Social Sciences: Roman pontifical university

The College of Commerce is a member of the network whose present focus is on Catholic Social Thought and Corporate Social Responsibility.

In February of 2005, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the University of Atma Jaya Yogyakarta and the University of Santo Tomas with the College of Commerce as principal operating entity. Business ethics as well as small and medium enterprise are a priority. Yogyakarta is known as the handicraft center in Indonesia. The chairs of the General Education and Economics Departments as well as a Triple Ecore faculty visited Atma Jaya last June 4-9, 2005.

“Unity in Diversity” was the theme of a cultural exchange program in the last quarter of 2004. Thirty students from Sophia University in Tokyo visited UST with commerce students as their hosts led by the Economics Society president. The Japanese teenagers are donors of scholarships to schoolchildren living in Benguet and Iloilo.

**Triple E: Entrepreneurship and Ethics education towards Equity**

The Triple E major is for the graduates to be able to sell affordable goods and services as well as to provide paid work for low-income communities. A core team of interdisciplinary faculty was formed in January 2004. In order to further inculcate Triple E ideals, student sections were named after the great social encyclicals: Rerum Novarum, Populorum Progressio, Laborem Exercens and Gaudium et Spes.

Since self-mastery is a key to entrepreneurship, self-awareness and team building sessions were held with students. Under the principle of “Know your market,” community field visits were conducted. Low income neighborhoods were selected in Antipolo, Bulacan, Tagaytay, and Sta. Mesa. The approach is community-based because social scientists agree that vernacular spaces “...provide meaningful solutions and are able to surf over waves and threats” (Rahnema in Sachs 1992) while local communities combine economic imperatives with social benefits (Dahrendof 1995).

The Triple E program is anchored on the Triple L model of working with grassroots communities. The Triple L model recognizes that women play a principal role in community mobilization and is based mainly on an action-research experience with fishing village women. Triple L refers to listening, leadership, and livelihood.

Forming the hearts of the students is the primordial goal of the Triple E curriculum. Students’ interaction with low-income groups could lead to encounter-dialogue, enabling skills among the communities, and ultimately, students embodying ideals of service.

**Lessons**

We learned much in the process of responding to the “signs of the times”:
- Students and parents are our clients.
- We respond to their needs.
- Our strategy follows our vision and mission while
- We consider the realities of : Manhattan—turbo-capitalism/material betterment. Dapitan—dualism/roots
- We continue leadership in areas of excellence i.e. the UST—AMV College of Accountancy while
- We pioneer in promoting the “excluded” e.g. Triple E or social marketing

**Challenges**

As a Catholic university, we need to think global and act entrepreneurial while being true to being universal. In the global economy, we observe a “silent takeover”. Powerful finance rules the world. Power lies with corporations since they decide
on what happens to us as workers, producers, and consumers. Yet, globalization from below is off camera and proceeding effectively. Robert Falk uses this term to denote that global mass movements have appeared and flourished with the use of technology.

We have to be entrepreneurial; we unite our “knowing” with our “doing.” Since we know that the poor are in the rural areas, we give them priority.

We have to be true to our being universal, to embrace all that concerns the human person and to embrace all human persons. We are inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, imprisoned and eventually executed by the Nazis: “It is an experience of incomparable value to have (the) learned to see the great events of history from beneath: from the viewpoint of the useless, the suspect, the abused, the powerless, the despised,—in a word, from the viewpoint of those who suffer.”

There is a “new agenda” versus the silent takeover: inclusiveness, reconnection of the social and the economic, as well as a determination that everyone has access to justice. But there is a lack of moral imperative, responsibility, or political will. Here, as a Catholic university, could we provide the moral leadership as well as assume responsibility towards a world with more justice and truth?

**UST: Towards 2011 and beyond**

Threats to precarious economies in the global village are many: “race to the bottom”, a homogenous world culture, inequality and exclusion. Yet, it is well in order to discover opportunities to help the young by seeking to:

- balance Manhattan: material betterment Dapitan: nurture roots, nourish the “excluded”
- affirm Human Values & Divine Image vs. globalization, cheapest labor, homogenous, goods and services
- hope: anchored in a rich Filipino culture, history, and identity
  - seeds of faith
  - hospitality
  - heroic love of country (EDSA 1 and 2)

These challenges require us, as a Catholic University, to practice rigorous fidelity and courageous creativity (**Ex corde Ecclesiae**).

(Dr. Jeannette V. Loanzon, Ph.D. is currently the Dean of the College of Commerce, University of Santo Tomas, Manila. The above article was presented during the 2005 National Convention of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines held on September 14-16, 2005 in Davao City – Ed.)
The SCOURGE of LEGALIZED GAMBLING
Despite the flaunted coughing up in revenues purportedly for social services programs, the government cannot remain unsullied to legalized gambling’s despicable consequences—cronyism and patronage politics, graft and corruption, bureaucratic mismanagement, gambling-related crimes, and a lot more of undesirable upshots.

By ROY Q. LAGARDE

Wilfredo “Boy” Mayor was right, it turns out. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo failed to expressly state that she is seriously against jueteng, an illegal numbers game, because its direct consequence will be to her own disadvantage. Aside from being alleged as the direct beneficiary of the illegal gambling money, she despises the Erap and Chavit-Singzon scenario—that she might also fail to complete her six-year term. “Gambling lords has an ace up their sleeves. And when push comes to shove they can pull that ace out and try to maneuver the situation,” Mayor said.

It has been five months since the jueteng controversy spawned by sensational exposes hounded President Arroyo and her family. On an estimate count, nearly 90% of jueteng operations nationwide have been affected and more than 200,000 jueteng workers were reportedly displaced. Now, however, after what seemingly must be the outpouring success of the government’s initiated crackdown on jueteng, a semblance of normality is setting in. Jueteng—and yes, big time operators—are reopening; and cabos and cobradores are now back in the streets welcoming the local folks to betting that not long ago were silent. Because of the government’s claim that the only way to win the campaign against jueteng is to give its beneficiaries an alternative livelihood, they’ve come out with an idea of legalizing it. The government has plenty of reasons, but one gnaws at them just like other legalized gambling: the revenues.

Over the past few years, more and more Asian countries, developed or developing, are discarding their traditional gambling stand and shifting gambling into major sources of public funds. For example, the Singaporean government has finally allowed casino operations because of their diminishing inflow of tourism and was afraid of being surpassed by other nations in terms of tourism industry. They have acknowledged the fact that it could generate an additional $1.5 billion revenues and create more than 35,000 jobs. Today, casinos and other gambling dens are also thriving in Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Nepal, Malaysia, Myanmar and even in tiny Laos.

In the Philippines, the government has been expanding and promoting gambling through the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), both under Government Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCC), and touted as the most profitable government corporations in the country established to generate funds for the government’s developmental projects and help curb illegal gambling.

PAGCOR’s net revenues kept rising from P14 billion in 2000, P17 billion in 2001, P20 billion in 2002, P21 billion in 2003 and P22 billion in 2004. To recall, some legislators have proposed to privatize the casinos, but it did not prosper. Why? Because there are several government agencies and programs that are being subsidized out of casino earnings as mandated by law—among them are the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) and the National Power Corporation (NPC). The moment PAGCOR is abolished, fund subsidies for these agencies will likewise stop.

Lotto earning, meanwhile, reached P9.6 billion in 2003 and P11.3 billion in 2004. According to the PCSO, 30% of total revenue goes to charity, 55% to the prizes and 15% to their operational costs. They’ve also confirmed that the unclaimed winnings from online lottery and sweepstakes have reached P624 million from 1996 to 2002. Now, the PCSO is set to institutionalize another form of gambling purportedly to eradicate jueteng—small town lottery, where the government stands to earn from P6 billion to P10 billion annually.

But like Mayor, self-confessed jueteng operator, many anti-gambling groups are getting apprehensive of the supposed advantages being dangled by the government. Gambling’s negative consequences are even more formidable than the flaunted revenues to subsidize purportedly government’s social services programs.

One problem is crime. Historically, crime increases where gambling is legal. Studies showed that problematic gamblers sometimes turn to criminal activities to support their habit. Gamblers often deal drugs, embezzle, or steal to get money to gamble or to pay gambling debts. Prostitution, and general sexual immorality, likewise rises because of immoral entertainment provided in and near gambling houses. In fact, alongside with most gambling dens in Metro Manila KTV bars have sprouted like
mushrooms, many of which conspicuously display Japanese characters and signs recruiting GROs.

Because of the thriving technology, PAGCOR already has ventured into online gambling such as online soccer and basketball jackpots which has allowed betting on NBA, PBA, UAAP and NCAA games, among others. However, a report by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) last year scored the alarming reality of sports betting even among school children in Manila’s exclusive schools, using their mobile phones in betting.

At first blush, it may be said that PAGCOR has indeed been subsidizing some major government's social services programs. For example, “As of April 2004 the ‘Patubig ni GMA’ has guaranteed the regular supply of potable water to 805,920 households in Metro Manila and the provinces of Rizal and Cavite, exceeding the initial target of 160,000 families identified as living in ‘waterless’ communities,” according to a one-page government paid ad published over a local magazine. In this project alone says Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz, “PAGCOR has spent more than P150 million for the purchase of equipments before the 2004 elections” But anti-gambling groups assert that subsidizing even a “milking cow” for the Arroyo administration and political ads, and P180 million went for public relations and political ads, and P180 million went for the purchase of motorcycles, 50 pick-up trucks and 7,000 truncheons. The truncheons are for barangay tanods but it seemed unclear where the vehicles went.

The biggest problem, in a word, is corruption or at least the potential for it. In many years, not only few government officials have been implicated in gambling-related scandals. Last April, members of House of Representatives sat down in a session to address alleged scandals in the country’s gambling industry. Legislators have been demanding that the PAGCOR open its books to an audit so that the people will be able know how the ‘gaming’, if gambling, government corporation spends billions of pesos it earns from its operations. “Where do these revenues go and how does the general public benefit from them?” Rep. Crispin Beltran asked during a House session last April. “It’s apparent that for all of PAGCOR’s projects that it donates millions to socio-civic projects of the government and contributes to charities, billions more are pocketed by its officials and their business partners in the private sector. PAGCOR is a government institution where corruption is inherent and undeniable.”

“From what I heard, PAGCOR is the Santa Claus for a lot of government officials and there is no way we could verify this report because of questionable disbursement procedures. I was also surprised that most of its finances are not covered by any auditing mechanism by Commission on Audit,” Rep. Robert Jaworski said.

For several years, PAGCOR’s contributions to the President’s Social Fund did not pass through the National Treasury until the implementation of E-VAT recently, imposing a 10 percent tax on services not previously covered by the old VAT law including PAGCOR.

By far also, there have been more accusations of anomalous transactions in PAGCOR including the P489 million in rent PAGCOR paid to the Hyatt Manila Hotel and Casino, and the hiring of 116 consultants, 103 retainers and many directors in exclusive clubs.

Francisco Tatad, erstwhile senator, charged Arroyo and some legislators of covering-up allegedly allowing PAGCOR to continue its operation. PAGCOR was created under PD 1067-A, with a 25-year franchise to operate under PDs 1067-A, 1067-B and 1067-C, all issued on January 1, 1977. These decrees were, however, consolidated into one PD-No. 1869 on July 11, 1983 without changing the 25-year contract, thus, the franchise was to expire January 1, 2002. But the Arroyo administration allegedly railroaded last December a bill which misrepresents the 25-year franchise as having taken effect on July 11, 1983 instead of Jan. 1, 1977, and expiring only on July 11, 2008 instead of having already expired on Jan. 1, 2002.

That legalized gambling or state-run gambling corporations are earning is no question indeed—albeit, most likely than not, the bigger chips often fall, not only to the government’s social programs but even more to questionable ends or purposes. Notwithstanding, the profligate correlative problems or ill practices that has become the hallmark of legalized gambling—cronyism and patronage politics, graft and corruption, anomalous transactions, gambling-related crimes, and other immoral consequences—undoubtedly far exceed the touted revenues.

Thence, ponder so, what reason else for the government to insistently peddle for the continued operation of legalized gambling? For Mayor, one is certain: “It’s all about money. They can’t afford to lose the huge gambling network and the millions of money that goes along with it.”

But can money redeem all the scourge that gambling brings?
The gospels speak of a touching moment in the last days of Jesus that evokes powerful undertones of how the Lord viewed the poor and the burden of poverty. That episode is mentioned in all four Gospels, especially in the recollections of the aging evangelist who loved the Lord demonstrably as a brother and mentor—the apostle John. The setting is a banquet, most likely in the nearby Jerusalem suburb of Bethany, hometown of Lazarus, the friend Jesus resurrected from the grave. Two accounts identify the host as the prominent Pharisee Simon, possibly a leper cured by Jesus.

Quite suddenly, a disturbance freezes the celebration. A woman enters the male-exclusive party; she “gate-crashes,” as it were, and is obviously made to feel unwelcome. Most of the men turn hostile glances at the intruder. Some of them recoil at her sight. In their secret thoughts, they wonder if this is the “sinner” the adulteress they couldn’t stone to death when Jesus exposed their own sinfulness. Boldly, the woman tames her cowering fear; she is a sinner fraught with remorse, numb to ridicule, but determined to pay homage to the One who saved her life and defended her dignity. She kneels before Jesus and pours expensive fragrant oil on the Master’s hair; then she washes Jesus’ feet with tars of repentance and joy. Judas, the treasurer, whom John labels a “thief” and “the one who would betray Jesus,” indignantly blurts out the conventional hypocrisy: “why was not this perfume sold? It could have brought three hundred silver pieces, and the money have been given to the poor.” Then, Jesus, looking at Judas, replies, “Leave her alone...The poor you will always have with you, and you can be generous to them whenever you want to, but you will not always have Me.” (John 12:7,8; Mark 14:6,7)

“....The poor you will always have with you...” Jesus’ remark has resounded through the centuries, enshrined in cynical minds—conveniently but wrongly considered to be the Lord’s resigned acceptance that poverty is inevitable, a condition mankind simply embrace as an evil that flows from the nature of man. Yet this was so utterly far from what Jesus had in mind. Rather, it speaks of where Jesus thought His disciples should be—with the poor, sharing whatever they have, providing for their needs of soul and body. And yet it also speaks of how preciously Jesus knew Judas’ heart; whenever His disciples bear the heart of Judas, there will always be poverty. The heartlessness of Judas is the root cause of poverty.

Far from the common wisdom that prevails among those who are “well-off,” the cause of poverty in the world and particularly in our country today is neither the fatalistic laziness of the poor nor their lack of enterprise. Jose Rizal exposed this elitist stance when he wrote about the “indolence” of the Filipinos. The single most telling cause of widespread, debilitating poverty is that so many self-proclaimed followers of Jesus have inflicted their greed and thievery on the powerless poor, dehumanizing them and reducing them to passive, dole-out-dependent chattel. The “haves” have constructed invisible, insurmountable barriers between themselves and the “have-nots”—the barriers of education, technology, capital, opportunity—and the most immobilizing barrier of all—the barrier of stoic, insensitive, self-righteous indifference.

The Philippine social elite and so-called “middle class” regard the idle “masses” as an unwanted but necessary evil in society. Countless, if not the predominant majority of the upper and middle class, view the multitude of laboring poor merely as unworthy tools and undeserving beneficiaries of their economic enterprises. This condescending attitude is craftily disguised in lip-service attempts at poverty-alleviation—charities and even movements that barely scratch the surface of poverty and ironically aggravate the problem by perpetuating the self-defeating syndrome of mendicancy. Over the decades, elaborate schemes concocted by business, civic and government sectors have ended up only in massive fraud, graft or thievery. Yet the incidence of poverty continues to balloon—from the single-digit level it was four decades ago to the scale of over three-fourths of the entire population that it is now. Indeed, widespread poverty has been unconscionably used to engineer massive corruption, which in turn rudely exacerbated poverty.

Perhaps a different outlook deserves
The Poor: Curse or Challenge?

1917 Code is dropped. With the new formulation, it comes out that marriage is ordered to the twofold end: the good of the spouses and the good of the children. The ends of marriage are actually one, complimentary, inseparable. The effect of this re-structuring of the purposes of marriage is the under-scoring the very dignity of the persons in the family and their being a community.

Structural Response

The most important juridical structure established by the Church in order to defend and promote the family is the Pontifical Council for the Family. It was established in 1981 by John Paul II as a Vatican “dicastery” with many areas of competence dealing with marriage, family and human life. Headed by the Cardinal Prefect himself, the Council primarily promotes the pastoral care of families and fosters their dignity and inherent rights in the Church and before civil society. As counterpart to this international Pontifical Council for the Family, the Commission on Family and Life was constituted by CBCP. It acts as lead agency for the defense and promotion of family concerns in the local churches in the Philippines. Meanwhile, each and every diocese of the Philippines is also expected to put up its own structural counterpart to oversee that the family and its values are duly protected and promoted at the grass root level. Through these juridical structures, several programs and activities, international as well as local, related to the promotion and defense of the family have been organized. The latest activity is the Fourth World Meeting of Families held here.

Christian Marriage / from p. 5
in Manila last January 2003.

**Pastoral Appeals**

**Appeal to men of good-will**. Appeals to save the family and the rights of its members have been voiced by the Church. The impassioned ones are contained in *Familiaris Consortio* of John Paul II who among others said: “The future of humanity passes by way of the family. It is therefore indispensable and urgent that every person of good will should endeavor to save and foster the values and requirements of the family. I feel that I must ask for a particular effort in this field from the sons and daughters of the Church. Faith gives them full knowledge of God’s wonderful plan; they therefore have an extra reason for caring for the reality that is the family in this time of trial and of grace” (n. 86).

Another impassioned appeal was made recently by John Paul II in his Address to the Fourth World Meeting of Families held in the Philippines last January 25, 2003. He said: “Christian couples, be “good news for the third millennium” by bearing convincing and consistent witness to the truth about the family. The family founded on marriage is a patrimony of humanity, a great good of priceless value, necessary for the life, development and the future of peoples. According to the plan of creation established in the beginning (cf. Mt. 19: 4-8), the family is the setting in which the human person, made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), is conceived and born, grows and matures. The family, as the primary school in which the human person is formed (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 19-27), is indispensable for a true “human ecology” (Centesimus Annus, 39).

**Appeal to those Experts in Law**. In the International Interfaith Conference on the Family held in Manila on the 28th March 1999, the participants came out with an appeal: “We call on all the families of the world to join hands and work together in creating appropriate legal structures to counteract forces destructive to family life and marriage institutions and move to promote growth and development. Every member of the family always has significant role to play. One voice can always make a difference” (cf. op. cit., *Family: At the Center of Human Development*, p. 243). To empower these families addressed by the Declaration, those knowledgeable with Church’s laws are to come out and help them with their expertise.

Meantime the addresses of the Holy Father to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota could shed some light on how to effectively approach the laws of the Church, properly interpret them in consonance with these guidelines and apply them accordingly.

**Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, 27 January 1997**. Here, the Holy Father observed that the Second Vatican Council’s vision of marriage and family contains personalist aspects. As this view of marriage has entered in the codification of 1983 Code of Canon Law, the Holy Father has been asking what would be the juridical consequences that would necessarily flow from these personalist aspects of marriage and family. His answer is to place the persons at the center of the civility of love. For him this approach will not exclude the law. In fact “it demands it, leading to a rediscovery of law as an interpersonal reality and to a vision of juridical institutions that highlights their constitutive link with persons themselves, which is so essential in the case of marriage and the family” (Address of John Paul II, 27 January 1997). It means that correct interpretation of the law and its application can only happen when the person involved is considered in all his/her reality and duly appreciated.

Law is an interpersonal reality; juridical institutions demand the constitutive link with persons themselves. Hence, there is no conflict between law and the interpersonal aspects of marriage. Take for instance the “relations between the spouses, in fact, like those between parents and children, are constitutively relations of justice, and for that reason have in themselves juridical significance. Married and parent-child love is not merely an instinctive inclination, nor an arbitrary and reversible choice, but is rather a love that is due” (op. cit.).

Correct approach of the law therefore demands the integral vision of man. This implies knowledge of the human person in all its reality. It has first of all to keep in mind the essential nature of the person, the essential nature of his conjugal dimension and the resulting natural inclination to marriage. Human person, that is, a free and conscious agent in relation to another, has a “nature” in the metaphysical sense. By virtue of his nature, the person is subject to essential rights and obligations of marriage which are objective and juridical (cf. op. cit., 5).

Integral vision of man includes man as redeemed. It envisioned man with a sound realism “in its conception of personal freedom, placed between the limits and influences of a human nature burdened by sin and the always sufficient help of divine grace” (op. cit. 4).

A novel approach to the law and its interpretation this is. The canon lawyers are enjoined to enter into it. If apprehension takes the better of them, they should be reminded of what the Holy Father said to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota. He said: “On these subjects the Magisterium of the Church goes well beyond the mere juridical dimension, but it does keep it constantly in mind. As a result, a preeminent source for understanding and correctly applying canonical marriage law is the Church’s same magisterium, which is responsible for authentically interpreting the word of God concerning this reality (see *Dei Verbum*, no. 10), including its juridical aspects. The canonical norms are only the juridical expression of an underlying anthropological and theological reality, and we must be in constant touch with reality if we are to avoid the risk of facile interpretations. The guarantee of certitude, in the structure of the People of God as communion, is offered by the living Magisterium of the Pastors” (op. cit., 3).

**Address of John Paul II to the Prelate Auditors, Officials and Advocates of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, 30 January 2003.**

In this address, the Holy Father highlights the importance and the significance
see Christmas lights as mere decoration; if anything, it is a symptom that gloom is right inside our hearts. We can be so distracted by so many artificial lights around us that we could miss (as we often do) the real LIGHT staring us full in the face. Yes, Christmas is about the coming of the Light, the Sun of Justice, Jesus the Christ. And just as the sun removes the darkness in the world and reveals its beauty and woundedness, Jesus comes to us and exposes our sins in the light of day so as to unwrap before our very eyes the beauty that makes us God’s children. Most of all, Christmas is about the Son of God becoming visible so that we could get a full view of the God we cannot see, the One St. Augustine calls “Beauty ever ancient, ever new”. Yes, a full view because Jesus comes to reveal God to us fully and not just in fragments, as in the olden days. “In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through his son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refugence of his glory, the very imprint of his being…” (Heb 1:1-3).

As a child I remember, one night, feeling very scared of an object that seemed to be moving in front of our old house. I hid safely inside and watched the object to see if it was some “engkanto” or some “aswang” threatening our very existence. Then the day after, with the sun fully shining, I discovered it was just the leaf from a stump swaying in the wind. My fears vanished like smoke. It is not unlike our situation. Before Jesus we were so afraid of darkness and evil; they seemed invincible. With Jesus, the powers of darkness lose their sting because the Light of the world shines on them, scattering them away. “All things came to be through him and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it” (Jn 1:3-5).

4. The DENR Order has set the clock back on social justice in the country. Social inequity in the Philippines can hardly be uprooted overnight. But it is powerfully given a boost by the Order. A corporation owned by a member of the country’s elite is now allowed to rake in more wealth for itself while the masses of Samar’s poor will only eke out of the crumbs and may even lose the little that they have of Samar’s God-given natural wealth. The Church which sees the advancement of social justice as duly constitutive of the preaching of the gospel (Justice in the World, no. 21) cannot merely view this state of things and let it be. She must raise her voice and say no.

5. St. Augustine used to say, “Love and do what you will (Ama et fac quod vis!) That is what we are called to do primarily as Disciples of Jesus Christ! Let us love our God who has given us the earth and everything in it! But let us especially love our people and do what we must: save their forests and save our patrimony!

We urge the government and especially Secretary Michael T. Defensor to do the same. Look beyond mere political and economic accommodations: Truly love the people and serve their welfare! How? Rescind the August 15, 2005 DENR Order allowing commercial logging in Samar Island!

May Mary, the Mother of the Savior, intercede for us and our worthy cause! Yours in the Lord,

Most Rev. Pedro R. Dean, D.D.
Metropolitan Archbishop of Palo, Leyte
Most Rev. Leonardo Y. Medroso, D.D.
Bishop of Borongan, Eastern Samar
Most Rev. Jose S. Palma, D.D.
Bishop of Calbayog, Western Samar
Most Rev. Emmanuel C. Trance, D.D.
Bishop of Cataraman, Northern Samar
Most Rev. Filomeno G. Bactol, D.D.
Bishop of Naval, Biliran
Most Rev. Isabelo Abarquez, D.D.
Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Palo
Most Rev. Angel T. Hobayan, D.D.
Bishop Emeritus of Cataraman, Northern Samar
Most Rev. Maximiano T. Cruz, D.D.
Bishop Emeritus of Calbayog, Western Samar
Clergy, Archdiocese of Palo, Diocese of Calbayog, Diocese of Borongan, Diocese of Cataraman, Diocese of Naval
Einar Gilkyson (Robert Redford) lives practically alone in his run-down ranch near Ishawoosa, Wyoming. His only companion is Mitch (Morgan Freeman), an old ranch hand who is now an invalid after being mauled by a bear a year earlier. Caring for Mitch means giving him his daily dose of morphine as well as bringing him his meals. As they go through their daily routine, it seems their lives have come to a standstill, with nothing more to look forward to. Then suddenly, Jean (Jennifer Lopez), Einar’s daughter-in-law and Griff (Becca Gardener), his granddaughter, appear on his doorstep. Einar hates Jean because, though his son died accidentally 12 years ago, Einar thinks Jean is responsible for his death. Einar does not know he has a granddaughter. Jean signals a reconciliation. Forgive—

Devoid of fantastic special effects or adrenalin pumping action stunts that dominate the screen these days, the movie An Unfinished Life depicts quietly what seems to be the static life of persons isolated physically and emotionally. But the uneventful story at the outset turns out to be an absorbing and touching drama as the characters undergo personality changes and evolve into more than stereotypes. Einar, the character of Redford, has the most dramatic metamorphosis.

In pursuit of its mission which is that of making the internet as a new forum for proclaiming the Gospel, CBCPWorld conducting training courses on information and communications technology. Last year, about a thousand catholic teachers and church workers underwent various ITC training programs.

This year, CBCPWorld is offering the following training modules:

1. EdTech Series - this is for catholic teachers; a 2-day program on integrating information and communications technology in the subject curriculum.
2. WebArt - for pastoral workers; a 3-day basic course on web designing with emphasis on religious design and layout.
3. SysAd - for systems administrators; a highly technical 3-day course on Linux and systems administration.
4. IT Awareness Seminar - for evangelizers; a 2-day hands-on seminar on information and communications technology.
5. Catechetical Multi-Media Production - for catechists; a 3-day basic course on digital audio and video production.

For inquiries, please email to friends@cbcpworld.com or call (02) 404-1612.
Homosexuality

Gender orientation in no way diminishes the inherent dignity of a human person. It is not what sex a person has that makes the difference but what he or she does with it. Human sexuality is an accompaniment of a person that changes his disposition but not constitution. That is why discrimination among persons has no place in civilized society. They are essentially equal.

It is said that homosexuals are not mean for the priesthood. This is however neither a degrading nor a discriminating observance. This is simple reality. It would be difficult for a homosexual to be pushed into a heterosexual milieu. Such is neither logical nor fair.

Let it be said too that heterosexual males unduly inclined to women are neither meant for the priesthood. This too is not discrimination but the admission of truth. It would be unrealistic to impose on them celibacy. Such would be asking them something extraordinary which is also unfair and unreasonable.

In the same way, just as women are not meant to become priests, men are neither intended to become sisters. This is distinction. Not discrimination. This is reality. The opposite is falsity. Men sisters just as women priests are but dissonant composites—not discriminatory realities.

Every human person must be good for something—though not for everything. While majority of the people get married, there are those who simply do not for one reason or another. They do not feel that marriage is for them. So they remain single for life. This is something connatural for them which do not make them more or less persons.

There are homosexuals who succeed and who fail in temporal matters. So are there heterosexuals who shine or fade in earthly pursuits. What makes them rise or fall is not their sexual identity. It is rather their talents as persons and their opportunities as individuals.

Do unto others what you want others to do unto you. Who does not know this golden rule? Even children are taught this elementary norm of living. It is a big shame if adults themselves do not know and practice it. This is precisely the case of those who discriminate against anyone on account of gender orientation.

www.ovc.blogspot.com

For many decades, the PCSO was an institution completely synonymous with charity. It meant charity on the part of those who bought its tickets. Their intention was charity. Their generosity was for charity.

People then did not buy sweepstakes tickets to win. They did not expect to win. They wanted to help the poor, the sick, the orphans. Most of them started buying tickets when they were young. They became old. They died. They never won. Their loss was charity’s gain. That was the way it was meant to be. And so it was.

But slowly and surely the PCSO was made to evolve into something with less nobility but with more avarice. It progressively made its patrons less charitable but more greedy. PCSO is now sadly adulterated with downright gambling.

Gambling could be anything but charity on the part of the gamblers. Helping others is farthest from the mind of the gamblers. Winning, yes. Helping themselves, yes. Coveting the money of others, yes. But doing charity, no!

First, PCSO introduced Lotto. This form of gambling was introduced allegedly to eradicate jueteng. The outcome is well known. Lotto and Jueteng came to have a peaceful co-existence. Lotto even sired another form of gambling: lotteng.

Now, PCSO is promoting small town lottery (STL). Again, it is said that this would replace jueteng. But just like lotto, STL is precisely the cover-up of jueteng. And once more, STL is poised to likewise procreate another form of gambling: pick-2.

It is worth asking how the national leadership feels about all these. The often proclaimed strong republic is fast becoming a gambling republic instead. There is PAGCOR dedicated to gambling. There is PCSO promoting gambling. And there are the gambling lords operating many forms of gambling. Gambling does not a strong republic make. Gambling is a vice as well as a vicious activity. Gambling promotes anything and everything—except industry, integrity and honesty. And its victims are always the same: the gullible poor and the indolent rich.

www.ovc.blogspot.com
Truth Proven By Lies

Time and again truth has shown its ability of manifesting itself. Hide and cover it up and it finds a way of showing itself. Those who want to disregard and refuse to admit it, ultimately find truth staring them at their faces. How strange that even those who try to bury it, the truth survives their mortal lives.

This is the paradox of our times. There were many questions unanswered, so many doubts entertained. Was there massive cheating in the 2004 national elections? Were votes padded or lessened by those precisely commissioned and trusted to count and record them well?

And after so many attempts and so much effort in finding out the truth, after so long a time in waiting, finally it has shown itself. The truth has ultimately come out in the open. And it took lies upon lies for truth to be known at last. What a strange way of knowing the truth!

The CBCP no less than twice called upon the people to continue their search for the truth about the reality or falsity of the presidential election.

The search can now be considered finished. The country has long wanted a closure of the issue. That closure can now be said as done. Again: the truth is found. The closure is made.

Now, the next move belongs to the holder of the highest office of the land. Would that it be according to the constitution. Otherwise, there could be either an extra-constitutional or anti-constitutional event. And this would be worse for her—because she would be totally divested of the immunity attached to her official person by force and not by her own decision.

Lesser and lesser come the respect of the citizens for the person of the president. Lower and lower is her approval rating. More and more ineffective leadership she exercises. Meantime poorer and poorer the people have become. And how much more should the people suffer by her tenacity to power.

Once again, according to the CBCP, resignation remains an option for the Malacañang occupant. And this appears to be the better option.
Statement on the Establishment and Operation of a Casino at Barangay, Poro, San Fernando, La Union

At this time of crisis occasioned by a difficult problem that would bring irreparable damage to our lives in this province, we, the bishop, priests, religious men, and women and concerned lay faithful in the Diocese of San Fernando of La Union, hereby declare:

§ That at all times we carry the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if we are to carry out our task as the universal sacrament of salvation (GS1);

§ that it is our task to act as conscience to society and to safeguard the moral order which defines the relationships between those in authority and their constituents;

§ that in fulfilling our task in sharing Christ’s mission as prophet, the Church must enhance, encourage, support what is good in Philippine society, yet at the same time criticize, condemn and do all it can to lessen what is bad in it (PCP II 347);

§ that one of the moral evils that exists in society is gambling and whatever form it takes threatens the moral values that ought to shape and form the human person into a responsible and God-fearing person;

§ that there can never be a justification for promoting gambling as in a casino establishment under the pretext of generating jobs for the unemployed, raising the standard of living, increasing the gross national product and providing economic sufficiency;

§ that such facilities for gambling would only spawn about untold evils including prostitution, drug abuse, AIDS, all sorts of crime and the destruction of family values;

§ that these evil consequences would even far outweigh the possible benefits that such facilities for gambling would produce;

§ that there can be other areas, wholesome and profitable ones, which need only to be explored for the sake of providing job opportunities for the unemployed and uplifting the living conditions of the poor;

As a church we hereby declare our opposition to the establishment and operation of a casino component to the hotel-resort at Barangay, Poro, City of San Fernando, La Union. We laud and commend the provincial and city government officials for the progress and development they have achieved for this province. We, however, believe that approving the operation of a hotel-resort with a casino component in the city of San Fernando was not necessary at all. Progress can be achieved even without it. We are against the promotion of economic sufficiency if only through gambling.

Most Rev. Artemio Rillera, SVD, DD
Bishop of San Fernando, La Union
November 20, 2005
As pastors of the Lord’s flock we have the responsibility to listen to his voice in the cry of the least of his brothers and sisters. No less than that is our duty to care for the earth, even as we humbly strive to imitate Him who looks after the “birds in the sky” and the “lilies of the field” to express his greater love for his people (Mt 6:26, 28).

Moved by this unparalleled love of the Lord for his flock, we, the Bishops of Samar and Leyte, with the concurrence of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Palo and his Auxiliary, together with our respective Clergies, petition the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, Michael T. Defensor, to rescind his August 15, 2005 Order allowing San Jose Timber Corporation to pursue logging operations in Samar Island.

There are vital reasons behind our common stand.

1. In our judgment rescinding the DENR Order is a demand of the people’s welfare. That welfare, after all, is the highest law (salus populi suprema lex). As long as the specter of destruction to life, livelihood and property, to a balanced and wholesome eco-system is poised on them by the imminent loss of critical forest cover and watershed, our people will not be helped even by financial or economic gain. In fact, material benefits alone do not determine our people’s welfare because even financial and economic considerations cannot supersede such other vital human concerns as our people’s security, spiritual and moral health, among others. Working for our people’s true welfare means respecting our people’s true nature; for we not only have bodies but spirits as well. Physically and spiritually, we need our forest cover intact and healthy.

2. The issuance of the Order came in the wake of a morally compromised situation: two public officials sharing favors that seem mutually related to one another. A Senator of the Republic helping to confirm the appointment of a DENR Secretary who himself issues an Order allowing the Senator’s logging company to operate again clearly does not at all inspire confidence in the absence of political trade-off between powerful people at the expense of Samar Island and its hapless people. Nor is it even tolerated by Article 6, Section 14 of the 1987 Constitution which bans Senators and Members of the House of Representatives from being “directly or indirectly interested financially in any contract with, or any franchise or special privilege granted by the Government, or any subdivision, agency, or instrumentality thereof, including any government-owned or controlled corporation, or its subsidiary, during his term of office. He shall not intervene in any matter before any office of the government for his pecuniary benefit or where he may be called upon to act on account of his office.” Rescinding the Order, therefore, rights a wrong and rekindles hope. It will, moreover, prove the seriousness of the government’s thrust against even a semblance of graft.

3. The DENR decision stands on the wrong side of the moral equation. For example, the Order champions the supposed “prior rights” of one public official and one corporation but tramples under foot the “more prior” native rights of the people of Samar Island. The Order keeps alive a business but it threatens the very survival of lowland farmers and their families or even of the Philippine Eagle whose biggest number is in Samar Island, the Philippine Hawk Eagle and the Philippine Cockatoo.
My husband is an Engineer by profession, I love him for his steady nature, and I love the warm feeling when I lean against his broad shoulders. Three years of courtship and now, eight years into marriage, I would have to admit, that I am getting tired of it. The reasons of me loving him before, has now transformed into the cause of all my restlessness.

I am a sentimental woman and extremely sensitive when it comes to a relationship and my feelings, I yearn for the romantic moments, like a little girl yearning for candy. My husband is my complete opposite, his lack of sensitivity, and the inability of bringing romantic moments into our marriage has disheartened me about love. One day, I finally decided to tell him my decision, that I wanted a divorce.

“Why?” he asked, shocked. “I am tired; there are no reasons for everything in the world!” I answered. He kept silent the whole night, seems to be in deep thought with a lighted cigarette at all times. My feeling of disappointment only increased, here was a man who can’t even express his predicament, what else can I hope from him? And finally he asked me: “What can I do to change your mind?” Somebody said it right, it’s hard to change a person’s personality, and I guess, I have started losing faith in him.

Looking deep into his eyes I slowly answered: “Here is the question, if you can answer and convince my heart, I will change my mind, Let’s say, I want a flower located on the face of a mountain cliff, and we both are sure that picking the flower will cause your death, will you do it for me?” He said: “I will give you your answer tomorrow....” My hopes just sank by listening to his response.

I woke up the next morning to find him gone, and saw a piece of paper with his scratchy handwriting, underneath a milk glass, on the dining table near the front door, that goes:...

My dear, “I would not pick that flower for you, but please allow me to explain the reasons further....” This first line was already breaking my heart. I continued reading. “When you use the computer you always mess up the software programs, and you cry in front of the screen, I have to save my fingers so that I can help to restore the programs. You always leave the house keys behind, thus I have to save my legs to rush home to open the door for you. You love traveling but always lose your way in a new city, I have to save my eyes to show you the way. You always have the cramps whenever your “good friend” approaches every month, I have to save my palms so that I can calm the cramps in your tummy. You like to stay indoors, and I worry that you will be infected by infantile autism. I have to save my mouth to tell you jokes and stories to cure your boredom. You always stare at the computer, and that will do nothing good for your eyes, I have to save my eyes so that when we grow old, I can help to clip your nails, and help to remove those annoying white hairs. So I can also hold your hand while strolling down the beach, as you enjoy the sunshine and the beautiful sand... and tell you the color of flowers, just like the color of the glow on your young face....

Thus, my dear, unless I am sure that there is someone who loves you more than I do, I could not pick that flower yet, and die....”

My tears fell on the letter, and blurred the ink of his handwriting.... and as I continue on reading...

“Now, that you have finished reading my answer, if you are satisfied, please open the front door for I am standing outside bringing your favorite bread and fresh milk....” I rushed to pull open the door, and saw his anxious face, clutching tightly with his hands, the milk bottle and loaf of bread....

Now I am very sure that no one will ever love me as much as he does, and I have decided to leave the flower alone....

rowena.dalanon@cbcpworld.net
Sites on Focus

by DENNIS B. DAYAO

For more than two years, the content development department of CBCPWorld has been developing and hosting several Catholic websites. Among these are school websites from their broadband clients nationwide.

In this December issue of Impact, we are featuring some websites, and more for the coming issues. If you find some time, do visit them!

http://www.aspmdps.org

Inspired by the Angelic Sisters of St. Paul’s charism, the Mother of Divine Providence School has been serving the youth since 1987. Located at Marikina City, MDPS continues to provide quality education for the young to become critical and creative thinkers.

http://www.cbcpworld.com/cic

The College of Immaculate Concepcion was founded on 1926 at Cabanatuan City. This Diocesan Catholic continues to educate and evangelize in Christ-centeredness, excellence, and service for the integral formation of persons towards a just, humane and peaceful society.

http://www.cbcpworld.com/sca

In 1951, St. Catherine Academy initially offered secondary education. Serving at the heart of Porac, Pampanga, SCA continues to envisions itself as a vibrant and viable choice for Catholic families who desire a high quality and faith-based educational experience.

http://www.cbcpworld.com/mdgc

Characterized by the Franciscan values of joy and simplicity for the formation of a just and humane society, Mater Divinæ Gratiae College carry through serve the youth of Dolores, Eastern Samar.

http://www.cbcpworld.com/ylac

The Young Ladies Association of Charity Unit (YLAC) was conceived to be the younger version of the Ladies of Charity in France. Opened as a primary school in 1949, YLAC continues to to give a free quality Christian-oriented education to the children of indigent families, for the less privileged children in the city of Cebu.

Calling to all open heartened, a donation of Php 1,000- a year will definitely help a child’s education and future. May you find true happiness in knowing you will be helping pave a better future for a child in need.

http://www.cbcpworld.com/carmelseminary

Canonically erected by Bishop Alfredo Versoza and inaugurated on October 11, 1942, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Seminary still continues to foster formation program for high school seminarians.

Calling to all open heartened, a donation of Php 1,000- a year will definitely help a child’s education and future. May you find true happiness in knowing you will be helping pave a better future for a child in need.
AFGHANISTAN

Quake hits Afghan Hindu Kush

An earthquake of 6.7 magnitude has hit the mountainous Afghan Hindu Kush region of bordering Pakistan early on December 13. Residents in Pakistani Kashmir, where tens of thousands were killed by an earthquake on October 8, fled their homes. The tremor was also felt in India’s capital, Delhi.

CHINA

74 dead in China mine blast

At a time when a probe into the Chinese chemical disaster in Harbin is intensifying, there has been another lethal disaster in China, this time in Tangshan, Hebei province. On December 7, a coal mine explosion killed at least 74 people. Last year, more than 6,000 miners were killed in fires, floods, cave-ins, and explosions, making China’s shafts the world’s deadliest. Corruption, lax safety rules, and poor equipment are among the factors often blamed for the accidents.

INDONESIA

Indonesia records 9th bird flu fatality

A 39-year-old man suspected of being infected with the bird flu virus died in hospital. A 35-year-old man who died in a private hospital in North Jakarta last November 19 has been confirmed by World Health Organization (WHO) as the country’s ninth bird flu victim. Meanwhile, another Indonesian suspected of being infected with the virus has died in hospital recently. If confirmed, he would be the 10th fatality from avian influenza in Indonesia.

IRAQ

Baghdad bus explosion kills 3, injured 13

An empty minibus loaded with explosives detonated near al-Kindi hospital and east Baghdad’s Nadhia bus station on December 12, killing three Iraqi civilians and injuring 13 others, five of them were police officers. Meanwhile, a separate bloodshed in and around Baghdad killed another six people, bringing the total to nine. Recently, 32 people were killed and 44 were injured when a suicide bomber at Nadhia station detonated explosives inside a jam-packed bus bound for a southern Shiite city.

JAPAN

'Fat-fingered' trader rocks Japanese stock

Via East Asia Watch, Japanese stock trader employed by Mizuho Securities accidentally sold 600,000 shares for 1 yen instead of 1 share for 600,000 yen on December 8. Despite the firm’s best efforts to buy back as many of its own shares as possible, the “fat finger syndrome” afflicted trader may have cost Mizuho 27-60 billion yen. The slip caused immediate shockwaves in the Tokyo market as traders tried to guess which firm had made the mistake. Fearing the impact, traders sold shares in all Japanese broking houses and the sell-off led to the value of the Nikkei 225 falling 2 per cent. It was only later that Mizuho admitted that one of its traders had made the error.

NEPAL

Nepal’s situation nearly identical to that in Pakistan: Jahangir

Asma Jahangir, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said that Nepal’s political condition is nearly identical to that in Pakistan and urged Nepali judiciary to be careful to keep its sovereign status. Speaking on human rights situation in Nepal at a program hosted by the Nepal Bar Association recently, she said Nepal’s judiciary is still upholding its independence despite its political situation.

PAKISTAN

Over 40 die as wedding bus catches fire

A 72-seater bus packed with more than 90 passengers returning from a wedding caught fire after fire-works exploded, killing 40 people 14 others were critically injured on December 11. Most of the victims were women and children. All bodies were charred, therefore, could not be identified. Police said that the only survivors were those who were standing or sitting near the door, the witnesses said.

SINGAPORE

Migrant women face debt yoke, abuse

Women migrant domestic workers in Singapore suffer grave abuses including physical and sexual violence, food deprivation, and confinement in the workplace, said Human Rights Watch in a new report. At least 147 migrant domestic workers have died from workplace accidents or suicide since 1999, most by jumping or falling from residential buildings. Migrant domestic workers earn half the wages of Singaporean workers in similar occupations, such as cleaners or gardeners.

THAILAND

Thai media still under threat

The dropping of frivolous defamation lawsuits by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra against one of his chief critics is a welcome step, but intimidation, fear, and censorship still permeate the Thai media, Human Rights Watch said. Thaksin dropped six criminal and civil defamation suits against journalist and Manager Media Group founder Sondhi Limthongkul. In total, Sondhi could have faced more than ten years in prison, and fines and damages of over U.S. $50 million from the six suits.
Transpacific Broadband Group International, Inc. 

a leading Philippine commercial teleport services company

- WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY SERVICES
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  - Health Care
  - Military Homeland Security
  - Local Government Units
  - Corporate and Individuals (Wi-Fi)

- SOFTWARE NETWORK APPLICATIONS
  - Online Registration & Grade Inquiry
  - Health Care Processing Portal
  - Smart Card

- MEDIA ADVERTISING
  - Advertorials in Schools
  - TV Block-time Offerings
  - Radio Advertising

- INTERNET SERVICES
  - Internet Access & Subscription
  - Web Design, Hosting & Management

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“We give trainings in IT and Educational Technology, we design and host websites, and publish magazines — all for the sake of the Gospel!”

- Content Development Team

Content Development
§ Web Design
§ Web Maintenance & Hosting
§ Content Sourcing & Editing
§ Video Production

Trainings Conducted
§ Systems Administration
§ IT Awareness Seminar
§ Edtech I
§ Web Design