



Chronicles from Manila no. 14

Assumptionist Philippine Delegation



Life in the Time of Typhoons

The last major issue of the Chronicles (no. 12) dates back to July! In the Chronicles no.13, we shared the sentiments of the Filipino people upon the death of former president Cory Aquino... Since then, there were so many changes and arrivals in our various communities of the Philippines and so many events came to us as a surprise... Visits, reflections on the future of our apostolate, final vows, typhoons and deeds of solidarity...

Here are the flow of events of this last quarter and the usual press review.

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Visit of Fr. Miguel Diaz, Assumptionist, Director of Formation in the North American Province



From July 23 to August 17, the Assumptionist Delegation of the Philippines welcomed with great joy Fr. Miguel Diaz (Mexico), director of formation in our North American Province.

He met personally with each religious, the novices and postulants; he also got to know a few of the candidates. He spent many days in the various communities of the Delegation: Adveniat House in Manila, the Novitiate

in Antipolo and the community of the postulants in Marikina. He convened also quite a few meetings: an Assembly of the religious, local community meetings, meeting with the members of the three communities of the Delegation, meetings of the Superiors, with the Commission on Formation; he also took some time to visit communities of the Assumption family.

Four axes of action for the Delegation

This visit of Fr. Miguel helped us to identify four axes of action for the Delegation.

(1) International and fraternal communities: to live the international component of our life in community is not always easy. This requires adaptations and a strong commitment: it is Christ who brings us together, he calls us to live together and sends us on a mission.

(2) Apostolic priorities: we are now ready to identify what will be our apostolic identity as Assumptionists living in the context of the Philippines and in Asia.

(3) Adapted programs of formation: they will integrate the humane, intellectual, spiritual, communitarian and apostolic formation in an international and Asian context.

(4) Finances at the service of the mission.

Three working teams have been formed to tackle these questions: a group called "Apostolic priorities", with Frs. Richard and Chuvi, Bros. Alex and Ed; the Commission on Formation and the team of the treasurers.

A meeting of the Assembly of the religious will receive the conclusions and suggestions of these groups early in November.

Final vows, renewal of vows and first profession

The high point of the visit of Fr. Miguel was certainly the Final vows of Brother Alex Castro, the renewal of vows of Brother Ed Molina and

the first profession of Brothers Joseph Macalanggan and Blair Paulus Nuyda.

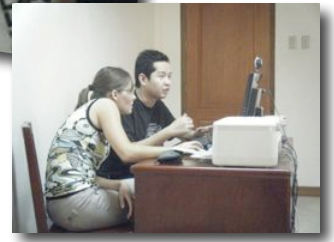
The celebration took place on August 15, on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, at the chapel of Assumpta Technical High School of the Religious of the Assumption in San Simon (Pampanga), about 60 km north of Manila. This was where Bro. Alex had been a student and teacher.

Fr. Miguel received the vows of the Brothers. There were about 300-400 guests present, filling up the seats inside the chapel. There were Sisters and Brothers from many Congregations, families and friends of the Brothers and our partners in various ministries.

The professed Brothers took turns in giving their word of thanks to those who have been part of their formative journey. It can be noted that a lot of friends have contributed in cash, in kind and in prayers to the success of the celebration.

At present, there are now two Filipinos in final vows and three in temporary vows in the Philippine Delegation.





Life in the Time of Typhoons. Snapshots representing some of our pressing concerns: formation, solidarity with the poor, Asian mission and lay partnership.

Visit of Sister Marie-Nicole Raimbert, Orante of the Assumption



On July 21, the community of Adveniat House was happy to greet Sister Marie-Nicole Raimbert, Orante of the Assumption; she spent seven weeks in the Philippines to explore the possibility of a foundation here. Before leaving Manila to go back to France in early September, she gave her first impressions on her discoveries.

Seven weeks in the Philippines with the hope of a foundation of the Orantes next year: an inter-Assumption experience

"I was sent by Sister Yolande, the Superior General, for an initial discovery and landed in the Adveniat community in Manila, a widely international group of brothers: Filipino, French, American, Canadian, Mexican and Chinese. I had to be familiar with the particular English accent of each! This community is overflowing with youth, dynamism and life. I want to thank particularly Fr. Bernard who made all the arrangements for my stay in the Philippines and did not spare his busy schedule to guide me through various groups and many religious congregations... After a while, I was able to travel by myself to the southern islands of Panay and Cebu. People were telling me: "But you are alone!" and I would answer: "No, I am not alone; I am

with the family of the Assumption." Religious of the Assumption, Little Sisters of the Assumption, Assumptionists: 10 communities with their specific charism. I am very thankful to each community for their hospitality, their prayers, their fraternal warmth where daring initiatives go with the service of the Kingdom. One single vine: Jesus Christ; a common trunk: Thy Kingdom Come This is what made my adaptation in this new continent so easy. The simple welcoming of people, their jolly smile, the fiesta spirit, the youthfulness of the people struck me. I found so many children but also a lot of poor people, many churches filled with young people and people praying at whatever time during the day. I noticed an adoration chapel next to every single church... It is sometime difficult to guess the real meaning of whatever is being said. But the fact is that there are

many apostolic possibilities: catechism with the children, support to the family, health education, and ecological initiatives... The government, the NGOs and the religious congregations offer a plethora of responses. With the help of the Assumption family, I was able to meet many priests, bishops, religious and lay people and to talk to them about our charism and foresee concretely our foundation (search for a house, jobs for the sisters). My stay was generally fruitful. It opened possibilities. The General Council of the congregation will have to discern the ways where the Spirit will lead us. Your prayers will be helpful."



A New Step Forward

With the beginning of a new academic year, last June, the Delegation met with a new step of its growth. The Assumptionists in the Philippine Delegation now live in three communities: Adveniat House in Quezon City, Pavel House moved to Marikina and the d'Alzon Novitiate in Antipolo. Three volunteers help the religious in their apostolates. The communities have finished their respective local chapters.



Adveniat, the “mother house” of the delegation, remains to be the center of apostolic activities. It is currently composed two priests and four student brothers engaged in the following apostolic priorities: vocation ministry and formation, Development Office, Martin Yen Residence, Assumption Language Center, Bayard Assumption Media Foundation and social ministry/solidarity with the poor.

Pastoral Year: New Ministries

After their first vows, Brothers Joseph and Blair will not immediately start Theological

Studies. They are to engage in full-time apostolate until the next school year opens (June 2010). This is part of their post-novitiate formation.

Brother Joseph, a Psychology graduate, works full-time at the Euphrasian Residence, a foundation established by the Religious Sisters of the Good Shepherd. It is a residence that provides formation to emotionally disturbed youngsters. He will make formation programs and will accompany these young teenagers as counselor.

Brother Blair, a Mass Communication graduate, helps the Development Office in its different publications, appeals and website. He is one of the English teachers in our Assumption Language Center. He also works part-time in Assumption College San Lorenzo to teach Literature.

The Novitiate in Antipolo, established last year, is home to a new set of novices: four Filipinos who entered last April 26 and two Mexicans who entered last August 15. Fr. Richard Brunelle, the superior and novice master, is assisted by two other religious, Fr. Roddy Ratsimiolaka (treasurer) and Fr. Leo Brassard who is on a sabbatical. The priests do some chaplaincy work from time to time. The novices collaborate with the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa for youth ministry, catechism and caring for sick children on weekends. At least once or twice a month, the novices attend modules from the Exodus Inter-novitiate formation program.

The novices taking the Exodus program have also gone through a number of modules like



Theater Arts, Body Prayer, Sexuality, Enneagram, Vows and Enculturation. At present, the novices are now preparing to attend the Exposure Program: a novice will stay for 10 days with leprosy patients, or fisher folk, urban poor, tribal indigenous people and handicapped children.

In the Delegation, the novitiate becomes a place for spiritual renewal for the religious and it will propose programs concerning our participation in the Bi-Centenary of d'Alzon's birth.



Pavel House is now an autonomous community in Marikina. It serves as a formation house for our postulants. Fr. Jean-Marie Chuvi Adubangho is the superior and Fr. Juan Carlos Giraldo assists him. Br. Alex Castro is the formator of postulants as well as the local treasurer. The postulants attend an in-house French language program given by a French lay volunteer, Marie. The postulants also attend an inter-congregational formation program called "Sojourn".

Now almost approaching the end of the first semester, the inter-congregational formation programs are going full swing. The postulants who are taking the Sojourn program have taken a number of modules already. Some of these are Self-Esteem, Life Review, Care for the Earth, Theater Arts, Journal Writing, Old Testament Spirituality, Community Dynamics, Gender Sensitivity and Human Sexuality.



Aside from the modules, participants of these inter-congregational formation programs give opportunities to the participants to take leadership roles. Since our congregation joined these programs, our formands have always been among those elected into key roles. This year, Jay Lituanas heads the core

group of Sojourn postulants and Ellis Luciano is the secretary of the Exodus novices.

A stable apostolic program is

currently being arranged but the postulants have already been involved in helping out Bayard in its efforts to diffuse its products and in helping out the Development Office do its share of improving the living conditions of Piat, located somewhere in the north of the country.

Among our relevant activities



Vocation Ministry

These last months have been quite busy for the team of the Vocation Ministry. This was the season for regular visits to the province in order to meet candidates. Thus, Gilles was in Cagayan de Oro (June 15-19), Cebu and Bohol (July 20-22) and Iloilo and Antique (Sept. 2-4). Ricky visited Sorsogon, in the southern tip of the island of Luzon, last October 30 to November 2. This was a good opportunity to have an update with the various contacts we have in these places and to encourage our partners.

Meanwhile, the candidates from the Manila area were not left aside: gatherings were organized on the last Sunday of the month from June to September. The formula is simple: candidates get together at Adveniat on Sunday morning at 9:00 am for a presentation on Assumptionist spirituality and sharing; the Mass follows at 11:00 am, then a time for dialogue and the meeting ends with the lunch together with the community. The last gathering left many people unable to attend due to the floods. We even invited one candidate to move to our house because he had lost almost everything when Typhoon Ondoy hit Marikina.



At the beginning of October, Juan Carlos, Ricky and Gilles took part in a convention of the Augustinian family in Cebu City designed for the vocation promoters. It was the first time that such a meeting was organized and it drew together some 70 participants, some coming from Australia, Korea, Malta, Chile and Mexico. Even the contemplative branch of the Augustinian sisters had received permission from Rome to send representatives. Also very significant was the participation of 15 lay vocation promoters.



Along with the OSA, were the OAR, the OAD, the AA and four groups of Sisters. The presentations were very accurate, the liturgies meaningful and the free time an opportunity for fraternal building. In the evenings, there was ample time for more singing, chatting and dancing -- all in a very great Augustinian family spirit. The upcoming events are three weekend search-in retreats which will be held simultaneously in

Cagayan de Oro, Iloilo and Manila, October 23-25. We hope to reach 20 to 25 young professionals with whom we are in contact. For some of them, it will be a to decide whether to apply for postulancy next June. They will be invited for a discovery visit in Manila on November 4-7 when they will live intensely the process of discernment of their vocation. This is only one step on a long journey for which we invite you to pray.

Brother Ricky is taking part actively in the preparation of the Asian Youth Days, which will take place next November in Imus (Cavite) and to the Pilgrimage of Hope organized by the community of Taizé in February 2010, in Manila. Brother Blair will help in this event as translator.

Martin Yen Residence

The month of August marked the start of our experience of welcoming six seminarians and priests from China and Indonesia for their formation and discernment. We will accompany them in their formation and discernment. To start with, they are studying intensive English and are participating in the life of the community.

The Martin Yen Residence Program is inspired by the spirit of the alummates: open to all, religious and diocesan students alike, in a family atmosphere. It also gives the community a good opportunity to get to know better those Asian candidates who would like to join us. In the future, we will look at the possibility to open our doors to the laity.

Brother Ed is responsible for this program. More about the program will appear on our next issue of the "Chronicles".



Assumption Language Center

Assumption Language Center was launched at the beginning of August 2009 in order to teach English to Asian priests, sisters and seminarians, some of them affiliated with the Assumption. During the recent meeting of various Institutes of Spirituality and Theology, learning English was recognized as an important need for many Asian religious students who are sent to Manila for studies. It is important for



them to level up their English proficiency before taking university level courses at the different institutions. Our experience of sending two Chinese priests and two Mexican postulants to a tutorial was judged quite expensive. It brought us to the conclusion that we should open our own language school, one that is more adapted to the needs of Asian religious. At present, our students include those from our Martin Yen program (2 Chinese priests, 3 Chinese seminarians, 1 Indonesian) and two Vietnamese RA postulants who attend our daily weekday classes. Once a week, four RA Vietnamese and Thai novices and one RA Vietnamese Sister attend our enrichment classes. The Oblate Sisters will also want to benefit from the language center when they arrive next year.

We have conceived our program in such a way that English should not just be used inside the four walls of the classroom. We are coming up with ways for our students to “live” and experience the language. That is why our daily routines, meals, prayers and activities should complement our classes by requiring them to interact using English.

We have hired professional lay teachers to help us. The Filipino brothers Ricky and Blair, who are also teachers, conduct classes as well. Our American lay volunteer Michael, helps the students converse comfortably in English.

Bro. Ricky oversees the program and its administration. Finances of the Language Center and Martin Yen Residence are taken by Development Office which, besides paying the salaries of the teachers, pays for the books, materials, room and board.

This year is really an experiment at a low scale. Yet, because of the different skills of the students and the need to divide them into different classes, sometimes all of our common rooms are occupied by the students: audio-visual room, sacristy, library and dining room. We can live with that for now but we have to come up with a long-term solution soon.

Arrival of new partners and “despedida” of those leaving

On September 1, Michael Sheerin joined the Adveniat House: he is a young American volunteer from Kansas. He teaches at



From Top to Bottom:
A typical English class in our Assumption Language Center; Some of our lay teachers: Ms. Girlie Libutaque, Mr. Ronald Edma, Mr. John Ray Nagas and Mr. Joseph Peter Calleja.

Other teachers include Brothers Ricky, Blair and Ed as well as our volunteer Michael.



our Language Center while also learning Tagalog; he will help with the promotion of the Bayard magazines and keep close to the residents of a squatter area near by. He brings in his luggage a lot of enthusiasm in discovering the reality of the Philippines.

On September 2, directly from France came two other volunteers: Marie Rahard and Arnaud Lemaître. Here are their first impressions before being taken up in the turmoil of typhoons “Ondoy” and “Pepeng” (see our updated letters on the website):

Our very first days in Manila

On September 2, 2009, we landed in the Philippines, a completely new environment to us—very humid and warm—brought us straight to the core of a new venture. A very warm welcome from Fr. Bernard, our partner, and from Thomas, the outgoing volunteer, and the rest of the community helped us to settle easily. In Adveniat House, we share with the daily life of Filipino, Indonesian, Canadian, Chinese and French brothers. The “family” is based in three houses and brings us in further contact with more Mexican, Congolese, American, Malgachian and Columbian brothers. This mixture of cultures enriches our experience here. We came here as Volunteers for International Solidarity (VIS) with the French Délégation Catholique pour la Coopération (DCC) and our first task is to assert our personal and professional landscape. The Development Office of the Augustinians of the Assumption has started a program of relocation of people whose houses were endangered by soil erosion and flood. Arnaud as project manager of the relocation program visited Piat, in the north of the country, where 35 families were helped by this program. He saw what is at stake there and was highly motivated in tackling the work laid before him as Thomas shared what has been his experience with this population. Many thanks, Thomas! As for Marie, she is discovering day-by-day life in the Philippines and more particularly the struggles in the squatter areas and the many groups helping these people to cope with life. A benchmark was a meeting with Sister Ann, a Little Sister of the Assumption; that community has opened some years ago a learning and livelihood center along with a clinic in a poor sector of Manila. They use recycled materials to produce bags, Christmas ornaments or miniature jeepneys and other toys to make a living for families of this depressed area. Marie will develop a social and educational program in a squatter area nearby and will be teaching French lessons to the Assumptionist postulants. The first classes brought some excitement in learning a new language; she is eager to see the progress of her students. We are happy to be invited to share the life of the community for the next two years.

“Despedida” of Thomas Lop Vip

On Friday September 25, the three communities came together at Adveniat in order to say farewell to Thomas Lop Vip who was leaving for France after working for two years with the community. He helped start the Development Office, our website and the attractive layout of the Chronicles. He initiated the relocation program for the victims of typhoons in Iloilo and Piat, plus a lengthy involvement with the people of Daan Tubo, a neighboring squatter area. Participating in the despedida (farewell) were also common friends, members of the French parish along with Alvy, his new wife who will soon join him in France.



**From Top to Bottom:
Our fearless lay
volunteers Arnaud,
Marie and Michael.**



He was to leave us on the day following typhoon “Ondoy” which brought such a disaster to the country. What a grand finale!

“Despedida” of Renee Bernardo

On Tuesday September 29, the community had a farewell to Renee Bernardo who, for the last year and a half, has put her energy and talents to launch Bayard Philippines. She is leaving us with a heavy heart because she liked working with us. She will stay in contact with us and with Bayard... as a subscriber and more.



30th Manila International Book Fair

On September 16-20, the 30th Manila International Book Fair was held. Bayard had a booth for the second time. Bruno-François Leitao, responsible for the development of Bayard in Africa and in South-East Asia, was here to strengthen this participation. Here is his report on the activity.

“All the manpower of Bayard Assumption Media Foundation was on deck for the event. As a publisher, Bayard had many new ventures this year with 4 new books in the Faith series for kids, a co-production with Adarna House, and two new books on spirituality co-published with Claretian Publications.

Our main purpose to be present at the Book Fair was to get new subscribers for our magazines for kids or for our Catholic publications imported from the USA and to meet with other local publishers. Many priests, brothers and postulants took part in manning the booth and in meeting with the numerous visitors at the Fair. Promotion and dialogue were main concerns.

After this important event for the all the publishers of South-East Asia, the results are quite encouraging since we could doubled the sales from last year. The Faith Series for kids (now with 8 titles) has proven to be successful. For the books on spirituality, the results are somewhat more humble but the two new books have known a strong start. Publishing is thus a strong pillar in the development of Bayard in the Philippines. With the financial crisis still around, it was more difficult to find new subscribers for the magazines and we did not do well last year. As for me, taking the torch from Bro. Didier Remiot in the middle of the year, this first participation to the Book Fair helped me to assert the dynamism of the Filipino market and the possible paths for the months to come in order to strengthen the presence of Bayard in this unique place of Manila on the Asian map.”

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NEWS

* At the beginning of July, Fr. Bernard went to the novitiate in order to give a break to Fr. Richard, the Master of novices. He was asked to give a series of lectures on Mary: Mary in the Gospel, according to Vatican II, in the Filipino catechism, in the writings of Fr. d'Alzon, in the tradition of Assumption.

* On July 1-4, Bro. Ed took part in a seminar on spirituality and on Spiritual Direction. Among other topics: Embodied Family Spirituality, Telling the Sacred Tale, Falling in Love with God, Psychology and Spirituality...

* The formators of the Sojourn program (an inter-congregation formation activity) came together at Adveniat for a seminar on the main lines of formation for postulants and on how to accompany them in their growth.

* August 2, 2009, Sister Luz Emmanuel Soriano, a Religious of the Assumption based in Antipolo, celebrated her golden jubilee of religious life. There was a solemn mass and a festive celebration at the Assumption Antipolo campus attended by family, friends, faculty, staff and alumnae. The Mass was presided by the Bishop of Antipolo, Gabriel V. Reyes. Our Assumptionist priests concelebrated in the mass while some brothers joined the choir in animating the liturgy. There were various musical presentations rendered by Sister Luz' closest friends, notably organized by De La Salle Brother Rolly Dizon. A slide presentation showing her gathered photographs gave the audience a glimpse of her life, vocation and extensive ministry. Sr. Luz was administrator of the three big Assumption schools in the Philippines. She has done much in its development and expansion. She continues to be a strong advocate of ecological and social causes by founding the PACEM Eco Park, which



includes a beautiful butterfly museum. She was among the religious leaders behind the EDSA People Power Revolution.

* Before taking their first vows, Brothers Joseph and Blair spent some days on retreat last August 3-8 under the guidance of Fr. Leo Brassard. With them were Jose and Gilberto, who were also preparing to enter the novitiate. Fr. Juan Carlos came to offer assistance. The retreat was focused on the life and teachings of Fr. d'Alzon, a very timely topic coinciding with the upcoming Bicentennial celebration. This was held at the Assumption Sabbath Place in Baguio, a beautiful retreat complex owned by the

Religious of the Assumption. On the last day of their retreat, the brothers watched the live coverage of Cory Aquino's funeral services on television as they prayed in solidarity with the rest of the nation. They also

spent a day to visit some sights in this beautiful hilltop city, dubbed as the nation's "summer capital". The Sisters were very warm and hospitable.

* Assumption Antipolo, now being led by Sr. Irene Cecile Torres, is now on its 35th year of foundation. To celebrate this at beginning of September, the school has come up with "Benedictus", a showcase of dance and music mirroring the many blessings the school has received and has shared on to its students, faculty, staff and alumnae. To this date, Assumption Antipolo is the biggest school of the Sisters here in the Philippines. It is known for its strong emphasis on social transformation and ecological care.



PRESS REVIEW

After the death of the former President of the Philippines, Cory Aquino, who ran the country after dictator Ferdinand Marcos was ousted and after becoming a national icon (see Chronicles no. 13), the headlines have been mainly on the electoral maneuvers and the typhoons.

Electoral maneuvers

A dozen or so candidates are lined up for the next presidential elections. Among them, there are three religious people: the evangelist “Brother Mike” Velarde from the charismatic movement El Shaddai, “Brother Eddie” Villanueva, president of Jesus is Lord Movement and Eddie Panlilio, a Catholic priest, governor of Pampanga.



After the burial of Cory Aquino, the political scene has somewhat changed. The huge movement of sympathy that swept the country has raised the image of her son, Senator Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino, who turned in his candidacy and brought in his camp prominent names. Will that mean a unity among the opposition against the clan of the present President?

The Catholic bishops call the laity to take their full responsibility in the political life of the country and to actively take part in the debate. They have recommended “*a Year for Prayer and Work for Peace building and Lay participation in Social change*”, adding a special prayer that was read at all the Masses on a given Sunday.

At the beginning of October, Pope Benedict XVI, upon receiving the new ambassador of the Philippines to the Holy See, had these unusual words: “*The struggle against poverty in the Philippines calls for honesty, integrity and an*

unwavering fidelity to the principles of justice, especially on the part of those entrusted with position of governance and public administration.”

Typhoons

In mid-July, typhoon “Isang” killed nine people and made 100,000 evacuees, particularly in the North of Manila where we have a program of relocation. There were six other typhoons that came after...

But it was nothing compared to typhoon “Ondoy”, which hit us last September 26 and made international headlines. Strong rains flooded the capital, killing many people and provoke major disasters. Eight days later, typhoon “Pepeng” hits the North of the country, flooding the Northern provinces.

Fifteen days after the first typhoon: Thousands of people and children are still living in mud, sometime with minimal help. There are power breaks in the Capital. Return to normal life will take a long time because the infrastructures have been damaged.

Journalists and editorial staff continue to question the neglect and inability of the government to face the situation. For many years, the experts have proposed solutions: to prevent squatters from building along the canals, lakes and rivers, relocate these populations, clean the rivers, take away the garbage, apply the environmental regulations and urban laws, maintain green areas and forests... But electoral interests speak louder than common wisdom...

The Filipino overseas workers keep sending money to their families. The government has foreseen a rise of 5% of the remittances for this year alone.



Good news

A hostage set free

On July 12, Eugenio Vagni, an engineer of the Italian Red Cross who had been kidnapped 6 months ago by the Abu Sayyaf group in Jolo is now free.

Land return to poor farmers

Thanks to the constant work of the Catholic bishops and of many NGOs, the President of the Philippines has extended for five more years the law on Land Reform. It will allow thousands of poor farmers to use the land for their own needs. But the decrees of application of the law are not yet out...

Collaboration between Muslims and Catholics

On September 19, during a prayer rally in Pasay City (southern part of Metro Manila), the religious Muslim leaders have expressed their gratitude towards the Catholic clergy who were instrumental in a fruitful dialogue with the government concerning the possible demolition of houses and mosque in favor of building a mall and a casino in their neighborhood. *“To destroy a religious symbol in order to replace it by a symbol of vice and consummation is a real provocation! (...) It is a violation of the religious traditions of Christians and Muslims alike”* said Archbishop Oscar Cruz with indignation; he is known in the Philippines for his crusade against the lotteries of all sorts.

Sad news

Still war

On June 28, eight policemen and a civilian were killed by the Abu Sayyaf group in Basilan while patrolling the area. Troops from the Philippine Armed Forces were sent to track down the rebels.

On the 5th of July, many bombs exploded in Jolo and Lligan, they killed two people and hurt thirty-six others. Other bombs have exploded in other cities of the South,

On the 21st of July, in Cotaboa, many bombs have also exploded. The same day, a faction of the Communist Party of the Negros asked forgiveness for the death of three civilians during an internal struggle.

On the 12th of August, in Basilan, the bodies of twenty-three soldiers and twenty rebels have been found after a strong fight with the camp of Abu Sayyaf. Many of the soldiers' bodies have been decapitated, which produced a great emotional reaction throughout the country. The President has ordered “that the rebels be pulverized.”

On the 19th of August, at Balabac (Palawan), the government troops killed seven rebels of the Moro National Liberation Front and arrested three others. At Cataboa, two thousand families had to be moved; they had become pawns in the struggle between the two rebel factions of MNLF.

On August 29, at New Batan. Rebel communists attacked a banana plantation and destroyed two trucks.

On September 20, twenty-four rebels linked to Al-Quaida and eight soldiers were killed during two days of combat on the Isle of Jolo.

On September 29, two American soldiers and one Filipino Marine were killed on the Isle of Sulu.

And unresolved murder cases

On June 26, Jonathan Petalvero (age 43) a journalist for radio FM of Baguayan, was felled for unknown reasons.

On July 12, a union leader of transport is killed in Bicol, before a national manifestation by truckers who were protesting the rise in prices of gasoline. Early September, a witness of a famous trial – which lingers on since 2000 – against politicians who are accused of having assassinated a journalist is gunned down in his house.

On September 6, Sunday, Northern Samar, Fr. Cecilio Lucero, human rights advocate, was killed by a group of armed men who managed to escape. As the director of the Human Rights Desk of his diocese, he received several death threats after the assassination of the mayor of Catubig who incidentally was his parishioner.



Other note-worthy events

A new president for the Philippine Conference of Bishops

On July 11, the Catholic Bishops in the Philippines chose their new president, Bishop Nereo Odchimar, from Tandag (Surigao del Sur), replacing outgoing Archbishop Angel Lagdameo from Jaro (Iloilo). He will take office on December 1st.



Meeting in Manila of the Catholic bishops of Asia

On August 10-16, 120 Asian bishops met in Manila in order to share about the life of the Church in Asia. Among the subjects that they studied were: inter-religious marriages, lower number of seminarians and violence against Christians in some of their countries.

Many bishops said that it has become difficult to attract young men to the seminaries, due to poverty and secularization in the society. Parents find it difficult financially to let their young sons go to the seminary while the family is lacking in resources. So there are less vocations. Christian families have fewer children and the secularization of society is not helping either.

The bishops also said that their governments are not helping enough the minorities in their countries. The Assembly of Asian Bishops is drafting a statement on corruption in Asia. *"In a continent where Christians are but a small minority, the collaboration between the bishops is important when it comes to inter-religious matters, inter-cultural questions and also the challenge of the massive poverty issue."*

95th anniversary of Iglesia ni Cristo

On July 27, Iglesia ni Cristo celebrated its 95th anniversary. Most of the political leaders have addressed their congratulations to the leaders of this religious institution. The President of the country declared a national holiday. But in August 31, the founder of this institution, Erano "Ka Erdy" Manolo died of a heart attack at the age of 84. The President asked for a time of national prayer until the day of his burial, which was attended by thousands of

people so much so that the traffic became impossible in this part of the city.

A few figures

Most of the unemployed are aged 15 to 34

Half of the unemployed population is between 15 and 24; one third is between age 25 and 34.

The main sources of

import to the Philippines (by order of importance) are: Japan, the USA, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia.

In China, 22 Philippine women were sentenced to death for transporting illegal drugs.

31 October 2009

OUR SORROWS

The Assumptionist Philippine Delegation would like to share with sorrow the news of the following deaths:

- The mother of Fr. Jean-Marie Chuvi, **Isabelle Nyalwiny Fwaling**, died at the age of 73 in Mahagi (Democratic Republic of Congo) on October 31, 2009.
- The brother-in-law of Fr. Bernard Holzer, **Charles Bastardis**, died at the age of 71 in Nabonne (France) on November 3, 2009.

May the Lord welcome them in His peace.

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