



News Briefs

Anthony S. P. Dameg, FSM

Thank you, Bishop Bastes! Welcome, Bishop Mesiona!

The national office of the Pontifical Mission Societies - Philippines (PMS) thanks His Excellency Arturo M. Bastes, SVD, DD, for his constant and generous support to PMS in all the years that he served as Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Mission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, extending from December 1, 2013 to November 30, 2019. Surely, the good Lord who cannot be outdone in generosity shall continue to bless you.

We welcome and congratulate His Excellency Socrates C. Mesiona, MSP, DD, as the new Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Mission (ECM) of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines. May the Lord continue to sustain you with his guidance and strength as you lead ECM in making Jesus more known and more loved.



Maraming Salamat po, Nuncio

Our gratitude is expressed to Bishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, DD, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, who began his service in November 2017, for his unwavering support to the works of the Pontifical Mission Societies – Philippines (PMS), especially for his presence at the sixty-sixth PMS Diocesan Directors Assembly on July 9-10, 2019, held in the Diocese of Bacolod. His presence was appreciated at the *Pista ng Misyon* for the celebration of the Extraordinary Missionary Month on October 18, 2019 at the Cuneta Astrodome, Pasay City.

Subsequently, Archbishop Caccia was appointed by the Vatican to the post of Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the United Nations. He succeeds a Filipino, Bishop Bernardito Auza, DD, whom Pope Francis appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Spain. Congratulations on your new mission, dear Archbishop Caccia. *Oremus pro invicem.*



Cotabato Celebrates the Extraordinary Missionary Month

“We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean, but the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.” – Mother Teresa

The Archdiocese of Cotabato sought to fill up that missing drop and respond to the call of Pope Francis by organizing a Mission

Congress. More than 300 faithful participated in the Archdiocesan Mission Congress held at Notre Dame RVM College of Cotabato on October 24, 2019. Representatives from all parishes, ministries, mandated organizations, Catholic schools and Religious Congregations in the archdiocese actively



participated in the said Congress. The presence of children from the Indigenous community of the Diocese of Marbel gave more color and life to the Congress with their tribal attire and dance, more urgency to respond to the call of mission within and outside the country.

The Congress opened with the Eucharistic Celebration presided by Archbishop Angelito R. Lampon, OMI, local ordinary of the Archdiocese of Cotabato, concelebrated by Fathers Salvador R. Robles and Mark Tobias, who are the PMS Mission Directors of the Archdiocese of Cotabato and the Diocese of Marbel, respectively. Members of the Youth Ministry sang a mission song animatedly, causing the Congress participants to be more alive, alert, awake and enthusiastic. Father Arnold Garferio, SM, who was a missionary in Thailand, focused his talk on "The Nature of the Church:

Church as Missionary." His talk awakened the participants' missionary spirit.

The Mission Congress highlighted the missionary identity of the local Church of Cotabato as part of the universal Church when Monsignor Esteban Lo, LRMS, presented the four Pontifical Mission Societies: Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood, Pontifical Society of Saint Peter the Apostle, and the Pontifical Missionary Union. The objectives, aspirations, simplicity, ordinariness, and the entirety of the four Pontifical Mission Societies enlightened the minds and enkindled the hearts of the participants in response to the call to mission. The event helped the participants realize, appreciate, and affirm their basic identity as being "baptized and sent," as being missionary-disciples.

First Diocesan Mission Assembly in Kidapawan

The Diocese of Kidapawan held for the very first time a Diocesan Mission Assembly on October 25, 2019 at Marian Hall, Seminary Compound, Balindog, Kidapawan City. The gathering was attended by 205 participants coming from eighteen parishes, Notre Dame Schools, the diocesan seminary, and different lay organizations, movements and associations. There were two speakers: Monsignor Esteban U. Lo, LRMS, National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies - Philippines who talked on "The Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019"; George Campos of Couples for Christ spoke on "The Laity in Mission." The gathering was concluded with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided by Bishop Jose Colin M. Bagaforo, the Local Ordinary of Kidapawan;

several clergy concelebrated. A business meeting followed after lunch.

The celebration was indeed "momentous," an "outbreak" for mission awareness and animation in the diocese. All are hoping and praying that the support and participation will continue to be alive for the sake of mission.



Maasin Diocesan Mission Assembly 2019



The Diocesan Mission Assembly 2019 of the Diocese of Maasin was held on October 20, 2019 at the *Agnus Dei* Shrine, Hilongos, Leyte. There were 826 delegates from 47 parishes and from different church organizations.

The event began with the introduction of *Maximum Illud*, facilitated by the Pontifical Mission Societies Diocesan Director, Father Manuel V. Lagumbay. This was followed by Sister Violeta R. Bayo, LGC, who talked about “Mission Animation and Cooperation.” The last speaker was Brother

Anthony S. P. Dameg, FSM, who explained the Pontifical Mission Societies and the Extraordinary Mission Month that was declared by Pope Francis and celebrated during October 2019.

People who attended the gathering understood the importance of how they can help the mission of the Church and how they can become missionaries in their own way. At the conclusion of the assembly, a concelebrated Mass was presided by Bishop Precioso D. Cantilas, SDB, DD, Bishop of Maasin.

Borongan Diocese Dual Celebration

The Diocese of Borongan conducted its Diocesan Catechetical Day 2019 and at the same time celebrated the Extraordinary Missionary Month on October 26, 2019 at its cathedral church, the Nativity of Our Lady Parish, Borongan City.

The said event was spearheaded by the Director of the Diocesan Commission on Catechesis, Father Cyril Caliba, the Director of the Diocesan Commission on Mission, Father

Philip Oliver A. Campomanes, and the Diocesan Coordinator of the Catechetical Commission, Sister Mariben Espinosa, LGC. The activities started at 7:30 in the morning with a registration of the participants by parish. There were more than 800 catechists coming from the three regions of the diocese who joined the gathering.

Songs and animations made the assembly very lively. Two brilliant speakers were invited. The



first resource person was a Maryknoll Missioner in the person of Father James H. Kroeger. He is an author of numerous books and catechetical materials. In his talk, he focused on Pope Francis' "Fiesta of Mission." The catechists listened attentively to Father Kroeger for he was conversant in imparting the information he wanted to share. His discussion on Pope Francis' "Fiesta of Mission" mentioned the following topics: ♦ Unique Mission Month, ♦ Urgency of Missionary Renewal of the Entire Church, ♦ Encounter with Christ, ♦ Integral Nature of Missionary Evangelization, ♦ Mercy: Heart of Mission, ♦ Reading the "Signs of the Times," ♦ Pastoral Initiatives Needing Attention, ♦ Renewed Emphasis on Holiness of Life, ♦ Potential of Popular Piety for Evangelization, ♦ Joy, Pivotal Sign of Missionary Disciples, and ♦ Constant Invocation of the Holy Spirit, Mary and the Saints.

The second resource person was Father Edmel M. Raagas, who also inspired the catechists with his talk on Christian Faith: Call, Gift and Mission. He is one of the young priests in the diocese who has been assigned as Parochial Vicar of Saint James the Greater Parish, Taft and Immaculate Conception Parish, Guiuan, Eastern Samar. His input touched and enlivened the catechists feeling, especially when he said that the "catechists are the

silent unsung heroes of our Faith." According to him, "faith is a gift, and whatever is given by God is meant to be shared. We share the Faith by being missionary. He also stressed that catechists are the storytellers of the story of Jesus. The following were also emphasized by Father Edmel: the catechist as a ♦ Student of Faith ("head" - grace of knowledge), ♦ Friend of Jesus ("heart" - grace of love), and ♦ Servant of the Lord ("hands" - grace of service).

In the afternoon there was a photo opportunity by parish with Sister Mariben "Bing" Espinosa. At exactly 2:00 in the afternoon, the Holy Mass was celebrated by the Most Reverend Crispin Varquez, Bishop of the Diocese of Borongan. Awarding of certificates was done after the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In the words of Father Kroeger, "Indeed, it was a full and fruitful day!" One participant reflected: "We are gifted to be part of a diocese-in-mission, seeking new and creative ways to communicate the faith and live Jesus' Gospel of Joy." All the participants departed with a renewed spirit, with "hearts on fire" to live and share the precious gift of faith!

Brother Anthony S. P. Dameg, FSM, is the Formation Coordinator of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Philippines.