



I WILL TURN THEIR MOURNING INTO JOY

Jeremiah 31: 13

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

In Ramah is heard the sound of sobbing, bitter weeping! Rachel mourns for her children, she refuses to be consoled for her children—they are no more! (Jer. 31:15)

GRIEF AND SADNESS

We know your grief and sorrow. We feel your pain and anguish. Your tears are our tears too. Your sadness is ours too.

Although death is a twin sister born with us on the same day we were born, death by terror and violence, death in the hands of our fellowmen is a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance. With willful murder, we also grieve the sins of sexual perversion, oppression of the poor and the defrauding of laborers of their wages. Like murder, these sins cry to heaven for divine justice. We are not numb to these other offenses against human life.

We mourn with you at the deaths that we have seen in our communities. Violent senseless deaths in the hands of our brother Cain, unnecessary deaths by sickness and accidents, deaths from a terror bombing in Davao, deaths of babies caused by their own mothers, deaths because of police encounters, deaths from extra judicial killings--indeed every death is cause for mourning because in the death of every man or woman, in the untimely death of every child or infant, a part of us dies.

We plead for divine mercy on behalf of our dead sons and daughters. Although they did not receive godly peace here on earth because of man's inhumanity, may they receive true and lasting peace with God in heaven!

We beg for divine mercy from the bereaved and grieving families of the dead. Seek justice but not revenge. Let the tears of Jesus Forsaken wipe every tear from your eyes. May Mary who knew the pain of losing a child in a violent death lend you her courage, peace and hope!

We pray that divine fortitude and wisdom guide all enforcers of the law so that human rights may everywhere be respected, human dignity always protected and the nobility of every human person shine forth despite the scar of crime and sin.

HEALING FOR THE ADDICTED

He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother (Luke 7:14-15).

Our hearts reach out in love and compassion to our sons and daughters suffering from drug dependence and addiction. Drug addicts are children of God equal in dignity with the sober ones. Drug addicts are sick brethren in need of healing deserving of new life. They are patients begging for recovery. They may have behaved as scum and rubbish but the saving of love of Jesus Christ is first and foremost for them. No man or woman is ever so unworthy of God's love.



"The phenomenon of drug addiction is escalating in our societies, which is disturbing and, under certain aspects, dramatic. This is related to the crisis of values and meaning which contemporary society and culture is experiencing. Drug addiction is also born from the stress and frustrations brought about by the quest for efficiency, by activism and by the high competitiveness and anonymity of social interaction." (cfr. *Charter for Health Care Workers*, #92).

Dead in their addictions, "living dead" in the eyes of an unforgiving world, we bid our addicted brethren to rise up and live again!

To them caught in the chains of drug addiction, we say "*Do not be afraid to turn to the Lord and receive new life. Show your scars and wounds to the Divine Mercy, ask for God's help and like the son of the widow of Nain rise up and return to your family in love, healed and renewed*".

CONVERSION FOR ALL

If my people, upon whom my name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven and pardon their sins and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Humbly repentant, we recognize that all the evils we see around us have roots in our hearts. The hate words and calumny, the vulgarity and lies, the cynicism and indifference—they all come from our obtuse spirits. The confusion amongst us is the result of the towers of Babel that we have built through the years when we attempted to build a nation without God! Our fear of reprisal and our timidity born from misplaced prudence have brought about these upheavals.

The deaths we have seen, the addictions that have caused us social ruin, the unabated criminality, the erosion of cherished Filipino values like reverence for elders, basic courtesies and respectful manners—all these challenge us to search our souls again, turn to the Lord and cleanse our dulled spirits. If peace begins in the heart, so does violence and sin. We are all responsible for the quagmire we are in. If we turn to the Lord, he will heal our land.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta aptly puts it: "If we can accept that a mother can kill her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?"

May our grief be turned to repentance and our repentant sorrow be turned into joy. May darkness of confusion be overcome by His light and may our cold indifference be cured by a new fire of Pentecost. May our repentance turn our paths from death into life!

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+SOCRATES B. VILEGAS
Archbishop of Lingayen Dagupan
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines