



4/2013

EDITORIAL

September 23, 2009: Typhoon ONDOY flooding Manila!
 December 16, 2011: SENDONG surprises Cagayan (Mindanao) in the middle of the night. December 3, 2012: PABLO cuts his destructive paths through Southern Mindanao. October 18, 2013 a 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Bohol damaged bridges and schools and brought down centuries-old churches to rubble. November 8, 2013 monster-typhoon YOLANDA brought devastation to Northern Cebu and to the coastal regions of Samar and Leyte with giant waves swallowing thousands of lives in Tacloban City.

In our hearts we ask ourselves: Where can we find God in the midst of so much suffering? How can we celebrate Christmas?

Responding to the sadness that filled the eyes of Cardinal Tagle with tears Pope Francis responded with the words: *"In these times of suffering, never tire of asking "why?" Your asking will draw the Father's tenderness and attention, just as children draw their parents attention when they ask "why?"*

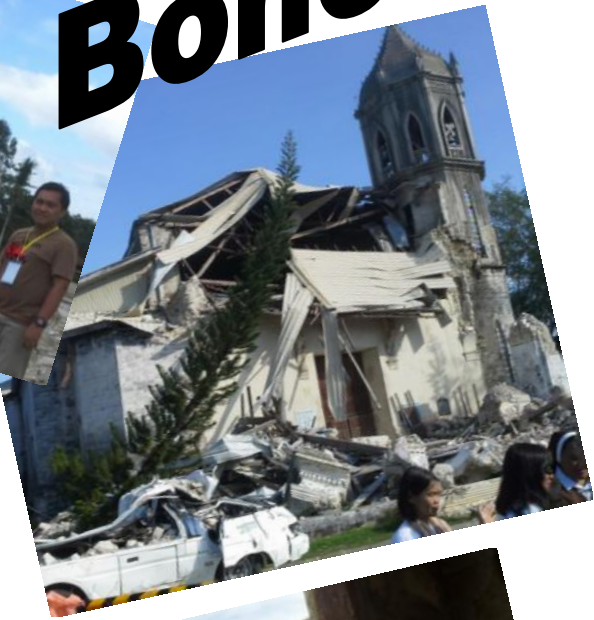
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Amidst suffering we find hope and the gift of endurance in alleviating suffering. Human compassion and care are God's hands and feet reaching out, embodying Christ's presence among us in so many forms of generosity and compassion.

"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overpower it!" (John 1:5)

**A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND
 A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR 2014!**

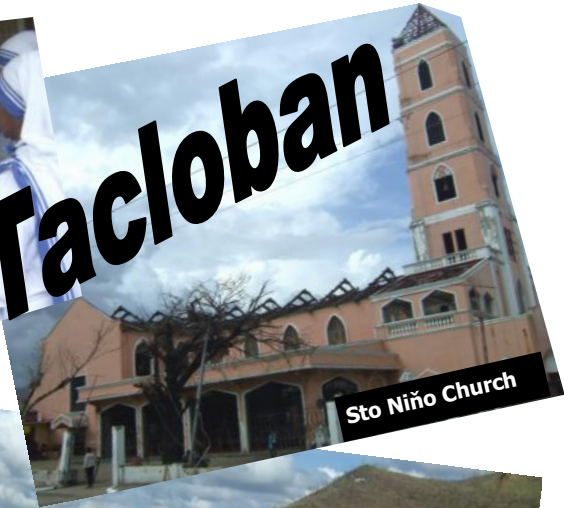
Bohol



Cebu North



Tacloban



Sto Niño Church



Body prayer



Things fall apart...

In November, Clayb, far from his troubled country, sent this email from Nairobi (Kenya)

I felt so helpless when I heard about the devastation caused by the earthquake and the typhoon that struck the Philippines. Dumbfounded for a while, I was thinking of the possibility of going home. Though, I breathed a sigh of relief after I communicated with my family and friends and checked that all of them were safe and sound.



I still felt a sense of guilt around the fact that they have to clear the clutter and rebuild without me at their side; especially when I think of the millions of Filipinos who are in dire and desperate conditions. It made me feel so small, so weak and so vulnerable. One survivor, praying inside the ruins of a church in Tacloban said, "God is more powerful than Yolanda." Her statement hit me. I asked myself, "How come someone who has experienced such horror would have such courage to believe that God remains present?" Her words remind me of the story of the widow who offered her last dime to the temple. I then asked myself, "Would I be willing to let go of the most valuable thing I have? Do I believe that God is in control and takes care of me or the others?" These are the questions that I am asking myself these days. I know the most intellectual answer is yes, if I base it on my readings of the Bible and the books of Nouwen, Rolheiser, Merton, Coelho, etc. But that yes doesn't mean anything if it remains in the head, it should come from the heart, my own heart. Now, this is the difficult part because at the moment I am filled with extreme desolation. I do not see a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel: apparently it's just an endless void.

Clayb Caputolan, M.Afr. (Kenya)

Vision and Mission in Manzese Parish (Tanzania)



The parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was started in 1978 by the Missionaries of Africa. The parish is located on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam. People here are settlers from villages of various regions who come to the city of Dar es Salaam to look for a "better life". Most people are struggling to make a living. In an overpopulated area the lack of proper drainage allows mosquitoes to breed and cause malaria.

Our presence in this parish is a "salt and light" experience for the community of Manzese township. Our ministries include: administration of sacraments, organising the youth, visitation of the sick and small Christian community-building, animation of seminars and retreats focusing on leadership training and Justice & Peace in support of the less privileged people. We also collaborate with the diocesan pastoral team on health matters called PASADA, who facilitate testing, counselling and distribution of medicine for those who are infected by HIV-AIDS.

My main apostolate consists in teaching catechism in a secondary school and English to a parish vocational centre for carpentry and tailoring. I take charge of youths and altar servers and attend their meetings. Often I visit families of our small Christian communities, eat with them and talk to them about life and faith, which also offers me a learning experience for Kiswahili, my new language.

As inspired by our founder Charles Lavigerie, I continue my journey of being "*Apostles and nothing but apostles*" and in all things to love and serve.

Christopher Rabelas, M.Afr. (Tanzania)



Linking Faith, Justice and Peace



(Fr. Richard Nnyombi, Missionary of Africa from Uganda is the Coordinator of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation - Encounter Dialogue (JPIC-ED) for the Society of the Missionaries of Africa.)

Fr. Emmanuel: *What has inspired you most in your missionary vocation?*

Fr. Richard: After the novitiate, I was appointed to Algeria for the apostolic training. Living in a country where 99.9% are Muslims was a big challenge to my Christian faith. Remember that we are there not to convert the Muslims! So, what was the purpose of our missionary presence in this country? How could one serve the people as a missionary in this context? This experience helped me to discover a new image of God, a God who wants to save all the people irrespective of their religious affiliations. It revealed to me the importance of interreligious dialogue. Since then, in my contacts with the Muslims and the study of Islam I have always sought to understand better how God is present and active not only in their lives and beliefs, but also in the lives and beliefs of other believers and their respective religions.

Fr. Emmanuel: *You just attended the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in South Korea with more than 2,500 participants representing 350 different churches. Why are the Missionaries of Africa involved in Ecumenism?*

Fr. Richard: For us Missionaries of Africa, encounter and dialogue with people

of other religions and cultures is one of our missionary priorities. We seek to dialogue with all without any exception and with the aim of promoting justice and peace. As disciples of Christ, we share common Gospel values and ideals with our fellow Christians from other Churches. It is therefore important that we engage ourselves in this ecumenical dialogue.

Fr. Emmanuel: *You are Justice and Peace coordinator for the Missionaries of Africa. Can you give an example of what is concretely done at this level?*

Fr. Richard: We have a number of confreres working with people at the margins of society or victims of social injustices, in parishes or specialised centres. In Europe and Canada we have some centres at the service of African migrants. In Kampala, Uganda, "Sharing Youth Center" which at the beginning was founded to cater for street children, has evolved since then into a centre supporting those who drop out from formal education through vocational courses like carpentry, metal work, tailoring and catering.

Fr. Emmanuel: *In India and the Philippines we have candidates preparing to be Missionary of Africa. Do you think it is important to send Asian missionaries to Africa?*

Fr. Richard: Yes. Asian and African cultures share some common values and challenges more than with the European cultures where the Missionaries of Africa originated. Some examples: The practice of hospitality and the importance of family and community relationships. Religion is more a living experience rather than an intellectual and notional reality. The Churches in Asia have a long experience of inter-religious dialogue which is a daily life experience in Africa. We experience common challenges concerning social justice and peace. In recent times, the number of Africans going to Asia has increased plus the economic contacts between the two continents.

Fr. Emmanuel: *Fr Richard thanks for your visit and your sharing.*

Our Founder Cardinal Lavigerie (13)

When I am in the next life I will see you better and will be more powerful to take care of you." With these words Cardinal Lavigerie sought to comfort those who were saddened to hear him speak of his approaching death.

All his life Lavigerie had been an energetic man with a drive for action. Still at the age of 63 he had launched the campaign against slavery requiring him to travel to most of the European capitals. The fatigue from his journeys

Nov. 26, 1892



weakened his health as he also suffered from arthritis.

Aside from declining health he suffered from the consequences of the so-called "Toast of Algiers" (November 12, 1890). Pope Leo XIII had requested him to make a public statement in favor of the Republican government in France ending the dream of many to bring back the

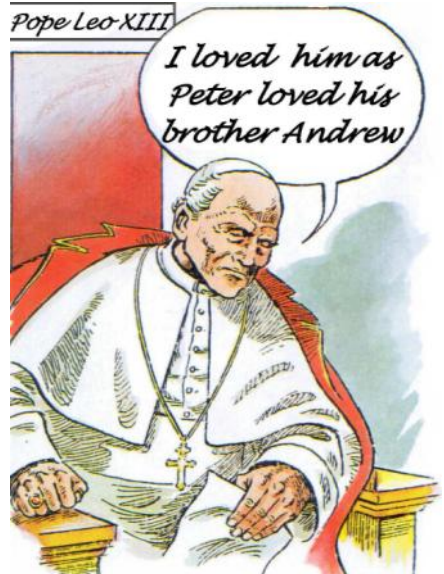
monarchy. This statement brought him insults and humiliation not only from politicians but also from many bishops. Newspapers ridiculed Lavigerie. It was only after one year and three months that Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical letter which clarified that Lavigerie had acted upon his request.

Later the Cardinal wrote to his priests: "There are no injustices nor even calumnies that I have not had to undergo. I thought it my duty to ignore the attacks. I have harbored no ill feelings, I have forgiven everyone," even as he recognized that "this fight killed me."

In May 1892 he suffered a stroke and died on November 26 at the age of 67.

By that time the missionary societies he had founded numbered 278 Missionaries of Africa (M.Afr.) and 95 Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA) working in Algeria, Tunisia as well as in East and Central Africa.

Cardinal Lavigerie's burial rites honored him like a national hero. As he lay in death in his cathedral more than 100,000 believers including Muslims and Jews paid him tribute as they passed by his coffin in the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers. When he was informed of Lavigerie's death Pope Leo XIII. expressed his grief in the words: "I loved him as Peter loved his brother Andrew."



Nelson Mandela 1918 - 2013

Champion of Peace and Human Rights!



Manila 1997: N. Mandela and C. Aquino

It seems impossible until it's done" What made Nelson Mandela the most famous and revered leader world-wide, and perhaps the most respected leader in history was his unshakable commitment to human rights and dignity. He inspired his nation as a political prisoner for 27 years. He never wavered in his unshakable belief that there would be freedom.

The most famous, difficult and wise change of his policy was to renounce violence in favour of negotiations that would lead to a recognition of his political movement and party, the ANC and free elections. That was his strongest card and he played it well. He negotiated as a statesman and astute politician while still a prisoner.

Mandela's legacy is an invitation for each and every one of us *to reflect on our own attitudes, learn and aspire to be a better person*, said Barack Obama! This iconic, visionary, transforming, charismatic and skilled politician sought to liberate both the prisoner and the jailer. "Are we willing to honour Mandela by practicing his legacy?" Asked one of his grandsons.

I think it is up to each one of us, if we really believe in dignity and humanity to answer this fundamental question.

Fr. John ITARU (M.Afr.)

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