

PREFACE

The Catholic Church in the Philippines is enthusiastically preparing for the celebration of the fifth centenary of the coming of Christianity to our beloved land in 2021. In particular, we will remember the first mass celebrated in *Limasawa* Island on Easter Sunday, the baptism of *Rajah Humabon* who was given the Christian name Carlos and his wife *Hara Amihan* with the Christian name Juana, as well as the subsequent giving of the image of the Sto. Niño as a gift from Ferdinand Magellan to the newly baptized Catholics in Cebu in 1521. Indeed, 2021 will be a year of great jubilee, a historic milestone of the Philippine Catholic Church that we should celebrate with joy and gratitude.

Unfortunately, our preparation for this historic event has been disrupted by the worldwide pandemic due to the novel coronavirus or COVID-19; however, I am sure we will still celebrate this anniversary as a people, of course not in a grand and lavish manner but in a simple yet meaningful way. This is because celebrating milestones, even if it is done simply but meaningfully, is an expression of a grateful heart. And why should we not be grateful when God in a very unique and mysterious way has blessed us with the gift of Christian faith five-hundred years ago?

Before COVID-19, the Philippine Church was already preparing for this great jubilee year with its nine-year thematic focus on pivotal aspects of the Christian faith that would culminate with the theme “*missio ad gentes*” in 2021. The choice of ending on the theme of mission in this nine-year preparation is both timely and appropriate, because the coming of Christianity to our beloved land is a gift that we cannot just keep for ourselves; we need to share this special gift with others! Thus, the Episcopal Commission on Mission (ECM) of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), as the lead commission for the “Year of Mission,” has chosen as its theme the biblical text from the Gospel of Matthew 10:8, which says: “What you have received as a gift, give as a gift” or more simply, “Gifted to give.” Freely we received the gift of faith; freely we also give it to others. As baptized Christians we are all expected to be missionaries who are tasked to share the gift of faith with others!

Part of the materials we decided to produce for our missionary formation in the Year of *missio ad gentes* is this catechetical source-book on missionary evangelization. The primary objective of this book is to fan the flame of our zeal for mission—both in 2021 and subsequent years. This zeal would be a wonderful legacy that we can bequeath to coming generations as fruit of our celebration for the year of great jubilee of our faith: having more Filipino Catholics becoming missionaries of the faith!

On behalf of the ECM-CBCP, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Father James Kroeger, MM, who painstakingly composed this book as resource material for our continuing missionary formation. Likewise, I would like to thank the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in the Philippines, through its National Director Monsignor Esteban Lo, LRMI, for closely collaborating in this project. Also, I am truly grateful for the support of the members of the Philippine Catholic Mission Council (PCMC) who helped make this project possible.

I hope and trust that the visible fruit of the 2021 celebration will be our enduring enthusiasm to share the precious gift of the Christian faith with others—both in our land and to the ends of the earth!

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