

Statement of the CBCP President on the Fifth Round of Peace Talks between the Philippine Government and the CPP/NPA/NDP

It is not without reason that many of our fellow Filipinos do not have high hopes about the peace talks that are entering the 5th Round — after all, we have been through this way before.

But we are in the Easter Season, and the Risen Lord greets us all: “Peace be with you”. Peace is the gift of the Resurrection. Peace calmed the troubled hearts of his despondent apostles. Peace gave them the courage to burst forth from the Upper Room to proclaim the Good News. Peace ignited that charity in their hearts that made them share everything in common. Peace built the community. Peace can still rebuild our nation!

We, your bishops, therefore commend the next round of the Peace Negotiations to the Prince of Peace — since He calms all storms, silences the shrieking of demons and emboldens those who are discouraged and afraid. Indeed, one of the most common exhortations in all of Scripture was one beloved to Saint John Paul II: “Be not afraid”. This is what we ask of the negotiators on both sides of the table. Do not be afraid to take the bold steps that alone can bring peace. Intransigence is not strength. Humility is. That one has stood one’s ground is not necessarily the best that can be said of anyone. That he has sown the seeds of peace is to say of a person that he is blessed!

While we have a legacy to uphold as a God-fearing, God-loving nation with precious freedoms assured us by human reason and enshrined in international covenants and in the fundamental law of the land, we must, with the same steadfast determination, stand for social justice and for the renewal of an order that has left too many to wither away in the peripheries.

Peace be with you...but for Christ's peace to pervade over our land, we need men and women of peace. We trust that our negotiators — on both sides — will be anointed by God's Spirit so that His sons and daughters in this land that has already been drenched by so much blood may at last walk the ways of peace.

From the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, May 24, 2017, Mary Help of Christians

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