



PISTA NG MISYON: An Extraordinary Celebration of Mission

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As the whole Church celebrated the worldwide Extraordinary Missionary Month (EMM) of October 2019, the Pontifical Mission Societies – Philippines (PMS) and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila (RCAM) organized and hosted a whole-day *Pista ng Misyon* (Fiesta of Mission, a title coined by Father James Kroeger) on October 18, 2019 at Cuneta Astrodome, Pasay City.

Prior to this event, the PMS staff had gone to different parts of the country, both on the level of ecclesiastical territories and on more local levels (schools, parishes, offices, communities, seminaries and organizations), and made use of different media platforms (print, brochures, booklets, national papers, radio, television and social media) in order to promote mission awareness; these activities served to orchestrate preparation for and celebration of the EMM, and to facilitate further different possible forms of mission cooperation.

Themed “Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World,” EMM was a celebration on the occasion of the centenary of *Maximum Illud*, the Apostolic Letter on mission, issued in 1919 by Pope Benedict the XV to “evangelically renew” the Church’s missionary commitment in the midst of the tragedies and traumas of World War I.

In his opening remarks, Msgr. Esteban Lo, LRMS, PMS National Director, welcomed the participants on behalf of His Eminence Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle, DD, Archbishop of Manila and in the name of the PMS. He

pointed out that like any feast *Pista ng Misyon* is celebratory—full of praise and thanksgiving, singing and dancing, storytelling and witnessing, praying and sharing of food. He also pointed out that this was another step in the preparation for the 500th Year of Christianity in the Philippines in 2021.



Pista ng Misyon was highlighted by five major segments: ♦ Paying It Forward to the *Kabataan* (Youth); ♦ Playing up God’s Graciousness *sa mga Kapus-palad* (Those on the Peripheries); ♦ Praying for Mission *sa mga Karatig Bansa* (Other Countries); ♦ Proceeding Forward *Kasama ang Isa’t Isa* (Together with Each Other); and ♦ *Usapang*



Each decade with its corresponding color was offered for a particular mission continent and region. Indeed, prayer is the first missionary act.

Segment Four: Proceeding Forward *Kasama ang Isa't Isa* was a unique presentation by the Archdiocesan Commission on Youth, sharing with everyone the stories and sentiments, the dreams and excitements of some young people

who are preparing to be sent or are already sent to mission locally or internationally.

Segment Five: *Usapang Misyon, Kunsu-misyon at Kumisyon* was a sharing of three well-known personalities in show-business: Mr. Dingdong Dantes, Ms. Marian Rivera-Dantes, and Ms. Cherry Pie Picache. In this segment, the guests were interviewed by Cardinal Tagle and



they generously shared about their respective stories of opportunities and successes, challenges and struggles, the joys and tears that came along their way, faith-life, discernment, and advocacies.

There were at least 8,300 participants from all walks of life and from all sectors of the Church, representing twenty-eight Philippine ecclesiastical territories. Aside from Cardinal Tagle, the celebration was also graced by the presence of the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, as well as by Archbishop Romulo Valles, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and nine other bishops. At least, 7,525 World Mission Rosary beads were distributed. The whole celebration was covered live both by Radio Veritas 846 and TV Maria.

Further enlivening the celebration, the Light of Jesus Music Ministry, Couples for Christ, and the Missionary Families of Christ led the praise and worship concert portion of the gathering. Both organizers and participants certainly enjoyed the day. This *Pista ng Misyon* truly served as a platform to celebrate in thanksgiving the gift of mission bestowed on us in baptism, to renew our commitment and our yes to God to serve Him through his people, and to rekindle the joy of mission in the heart of every Filipino Catholic.

The whole day program culminated in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided by Cardinal Tagle. Within the Mass was the *Missio Canonica* of the catechists of the Archdiocese of Manila. In his homily, after reminding everyone

that “Every baptized person living the life of Christ by sharing in his death and resurrection is also sent on mission,” Cardinal Tagle underlined the following points: ♦ A Personal Encounter with Jesus: “This is a requirement for growth in baptism and mission. Do I know Jesus? Have I encountered him and what am I doing in order to deepen my knowledge of Jesus?” ♦ Mission is Fundamentally Witnessing: “Mission in word, in deed, in my relationships, even in my silence, is witnessing to Christ. To witness to Christ means bearing the cross, especially the cross of helplessness.” ♦ Mission of Charity: All the faithful were asked to remember in their prayers those who were greatly affected by the earthquake that hit Mindanao two days earlier, as well as those who are caught in the midst of violence and war in Syria, and those who suffer in Kenya because of severe drought.

Before the final blessing everybody raised their world mission rosary beads as Cardinal Tagle commissioned them to engage in mission. *Pista ng Misyon* closed with everyone singing the 1995 World Youth Day theme song: “Let Us Tell the World of His Love.”

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