



Message from the National Director

I grew up in a home with two altars: the Catholic altar of Mama near the window and the Buddhist altar of Papa near the door—all in one and the same bedroom. Growing up I saw my mother praying every day, sitting on the bed and making use of the very small prayer booklet entitled, *Lord of Pardon*. I also witnessed my father praying every day, kneeling on the floor and offering incense before his altar.

Papa allowed all of us sixteen siblings (three died as babies) to be baptized and raised as Catholics. While we were praying inside the bedroom, Papa sat silently in the living room. We did the same when Papa was praying. During big feasts of the Catholic faith we enjoyed the native fares prepared by Mama. Celebrating important dates in the Buddhist calendar means feasting on the Chinese food brought home by Papa from the temple. Interreligious dialogue was a daily reality in our family, always based on mutual recognition, mutual respect, mutual appreciation, and mutual enrichment.

Going through adolescence my Catholic faith was put to the test. An innocent and charitable act of accompanying a friend in pursuing his love interest brought us to her Protestant Church community. For the next two years it meant for me less daily rosary, less Sunday Masses, less weekly novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, and less monthly novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But, I also learned a lot more about the Word of God and fellowship. After two years I found my way back to the Catholic Church. This time, I daresay, I was more informed and much surer about my Catholic heritage—a heritage that is committed to Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Indigenous Peoples.

Through the Ministry on Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs of the Archdiocese of Manila I have come to know some Muslims with whom I have developed friendships. For at least three times now I have invited them to dialogue with

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my Catholic friends about faith, spiritual journeys, and our common commitment to peace and harmony through peaceful means.

These past two and a half years, I have visited different parts of the Philippines to meet our mission collaborators who are working among children of different indigenous communities. Encountering these children and their elders is truly a grace and an incentive to seek more help on their behalf.

We thank the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for declaring 2020 as the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Indigenous Peoples with the theme "Dialogue Towards Harmony".

Also, *daghang salamat* to Father James H. Kroeger, MM, for once again graciously and generously editing this publication and for his own article included here. Thank you, all contributors to our current edition of *The Missions Newsletter*. *Maraming salamat po*, staff of the National Office of the Pontifical Mission Societies – Philippines for all your help in realizing this project.

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).


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