CARITAS MANILA:
A Prophetic Story of Charity and Justice
We cannot win by achieving economic prosperity at the cost of the environment.”

Wang Xiaofeng, director of the administrative office of the commission in charge of building the Three Gorges Dam, China’s showcase engineering triumph and the world’s biggest hydropower project but has been triggering series of catastrophic landslides.

“The CIA and the U.S. Army trained terrorists and supported terrorism, and they themselves are terrorists.”

The Iranian Parliament voted to designate the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Army as terrorist organizations; an apparent retaliation for the U.S. Senate’s resolution requesting that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards be designated a foreign terrorist organization.

“This particular government has apparently long since considered the people as its always ready and always obliged milking cow…”

Archbishop Oscar Cruz, commenting in his blog (www.ovc.blogspot.com) on the series of mega corruptions and financial anomalies commonly attributed to the Arroyo Administration.

“The jungles and mountains of Vietnam are fascinating places and they continue to surprise scientists.”

Bernard O’Callaghan, Vietnam program coordinator for the World Conservation Union; after scientists found 11 new species of plants and animals in Vietnam, including a snake, two butterflies, and five orchid varieties.

“Given what is going on in the streets in Rangoon, I would have hoped that the Security Council would take a stronger action.”

Condoleezza Rice, US Secretary of State, after the 15-member Council failed to condemn repression in Yangon; despite ASEAN ministers at the UN expressing revulsion over reports that the demonstrations in Myanmar are being suppressed by violent force.

“... it is really a lie to say we welcome mining in the Philippines in order to solve our economic problems.”

Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos, speaking lately at Great Britain’s House of Commons on environmental issues in the Philippines.

## Subscription Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>2 year (25% off)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Php 750.00</td>
<td>Php 562.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Manila</td>
<td>Php 800.00</td>
<td>Php 600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Php 750.00</td>
<td>Php 562.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Php 800.00</td>
<td>Php 600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East, Australia, New Zealand</td>
<td>US$ 45.00</td>
<td>US$ 33.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA, Europe, Canada</td>
<td>US$ 50.00</td>
<td>US$ 37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa, Caribbean, Latin America</td>
<td>US$ 55.00</td>
<td>US$ 41.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 60.00</td>
<td>US$ 45.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2 years: 15% discount on 2nd year surface mail)
Editor’s NOTE

ENDEMIC it has been even in previous dispensations, corruption is best characterized in this incumbent administration where blatant administrative robberies have been done with neither finesse nor poise. At first blush, one is amazed at the courage and daring of supposedly reputable government people grabbing potential millions of dollars in broad daylight—as what one may see in the recent National Broadband Network anomaly.

On second blush, however, one realizes that to be able to launch mega corrupt operations without any qualms verges on the pathological where neither mores nor morals are any of the considerations. Methinks that the godfather—or godmother as any case maybe—of these operations perhaps are good cases of psychological studies.

Except that such operations are too brave to shame even the underworld, this could be tactical, too. Because when one’s survival is the supreme agenda one has to strategically raise tremendous amount of money to buyout all blocks if only to save one’s neck and hold on to so much power—and veer away from the probability of an itinerary from palace to prison or from Hawaii to Paoay, which was true of predecessors.

While all these are plausible, it maybe that the punishment from the gods are now befalling on some high government officials for making eighty millions or so Filipinos undergo undeserved suffering for quite some time now.

Lord Acton said it best when he stated that power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely—because, indeed, morality lessens when power increases. In the Philippines, however, power tends to condemn. Leaders who assumed so much power were condemned by the very power they thought could glorify them.

This issue opens with Rudy Diamante’s report on the worsening situation of jails in the Philippines. Looking into the sorry state of prisons and prisoners is of special interest in view of getting the attention of the government. But jailing corrupt government officials is, of course, more interesting.

Our cover story is about Caritas Manila. Single handedly, it seems, this modest charitable institution has been filling in the gaps neglected by appropriately funded government agencies. Read on.
Institutional imprisonment is not meant only to punish the offender. It is also supposed to correct him, that is, to prepare him to rejoin society after serving his sentence. It is likewise meant to temporarily detain an accused pending the resolution of his case, if his alleged crime is non-bailable, or if he cannot afford the bail.

Correction as part of the criminal justice system is both complex and crucial. It is essential to the maintenance of peace and order in society and of the human dignity of its straying member. Unfortunately, correction is least seen and known by the public. Society is eager to recognize the duty of the state to punish the offender, but reluctant to see its equally important role to “correct” the offender, little realizing that injustice and other societal factors contribute to the making of a criminal.

The objective of transforming the correctional process into an educating and humanizing experience for offenders has been dampened by the insufficient provision of the prisoners’ basic needs. The overcrowded conditions and the grossly deficient facilities in national prisons and various jails give rise to sub-human living and health conditions of prisoners. This is aggravated by insufficient food allowance. The exercise of authority is sometimes abused to the extent of degrading the dignity of prisoners and detainees to include maltreatment, sexual harassment, extortion, and other inhumane treatment.

Moreover, the struggle for supremacy, in prison/detention cells often results in inmates exploiting or abusing other inmates and detainees for personal gains, further creating problems and issues particularly in the use of prison labor. Furthermore, the appropriate provisions for youth offenders, women offenders, elderly and mentally disabled in prisons and political prisoners are inadequate for their protection.

Jail and prisons population

As of February 2007, the jail and prison population reached 128,134. Only 40% of this number were actually found guilty of crimes and are serving their sentences. The remaining 60% are only charged but not yet proven guilty. They are detained because their alleged crimes are not bailable while others cannot afford to pay the bail.

Rehabilitation centers: Premises and facilities

In the Philippines, there are three levels in our institutional approach to correction. The first consists of the national penitentiaries, for offenders sentenced to more than three years of imprisonment. The second level is composed of the provincial and city jails for offenders whose sentences are from seven months to three years. Finally, at the third level are the municipal jails, for offenders sentenced to not more than six months of imprisonment. These jails and prisons also serve as house for detention of prisoners.

Penitentiaries. There are seven penitentiaries strategically located all over the Philippines and these are under the administrative control and supervision of the Bureau of Cor-

The Worsening Condition of Jails in the Philippines

By Rodolfo D. Diamante
The Basic Facilities for Hygienic Fairly Recent Vintage Still Lack Ventilated, Dark, Damp and Cold. Chances of Escape. Hence, until phasis was on minimizing hardship was fit for humans. The em- places of incarceration were century or even earlier, when dates back to the turn of the century. With very few exceptions, the city and municipal jails were constructed at the time the city and municipal buildings were constructed, which means ages ago. The design of some jails dates back to the turn of the century or even earlier, when places of incarceration were hardly fit for humans. The em- phasis was on minimizing chances of escape. Hence, until today, these prisons are poorly ventilated, dark, damp and cold.

Even the few that are of fairly recent vintage still lack the basic facilities for hygienic and humane incarceration of prisoners. Some are devoid of such bare necessities as comfort rooms. The poor conditions brought about by age-worn buildings and equally age-torn facilities are worsened by budgetary constraints and low priority given to the prisoners.

Premises and facilities. Most of the buildings and facili- ties of the jails and prisons are dilapidated from sheer old age. With very few exceptions, the city and municipal jails were constructed at the time the city and municipal buildings were constructed, which means ages ago. The design of some jails dates back to the turn of the century or even earlier, when places of incarceration were hardly fit for humans. The em- phasis was on minimizing chances of escape. Hence, until today, these prisons are poorly ventilated, dark, damp and cold.

A typical provincial jail has an accommodation capac- ity of 50 prisoners; a municipal jail has 20 while a city jail has 100. However, almost all house prisoners whose numbers are double or even triple their capacity, so that the first offender are mixed with hardened ones. There are also prisons which cannot segregate inmates on the basis of sex and age groups, because they have no separate cells for women and minors.

The annual budget allo- cated for prison to cover ex- penses is not sufficient to feed the inmates three decent meals a day and provide for prison upkeep and administrative work.

Problem Areas

Health. The Bureau of Corrections has in its employ medical and dental staff that take care not only of the pris- oners but also of the personnel and their families who live in the reservation area. However, penitentiaries are provided with a subsistence allowance of Php40.00 each. For those con- fined at the provincial jails the food allowance varies ranging from an average of Php12.00 to Php30.00.

The prisoners are served three meals a day. With the high cost of living particularly in urban areas the allotted al- lowance for the subsistence of the prisoners/detainees cannot buy adequate and nutritious food that their body needs. Not only that, in some cases their food are not properly and hygienically prepared and cooked.

The corruption that goes into the purchase and distribu- tion of food is another big problem.

Hygiene. The national penitentiaries and most of the jails are provided with drinking water, showers and toilet facili- ties. However, they are also substandard and deteriorating. Some jails that house about 100 inmates have only one toi- let, shower and drinking facili- ties. Water supply is inade- quate.

Contact with the outside world. The families and friends of those confined at the national penitentiaries and the jails are allowed visitors and on some special occasions, like Christmas and Independence Day, the visitors are allowed to stay overnight. However, such privileges can sometimes be- come a source of corruption and abuses. Sometimes before a visitor is allowed to enter, he/ she is asked to pay a certain amount or has to buy what is being peddled at the gate.

Contact with the outside world is not limited to their le- gitimate visitors. There are in- stances when prostitutes are allowed to peddle their services inside. This is done either by the prostitutes themselves posing as relatives of inmates, or sometimes in connivance with corrupt personnel.

Correspondence is al- lowed with minimum censor-
ship. Free writing and mailing materials are even allocated for the inmates.

Physical and cultural activities. Activities of detainees and convicted prisoners are strictly organized by the law and yet simply because of lack of funds and programs, most of the prisoners’ time is unoccupied. The most popular sport is basketball. There is no adequately furnished library nor any newspaper nor magazine provided by the government. However, some of the jails and penal farms have television and radio sets bought by the inmates themselves or given by some volunteers.

Generally speaking, prisoners are allowed to walk and roam around the prison/jail compound.

Training and work. The Bureau of Corrections provides opportunities for the inmates to work to keep them busy and at the same time to earn for their personal expenses (in prison) and their families. These work programs are funded from four sources, namely: a) appropriated funds for prisoners utilized as janitors, orderlies and other administrative odd jobs; b) prison agro-industries trust funds for prisoners utilized as farm workers; c) wages from TAGUM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, a private corporation that employs prisoners in Davao Penal Colony as banana plantation workers, and Samsung Paper Products at the Medium Security Compound at the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City; d) wages and salaries from the Bureau’s Prison Inmate Labor Contract Office, for prisoners working in various handicraft contracts.

The National Penitentiary offers three types of education and training as primary program for rehabilitation of prisoners. The first is the formal education which includes college (B.S. Commerce), high school and elementary education. The second is the non-formal which is designed to teach prisoners on how to read and write. The third is the vocational training which is undertaken through formal and on-the-job courses.

Prisoners who are confined in municipal, city and provincial jails seldom received education training skills and livelihood projects.

Defense. The government has a Public Defenders Office that provides lawyers to prisoners who can’t afford one. However, because of time constraints and large volume of cases, the lawyers can hardly work efficiently on their cases. If at times, because of poverty the detainees cannot afford the other expense necessary to fight his case, the lawyer will just ask him to plead guilty even if he is innocent of the crime. Furthermore, there are prisoners who claim that some PDO lawyers are not interested or are incompetent in defending their cases.

Discipline/punishment. The National Penitentiaries and jails have isolated cells called guard house or bartolina for those who have violated prison rules and regulations. The punishment varies from each offense and is dependent on the authorities meting out punishment. There are reported abuses ranging from infliction of physical harm and repression of rights such as visitation privileges and access to communication. Guard houses or bartolinas are usually not fit for human habitation. They are damp, dark, filthy and lacking in ventilation.

Deaths. The three types of death of inmates are natural causes (disease), violent incidents, and hot pursuits while escaping.

Position of minors/women. The Juvenile Justice Welfare Act of 2006 governs the treatment of children in conflict with the law ages below 18 years. This law provides that minors who have committed crime and found guilty are given suspended sentence. They are left to the care of their parents or to the institutions known as re-
ception centers supervised by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Those left under the care of parents are not given any program. Those in the institutions are left to the care of social workers who implement program of rehabilitation. The law provides alternative ways of settling dispute through the use of diversion and community based treatment.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Corrections provides a separate institution for women prisoners but in some jails there are no separate cells for women. Prisoners are allowed conjugal visits.

Church’s response to a plea

On March 25, 1975, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines received a letter-petition from the prisoners of the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City. In that letter, they enumerated their problems and sorry condition and expressed their desire to improve the plight of their fellow prisoners throughout the country, including their families.

It was a plea for help.

In response, the CBCP formed that year the Episcopal Commission on Prison Welfare (ECOPRIW). And henceforth it became the agency of the CBCP charged to promote the total development of the members of the prison society. Eventually, since 1998, the agency came to be known as the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care (ECPCC). It is one of the more than 30 offices under the CBCP.

The ECPCC pursues its objective of promoting the total development of the members of the prison society through the organization of Volunteers in Prison Service who implements the Integrated Pastoral Program for the members of the Prison community. The current major thrusts of the CBCP-ECPCC are as follows: a) promote, organize, and sustain the development of Volunteers in Prison Service units in various dioceses to deliver meaningful rehabilitation program for the prisoners; b) continuing advocacy of Restorative Justice, the complete abolition of the death penalty, the adoption of a comprehensive juvenile justice system and other enlightened legislations that promote and serve the Christian values and attitudes towards offenders; c) establishment of linkages and partnerships with groups, agencies, and organizations involved in prison work. For example, locally, with the PAYO (Philippine Action for Youth Offenders), the CADP (Coalition Against Death Penalty), the ICAP (Integrated Correctional Association of the Philippines) and the Technical Committee on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice System of the National Police Commission and internationally, with the IPCA (International Prison Chaplains’ Association) and the ICCPPC (International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care) among others; d) building up a modest Resource Collection on CBCP-ECPCC’s concerns; and e) sustained program for CBCP-ECPCC staff, resource persons and volunteers.

The challenge

The challenge before us is to work for Justice that Heals. It is a kind of justice that will move from PUNISHMENT to RECONCILIATION; from VENGEANCE to HEALING OF VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS; from ALIENATION and HARSHNESS to COMMUNITY WHOLENESS or SHALOM; from NEGATIVITY and DESTRUCTIVENESS to HEALING and FORGIVENESS AND MERCY. This is the JUSTICE THAT RESTORES THE HUMAN DIGNITY.

(Rodolfo D. Diamante is the Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines and Asia-Oceania’s representative to the International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care.)
When I was in college, I used to tutor children in an urban poor community in Quezon City. Every Saturday, my group and I went to the area and taught little children some catechesis and academic lessons. That was where I met Cocoy (not the child’s real name). He was around 10 years old then and was one of our active and diligent students. My friends and I agreed that if he kept up the good work, he would surely have a promising future ahead of him. His dream of having a good job and raising a family would certainly come true. But these things were not meant to be.

Two years ago, I met Cocoy again amidst devastating circumstances. I was conducting a research in Muntinlupa and was shocked to learn that he was one of my subjects. My research was about children in conflict with the law (CICL) who are detained at the New Bilibid Prisons (Bilibid). Cocoy was one of them.

When I saw him, I was moved to tears. I could not imagine how this boy, whom I spent most of my Saturdays with, would end up behind bars. I found out that he was 15 years old when the crime happened and that he had been languishing in jail for six years now. He got hooked on drugs at age 13 and was involved with bad friends. These, coupled with the immaturity and rashness of adolescence led him to this sorry state.

Dismal condition of Philippine jails

Prison life was hard for Cocoy. The dismal condition of Philippine jails, where there is congestion, violence, incidence of abuse, poor nutrition and medical care, and lack of rehabilitative activities, is a known fact. For instance, the daily food budget in Bilibid is only Php 40.00 per inmate. Prisoners often complain that the food served is not even palatable. They jest that they are always served “baka and baby” (beef and pork) during every meal. They eat “baby”—short for “ang baby ng pagkaluto” (like pig’s food) and “baka”—short for “baka sakaling makain mo pa” (hopefully you can still eat it).

There are no separate quarters/cells designated for minors in Bilibid. They are usually mixed with adult offenders. The cells where they stay frequently lack proper ventilation and lighting. Congestion is also a big problem in Bilibid. Inmates often sleep on the floor because they don’t have beds to lie on. Basic necessities like bath soap, toothpaste and other toiletries needed for hygiene are also scarce. Juveniles like Cocoy sometimes work for other adult inmates, performing menial jobs like washing their clothes or cooking for them, if only to earn some money to buy soap or toothpaste for their daily use.

Cocoy frequently got sick in Bilibid and had to be confined in the prison infirmary due to kidney problems. The sad part is that the medicine budget per day is only Php1.00 per prisoner and that the ratio of doctors to inmates is one for every 1,260 prisoners. Cocoy recovered slowly from his sickness and his family had to provide for most of his medication.

Cocoy said that the worst thing in being in jail is not being able to see his family. His parents and siblings could not visit him often due to the high transportation cost. Muntinlupa is far from Quezon City and Cocoy’s mother would need to shell out more than Php200 to get to Bilibid. This is a lavish amount considering the family’s meagre income. Cocoy shared that the most difficult time for him is Christmas. He confided that he just sleeps through it so he won’t be reminded that he’s alone and far from home.

The incidence of violence in the prisons, due to riots and gang wars, is also prevalent. Some of the minors in Bilibid are...
members of gangs like Sputnik, Commando and Bahala na. They affiliate with these groups for protection. Cocoy is not a member of any gang, but has witnessed many riots and prison violence. He said that the first time he witnessed a gang war, he was truly terrified. After a while, he got used to it and just kept away from trouble so he will not get harmed. He said that people in Bilibid are okay, just as long as you know how to practice “pakikisama” (ability to get along with others).

Cocoy is quite apprehensive about his future. He knows that the stain of a prison record has jeopardized his chances of a good life. He knows that it would be difficult to rebuild the trust of his family and the people around him. When he gets out of prison, he is unsure if he could even get a job or if anyone would give him the opportunity to prove that he has changed and that he is willing to do everything to rebuild his life.

The future for CICL like Cocoy

There are many children in conflict with the law (CICL) like Cocoy who are languishing in jails and detention centers all over the country. Statistics show that there are over 10,000 of them. This number has supposedly decreased due to the passage of a new law on managing adolescent offenders known as the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 (RA 9344). RA 9344 has introduced several reforms in the manner by which CICL are handled. It has increased the age of criminal liability from 9 years old to 15 years old; introduced the philosophy of Restorative Justice where equal importance is given to the needs of the offender, the victim and the community; pioneered diversion interventions—an alternative child appropriate process assisting CICL in the barangay, police, prosecution and court levels; and established a Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC) that will oversee the implementation of the provisions of the law.

The impact of RA 9344 is now being felt in the Philippine Justice System. A child 15 years of age or under is said to be exempt from criminal liability and cannot be charged in court. They will not be jailed, but will undergo intervention programs appropriate for their needs. In many jails and detention centers all over the country, children who are 15 years old and below are now being released back to their families (if it is in the best interest of the child) or to appropriate institutions and provided with proper rehabilitative programs. Cocoy would probably have benefited from the passage of this new law, if the law had been enacted several years ago. He would not have languished in jail and would have received appropriate services to help him understand the impact of his crime and to give him the opportunity to start his life anew.

It is hoped that with the establishment of the JJWC, an agency mandated to oversee the implementation of programs for children in conflict with the law, rehabilitation and intervention services for CICL, especially those who are in prison, would be improved and strengthened. Children like Cocoy would hopefully be provided the opportunity to engage in more meaningful programs while in prison, to assist them in becoming good and responsible citizens.

RA 9344 is not a perfect law, but it has introduced many reforms in the manner of ensuring justice for children. To my mind, the most important provisions of this new law are the ones that focus on diversion and the prevention of juvenile delinquency in communities. If these things will be strengthened and properly implemented, then we could expect fewer children in conflict with the law, like Cocoy, in our prisons.

Cocoy is still in Bilibid. It’s his eleventh year in prison. His brother informed us that he will be released this year. Cocoy went to Bilibid as an adolescent, and now he will be leaving Bilibid as a grown man. Cocoy is fortunate that he has a family to return to. Other prisoners are not so lucky. His return to the bosom of his loved ones would hopefully begin a new and positive chapter in his life. It would be a chance for him to make things right, apply the lessons he has learned, and start anew.

(Melanie Ramos-Llana is a project officer of Church and Family Life Desk of John J. Carroll Institute for Church and Social Issues of the Ateneo de Manila University.)
The Prison Chaplaincy Apostolate

By Rudy Diamante

Church Structure

The Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care is one of the 30 offices and commissions of the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines formed in 1975 that is tasked to promote the total development of the members of the prison community all over the country. It is composed of a chairman and four members elected from the bishop-members of the conference for a term of 3 years with re-election. The commission carries its task through the Secretariat headed by an Executive Secretary appointed by the chairman.

State Structure

In the Philippines, there are three levels in our approach to institutional correction namely, the national penitentiaries, the provincial jails and the city and municipal jails. There is also the community based treatment approached for first adult offenders whose sentence is six years below and for children in conflict with the law. The jails and prisons have full-time chaplains employed by the state. We also have volunteer chaplains appointed by the local bishops to minister to the members of the prison community.

Main events in the Chaplaincy

• Organizations of 82 units of Volunteers in Prison Service Units nationwide that deliver the Integrated Pastoral Program—namely worship, formation, service, advocacy and linkages/networking. The Chaplains and Volunteers conducted the 6th General Assembly of Chaplains and Volunteers in Prison Service last December 6-9, 2004 in Lipa City, Batangas. It also held 3 regional assemblies: Central and North Luzon last April 21-23, 2006 in Baguio City; East, West, South Luzon last July 28-30, 2006 in Lucena City and Visayas and Mindanao region last December 4-7, 2006 in Cebu City. These assemblies explored the theme “Healing and Restoring Hope and Dignity to the Community”. Theological and pastoral updating were also given in these gatherings.

• The Abolition of Death Penalty and the passage of Juvenile Justice Welfare Act of 2006 otherwise known as Republic Act 9344 - an act abolishing the death penalty” and Republic Act 9346
- an act that provides for the institution of restorative justice paradigm in dealing with children in conflict with the law.

- Observance and celebration of the Prison Awareness Sunday every last Sunday of October with themes that underlined the need to look at the welfare of the members of the prison community. The celebration focused on community’s role in the repair of the social injury caused by crime; the need for the offenders to ask for forgiveness and do some restitution and for the victims to heal and to be given the opportunity to forgive. The traditional and yearly Gawad Paglilingkod Award was conferred to individuals and groups of the various archdioceses/dioceses in the country who have rendered invaluable services in the prison for at least 3 consecutive years.

- Promotion of the Restorative Justice paradigm through the holding of various seminars, fora and symposia among policy makers, legislators and church and government personnel involved in correction.

Issues and problems

- **Subhuman living conditions of our jails and prisons.** There is an inadequate food, beds, toilets and other sanitary facilities. The budget allocated by government is always too small for the basic needs of prisoners. Most of our jails are congested, overcrowded and dilapidated.

- **Human rights violation.** Corporal punishment is practiced by some employees and prisoners. Some prisoners had experienced forms of physical and psychological torture.

- **Slow judicial process.** Many suspects, not yet found guilty, are already detained while awaiting hearings and sentence that take months and years. The injustice is greater when they are found not guilty as charged.

- **Retributive system of justice.** Our penal system is still characterized by long sentences and lack of rehabilitative program because of the retributive paradigm.

- **Failure of government to provide facilities and services to prisoners with special needs.** There are no facilities for the mentally ill, the handicapped, the young, the old and the sick.

- **Absence of after care release program.** There is lack if not absence of programs that will address the problems of released prisoners for employment, livelihood and provision for basic needs.

- **Corruption** exists in almost all levels of the criminal justice system. The institutions are still saddled with graft and corrupt practices of some employees.

- **Lack of financial support,** even with the Church hierarchy. It is not a priority program in the government and in some Archdioceses.

- **Growing number of children in conflict with the law.** Some are still locked up together with adult offenders despite the passage of the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act of 2006.

Hopes and Aspirations

- The final and absolute abolition of the death penalty in our criminal justice system when the Senate ratifies the 2nd Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights

- Passage of a PRE-TRIAL Release Program that will be an alternative to the current bail system. This program when passed will decongest our jails by 70%.

- The full implementation of the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act of 2006 that provides better treatment of the children in conflict with the law.

- Integration of all agencies involved in correction into one Department of Correction.

- Adoption of the Restorative Justice approach in our criminal justice system.

- Declaration by the UN and Vatican of World Prisoners’ Day 2

---

Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population - 87 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Prisons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Penitentiaries - 7 for those sentenced to 3 years above (6 for men and 1 for women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Jails - 78 for those sentenced to 3 months to 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Jails - 86 for those sentenced below 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal/District Jails - 1040 for those sentenced below 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Youth Center for those whose sentence has been suspended - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Rehabilitation Centers, and only about 5 youth detention centers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Prisoners including pre-trial detainees and remand prisoners - 128,134 as of February 2007 (The number does not include those confined at the provincial jails, police detention centers.)

Number of Prison Chaplains (Only priest are considered chaplains)

- Full-time - 15
- Volunteers - 61

Number of Prison Chaplaincy Pastoral Workers

- Priests – 76
- Religious Sisters – 11
- Lay Persons – 86 Volunteer in Prison Service Unit Coordinators (About 1700 volunteers.)
What happened after Mother Teresa said ‘yes’ to the divine inspiration that called her to leave everything in order to serve the poorest of the poor?

The world learned a great deal about what happened around her – the arrival of her first followers, ecclesiastical approval, the dizzying expansion of her charitable activities – but until her death, no one knows what happened inside her.

This is revealed by her personal diaries and the letters she wrote to her spiritual director, now published by the postulator of the cause of her canonization. I do not believe that the custodians of these letters, before deciding to give them over to be printed, had to overcome the fear that these might disturb or even scandalize their readers. Far from diminishing Mother Teresa’s stature, they instead increase it, placing her beside the greatest Christian mystics.

“With the beginning of her new life in service of the poor,” writes Jesuit Fr. Joseph Neuner, who was close to her, “an oppressive darkness came over her.” A few brief passages are enough to give us an idea of the weight of the darkness in which she found herself: “There is so much contradiction in my soul, a deep longing for God, so deep that it hurts, a constant suffering – and with this there is the feeling of not being wanted by God, rejected, empty, without faith, without love, without zeal... Heaven means nothing to me; it seems a hollow place.”

It is not hard to recognize immediately in Mother Teresa’s experience a classic case of what the scholars of mysticism, after Saint John of the Cross, usually call the dark night of the soul.

Johannes Tauler gives a startling description of this state: “Then we are abandoned in such a way that we no longer have any awareness of God, and we fall into such anguish that we no longer know if we were ever on the right path, nor know if God even exists, or if we ourselves are alive or dead. And so an anguish besets us that is so strange, it seems as if everything in the entire world were joining together to afflict us. We no longer have any experience or awareness of God, but everything else seems repugnant to us as well, and it seems we are trapped between two walls.”

Everything indicates that this darkness stayed with Mother Teresa right up until her death, with a brief pause in 1958, when she was able to write triumphantly: “Today my soul is full of love, full of inexpressible joy and an uninterrupted union of love.” If at a certain point she almost does not speak of this night anymore, it is not because it was over, but because she had learned to live within it. Not only had she accepted it, but she recognized the extraordinary grace that it held for her. “I have begun to love my darkness, because I now believe that it is a part, a tiny little part, of the darkness and suffering in which Jesus lived on earth.”

The silence of Mother Teresa

The most fragrant flower of the night of Mother Teresa is her silence about it. She was afraid that by talking about it she would draw attention to herself. Even the people closest to her suspected nothing, right until the very end, of her interior torment. According to her instructions, her spiritual director was supposed to destroy all of her letters, and if some of these were spared, it was because with her permission he had made a copy of them for the archbishop and future cardinal Trevor Lawrence Picachy, and these were found among his papers after his death. Fortunately for us, the archbishop refused to comply with the request to destroy them, which was even made to him personally by Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa, “the night” accepted as a gift

By Raniero Cantalamessa

The most insidious danger for the soul that is in the dark night is that of realizing that she is, in fact, in the dark night, in what the great mystics before her had experienced, and that she is therefore part of a circle of privileged souls. With the grace of God, Mother Teresa avoided this danger, hiding her torment from everyone under an ever-present smile. “Always smiling, is what the sisters and the people say of me. They think that inside I am full of faith, trust, and love... If they only knew how true it is that my joyfulness is nothing but a cloak I throw over my emptiness and misery!” A saying of the desert Fathers says: “However great your sufferings may be, your victory over them lies in silence.” Mother Teresa put this into practice in an heroic way.

Not just purification

But why did this strange phenomenon of the night of the soul last practically her whole life? Here there is something new compared with the experience and accounts of the spiritual masters of the past, including Saint John of the Cross. This dark night cannot be explained solely through the traditional idea of passive purification, what is called the “purgative way”, the preparation for the illuminative and unitive way. Mother Teresa was convinced that in her case, her ego was particularly hard to overcome, since God was constrained to keep her for so long in this state.

But this was certainly not the case. The endless night of some modern saints is the
Mother Teresa, “the night” accepted as a gift

And there is an even deeper reason that explains these nights that extend through an entire life: the imitation of Christ, participation in the dark night of the soul that enfolded Jesus in Gethsemane, and in which he died on Calvary, crying: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Mother Teresa came to see her trial more and more clearly as a response to her desire to gasp, together with Jesus on the cross, “I thirst”. “If my pain and suffering, my darkness and separation from you give you even a drop of consolation, my Jesus, then, do with me what you will... Impress the suffering of your heart upon my soul and my life... I want to quench your thirst with every last drop of blood you can find in me. Don’t be concerned about returning soon: I am ready to wait for you for all eternity.”

It would be a grave mistake to think that such people’s lives are nothing but gloomy suffering. In the depth of their souls, they enjoy a peace and a joy that are unknown to the rest of mankind, arising from the certainty – stronger in them than their doubts – that they are living according the will of God. Saint Catherine of Genoa compares the suffering of souls in this condition with that of Purgatory, and says that it “is so great that it can be compared only to that of Hell,” but that there is in it a “tremendous contentment” that can be compared only to that of the saints in Paradise. The joy and serenity that radiated from Mother Teresa’s face was not a mask, but rather the reflection of the profound union with God she experienced within her soul. She was the one who was “deceived” about her condition, not the people.

**At the atheists’ side**

Today’s world has hatched a new category of people: atheists in good faith, those who experience the silence of God as a painful burden, who do not believe in God and yet do not boast of this, experiencing instead existential anguish and an absolute lack of meaning; they too, in their own way, live in a dark night of the soul. In his novel “The Plague,” Albert Camus calls them “saints without God.” The mystics exist above all for them; they are their companions on the road and at table. Like Jesus, they “have sat at table with sinners and have eaten with them” (cf. Luke 15:2).

This explains the passion with which certain atheists, once they have converted, have thrown themselves into the writings of the mystics: Claudel, Bernanos, Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, Leon Bloy, the writer Joris-Karl Huysmans, and many others plunged into the writings of Angela da Foligno; T.S. Eliot, into those of Julian of Norwich. Here they found the same landscape that they had left behind, but this time illuminated by the sun. Few know that the author of “Waiting for Godot,” Samuel Beckett, read Saint John of the Cross in his free time.

The word “atheist” can have an active or a passive meaning. It can indicate someone who rejects God, but also someone who is rejected by God — or at least feels himself to be. The first case is one of culpable atheism (when it is not in good faith), while the second is an atheism of suffering or expiation. In the latter sense, we can say that the mystics, in the night of the soul, are a-theists — without God — and that on the cross Jesus, too, was an a-theist, one without God.

Mother Teresa wrote words that no one would have expected from her: “They say that the eternal pain that souls suffer in Hell is the loss of God... In my soul, I experience precisely this terrible pain of damnation, of a God who does not want me, of a God who is not God, of a God who in reality does not exist. Jesus, I beg you to forgive my blasphemy.” But one realizes that her a-theism was of a different character, marked by solidarity and expiation: “In this world that is so far from God, that has turned its back on the light of Jesus, I want to help the people by taking on some of their suffering.” The clearest indicator that this atheism is of a completely different nature is the inexpressible suffering that it provokes in the mystics. Ordinary atheists do not go through this kind of agony because of their atheism!

The mystics have come within a step of the world where people live without God; they have experienced that dizzying plunge. Mother Teresa again writes to her spiritual father: “I was on the verge of saying “No”... I feel like one of these days something inside me will have to snap.” “Pray for me, that I do not reject God in this hour. I do not want this, but I am afraid I could do it.”

For this reason, the mystics are the ideal evangelizers in the postmodern world, where people live “etti Deus non daretur,” as if God did not exist. They remind the honest atheists that they are not “far from the kingdom of God,” that in just one leap they could be on the side of the mystics, passing from nothing to everything. Karl Rahner was right when he said, “In the future, Christianity will be mystical, or it will not exist at all.” Padre Pio and Mother Teresa are the response to this sign of the times. We must not underestimate the saints, reducing them to channels of grace, or merely good examples.
Catholics and few priests join monks and demonstrators

YANGON, Myanmar, September 28, 2007—Many Catholic students and a few priests are among the throngs of people marching in defiance of the bans imposed by Myanmar’s ruling military junta, local sources told AsiaNews.

Myanmar’s bishops released a statement a few days ago calling on the country’s 600,000 Catholics to pray for the people of Burma and for national reconciliation.

In the message they urged priests to avoid being directly involved in demonstrations but told lay people to work for the good of the country as best they could.

In the last few days rosary prayers have been recited in the evening just before curfew.

In Yangon and Mandalay Catholic students from secondary schools and universities have marched with the population.

Some priests have also visited Buddhist monks to express their support for what they are doing.

“The history of the Burmese Church is one of martyrs,” said one faithful. “We are not afraid of risking our lives for our country.”

Other sources told AsiaNews that despite the curfew and the ban on gatherings of more than five people, Burmese are determined to keep marching until a breach is made in the lack of freedom and dialogue imposed by the junta.

“People are desperate, especially because of the untenable economic situation,” they explained. “Families have no money for rice; there is neither power nor gas. The military is everywhere and it is scaring us, but they won’t stop us. Our monks, exhausted by marching and soldiers’ violence, move us and drive us to continue the fight.”

AsiaNews

Overseas employment cracks family life

MANILA, September 26, 2007—Along with financial gains of parents working abroad comes sad-ending stories, a Catholic bishop said.

“Very few families benefit from overseas employment,” said Archbishop Paciano Aniceto of San Fernando, Pampanga in an interview over Catholic-run Veritas 846 Wednesday morning.

He said that in the life of a typical Filipino family, the situation of parents working abroad is very common in a desire to give better future to their loved ones especially for their children.

But the prelate said working abroad does not always give full beneficial returns to each of the OFWs especially when their family life is concerned.

“Yes, foreign remittances boost the country’s economy but in the long run, very few benefit from overseas employment as family members should remain intact,” said Archbishop Aniceto who chairs the CBCP- Episcopal Commission on Family and Life (ECFL).

He stressed that a family’s foundation becomes weak because of the physical distance that is built when one leaves home for another country.

Archbishop Aniceto said he “wishes Filipinos would find decent jobs in the country so nobody will leave his wife or husband and children.” (CBCPNews)
Holy See calls Christians and Muslims to defend religious freedom and refuse violence

VATICAN CITY, September 28, 2007—Christians and Muslims have a duty to educate, above all the young, to create a society which respects human rights, above all the fundamental right of religious freedom, and refuses recourse to violence and terrorism.

This is the concept which surrounds the message sent by Cardinal Jean–Louis Tauran, president of the pontifical council for inter-religious dialogue to Muslims marking the feast of ‘Id al-Fitr, which ends Ramadan.

“In the troubled times we are passing through, – reads the message – religious believers have, as servants of the Almighty, a duty above all to work in favor of peace, by showing respect for the convictions of individuals and communities everywhere through freedom of religious practice. Religious freedom, which must not be reduced to mere freedom of worship, is one of the essential aspects of freedom of conscience, which is the right of every individual and a cornerstone of human rights. It takes into account the requirement that a culture of peace and solidarity between men can be built in which everybody can be firmly engaged in the construction of an increasingly fraternal society, doing everything one can to reject, denounce and refuse every recourse to violence which can never be motivated by religion, since it wounds the very image of God in man. We know that violence, – continues the text – especially terrorism which strikes blindly and claims countless innocent victims, is incapable of resolving conflicts and leads only to a deadly chain of destructive hatred, to the detriment of mankind and of societies”.

It is the role of believers above all to give “a message of love between individuals and peoples”, through educating future generations. It is a duty which lies above all on the shoulders of those who work in the field of education “it is the common good of every society and of the entire world which is at stake”.

The message concluded, “In this spirit the pursuit and intensification of dialogue between Christians and Muslims must be considered important, in both educational and cultural dimensions. Thus all forces can be mobilized in the service of mankind and humanity so that the younger generations do not become cultural or religious blocs opposed to one another, but genuine brothers and sisters in humanity”.

(AsiaNews)

Over 10 thousand people attend the funeral of assassinated priest

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, September 29, 2007—This morning in Mannar’s St. Sebastian Cathedral the funeral was held for Fr. Nicholaspilai Packiyaranjith, killed by an explosives attack on September 26th.

The solemn ceremony was presided over by Msgr. Rayappu Joseph, bishop of Mannar, and concelebrated by the bishop of Anuradhapura, Msgr. Norbert Andrade, the Sri Lanka Jesuit provincial Fr. Maria Antony, together with other religious and civil authorities, 120 priests, 100 religious sisters and 10 thousand faithful. Also present were representatives of international aid organizations.

From the church, the biggest procession Mannar has ever seen poured forth, with over 100 cars and 200 horse drawn carts following behind the hearse, accompanying it through to the cemetery. In a sign of respect, all of the shops in Mannar remained closed.

Msgr Rayappu vehemently condemned the brutal murder of a priest who dedicated his life to helping the poor and marginalized, recalling that “enough blood has flown on this little island nation. This blood cries for peace and not for vengeance. Therefore, we call on the International Community and all men and women of goodwill to condemn this killing and effectively voice their strong condemnation of the ongoing senseless war. We plead with the warring parties to bring to an end this war that had been mercilessly left to go on unabated for the last quarter of a century”.

Fr. Packiyaranjith, 40, a native of Jaffna and a priest for 10 years was working as the coordinator of Jesuit Refugee Service in the District of Mannar, Sri Lanka, was hit late in the evening as he traveled from Pooneryn to Kalvi’laan (Kilinochchi), carrying food and aid to the refugee camps and orphanages Vidathalvu. The driver with him was also seriously injured. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack so far, while army sources and rebels accused each other.

All involved remember him as a dedicated priest who brought spiritual and material aid to the refugees.

Msgr. Oswald Gomes, Archbishop of Colombo, said he was “profoundly moved by the tragic death”, and remembered “with gratitude” his tireless service to the people, inviting all of the faithful to pray “that this incident will stir the peace process, so that he who has died, may not have died in vain”.

(AsiaNews)
The late Rufino Cardinal Santos defined charity as the provision of the needs most basic to everyone—food, clothing, education and health, as well as aid in times of emergency and disasters. Thus the services during Catholic Charities’ initial years were weekly food rations, provision of material aid and crisis assistance in calamitous times, medical assistance including giving of free medicines and dental aid, educational support through granting of scholarships as well as skills development. The key unit for delivering these services was then called the Parish Welfare Service. In 1955, the Parish Welfare Units were then created under 17 parishes and they became the distribution centers for Catholic Charities. But more than receiving and delivering the goods and services of Catholic Charities, these parish-based welfare units also played the important role of local fund-raising and sourcing to augment what were already available.
Genuine charity is just

The second decade of the Catholic Charities, 1963 – 1973, opened at the heels of the changes wrought by the Second Vatican Council. The Church started to see itself not only comprising of the religious, specifically the hierarchy of bishops and priests, but as a community of the baptized and faithful.

A more significant impact was seen in the new stress on justice as an underlying principle not only in charity work but in the way the Church now views its role in society in general. For the Philippine Church—for Catholic Charities in particular—it is no longer just about provision of services the poor needed, but a vision for social development that is pro-poor, that dissect and addresses social-political and economic roots of poverty and inequality, and that empowers the poor themselves, drawing out their capacities to make them rely on themselves.

In 1966, the Home Industries and Self-Help Unit (HSU) was set up to create and oversee self-help projects for the poor. Some of these projects were production of handicrafts and other cottage industries, and then later in 1967 mushroom cultivation, which aimed to help create income for families. There was also the Job Placement/Vocational Training Program began in 1970 to further capacitate the poor. The initial beneficiaries were people from the rural provinces who wanted to be employed as domestic help in urban areas.

In 1972, community organizing was further strengthened, even reaching the neighbouring provinces of Manila. This was paired with other projects dealing with youth development and more of the original services, such as medical assistance, nursing and feeding programs, and mothers’ clubs.

Provision of material aid especially in times of emergency and calamity continued and became the priority of Catholic Charities in 1972 when a great part of Luzon went under water in what was to be known as the Great Flood of ’72. As a result of the experiences during this calamity, during which more than 90,000 families were helped, the section for material aid became a full blown program.

Charity and Justice equal Love

In 1973 to 1983, Catholic Charities not only had a change in name but also a change of leader. In 1975, Catholic Charities received guidance from a new father, Jaime L. Cardinal Sin. Cardinal Sin changed the name of Catholic Charities to Caritas Manila. The term “Caritas” was symbolic of Christian charity not only in the Philippines but also internationally, with most diocesan social action centers in the world bearing the name. With the new name, a new structure was also borne out of the old.

A new component was also added—programs for the children and youth. First among these programs was the Maternal and Child Health Program began in 1977, which aimed to combat widespread malnutrition among the most vulnerable social group, the infant and children, and their mothers. For its initial year, the program benefited more than 8,000 children and mothers in more than 70 parish-based nutrition centers throughout the Archdiocese of Manila.

The most significant transformation was in the “new attitude.” It is true that the Church fights poverty in the bigger context of the fight for justice, but it is justice that is not merely political or ideological, or social and human, but more importantly divine. And in the context of Christianity, charity should not only be an act of justness, but above all an act of love.

Cardinal Sin summed up this perspective when he said “We are Christians because of the redemptive cross of Christ. The cross has two beams. The vertical beam stands for our relationship with God in prayer and in faith. The horizontal beam stands for our relationship with our fellowmen. How could we say we love God if we do not care for our neighbour? The love of Caritas Manila manifests this obedience to Christ’s imperative.”

This act of love through the act of charity, specifically for the least among the brethren—the children and young people, and women—was reflected in various new programs. One of these was the Madonna Special School for the Handicapped, the first Catholic School for specially-abled children. Another program was the Morning Glory Program, launched in 1977, helped women who were in prostitution, by offering them temporary shelter, academic and vocational scholarships, job placement as well as formation programs.

Social development orientation was further strengthened with the creation in 1974 of the Socio-Economic Advancement Program, which combined practical training with a social orientation. To date, since its creation, the program had already more than 17,000 graduates.

During this period, too, the term com-
community took on a broader meaning, as Caritas Manila welcomed to its fold people of different race. Through a partnership with the government, the Philippine Refugee Processing Center in Morong, Bataan was established. The center offered comprehensive social services program for Indo-Chinese refugees, such as child care, counselling, pastoral ministry, health and feeding, and community outreach.

**The Cardinal Sin era**

That Cardinal Sin led and guided Caritas for more than two decades was only part of the reason why this period was dubbed his era. The other part was the role history put him in—a church leader during very historic times in the socio-political life of the Filipino people.

After the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., in August 1983, the Church through Cardinal Sin shifted its stance from one of critical collaboration with the Marcos government to one of open opposition, leading up to his call for all Filipinos to go to EDSA and join the People Power Revolution against Marcos.

This people power revolution did not only affect Philippine politics, it also influenced the Church. Cardinal Sin recognized and acknowledged the people’s new sense of freedom and self-confidence—that people have the capacity to initiate change, not only socio-political institutions.

In further adoption of what was started in Vatican II, the Philippine Church through the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) pushed for the integration of the Church’s mission for the transformation of the human person with the liberation and transformation of society. To reflect this vision, Caritas Manila responded by enhancing the participatory, empowering and all-embracing character of its programs and services.

Caritas Manila strengthened its Basic Christian Communities program, which it initiated in the early ‘80s. The added goal now was to build self-reliant Christian communities and transform community members into productive, capable individuals.

People empowerment was seen not only in terms of political power but economic as well. The Livelihood Enterprise Assistance for Development (LEAD) program started credit and technical assistance and even conducted management seminars for the beneficiaries or borrowers. The Commodities Marketing Program (CMP) offered basic commodities at factory prices and serviced more than 200 parishes and organizations. Caritas Manila also became the conduit for the National Food Authority’s low-cost rice for the urban poor. Other programs aimed at economic empowerment were Product Promotions and Job Placement.

More programs were developed to serve specific sectors such as the Prison Apostolate Program (PAP) and Morning Glory Program for commercial sex workers and street children and their parents through the Sagip-Moral project. The Bukid Kabataan for abandoned boys, was set up in 1989.

Other social sectors reached by Caritas Manila during the decade 1983-1993 were drug dependents, served through the Youth Renewal Center and Catholic Youth Organization; informal settlers, who were provided with paralegal assistance and orientation on urban poor’s rights and benefited from Balik-probinsiyo program; as well as AIDS-infected individuals and those at risk.

Caritas Manila never let up on its programs for emergency aid. True enough, natural tragedies struck again in 1990 by way of a strong earthquake and the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo.

In the era associated with Cardinal Sin that ended in the 1990’s, Caritas Manila reinforced its identity as a social service and development organization, an identity rooted in Christian love of God and neighbour. Through Caritas Manila, people saw and encountered Christ in others, and others became one with Christ.

Thus for Caritas Manila, the best testimony would be found in these words: “I was living in subhuman conditions, and you organized my community. I was struggling to make both ends meet, and you believed in my skills. I was hungry and in crisis, and you gave me assistance. I was a Vietnamese stranger, and you created a village for me. I was in prison, and you visited me. I was a child unsafe in his/her own home, and you gave me a secure home. I was ostracized because of AIDS, and you made me feel I belong. I was evicted from my house, and you helped me fight for my rights. I was drowning in the cycle of poverty, and you sent me to school to find my way out.”
2003 to present: Cardinal Rosales and the new vision

“A people called by the Father in Jesus Christ to become a Community of Persons with Fullness of Life witnessing to the Kingdom of God by living the Paschal Mystery in the power of the Holy Spirit with Mary as Companion.”

The new vision clearly states that we are or should be “persons with Fullness of Life.”

Guided by this vision, Caritas Manila has adopted a new approach that anchors its operation on the parishes and the vicariates while enhancing its ability to link those in need of help to those who wish to help—to gather more and to give more. Direct operation, except for special cases, is handled in the vicariate and the parish levels by capable and trained volunteers, partners, and parish priests.

In 2004, Caritas had to undergo a major organizational overhaul in response to the call of the times, with the desire to create a better Caritas. The major restructuring involved right-sizing the organization and establishing new operating systems and procedures meant to empower the vicariate offices and the parish social services and development ministries in the Archdiocese. The result is a more cost-effective organization that can adequately respond to the changing needs of the people; a better, more efficient, more effective Caritas.

New operating procedures and systems enable the restructured organization and the network of volunteer to handle, despite the reduced manpower, not just the original workload but the increasing demands of the yearly “scaling-up” of all Caritas programs.

Volunteer ranks swelled by continuous recruitment of organizations and individuals. The quality of volunteers is enhanced through formation and skills development, involving ladderized training in a) formation of servant leadership; b) Catholic social teaching paradigms; and c) the vision and mission of the Archdiocese of Manila. The Pastoral discernment of spirits is also a vital concern.

Focus is as important a direction as restructuring. From multiple concerns, Caritas Manila is now focused on Education and Health as flagship programs; Livelihood, Disaster Management, Housing, Restorative Justice, and Advocacy as special programs.

The Father of Caritas Manila

To many he was simply the first Filipino Cardinal, but to Caritas Manila, he will always be a father. More than fifty years ago, on the very first day he took office as Archbishop of Manila, he vowed to combat the problems of society. “I have thought of organizing a social welfare for uplifting the spirit and soul of these unfortunate members of our community... Hence, my purpose and determination is to create some special funds with which to assist the material needs of these underprivileged brethren of ours. Let us bring them the assistance and help of (our) bounteous God in their misery and distress. The Archdiocese will lead in this undertaking with an initial amount of fifty to one hundred thousand pesos. Then I expect the more fortunate of the faithful in the Archdiocese to contribute their help in the amount of Php1.00 a month for the purpose, in order that we may budget some two hundred fifty thousand pesos a year for buying food, clothing and medicines for distribution among our poor brethren, and the education of their children.” – Rufino Cardinal Santos

“A new era in the Philippines, an era in which the Church will become more and more a vital force in the life of the country, when the Church will be more and more interested in the problems of the Filipino people, and so with the solutions of these problems, and particularly the problems of the poor people,” was the response of Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, the Papal Nuncio during that time.

Thus, Catholic Charities, the old name of Caritas Manila, was born.

Bishop Protacio Gungon, Caritas Executive Director (1959-1966), recalls how Cardinal Santos worked for the poor. “He was so concerned with the poor that he would often ask for recommendation from other religious organizations on how to serve them.” Like any other organization, there were birth pains to endure. Through it all Cardinal Santos involved himself in the details of running the organization.

“He worked hard, wanting things to be in order and minding even the details,” narrated Bishop Gabriel V. Reyes who served the Cardinal from 1967-1968.

When he became the first Filipino Cardinal, it was with the poor that he chose to share such blessing. He visited the poor communities, and in fact celebrated his birthdays with them. During these visits, he always had something to give, both material and spiritual. He embodied God’s love for the poor not just on the institutional level but also on a more personal level.

From his installation as Archbishop of Manila until his death in 1973, Rufino Cardinal Santos was the Chairman of the Board of Caritas. He would always be remembered as the first Filipino Cardinal but to the people whose lives he had touched, he would more importantly be someone who made a difference, who showed and taught others how to care.

“The accomplishments and beneficiaries of Caritas Manila’s programs and services have increased exponentially through the years. This could not be achieved without those who support and continue to support Caritas Manila.

Through God’s blessing, Caritas Manila continues to have more of these people who continue to share their time, talent, and treasures with us – the different parishes, private corporations, individuals, government institutions led by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, and sister organizations like Pondo ng Pinoy and Radio Veritas 846. Caritas is inspired to raise the bar, and expand its ministry to more people, because of the successes it has achieved through the years.

Caritas Manila achieved the first step of “scaling up” of its programs and doubled, even tripled previous levels. Still, the leaders of Caritas Manila, from the members of the board, the advisers and management, down to the operational staff of the ministry, are aware that the number of families being changed and uplifted must reach a significant quantity to create a base from which effective change can take place.

The aim now is 300,000 poor families assisted, and their lives changed for the better, by 2010.” (Rev. Fr. Anton CT Pascual, Executive Director, Caritas Manila)
Caritas Manila: A Prophetic Story of Charity and Justice

Education

Aware of the significant role education plays in helping free people from the clutches of poverty, Caritas Manila has made education a priority concern of its social development programs. It has partnered with private and public schools to provide free education for intelligent and deserving children of the poor.

Scholarship - Caritas Manila provides scholarships to worthy beneficiaries coming from the poorest of the poor. Those primarily qualified belong to families with a monthly income per capita of Php 1,000 or less.

Scholars are selected, recommended, and facilitated in the parish and the vicariate level. Scholarships are provided in the elementary, high school, college, and vocational levels. Values formation is integrated in the program. Parents are required to participate and be effectively involved both in education and formation of their children and themselves.

Driven by a sense of urgency, the educational assistance program grew by leaps and bounds. As of June 2007, the number of Caritas Manila scholars reached almost 6,000, and continues to scale up every year.

2006 Figures: 5,434 scholars (Elementary -1,551, High school -1,811, College -946, Vocational -1,126): 3,704 scholars from 80 parishes in the Archdiocese of Manila; 256 scholars came under the suffragan dioceses and 1,474 scholars under the institutional partners.

Integrated development program - Under the integrated formation program, scholars and their parents, guardians, or immediate family members go through the following modules: Values Formation; Sacramental Appreciation; Health and Nutrition, Livelihood and Skills Training; 3R Tutorials: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic; Natural Family Planning; and Responsible Parenting.

Organizational developments and formation - Caritas Manila maximizes the Church’s endowment, i.e. the numerous volunteers who gladly share their 3Ts—time, talent, and treasure, in order to implement the various programs at the parish level. A major role of Caritas Manila is the strengthening of the different social services and development ministries (SSDMs) in the areas of organizations, training and formation, volunteer development, operations and finance; and networking with strategic partners.

Capacity building for volunteers is anchored on the following modules: Catholic Social Teaching and Servant Leadership; Volunteer Management; Facilitators’ Training; Counselling for the Poor; Laws of Teamwork; SSDM orientation; and Conflict Management.

The program is designed to enable SSDM leaders and volunteers to better serve their communities, and to help them become effective and committed servant leaders acting as social change agents at the grassroots level. CM social development officers offer technical and management consultancies in the areas of organizational development, program development and management, trainors’ training, and resource generation. These are available for the partner parish and diocesan social service and development ministries in the Archdiocese of Manila and its Suffragan Dioceses.

In 2006, Caritas increased its volunteer ranks from 1,588 to 2,860. SSDM leaders were put in place in all 81 parishes, 10 shrines and chapels, and 13 vicariates of the Archdiocese. Identification and mapping of the 500 poorest families were completed, and urban poor visits in 45 parishes were conducted. To ensure that implementation targets are met, a regular operations and social audit system is being established.

Health

CM Clinics - The urban poor who are the most prone to suffer from ailments have the least access to medical attention. This prompted Caritas Manila to establish parish-based clinics that provide free basic medical and dental services and at times even free medicines to indigent parishioners.

Caritas now has 26 charity clinics, one Vicariate Health Clinic and one satellite clinic for every vicariate in the Archdiocese of Manila. Cases range from common ailments like colds, fever, and flu to more complex ailments like hypertension and
pulmonary infection.

2006 Figures: 40,876 cases attended to in the Charity Clinics

Operation True Love - In partnership with Radio Veritas 846 and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Caritas also administers Operation True-Love, a medical-dental outreach mission to give the poor access to health care. Parish staff and volunteers assist in the missions.

2006 Figures: 7,267 patients served in 11 outreach programs

Hapag-Asa Feeding Program - Three out of every ten Filipino are malnourished, resulting in anaemia, poor resistance to ailments, and dull-headedness. The Church’s response to the problem is HAPAG-ASA, an integrated Nutrition Program implemented in parishes, via Parish Action Teams composed of volunteers. Local government units help with facilities, medicine, equipment such as weighing scales, and more volunteers. To ensure the continued health of the children beyond the feeding period, the parents undergo an educational program where they are taught health education, spiritual information, and livelihood skills.

2006 Figures: Fed 5,679 wasting and malnourished children

HIV/AIDS Program - HIV/AIDS is a major concern for the Church because of its potential to cause an epidemic. Through its advocacy and strategic partnerships Caritas has revitalized its involvement in the HIV/AIDS campaign. Caritas has integrated its campaign to educate parishioners and local communities on HIV/AIDS by incorporating it with its training and information modules under the Education, health, and Restorative Justice programs all within the context of Catholic teachings. Caritas Manila also continues to provide direct services to Alay-Pag-asa, a support group of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their family members.

Livelihood

The challenge of fighting poverty is being addressed in many fronts. Caritas Manila is committed to help alleviate the problem by providing the poor with opportunities for employment, training cooperative leaders to enhance their capabilities, and giving the entrepreneurial poor access to credit.

Job Assistance - Caritas Manila provides the poor with opportunities for self-wage employment.

Caritas Manila’s Job Assistance program has two key channels for assisting the poor—the Parish Employment Assistance Desks, and regular Job Fairs. From January to December 2005, 1,474 job applicants were hired through 13 employment desks and 18 job fairs that were conducted. The key to the program is effective coordination with prospective companies; making sure the job fairs are timed to bring hiring companies and appropriate job seekers together.

Cooperative development - Cooperatives are not just about credit. More importantly, they teach the value of saving for the future. The goal is to promote this as a way of life as much as a form of entrepreneurship. At the forefront of this program is the Union of Church Cooperatives (UCC), an association of church-based cooperatives from six Metro Manila dioceses. Its guiding principle is cooperation and social responsibility. The thrust of UCC is to strengthen the leadership and management capabilities of member cooperatives. Fifteen member cooperatives are active under the union system.

Microfinance promotion - The Church’s microfinance program Savings and Livelihood with Values Education (SALVE) provides additional capital to family-based livelihood activities at very reasonable terms. Its more than 1,400 beneficiaries support their families by making and selling accessories, trading vegetables and meat, and tending sari-sari stores. Borrowers and community partners undergo weekly values and spiritual formation sessions, complementing the practical and financial support they receive. This also helps the borrowers improve the way they run their business and be able to meet their obligations. SALVE has achieved an outstanding 98% recovery rate of its loans as of September 2006.

Crisis and disaster management

Disaster management - At the heart of Caritas Manila’s Disaster Management Program are the donors and volunteers who are pressed into action during times of crisis and calamity. CM volunteers, including parents of Caritas scholars, are models of efficiency as they are tasked to prepare relief goods, coordinate with parishes, and distribute aid.

CM leadership and the resource mobilization team are just as efficient in working to secure funds and other donations needed for relief work. Funds generated go to the Caritas Emergency Fund, on which the disaster management program is anchored. In 2006, the funds provided assistance to the victims of the tragedy at St. Bernard, Leyte, and typhoons Milenyo and Reming. Assistance was provided to some 73,087 families nationwide who were affected by calamities.
2006 Figures: Provided assistance to 73,087 families nationwide; PhP .6 M for victims of St. Bernard tragedy; PhP 3.7 M for Typhoon Milenyo Victims; PhP 8.4 M for Typhoon Reming Victims

Crisis Assistance - Caritas Manila maintains a crisis intervention and emergency relief desk to respond to cases that cannot be attended to at the parish and vicariate levels. It continues to perform significant work in emergency cases for the poor

2006 Figures: Served 825 crisis clients (95 Hospital cases, 705 Medical Assistance cases, and 25 Transportation Assistance cases)

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice aims to make offenders, their victims, and community members work together for the resolution and healing of the consequences of a crime. Caritas Manila has been implementing a restorative justice program since 1975, with formation, paralegal assistance and outreach as its main planks.

In June 2006, the Church’s Inter-Diocesan Restorative Justice Ministry formalized an agreement with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology to work together to improve the living conditions and promote effective rehabilitation of detainees in Metro Manila jails. This allows paralegal volunteers of the Church to follow up cases and help facilitate the release of those proven innocent or those who have already served their time.

For inmates, the CM program conducts a skills training program. They are taught how to make candles, detergents and herbal soaps, among other skills. The inmates are also offered courses in personhood, which includes values formation and family life seminars.

The Binh ng Pag-asa Community, an association of released prisoners, was organized. Members were provided with sessions for continuing personal renewal and for livelihood training.

2006 Figures: Conducted HIV/AIDS awareness seminar for 470 inmates; Conducted CLSS with Personhood seminar for 1,337 inmates in jails of Manila and Mandaluyong; Provided paralegal assistance to 2,108 inmates.

Housing

Caritas assists communities and organizations in an advisory capacity, and as mediator in behalf of communities facing such major problems as evictions, demolitions and relocations.

Among the initiatives conducted by Caritas were a forum on housing issues and orientation on the Urban Development Housing Act; the appeal to Congress for immediate implementation of EO 272 “authorizing creation of Socialized Housing Finance Corporation and Transfer of CMP Fund;” and an inter-agency meeting between national agencies and LGUs on housing issues, particularly demolitions and relocations.

In 2006, CM coordinated the Church’s deep involvement in the ongoing massive relocation of families affected by railways’ improvements to Cabuyao in Laguna.

Advocacy

Promotion of causes is a major function of Caritas Manila — to create awareness that God’s hand is at work in the Archdiocese of Manila. Its advocacy program is centered on social awareness and responsibility and the promotion of social justice among the general public.

Social Development

Contrary to popular perception, Caritas Manila is not a dole-out welfare institution. While engaged in massive relief operations and direct feeding program of wasting children, Caritas does so only to provide immediate relief in times of disasters and emergencies.

CM has always believed that meaningful assistance must be an empowering process. Most CM programs are designed to transform people from poverty and dependence to productive self-reliance with dignity. Caritas Manila works in, with, and through the Church’s basic structural unit—the parish.

Caritas Manila remains as the lead Catholic agency for social services and development in the Archdiocese of Manila. It directly serves the 13 vicariates of the Archdiocese and provides technical assistance to social services and development ministries, and acts as catalyst for capacity-building and networking for the five other Metro-Manila dioceses.

Its programs and services are directed towards total human development of marginalized people particularly community building of the urban poor for integral evangelization and the promotion of social justice in the light of the Church’s Catholic Social Teachings.

“The Church’s charitable institutions, especially Caritas, carry out the important work of assisting the needy, especially the poorest. Inspired by the Eucharist, they become a concrete expression of that charity.” (Sacramentum Caritatis 90)

References:
Caritas Manila 2005 Annual Report
Caritas Manila 2006 Annual Report
The Caritas Good Newspaper Vols. 18 and 19
Caritas Manila Golden Jubilee Program – 50 Years of Witnessing Love and Justice
We, members of the International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care, bishops, priests, religious sisters and brothers and lay persons from 62 countries, sent by our respective Episcopal Conferences to participate at the XIIth ICCPPC World Congress held in Casa Lasalle, Rome from September 5-12, 2007, with the theme “Discovering Christ’s Face In Every Prisoner” who are inspired to live authentically the words of the Letter to the Hebrews: “Remember the prisoners as if you were imprisoned” (Heb. 13,3);

We, who recall the memorable message of the late Pope John Paul II for the Jubilee in Prisons “Jesus is a patient companion on our trip, who knows how to respect the times and rhythms of the human heart” and the message of Pope Benedict XVI during our private audience with him that we are “called to be heralds of God’s infinite compassion and forgiveness”;

We, who proclaim that the prison ministry is an essential part of the pastoral ministry of the Church since its very beginnings;

We, who are conscious of the fact that to visit and liberate the prisoners (Mt. 25,36; Lk. 4,18), is an expression of God’s love and a clear manifestation of his own essence, (Deus Caritas est 25) hereby declare:

1. That “the human being is the way of the Church” (Redemptor Hominis 14, Centessimus Annus 53) whose face evokes the face of Christ himself. Their inherent dignity and fundamental rights spring from their being “at the image” of the Divine Creator (Gn. 1,27). Their incarceration, for whatever reason, does not diminish this image;

2. That in many countries the basic human rights of prisoners are not guaranteed; their religious liberty is not respected and the Church is prevented from attending to the spiritual and material needs of the prisoners. Most prisoners are overcrowded; the prisoners are abused and their needs are not satisfied. In many countries capital punishment and other penalties that are incompatible with human dignity still exist. These inhumane expressions of institutional cruelty must be rectified by abolishing death penalty, putting an end on torture and observing the UN Standards and Norms in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice;

3. That the current criminal justice system in many countries fails to address the needs of children in conflict with the law as well as the vulnerable sectors of our society such as the mentally ill, drug addicts, foreigners and elderly people. We advocate that programs, laws and systems be put in place to attend to the needs of these groups;

4. That Penal and Migration Laws are sometimes abusive and we are one with the late Pope John Paul II who said that “the world does not need walls but bridges” (Nov. 16, 2003). We strongly advocate and work for justice that restores, heals and protects; a justice that makes the offenders accountable for what they have done; a justice that provides restitution to the victims who are most of the time ignored and forgotten by the current justice system; a justice that engages the community in facilitating the healing process, thus leading to the re-integration of the victim and the offender to the community;

5. That we recognize and are grateful for the remarkable work of the prison pastoral care ministers in many countries who, despite their limitations and countless problems, are able to work for genuine justice, liberty, mercy, reconciliation and hope, thereby making God’s love visible. They offer spiritual support, nurture the prisoners’ faith in the Gospel and the sacraments of the Church, respond to their material needs and provide legal assistance to safeguard their fundamental rights thereby converting “the time in prison as a time of God”;

6. That we can better serve the needs of the prisoners if we are formally integrated into the ecclesial canonical structure of the Church;

7. That we are aware that “much is still to be done” and that “our conscience may not remain quiet” (Jubilee in Prisons). Confident of God’s love, who is capable of “making all things new” (Rev. 21,5), we put our brothers and sisters who are in prison, as well as all our longings, in God’s hands, knowing that His endless patience will accompany us and that He will persistently urge us to discover Christ’s face in every prisoner.

With the help of God, we consecrate all our efforts to this end.
As we celebrate Family Week from September 23 to 30, we are reminded once again of the Holy Family of Nazareth that showed all families the ways by which we must live our family life in consonance to God’s purpose. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, mirrored a perfect likeness to the intimate love and unity that the Holy Triune God holds together as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Human fatherhood and motherhood, while remaining biologically similar to that of living beings in nature, contain in an essential way, a “likeness to God” which is the foundation of the family and the basis of family prayer life.

The family has been ordained to be the basic unit of society. The creation of man and woman and their union blessed by God in the Garden of Eden points to this fact. And God commanded them to multiply. Thus, the family became the main spring of the fulfillment of God’s Plan to create human community on earth that He would prepare to become His own family in heaven.

Right from the moment God created Adam and Eve, He also gave them duties and responsibilities to fulfill. The first of these duties is to build a loving relationship as husband and wife. Hence, marriage is the fundamental basis of the family. Begotten of this relationship of man and woman are the children springing forth from their love for each other, the bearing of children and their nurturance demand responsibility from parents that we call “responsible parenthood”. It implies above all a more profound relationship to the objective moral order established by God, of which a right conscience is its faithful interpreter.

The responsible exercise of parenthood goes beyond biological satisfaction between husband and wife. It demands that husband and wife recognize fully their own duties toward God, toward themselves, toward the family and society in a correct hierarchy of values.

Responsible fatherhood and responsible motherhood include not only the couples’ choices and decisions on how they will keep their marriage and raise their family but also the avoidance and refusal to deny or violate the will of God in the sacredness of their relationship as husband and wife that is often de-sacralized by artificial methods of birth control in the name of a false sense of freedom and liberty of choice that often lead to the cruel death of children by abortifacients or direct abortion, and the tortures of deadly diseases that the pills, IUD’s, injectables and condoms bring.

Chemical agents and mechanical gadgets that make up the cluttered display of contraceptive methods of birth control have caused serious damage in family relationships, disrupting the unity and openness that build family life by the effects that accompany the contraceptive culture which include extramarital relationships, adolescent pregnancies, and even the hideous murderous act of abortion. This is compounded by an approved public educational curriculum that now teaches birth control in a contraceptive culture to the youth right inside the classrooms without parental consent. The modern pop culture has brought into the family a wider generation gap between the young and the old starting with the norm of respect and obedience of children to parents and the diminishing role of parental guidance in the lives of the younger generations.

Science and technology have produced electronic entertainment in the home specially television and computers that keep feeding the children images from nursery years to young adulthood the wrong
misguided norms and conduct has produced formidable challenges that the family has never met before. The role of women in the home has considerably changed from a focused homeminess and motherliness to career seeking outside the home. The contentious issue about gender and feminism has taken all the way to encouraging women to challenge the masculinity of men and his role as provider and head of the family. The care and nurture of the children in their growing years has now been delegated to surrogate parents who have taken over most of the role of the parents in the formation of the children.

The Church’s Mission with the Family

The Church, a prophetic, priestly and kingly people, is endowed with the mission of bringing all human beings to accept the word of God in faith and love, to celebrate and profess it in the sacraments and in prayer, and in the concrete realities of life.

The fruitfulness of the Christian family in its specific service to human advancement, which of itself cannot but lead to the transformation of the world, derives from its living union with Christ, nourished by the celebration of the Eucharist at the Temple of the Lord in the Church and in the Home.

Most Rev. Paciano B. Aniceto, D.D.
Archbishop of San Fernando Chairman, CBCP – ECFL
September 21, 2007

---

Want to stay focused on what really matters?

Get daily virtues guide in English or in Filipino. P2.50/txt

Text VIRTUE or BIRTUD to 2253.

Ask for a prayer and pray for someone today!

Register to Pray It Forward. P2.50/txt.

Text PRAY REG <Name/Address/Age/Gender> to 2253 for SMART and Talk ‘N Text or 2800 for GLOBE and TM subscribers.

Do you need to take time out to RE-charge?

Get daily Bible REadings and REflections in English or in Filipino. P2.50/txt.

SMART and TALK ‘N TEXT:
Text DIDACHE HELP or GABAY HELP to 2253

GLOBE and TM:
Text DIDACHE or GABAY to 2333.
The Supreme Court of the Philippines

During these days of frustration in the search for truth and times of desperation in the pursuit of justice, the Supreme Court of the Philippines stands at the summit of hope especially for those who feel or know that they are victims of the Executive Department in its despotic moves. It is enough to think of certain so-called “Presidential” proclamation and “Executive” Orders ultimately undermining human dignity and offending human rights.

When approached and called upon to intervene in putting a stop to excesses of the Executive Department, the Supreme Court, under the leadership of the incumbent Chief Executive, respects no personal status or public stature of respondents in its quest for what is true, right and just. In fact, it is now a public knowledge that the Supreme Court has been lately taking the high moral ground in looking for and safeguarding the intent of the law.

The truth is that the Supreme Court now is no longer contented by merely passively waiting for the submission of evidence but has in effect taken a pro-active stance in the resolution of celebrated cases. It is enough to recall the Summit it called last July in order to have a better judicial grasp of the odious and infamous extrajudicial killings. Recently there is the adoption of the Habeas Data provision in response to cases of “disappearances” through abductions shamelessly perpetrated precisely by those walking in at the halls of power.

It would be great if the celebrated Plunder Case recently resolved by the Sandiganbayan would be appealed to the Supreme Court for a final and executory sentence. Considering its obtaining integrity, courage and competence, there could be no tenable cause to doubt the merit of its decision. When the national leadership has its hands in practically all subordinated government institutions and agencies ultimately to maneuver their moves, the country still has a champion in the defense and promotion of the common good as the sum total of the good of the citizens of the land.

Would that the Supreme Court of the Philippines under the leadership of the present Chief Justice stay in course in being the court of last recourse of the people who are fooled, exploited or trampled upon by a discredited, distrusted and disrespected administration.

Who is next?

One down, and counting. It can not be otherwise. The one who fell was burdened with some overwhelming socio-moral accountabilities. The next one will find it hard not to fall as well. The latter’s both ethical and political liabilities are much more in number and gravity. One could meantime fool around with the tenure of power and the exercise of influence. But no one can endure the persistence of truth and the insistence of justice. Truth eventually stands out and justice ultimately has its due course. This is not an empty warning but a historical fact—along the maxim that what goes up, eventually comes down.

Probably true than false, someone is already in deep trouble, wallowing in mire, barely breathing freely. This explains why when someone was being sentenced to imprisonment, another was kept at an instantly made fortress, well guarded with strong firepower in addition to barbwires and other barricades. While someone powerless faced his accusers, another very powerful was hidden somewhere. How true is the saying that as integrity is big moral strength, improbity causes ethical weakness and interior fear.

It might be in order to mention but some much disturbing issues that find their way to the Malacañang doorstep. There is the most expensive highway in the world together with a certain big IMPSA question mark. There too is the unending issue about a certain tape plus the matter of fertilizing the 2004 elections. Furthermore, there are the ignominious facts of extrajudicial killings and fatal disappearances. Recently, there is the scandalous broadband deal—to mention but some (woman) and man-made earthquakes shocking and shaking the country. At some kind of a spicy ending, there were the fatal findings of the senate hearing on jueteng—when and where and to whom jueteng payolaws were distributed and received.

All these atrocious dealings and infamous transactions must mean something in the realm of good or evil, in the sphere of innocence or guilt and the consequent area of who remains free or who goes behind bars. Hence, after the very first case of a former President of the Republic was accused, tried and found guilty, the question comes as a matter of course: Who is next?
Rightly or wrongly, there are already certain individuals, families and clans whose names evoke distrust and disdain, whose attitude and behavior are highly censurable and markedly detestable. It is not really hard to know and identify them—except for the usual threats of libel together with the standard dangers to life and limb. The reality is that it has become dangerous—very dangerous—in this country under the present regime to tell the truth. Truth is taboo. Justice is a rarity. Reconciliation is frequently and loudly called for precisely by those who are the incarnate causes of people’s disunity and division.

In a way, any and all verdicts of Philippine History especially on those who hold high leadership positions in government can readily and easily be divided into but two main categories: They are either truthful or liars, honest or cheats, upright or thieves. Even the common tao know them and have them accordingly marked in their mind and written on their heart. The truth of the matter is that even but a simple survey will readily come up with some kind of a “Hate List”—which although unkind is however understandable especially during these difficult and trying times in the history of the Philippines.
A Wife’s Wisdom

One day a sage came to a King for an interview. The sage had to wait for a long time because the King was very busy. Finally, the King said he could come in. When the sage entered the hall, the first thing he did was to take off his hat and bow to the King. Immediately the King took off his crown and bowed to the sage. The ministers and others who were around the King asked, “What are you doing? He took off his hat because he is an ordinary man. But you are the King. Why should you have to take off your crown?”

The King said to his ministers, “You fools, do you think I wish to remain inferior to an ordinary man? He is humble and modest. His humility is a peerless virtue. He showed his respect to me. If I did not take off my crown, then I would be showing less humility than an ordinary man, and I would be defeated by him. If I am the King, I should be better than everybody in everything. That is why I took off my crown and bowed to him!”

The King’s Humility

One day a sage came to a King for an interview. The sage had to wait for a long time because the King was very busy. Finally, the King said he could come in. When the sage entered the hall, the first thing he did was to take off his hat and bow to the King. Immediately the King took off his crown and bowed to the sage. The ministers and others who were around the King asked, “What are you doing? He took off his hat because he is an ordinary man. But you are the King. Why should you have to take off your crown?”

The King said to his ministers, “You fools, do you think I wish to remain inferior to an ordinary man? He is humble and modest. His humility is a peerless virtue. He showed his respect to me. If I did not take off my crown, then I would be showing less humility than an ordinary man, and I would be defeated by him. If I am the King, I should be better than everybody in everything. That is why I took off my crown and bowed to him!”

There was a very rich man who was extremely cruel and miserly. His wife was kind-hearted and affectionate, and full of sympathy for everyone. No one liked the husband, but everyone liked the wife. However, she thought, “God gave me this bad husband, so what can I do? Nobody likes him, so at least I should.” She was kind to him and served him day and night.

A famine struck the region where they lived, and many villagers came to them for help. The wife gave money to everyone and showered them with affection and sympathy. Her husband did not mind her generosity, in spite of his miserliness. He said, “As long as I don’t have to personally give, I’m satisfied.”

When she gave money to the people, they said, “We’re only borrowing this money. We’ll pay you back.” She said, “No. You don’t have to pay it back. It’s a gift, just take it.”

They refused, saying, “No. We’ll repay you when the famine is over.”

She said, “If you really want to repay me, then give me the money the day my husband dies.”

Some people were shocked to hear her talk like this. Others thought that when her husband died, she would have many expenses for the funeral and that was why she said this.

One of their sons happened to be present when his mother made this odd statement. The son loved both parents dearly, but when he heard what she said, he was angry.

He went to his father and told him, “Mother is asking people to repay the money she’s giving them after your death.”

The father could not believe this. “How can she say this? She always gives money freely, so why is she now asking them to return the money and why does it have to be after my death?”

The husband went to the wife and asked her, “Tell me why you’re asking people to return the money after I die?”

She said, “You don’t understand. You see, people don’t like you. They hate you. Everybody wants you to die today, but many people have taken lots of money from me, and by nature people don’t want to pay it back. From now on, instead of thinking of your death, they will pray to God to keep you alive so that they don’t have to pay it back. I want you to live for many, many years. Who knows? One day you may also become very affectionate, kindhearted and sympathetic.

“I played a trick. I want them to pray to God every day that you live. This will make me happy. Who cares for the money? I want you to live for a very long time.”

The husband was extremely touched by his wife’s wisdom and love for him and he vowed to be more compassionate toward others.

rowena.dalanon@cbcpworld.net
**Let Me Go to the Father’s House**
*John Paul II’s Strength in Weakness*

*Stanislaw Dziwisz and Czeslaw Drazek, SJ; Renato Buzzonetti; Angelo Comastri*

No other pope in history had left so much impact in the lives of people, especially among the youth, as John Paul II did. He was a man so much attuned with the signs of the times, a person who possessed profound insights into the struggles and sufferings of humanity. He was a man of courage, his values and teachings often times at odds with the values that contemporary society uphold. But this courage had not been more manifested than when the Pope was brought into the valley of suffering caused by pain and illness. The book, recently published by Paulines, is divided in three parts. It gives a seamless presentation of John Paul’s personal experience of pain and suffering early on in life; as a priest; as a pope; and up to his deathbed. Contributors to this volume are people who have seen the Pope up close and personal, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, John Paul II’s friend and private secretary of twenty-seven years; Rev. Czeslaw Drazek, SJ, publisher of Polish edition of L’Osservatore Romano; Doctor Renato Buzzonetti, John Paul’s longtime personal physician; and Most Rev. Angelo Comastri, President, Fabbrica de San Pietro and Vicar General of Vatican City under John Paul II.

**Against An Infinite Horizon**
*The Finger of God in our Everyday Lives*

*Ronald Rolheiser*

Another by Jesuit Communications, this book, written by an Oblate missionary explores the subject of faith the way we experience it in our daily lives. Without being too simplistic, the author uses ordinary events and experiences to show readers how these actions might be seen as a result of God’s divine providence. Though written from a Christian perspective, the book can also be read even by those who belong to other faiths. In essence, it is a pilgrim’s book, rich and overflowing with insights on diverse topics such as community, social justice, sexuality, mortality, and rediscovering the deep beauty and poetry of Christian spirituality. Each chapter opens with quotations from various authors giving a profound backdrop on each topic discussed. Indeed, an excellent companion for a person’s spiritual journey.

**Tender Fires**
*The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality*

*Fran Ferder and John Heagle*

This book explores the topic of human sexuality and the spirituality behind it. The authors, who are both counselors, at the same time co-directors of Therapy and Renewal Associates (TARA) in Seattle, Washington happened to be a nun and a priest. Curiously one might ask, why would a nun and a priest write a book about sex? This volume though, does not merely talk about sex; rather it provides an encompassing and deeper understanding of what human sexuality is all about. Using the metaphor of cosmic energy to describe human sexuality, the authors explain sexuality as energy that is vital to any healthy relationship, “a sacred force that is directed towards connections that create and sustain life.” These connections, according to them can be present in all forms of interactions and relationships: friendship, play, parenting, mentoring, making love, or prayer. This book is locally published by Jesuit Communications from the original by Crossroad Publishing Company. An interesting read for both lay and religious, and for all who seek integration of sexuality and spirituality in their lives.

**8 Secrets of the Truly Rich**
*How You Can Create Material Wealth and Gain Spiritual Abundance at the Same Time*

*Bo Sanchez*

Is it really possible to be wealthy, at the same time detached from the trappings of material wealth? Take it from best selling author and much-sought-after international preacher Bo Sanchez. A prolific speaker and preacher, writer, publisher, composer, media man, entrepreneur, Bo gives the reader in this volume a step-by-step advice on how to live life meaningfully and become truly rich in the process. Each chapter concludes with practical recommendations to apply in daily life. In a nutshell, the book tells us that we are all responsible for the decisions we make, and our mindset shapes our destiny.
When Rogue (Jet Li), an infamous and elusive assassin, killed and murdered FBI agent Tom Lone (Terry Chen) and his family, Lone’s partner John Crawford (Jason Statham) vows to find him to personally avenge his partner’s death. Three years later Rogue resurfaces to ignite a bloody war between Chinese Triad leader Chang (John Lone) and Japanese Yakuza head Shiro (Ryo Ishibashi). Crawford, eager to capture Rogue at all costs, leads his team of crime specialists to meddle into the conflict between the Chinese and Japanese mafias. But his thirst for vengeance conflicts with his interest of resolving the turf war for it affects his professional judgment, thereby jeopardizing his team’s operations. Meanwhile, Rogue starts to unveil as a complex and complicated assassin with the series of betrayals that he does with his bosses. When Crawford finally comes face to face with Rogue, he discovers that nothing about Rogue and his plans are what they seem to be.

Dubbed as the ultimate martial arts duel movie of the year, Rogue fails as an action-thriller feature in more ways than one. The martial arts aspect is limited into being a mere business than a pivotal device to move the story forward. The choreography seems to be uninspired and run-of-the-mill. The twists and turns of the story could have been interesting but they still appear clicheic because of the rather slow moving treatment. The production design, cinematography and special effects actually worked although much of the milieu is left unexploited. Jet Li and Jason Statham’s screen partnership does not blend well as compared to other inter-racial tandems. Vengeance is the ultimate weapon, so Rogue says. The entire movie runs with the central theme of revenge that is apparently not the best motivation for a human person. Vengeance is as evil as greed that eventually destroys the human spirit. Crawford has lived a self-destructive life since he swore upon his friend’s grave that he would seek justice with his own hands. Eventually, he loses his wife and child and his own self. The same motivation coupled with his action of betrayal has also caused him his downfall. The same is true with Rogue’s character. He justifies his violent actions from his past experiences. He kills for a reason. However, the central theme of vengeance may have worked for the genre but it does not help the audience’s processing as to what actions are acceptable and unacceptable. Rogue only leaves disturbing and questionable moral judgments. Ultimately, CINEMA finds the graphic violence and theme of the movie fit for mature audiences only.
AFGHANISTAN

Taliban produces its own Afghan constitution

The Taliban has published a shadow Afghan constitution outlining an alternative hardline government to that of President Hamid Karzai. The 23-page document envisages a country where women would remain veiled and under-educated, “un-Islamic thought” would be banned and human rights would be ignored if “contrary with the teachings of Islam.” The Constitution of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan comes days after Des Browne, Britain’s defense secretary, said the Taliban would need to take a role in the peace process in Afghanistan.

NEPAL

2 opposing forces unite

The two opposing and great political forces are united anew five years after they separated. Asianews reported that the Nepali Congress (NC) and Nepali Congress Democratic Parties recently signed an accord—a decision that, according to Nepalese President Girija Prasad Koirala, “delivers a strong message at home and abroad, and which undermines that national politics is entering a new phase.” The source said that with the signature of the two leaders of the parties, a new political reality is created capable of earning the absolute majority in parliament, thus avoiding the crises of government set off by the Maoist departure from the power sharing coalition.

INDONESIA

Study shows 2006 human-human spread of birdflu

A mathematical analysis has confirmed that H5N1 avian influenza spread from person to person here in April. U.S. researchers said they had developed a tool to run quick tests on disease outbreaks to see if dangerous epidemics or pandemics may be developing. Health officials around the world agree that a pandemic of influenza is overdue, and they are most worried by the H5N1 strain of avian influenza that has been spreading through flocks from Asia to Africa. It rarely passes to humans, but since 2003 it has infected 322 people and killed 195 of them. Most have been infected directly by birds. But a few clusters of cases have been seen and officials worry most about the possibility that the virus has acquired the ability to pass easily and directly from one person to another. That would spark a pandemic.

JAPAN

Lawmaker calls for dolphin meat ban

A lawmaker in a Taiji town called for a ban on the meat in school lunches, saying it has high levels of mercury. Taiji, a port town in western Wakayama prefecture, has kept up a four-century tradition of herding thousands of dolphins and whales a year into shallow coves, where they are speared to death. Taiji City assemblyman Junichiro Yamashita has broken ranks by opposing the slaughter, on the grounds that the meat is contaminated with mercury. Yamashita said he conducted lab tests last year on dolphin meat sold in supermarkets and discovered mercury levels 10 times higher than allowed by the government.

SRI LANKA

Priest killed in landmine explosion

A Jesuit Catholic priest who was delivering aid to displaced refugees is the latest victim of this country’s two-decade civil war. Fr Nicholaspillai Packiyaranjith, 40, was allegedly killed in a claymore explosion on September 26 in non-liberated Malavi area in Wanni. The priest, who had been in the service for the past 10 years, was the Mannar district coordinator of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). Colombo Archbishop Oswald Gomis was quick to denounce the incident, saying such acts of violence should be condemned by all possible terms.

CHINA

Pig disease in China worries the world

At first, it was just some of the piglets. The mother gave birth to 13, all of them stillborn. Within a few weeks, however, she and other adult pigs in neighboring stalls became feverish and died. By the end of the summer, all but a handful of the village’s 300 pigs had succumbed to the mysterious disease. Moving rapidly from one farm to the next, the virus has been devastating pig communities throughout China for more than a year, wiping out entire herds, driving pork prices up nearly 87 percent in a year and helping push the country’s inflation rate to its highest levels since 1996. The Chinese government has admitted that the swine deaths amount to an epidemic but contends that the situation is under control.

IRAQ

Air strike killed women, children, officials claim

U.S. forces were accused of killing 10 people, including women and children, on September 29. Iraqi officials said the early morning U.S. air raid targeted a building in the majority Sunni Al-Saha neighborhood in southwestern Baghdad where families were sleeping. Bodies were pulled out of the rubble of the building, which was destroyed. “We have no idea of the reason for the attack,” said an Interior Ministry official.

SYRIA

Gunman kills anti-U.S. imam

The imam of a mosque who repeatedly called for a holy war against U.S. forces was shot dead after praying on September 29, news reports said. Mahmud Gul Aghassi, also known as Abu al-Qaaqaa, was killed by a gunman who stepped from a car and opened fire with an automatic weapon outside his mosque in the northern city of Aleppo.
The quality internet provider with a mission.

“The Children and the Media: A Challenge for Education”

CBCPWorld, which has for its mission the making of the internet as a new forum for proclaiming the Gospel, is now on its 5th year.

It provides filtered broadband internet connectivity via VSAT and IP Radio systems to over a hundred Catholic schools, dioceses, congregations and partners.

Other services:

> Training in Systems administration, Web Designing, Educational Technology and many more
> Web Design, and Free Web hosting for religious and educational sites
> Construction of local and wide area networks using WiFi technologies

Visit our website: www.cbcpworld.com or call (02) 404-2182 / 4041612