

Keynote Address of Bishop Ambo David at the CEAP National Convention

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Dear members of the Board of Trustees of the CEAP, headed by the President, Fr. Joel Tabora, His Eminence Cardinal Quevedo, mga kapatid, magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

Pagdating ko kanina binigyan ako ng stampita ni Pope Francis. I think this stampita makes it very obvious who the inspiration for the topic this afternoon is. But as Fr. Elmer Dizon preempted a while ago, I am not really going to demolish or dismantle your topic, but I intended to propose a little bit of a correction to the subtitle “From Brokenness to Blessedness” if Pope Francis is really our inspiration because blessedness still presupposes brokenness. We do not stop being broken when we are blessed. So perhaps it would be better to reformulate it as “Blessedness IN brokenness”, kasi ganuon ang motto ni Pope Francis “Miserando Aque Eligendo “wretched but chosen” and you might say blessed but broken, nevertheless; or broken but blessed, nevertheless. So yung binigay na subtitle sa akin was not exactly from blessedness to brokenness but being blessed and becoming a blessing for an authentic world. And my translation of Sanctificatio is “holiness in the making”.

If we declare ourselves as sanctified already, baka may magalit diyan at tawagin na naman tayong, “a whole bunch of hypocrites”. We cannot be really hypocritical about it, we remain, really broken, even in our aspiration for blessedness.

So let me proceed to a little bit of introduction. I think our Biblical basis for *sanctificatio* is what is stated in the book of Genesis, Chapter 1: 26, humankind is called to be like God, we are called to be like God. And in Leviticus Chapter 19 verse 2 – “to be like God is to be holy as God is holy”.

Sanctificatio is holiness in the making, it is goodness in the making. The world is a creation in progress reflecting God’s holiness in its unfolding. Humankind is created as a very special creature. And Genesis 1:26 defines that special character of the human creature as “image and likeness of God”. I’d say the other word for holiness should be “goodness”.

In the Genesis - in the first creation story, when you look at all the items in creation, there is a constant refrain there “and God saw that it was good.” God created the world and God saw that it was good. But in verse 26, after God created humankind, in his image and likeness, God looked at everything that he had created, and God saw that it was VERY GOOD. It’s from good to VERY GOOD because humankind was in the picture already. That defines that role of humankind in creation. To be like God is to participate in the Holy God’s continuing creation of the world. Meaning, we have a mission. Our mission is the world’s transformation from good to very good.

That is why it is very uplifting to watch something so superior in aesthetic quality like Coro San Benildo. I enjoyed myself so much that I did not want them to end anymore. I was so fascinated by a choir that could perform *a capella* in such a beautiful way. The experience of beauty, something really superior is very uplifting. There is something very holy about it. The

opposite of it is mediocrity. You know how you feel when you watch something very mediocre. It is like you are squirming and especially when the performers do not look like they are enjoying themselves, you squirm within you. Somehow, something within you says “you can do better than that.” Don’t be good when you can be very good. The Jesuits have a word for it. MAGIS. Magis, that is our role and mission as humankind, as creatures in God’s image and likeness.

So there are three aspects of holiness in the making as defined by the subtitle proposed to me: First, being blessed in order to, second, become a blessing. That the whole point in being blessed is to become a blessing. You are not holy enough if you are just blessed. Holiness is supposed to be about being blessed in order to become a blessing for an authentic world.

THREE ASPECTS

First: Being blessed

Like I said, we are created to be like God. We are created to be God’s image and likeness. The problem however, is this is very often misinterpreted by humankind especially when the serpent comes in. Remember Genesis 3 the pet peeve of “you-know-who”? “Ano bang klaseng Diyos yan, he created something beautiful tapos, tapos spoils it himself, by sending a serpent.”

I have to post in my Facebook page, “Sir, it’s not literal, its literary” what matters is the point. Ano ang punto? You know, being like God is really very commonly misinterpreted by humankind. Very often we interpret it to mean “to be powerful like God. Kaya ako nag-iingat ako kapag nagdadasal at sinasabi nating “All-powerful God, Ominipotent God, Almighty God...” Because I am not sure if the person who is praying knows what it means to be almighty, omnipotent, or powerful for God. We are all always aspiring to be almighty, powerful and omnipotent because we believe that God is almighty. If we are created in the image of God, and this God is almighty then, it must be godlike to aspire to be almighty and powerful! That’s precisely where we fall.

Remember, this is where the serpent is an expert of – the serpent’s half truth. Yung kanyang “fake news.” Ang sabi niya, “You certainly will not die. God knows well that when you eat of that forbidden fruit, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God – knowing good and evil.” Tama ba siya? Parang tama eh! Kasi he said, “you will be like God,” Genesis 1:26 “God created humankind in his image and likeness.” What’s wrong about that? We are called to be like God. But here is the serpent defining for humankind what it means to be godlike. “Kumain ka na niyan, para mabuksan ang mata mo!” This tree of knowledge of good and evil is actually the tree, the poison tree of power. And it becomes the tree of death. Kaya the antidote to it is the tree of life. Which becomes the CROSS, in Christian tradition.

To be like God, in Moses, in the Pentateuch, Moses says that to be like God is to be “Holy like God” (Lev 19:2), “be holy, for I the Lord your God, am holy” and then when you move to Deuteronomy Chapter 6, “Hear, O Israel, The Lord is your God, the Lord alone, therefore, you

shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” You know why you must love with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength? Because that is how much God loves you. And you are a creature in the image and likeness of God, and you must learn to love like God. And of course in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Matthew, “be holy because your God is holy” is reformulated by Matthew into “be perfect” that is why in this Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons, the consecrated ones are reminded that the consecrated life is a quest for perfection - perfection. But we have to understand what that perfection is about because we are all flawed creatures. At walang sino man sa atin magtataas ng kamay to say “I am perfect.”

Maybe we are aspiring for perfection. Perhaps that is the reason why St. Luke reformulated it to “Be merciful, just as your father is merciful” Meaning for St. Luke perfection is merciful. And, of course, in John 15:12, Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” He defines that Divine Criterion of Love. “Love one another”. He did not just say, “Love one another,” hindi pa tapos yun. Our criterion for loving is: “as Christ has loved us”. The cross is the Criterion.

Second: To become a blessing

To become a blessing to the rest of humankind. To become a blessing to the rest of creation. Blessing to the rest of humankind. Blessed to become a blessing.

In the book of Genesis again, in Pentateuch, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are given this promise by God. “ I will bless you... so that you will be a blessing”. Malinaw na malinaw, I will bless you so that you will be a blessing. You know that Israel called themselves a chosen people, yet very often, they forgot what they were chosen for. Akala nila, pinili sila dahil magaling sila. They thought they were chosen because they were the greatest. They had to be corrected by God every now and then. “No, no, you are blessed so that you can be a blessing... and all the families of the earth should find blessing in you (Gen 12:2-3).”

This too is repeated in the promise to Isaac and Jacob. But that blessing is not just to humankind. It is to the rest of creation. Remember, I said that God created the world and he saw that it was good, and then when he created humankind, he looked at everything that he had created and he saw that it was VERY GOOD... because of humankind. Meaning, our mission is not just to one another, not just to the rest of our fellow the human beings, but to the rest of creation. That is why in Mark 16, the Commission by Jesus is to “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation, to every creature” not just to humankind. I think this is the inspiration of Pope Francis in Laudato Si – to ALL creation.

Third: For an authentic world

And lastly, for an authentic world. Blessed to be a blessing for an authentic world. Authenticity. And I would go back again to the word GOOD, a world that is good, but a world that is called to become even better at each time. Yes, we are good. Don't you ever presuppose that we're bad. I think it is heretical to presuppose that there are evil human beings. Ito yung common problem

ko sa Kalookan, by the way. Yung kapag sinasabi ko na “naniniwala ba kayo na mayroong masamang tao dito sa mundo?” Sigurado, in unison, people will say “Yes! Yes!” So, I usually have to restate the question and say, “Teka, naniniwala ba kayo na mayroong likas na masamang tao dito sa mundo?” Marami pa ring YES, pero medyo mas mahina na. And, I have a problem with that. Because that’s heretical. Because if you believe that there are innately evil people, you will have to believe that is an innately evil God who created innately evil people. That’s why I have a big problem with people who stigmatize people as criminals, as good for nothing, as people who do not deserve to live. I have a problem with that! Because morally speaking, you cannot call yourself a Christian and agree with that!

Because we have to have a role – a special role as human beings. Authentic means real. And the word we use in Tagalog is *huwaran*; as opposed to lie, fake, or make believe – which is related to *huwaran* -- the word is HUWAD. FAKE. You know, I had to learn this from people from the Southern Tagalog. Verb pala yung “HUWADAN mo yan.” Kaya HUWARAN, that which you make a copy from. That’s the *huwaran*, to be exemplary.

OK, our reference, our basic reference is the pastoral exhortation of Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate* which he subtitled as the call to holiness in today’s world. And the objective of that book is to repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time – with all its risks, challenges, and opportunities. And I’m happy that you picked up this challenge in the education ministry.

Let me propose **seven (7) very brief points in the quest for sanctification**. And how you appropriate these for yourselves in the context of the education apostolate and ministry, I leave that to you.

The first point: “Every saint has a past; every sinner has a future.”

Actually, I drew this from the very first chapter of *Gaudete et Exsultate*: “Every saint has a past; every sinner has a future.” And this is a source of consolation for all people aspiring for sanctification. “Every saint has a past; every sinner has a future.” Apparently, this is from St. Augustine but later coined by Oscar Wilde. Some people know it as coming from Oscar Wilde than from St. Augustine. But St. Augustine himself is an evidence to the statement “Every saint has a past; “ and you know the past of St. Augustine. The important thing is to know that the Lord will never pin us to our past. The Lord is always offering a future to humankind. And what better example do we have than St. Paul himself. Remember in Galatians 1:13, he says. “you heard of my former way of life in Judaism. How I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it...” This man was a persecutor who was converted later on into a propagator of the faith.

“Every saint has a past; every sinner has a future.” And what better example can we think of for a sinner with a future than Simon. Simon who became Peter. “Do not be afraid,” Jesus says, when Simon was amazed because of the huge catch and realized what this man before him was

up to. Suddenly, he was gripped by that fear as if he wanted to say, “You have the wrong man, Lord. I am not a saint. Please look for somebody else.”

And Jesus says, “Do not be afraid”.

This is Jesus’ way of saying. “I am not looking for a saint. I know who you are...” As Ecclesea says it. “God does not call the qualified. He qualifies the those he calls.” From now on, you will be a fisher of men.

In Gaudete et Exsultate, Pope Francis proposes the Beatitudes. And he calls the spirituality of the Beatitudes as “going against the current”. Going against the current. All the Beatitudes are paradoxical statements. Like I said, it’s not really a process from brokenness to blessedness. Wag tayong mag-ilusyon. You won’t become blessed; you won’t become blessed from brokenness at hindi ka na babalik. You remain broken in your blessedness. It is precisely that paradox which defines the spirituality of the Beatitudes.

In Chapter 4 of Gaudete, Pope Francis presents five signs of holiness. And I would recommend very highly that you dwell on that chapter.

First sign is perseverance. Kaya delikado yung umaatras kaagaad, the quitters who do not persevere. Konting challenge lang umaatras kaagaad.

Second sign is joy/sense of humor. Alam nating lahat na mabibigat ang mga gawain natin and after a while, we become joyless. When we are miserable, we will just make other people miserable.

The third is parisea, the Greek word that Pope Francis loves to mention. Boldness. Passion. The courage to stand for what is truth.

Fourth, is living in community. Kanina, Fr. Elmer when he reviewed your activities, he recalled the time when we celebrated the year of the parish as a communion of communities. I’m amazed that you also applied this in the school setting – how to create an atmosphere of a communion of communities within the school.

And the last is, to be always in constant prayer. I’ll go back to this prayer later on when we talk about spiritual battle. He ends that book with a final chapter on spiritual battle. You know that the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines came out with a pastoral exhortation recently and then the opening lines were “what about the spiritual battle?” We said, we do not fight the battle with human beings or with flesh and blood. Our real enemies are spiritual enemies and the real battle that we fight is spiritual warfare. Wala tayong taong kalaban dito sa mundo. Kahit ituring pa nila tayong kalaban, we will never treat them as the enemy. Ang kalaban natin palagi ay ang demonyo. And the arena of battle is so so wide for the peril. And I draw a lot of inspiration from the Jesuits for this because I call them the masters in

discernment. But you cannot have discernment without prayer. Only through prayer can we grow in the gift of discernment.

Usually, our students, if you tell them to pray; they would know what prayer means as “talking to God”. Praying as talking to God. If we really want to make our students mature in prayer, I believe we have to teach them, more basically, that prayer is LISTENING to God. Praying as more basically, “listening, opening to God,” as Fr. Tom Greene says. And discernment, I would call it spiritual intelligence – the capacity to sort out among the many voices.

Kasi ang buhay natin dito sa mundo, parang ***hampas palayok***. You know that game – hit the pot? When I was a little boy, I remember I always won in that game because I had a secret. It was my father who taught me. He would always say, “Alam mo, Ambo, kung gusto mong tamaan yung palayok, “ kasi paiikot-ikutin ka pa eh, pipiringan ka, tapos lilituhin ka, hanggang sa hilung-hilo ka na paano mo tatamaan ang palayok? Ang sabi niya, “pag nagsimula ka nang lumakad, sumisigaw ang lahat ng tao sa paligid mo, wag mo silang pakikilingan. Alam mo naman ang boses ko. Sa akin ka lang makinig. Pagsinabi kong direktso! Kanan! Kaliwa! Hampas!” Hampas ako kaagad. At lagi akong nananalo! Because I listen to my father’s voice. I think prayer is like that. And discernment is the capacity to sort out among the many voices to know your Father who is leading you to your direction.

Second point: Holiness of Life is what our “common priesthood” is about.

The priesthood of the holiness of life. It is our basic Christian calling. I have to be honest with you na hindi ako ganyan ka- komportable calling myself a priest. I was educated in the theology of the priesthood by Fr. Catalino Arevalo. And it was from Fr. Arevalo that I heard that before we can understand ministerial priesthood we have to first of all situate it within the common priesthood of the faithful.

In the New Testament, there is no other priesthood except the priesthood of Jesus Christ. And the next time you hear about priesthood it’s already applied to the priestly community, to the priestly people – the common priesthood. And so the sharing in that priesthood is common. It is our basic Christian calling. We are called to share in the priesthood of Christ. And that common priesthood of the faithful, is basically what holiness of life is about – how we are called to live the priesthood of Christ in whom the offerer and the offering are one.

Kasi in the Old Testament, priesthood was about making an offering; and distinguished ang priest from the victim – the offerer from the offering. The priest in the Old Testament is a mediator of a covenant between God and his people. And when the covenant is somehow broken, the priest has to do some mediating through an offering of sacrifice. And the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, sort of, ridicules that. He says, “look at that situation, the sinner is not even hurt in the offering, in the sacrifice that’s being made. The priest is not hurt, the sinner is not hurt. It’s the victim that is hurt.” In the new dispensation, Jesus will not say, “I will offer a lamb for you.” Rather he will say, “I will be the lamb, I’ll give my life for you. My sacrifice is my life.”

So participation in the priesthood of Christ is about living a Eucharistic life. My offering to God is not my token time, talent, and treasure even if all of that is very significant. Rather, my whole life. Kaya nung namura na naman tayo dahil tinatax natin ang ating mga miyembro. Parang gusto kong magtext at sabihin, "Sir, baka hindi kami yung tinutukoy mo." Kasi sinasabi niya, "these Catholics, why are they taxing their members." Meron daw tayong system of taxation. Sabi ko, "wala kaming system of taxation in the church. Ang alam kong ay system of taxation ay yung humihingi ng ika _____, (32:00), o yun, taxation yun!" 10%. In the Catholic church we do not ask for 10% because we believe that God is not asking for 10%, God is asking for 100%. He is not asking for 10%. He is asking for 100%! Ano ka 10% lang? That is the priesthood of holiness of life. Whatever you offer to God is just token. They are called token thanks offerings in thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving for the many gifts we received from God. This is the spirit of Old Testament priesthood and sacrifice.

Meron akong kaibigan, nung birthday niya, bago daw siya nagbirthday, napansin niya na yung anak niya, hingi ng hingi ng pera sa kanya. And on the day of his birthday binigyan siya ng regalo. Tinanong nya, "Saan mo binili to? Saan ka kumuha ng perang pambili mo nito. Ang mahal nito ah." Ang sabi daw ng bata, "Sa yo po, Daddy." Tuwang tuwa naman daw siya na napaka-thoughtful ng anak niya, na kahit yung pinambili ng regalo niya sa kanya nanggaling. Siguro ganyan talaga. Ang Diyos siguro ganyan din sa atin. Ano ba ang pwedeng i-alay natin sa Diyos na hindi sa Diyos nanggaling? Diba? All of it is token! That is why at the presentation of gifts, yung sinasabi natin, "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we offer you the bread we received..." Ang iniaalay namin sa inyo, sa inyo din ho nanggaling!

Dahil ba sa Diyos din nanggaling eh wag na tayo mag-alay? It's really token. Dahil binibigyan tayo ng Diyos, parang sapat na sa Diyos na makita niyang natututo tayong magbigay katulad niya. Because we are supposed to be like God. Kaya yung magulang lahat binibigay sa anak. Pag nagbigay yung anak niya, kahit sa kanya din nanggaling natutuwa siya kasi marunong na rin magbigay ang anak.

Sorry, I preempted this, what we say in the presentation of gifts. We say the same thing: "Fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life". (Slide 32).

From a token offering, to an offering of self.

And I hope you understand why I chose that photo in the background (Slide 33). You know him? He was going to offer the mass. Well actually, he had offered it already. I think he was killed after the mass. So from a token offering to an offering of self. The Eucharist is about becoming what we eat.

And so we can understand ministerial priesthood only in that context of the common priesthood. In the ministerial priesthood, the presider acts like Christ. So that all who commune with Christ, can be CHRISTIFIED. Yung pala ang papel ng priestly ministry or ministerial priesthood. It is directed to common priesthood. A ministerial priesthood that does not build up

the common priesthood, is fake, it's totally useless. It is connected to the common priesthood. You are familiar with that vocabulary that was made popular by the song of Fr. Manoling Francisco, diba? Christify! And some people react to that vocabulary. Well it actually comes from the early fathers of the church. Christification. He says, "with this bread and wine you Christify/ Now our deepest thirst you satisfy/ We who by this bread you sanctify/ Draw the world for you to Christify. " So Christification isn't just about the bread and the wine. It is the bread and the wine becoming the body and blood of Christ. Sometimes, we call it transubstantiation. Kala tuloy ng iba, magic – that the bread suddenly becomes God. You know, I prefer to see in the Eucharist not the bread who becomes God but the God who becomes bread. Because the Eucharist is very Kenotic. It's about the God who empties himself totally. But the Christification is not just applied to the bread and wine. It is applied, above all, to the community of the people of God and to the whole world to be Christified. There is one great Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin, who talks about this as the omega point. The Christogenesis. That Christification is the direction of all creation.

Third point: The path of sanctification is Christification.

I may have pre-empted that. Only in Jesus Christ is our humanity fully united with divinity. And I would refer you to Colossians Chapter 1: 15-20 for this. Remember that Christological hint, he is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creatures. For St. Paul, to be holy is "to live in Christ" to be part of the body of Christ. He says, "I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and has given up his life for me."

And so, Christ is multiplied in his disciples. I know that we have fellow Christians, especially among the Pentecostals and Evangelicals who are scandalized about our veneration of the saints. And madalas ang reaction nila "bakit ganyan na lang ang pagpaparangal ninyo sa mga santo't santa na yan eh mga tao lang din naman yan na katulad ninyo?" Tao LANG yan? Kung ganyan kababa ang pagtingin natin sa tao, what will you say about the humanity of Jesus? He shared in our humanity. Incarnation did not finish with Jesus. It continues. It's a continuing reality in the church. And so there is nothing that we honor and venerate in our saints except the Christ that is reflected in them and by them. Kapag hinahanap si Kristo, saan ba tayo magtuturo, alangan naman sa Krus lang tayo magtuturo? Larawan lang yan. We're supposed to be the spitting image of Christ as members of the body of Christ.

Fourth point: Holiness is a paradox of "power in weakness".

I sort of pre-empted this with my commentary on Pope Francis' "miserando aque eligendo", when I said maybe we should reformulate from brokenness to blessedness to: blessedness in the midst of brokenness ... that's the paradox. Holiness is a paradox – the paradox of power in weakness. Remember, St Paul could not understand why he continued to suffer his thorn in the flesh – his own weaknesses. And one day he prayed to God and he said, "God, if you have called me to sanctity, would you please get rid of my weakness. Can you please remove my thorn in the flesh?"

Dito sa mundo maraming ganyan pa rin ang dasal sa Diyos. “Get rid of my weakness, Lord.” And the answer of God to that is in 2 Corinthians 12:9 “my grace is enough for you. For power is made perfect in weakness. I’d rather boast gladly of my weakness in order that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

Si Pope Francis kuhang-kuha niya talaga ito sa “Miserando Aque Eligendo. The Tagalog translation would be : “Aba, ngunit pinili” (Eng: Wretched but Chosen) that we are chosen in our very wretchedness. To be holy is to discover the sufficiency of God’s grace. Right there in our weakness, power reaches perfection. That’s why holiness can never grow in pretentiousness. Na para bang akala mo, parang sino na tayong santo o anghel sa pagpapakabanal. Kaya nga, parating iniinsist natin ang pagpapakabanal ay hindi dapat mahiwalay sa pagpapakabayani. Kasi ang pagpapakabanal na walang pagpapakabayani ay pagbabanal-banalan.

Fifth point: Jesus’ vision of a Holy Life is outlined in the Lord’s Prayer.

How clever of Jesus to sum up the call to holiness in just one prayer – The Lord’s Prayer. In fact, I call it the vision and mission statement of Jesus. We do not have to invent that vision and mission. It is there in the Lord’s prayer. I don’t think he meant it as just a prayer, I think he meant it as his vision and mission of a holy life. To live life on earth as in heaven. Meaning, the life of holiness, the aspiration for holiness, for sanctification, is not just aspiring to go to heaven. Aspiring to go to heaven is only part of it. It is aspiring to go to heaven starting here on earth. There is no heaven to aspire for if we did not aspire for it here on earth.

The Kingdom of God is among you. How do we live life on earth like heaven has begun? Well, by hallowing God’s name; by seeking God’s kingdom; by doing God’s will; by seeking one’s daily bread (and that daily bread is not just, you know, what fills our stomach. Remember, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”); by learning to forgiveness; and through our readiness for the spiritual battle. All of this sum up what it is to live life on earth as in heaven – the call for sanctification.

Sixth point: Holiness is wholeness.

Wholeness, that is what Integrity is about. And I do hope that in all our Catholic schools, integrity remains as one of our core values. Integridad. It is about having one word. Ayaw natin ng mga taong walang isang salita. Even in Spanish they say, Palabra de honor. In English, a person of one word. Do you know that in Hebrew, the word, DABAR, which is translated into WORD, it can mean thought. It can mean speech. It can also mean action. It can mean an event. It means a lot of things but the word used is just one word, DABAR. Palagay ko may ibig sabihin yun. And so when we read in John chapter 1, “in the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” I think it suggests that holiness is to be a person of ONE WORD like God – in thought, speech, and action. Because it is precisely when our thought is not in congruence with our speech and not in congruence with our action that we become liars and traitors. I see now why the bishops’ exhortation to the candidate for diaconal ordination

addresses precisely these three words. "Receive the word of God", that is the exhortation of the bishop to the candidate for ordination. Receive the word of God. And what are the signs that you have really received the word of God? "Believe WHAT YOU READ". Don't just read, take it to heart, BELIEVE. "Teach WHAT YOU BELIEVE." Do not teach what you do not believe. Teach only what you are willing to die for. And above all, "Practice WHAT YOU TEACH." Remember Pope Paul VI, who became known for this famous line, "modern man listens more to witnesses than to teachers."

If they listen to teachers, it's because they were first witnesses. What a beautiful message to CEAP, esp to all educators. Let us never allow ourselves to become noisy gongs or clanging cymbals. If we want the millennials to listen to us, it is not enough that we teach. If they listen to teachers, it is because their teachers are witnesses. Integrity includes the multidimensionality of the quest for holiness. And I believe this is a very important reminder to all of us. Three dimensions: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Metapersonal or structural.

Holiness is not just a personal thing. It is not just an intrapersonal thing. The modern tendency is to limit holiness to the intrapersonal. It's between me and my God. Not so, in the Biblical tradition. I referred you a while ago to Leviticus 19:2 where God says to Moses:

"Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them:
Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy."

"Be holy", what does that mean to be holy like God? The implication is entering to a covenant relationship with Yahweh demands some changes in one's moral behavior. The covenant partner is expected, above all, to be mindful of the poor. In the Old Testament, holiness is connected to the mindfulness of the poor because that is how Yahweh has dealt with Israel. Yahweh took pity on Israel because they were poor. God chose Israel because they were the least, because they were being oppressed. On the basis of the call to holiness, Israel was expected to build a society that was just, equitable, concerned about the common good, merciful, and compassionate to the poor, the handicapped, the weak, the sick, etc. And the further implications for moral behavior are contained in the Leviticus Chapter 19:11. "You shall not steal, you shall not deceive, or speak falsely to one another", Do not spread fake news, that has nothing to do with holiness. It's the exact opposite. "You shall not exploit your neighbor, you shall not commit robbery."

A few days ago, merong isang ama sa Kalookan, ipinampalit ulo sa anak niya. This happened in one of our mission stations. The most recent mission station that we opened has a Jesuit as chaplain. We have opened 13 mission stations so far, and mission station # 13 is going to be run by a Jesuit, the former vice president of Ateneo de Zamboanga; who is going to be serve a little urban poor community in the Diocese of Kalookan. Wow! Sana hindi nagagalit sa akin ang Ateneo de Zamboanga. Karel ha! Sinumbatan na nga ako kanina eh. Sabi niya, "Kinuha ninyo ang Vice President namin. But it's ok." Sabi naman niya. "We are happy to contribute to the Diocese of Kalookan." Kasi hindi na kami makapagbukas ng bagong parokya, wala naman kaming lupa na pagtatayuan namin. How can you build a parish in an informal settler

community, so instead of parishes, we are building mission statements. Kasi most of the parish are becoming parochial. They expect the parishioners to come to the parish. Sabi ko, sabi ni Pope Francis, "if the people don't come to the church, the church must go to them." Binaliktad namin, that is our concept of a mission station. Church presence among the poorest of the poor. As long as our mission partners are willing to accept the challenge of living right there with the poor. Imagine a Jesuit who is going to live in an informal settler community, in an urban poor community? Wow!

So I was telling you about someone who belong to that mission station. Yung anak niya nasa Drug Watchlist, as a drug user. Kaya, dinadalaw ng pulis para arestuhin siya. Eh wala siya sa bahay. Ang inaresto, yung ama, dinala siya sa prisinto. Kasi that's the easiest way para lumabas ang anak. Ang tawag diyan eh "palit ulo!" So lumabas yung bata kasi inaresto yung tatay niya. Duon sa Sangangdaan Police Station pinainum sila ng tubig na masama daw ang lasa. You see kapag nag-aresto yung pulis at wala naman silang warrant of arrest, they have to produce evidence that they caught him in the very act of committing a crime. Kaya dapat may one sachet of Shabu or whatever, or kung minsan they have to test positive of drugs. Pinainom siya, eh kaso, may sakit siya sa puso. Pagkainom niya ng tubig, eh nag-seizure siya, and then namatay siya. Ito yung first exposure ng aming Jesuit chaplain.

We have to deal with this all the time. And by the way, our Diocese is called Diocese of Kalookan with a "K" to distinguish it from the Caloocan City with a "C", because hindi naming sakop ang buong Caloocan City kundi yung south of Caloocan only. North Caloocan belongs to the Diocese of Novaliches. At kasama sa diocese naming ang buong siyudad ng Malabon at buong siyudad ng Navotas.

Let me go back to Leviticus 19,
"You shall not withhold overnight the wages of your laborer. You shall not insult the deaf..."

Sino ang dapat sabihan niyan?

"You shall not insult the deaf," Hindi katatawanan ang sign language.

"You shall not put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you shall fear your God. I am the LORD." Says Yahweh.

"You shall not go about spreading slander among your people;
nor shall you stand by idly when your neighbor's life is at stake."

"Should not stand by idly when your neighbor's life is at stake." Let me show you one little video, kasi I showed this video to some people in Angeles City during the CEAP (Region 3 assembly). (*plays video*)

There, this was a killing in broad daylight. It happened a few weeks ago in one of the streets in Kalookan. Those are death squads. Tatlo katao. Ayan, babanatan niya yung naka tricycle. Ayun!

Tumakbo yung bata, pero nanunuod yung mga tao. People are watching. They are so used to killings. They were just watching. These killers, they stop the traffic, and now they are going to move. And there is somebody else doing a follow-up shooting. Ayun! Ayan, tumatakbo na siya. OK. Sasakay na siya ng kanyang motorsiklo and then yung kasama niya naghihintay, aalis na sila. And then lalakad na ang traffic, like nothing happened. And then, wait for the body...the cadaver is there. Kita ninyo? Ayun! That's him! That's him. That's 8:00 in the evening, nandiyan pa siya. That really bothered me. What bothered me was not the killing; because we are so used to the killings. What bothered me was that people WATCHED IT and after watching it, they passed him by. Nobody even bothered to cover the dead body with a newspaper or a blanket.

When I was a little boy, I remember there was a big accident along the highway close to our home and there were two people who died and it was obvious that they were dead already and one of the neighbors, by instinct, the first thing that he did was to cut banana leaves to cover very gently the bodies of the dead people. I do not know why, as a little boy, that really made an impression on me. And the message to me was: "Human life is sacred". That is why when I saw this, as Bishop of Kalookan, I was really disturbed. I said, "My goodness, even among the urban poor, the lifestyle of individualism is becoming very strong already." That is the reason why we switched not to building parishes, but to building mission stations. And I am just inviting my mission partners to make the church present among the poor and to build basic ecclesial communities. That is quite enough for us.

So, let me now end this. "You shall not stand by idly when your neighbor's life is at stake because I am the Lord". And I think that is what is happening around us now – people standing by idly. The most toxic whisper is when people will say, "eh drug user naman yan eh, as if that will justify the killing."

"Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people. Because You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."

"You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God."

Saan ba kayo nanggaling? Pinulot lang kayo sa imburnal. Have you forgotten where you came from? from poverty, from oppression, from slavery... and so you have to be compassionate to the poor and to the slaves.

Seventh point: Holiness as Childlikeness

Let me end by "Holiness as Childlikeness."

"Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

“Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

There is one philosopher by the name of Friedrich Nietzsche who wrote a very interesting essay ON THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT. Ang sabi ni Nietzsche, “the human being, evolves from from camel, to lion, to child!” That the earliest part of our evolution, the evolution of the human spirit, is the camel stage. Maybe the closer analogy to that is the *kalabaw*, the beast of burden. Because at the start of our growth as human beings, we are saddled with tradition, we bear the word of our parents, of our teachers, of our priests, which is handed down to us. And we carry it like a heavy load on our shoulders. But eventually, we metamorphose into lions. And part of education is educating your children with critical thinking, diba? But the problem is, when you open the minds of your students and make them more critical, they begin to discover the distinction between truth and lies. And that’s beautiful; but that will make them very angry. They will metamorphose into angry lions who will say, “You are not consistent. You are teaching us this but you yourself you are contradicting what you are telling us.” Be careful, because your students are intelligent. They will not be camels all their life. The time will come when they will turn into angry lions and they will learn how to tear down lies. But hopefully, as we guide them along, they will not stay in the lion stage. Nietzsche says, “when people mature, and mellow down, and become wiser, they become children.” And I think that is very consistent with what Jesus says. That the Kingdom of heaven belongs to little children.

Holiness is childlikeness.

Maraming salamat po!