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Within twenty-four hours after his election, Pope Francis payed homage to Our Lady and prayed for this period in the life of the Church.

CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY ON JUNE 8, 2013

Your Eminences/Excellencies/Reverend Administrators:

In 1975, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, in its Pastoral Letter entitled "*Ang Mahal na Birhen*", detailed the place of Mary in the history of the Philippines and demonstrated how deeply the Blessed Virgin Mary is part of the Filipino heritage and identity. Indeed, Filipinos would always hold on to the devotion to Mary as a source of inspiration and an aid to salvation. Having appraised such deep devotion, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines aptly puts it: the outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines is to be "*pueblo amante de Maria*" – a people in love with Mary (cf. PCP-II, n. 153). Thus, it is always our dream and hope that we, as a Filipino nation, may not only grow in our devotion to Mary, but above all, may acquire a deeper understanding of Mary's role in the Church in the Philippines.

Time and time again, we have experienced tremendous flow of divine grace through the intercession of Mary, our Mother. Such maternal care we continue to implore especially in important events of our nation. In fact, in 2009, the CBCP invited the Filipino faithful to start preparing spiritually for another crucial transition in the life of our nation – namely, the National Elections of May 2010 – by declaring the Year of the

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Two Hearts for Peace-building and Lay Participation in Social Change from June 2009 – June 2010. In that year, the bishops called on the faithful to consecrate the country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the very days of their feasts.

Realizing once more the need to invoke the loving guidance of our Mother, especially as the Philippine Church has embarked on a nine-year spiritual journey towards the great jubilee of the Fifth Centenary of the Christian Faith in our beloved land come the year 2021, ushered by the observance of the Year of Faith which offers for every faithful an opportunity to rediscover the Christian faith and intensify our efforts for a renewed integral evangelization (New Evangelization), ***this Episcopal Conference deems it providential to declare in one accord, during its 106th Plenary Assembly last January 28, 2013, the holding of a simultaneous National Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on June 8, 2013, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at 10:00 in the morning in all the Cathedrals, Parish Churches, Shrines and Chapels in the respective Arch/Dioceses, Prelatures and Apostolic Vicariates.***

For a well-coordinated and fruitful celebration of such momentous event, the CBCP Permanent Council has designated an *ad hoc* Committee to plan, promote and spearhead the national consecration. His Excellency, Most Rev. Guillermo V. Afable, Bishop of Digos, acts as Chairperson, with the assistance of the Episcopal Commissions on Liturgy & Social Communications and Mass Media, Amb. Howard Q. Dee of Bahay Maria - Assisi Development Foundation, Fr. Yulito Ignacio and the CBCP General Secretariat.

Attached herewith is the suggested plan of activities prepared by the Committee. Instructional and campaign materials will be sent once ready. An in depth explanation of the rationale of the national consecration will be contained in a CBCP Pastoral Exhortation and a Primer now being prepared.

Meanwhile, I am earnestly appealing to all the Most Reverend Ordinaries to organize arch/diocesan executive committees for the said celebration.

May Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, look upon her “**pueblo amante**”, the Philippines, with a mother’s eye and guide it along the paths of justice, truth and love. Amen.

Given at the CBCP Headquarters, Intramuros, Manila this 3rd day of April 2013.

+ JOSE S. PALMA, D.D.

Archbishop of Cebu

CBCP President



CBCP PASTORAL EXHORTATION
ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE
NATIONAL CONSECRATION OF OUR PEOPLE
AND OUR BELOVED LAND
AS “ISANG BAYANG SUMISINTA KAY MARIA”
ON JUNE 8, 2013
FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

Beloved People of God in the Philippines:

A few months ago, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) with the Pastoral Message, **“Live Christ, Share Christ!,** Looking Forward to our Fifth Century of the Coming of Christianity,” set in motion our observance of the **“Year of Faith”** (YF) in the Church in our country, as well as the fostering of **“The New Evangelization”** (NE) proclaimed by the Holy See.

Our past months have been marked by the joyous canonization (21 October 2012) of San Pedro Calungsod; by the October 2012 Bishops’ Synod held in Rome on the New Evangelization (NE), and – just now – the recent election of Pope Francis to succeed Pope Benedict XVI who, – out of his loving and noble concern for the greater good of the Church resigned for reasons of age and failing health. Tied up with this succession of remarkable events, we have noted a notable increase in interest and even enthusiasm regarding “what’s new in the life of the Church” among our Catholic people. We take all this as also a sign of the Holy Spirit’s inspiring of our communities, and it adds greatly to our sense of Easter joy.

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As a notable event in our own Year of Faith, we have already announced that the CBCP has marked **8 June 2013** as a day of a nation-wide **National Consecration** by our Catholic Faithful of our people and our country to **the Immaculate Heart of Mary**. The CBCP has directed and urged all our dioceses and parishes, schools and other institutions, even all our families, of course, - to offer solemnly a joint public act of entrustment to the Blessed Mother, Mother of our people and our country.

We wish to do this as truly one people, “from Aparri to Jolo”: formally re-affirming that our country is indeed **“pueblo amante de Maria”** – **bayang sumisinta kay Maria**: *a people truly loving Mary the Mother of Jesus the Lord, a people in a true sense “made one” by this love and devotion which we bear, by God’s great gift, to the Mother of God.*

This solemn act of entrustment and consecration, we have said, is part of our Year of Faith observance, and part of the nine-year (“novena”) preparation for the 2021 celebration of the coming of the Christian Faith to our land in 1521 – five hundred years ago. But we hold in our minds and hearts even deeper grounds for this significant forthcoming event.

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

We have before us the acts of entrustment of the world, of all its peoples and nations, by Popes of our time, from Pope Pius XII in 1942, to Blessed Pope John Paul II, who **five times** during his long pontificate made and renewed this placing of all of humankind under the mantle of the Blessed Mother, consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This entrustment was inspired by Our Blessed Lady’s words to the

children of Fatima and the enduring message of Our Lady, still truly relevant for our time. (Pope Benedict XVI). Our Lady promised that this consecration, freely and firmly offered, would bring grace for conversion from sin and of sinners, protection from the “menace of evil and war; from sins against life and the dignity of God’s children; from every kind of injustice and trampling of God’s commandments; from the sin of the world, sin in all its manifestations...” (Pope John Paul II’s *Act of Consecration*, 1984)

Memorably for us, our Philippine Bishops, representing all of us Catholics in our land, -- all joined Pope John Paul II -- who in Rome, before an image of Our Lady of Fatima -- and with him all the Catholic Bishops of the world in their own dioceses, offered the **world-wide Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 25 March 1984**.

During an entire “Bimillennium Marian Year”, beginning 8 December 1984 and culminating on same date in 1985, we begged our Blessed Mother’s intercession to bring us true freedom and peace, at a time when our people were undergoing great stress and suffering and near-hopelessness under the dictatorship. The “peaceful People Power Revolution” of February 1986 came as God’s answer to our prayers and longings, -- so we are convinced -- *through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. Memorably again, on 3 December 1987, as an act of joyous thanksgiving, we renewed our *Consecration to the Two Hearts, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his Mother’s Immaculate Heart*, led in our name by Cardinals Jaime Sin and Ricardo Vidal.

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More recently, our Bishops, responding to our Filipino lay Catholics' initiative, opened (on 19 June 2009) a "Year of Renewal, of Consecration and Commitment offered to the Two Hearts," and ended it solemnly with an Act of Consecration to the Heart of Jesus and also to the Heart of Mary, 11 June 2010. We are certain much protection from harm, distress and evil were given to us through the graciousness of the "Two Hearts". Peaceful elections were held in May 2010, and a new administration installed, with peaceful and orderly transition.

Looking at our Present Context

As the Year of Faith moves forward, we know that there are several situations of trouble and conflict in our part of the world. It suffices to name some areas: the "two Koreas", Sabah, and the West Philippine Sea.

Within our nation, we know also that there are positive gains: the widely recognized present economic upturn under our present government's policies and programs; equally recognized improvements and progress in governance, in health care, in anti-poverty and pro-education endeavors; sincere efforts at diminishing corruption, and more. We are told by surveys also that genuine hopes for a better future have recently risen among our people. Yes, there is new hope.

Yet, just as truly, there remain not a few dark and shadow areas too, like the ongoing violence and conflicts in Mindanao; the also ongoing decades-old Communist-led revolutionary movement; the persistent joblessness that daily sends hundreds, even thousands, of our countrymen abroad in search of employment, the unabated wanton destruction of

remaining natural resources. There are also the recent bitter controversies regarding legislation on “reproductive health”; the threat of more bills in Congress to legalize practices which our Catholic moral doctrine holds as contrary to divine law; the manifestations of a spreading relativistic mindset in some sectors of our society (the “dictatorship of relativism” reaching even us) and its effects in our own changing lifestyles.

And of course, next May, we will have coming national and local elections. We all know that amongst us, election-periods are so often “trouble periods– and even crisis-times” -- with guns, goons and gold pursuing their destructive doings.

Deeper than all the foregoing, a **genuine “return to God and turning truly to the Gospel”** and the more authentic living of our faith, these call us and challenge us, in pursuing our vocation to be truly God’s People, to be Christ’s Body in our land. A “practical atheism” (so emeritus Pope Benedict so often refers to it), secularism and forgetfulness of God and of the Gospel spread more and more in our *de facto* culture; the wrong elements of so-called “post-modernism and globalization” increasingly affect our minds and mindsets, our moral conduct and our lives, above all the lives of our young people. On Ash Wednesday we are told, “*Repent and be converted to the Gospel!*” The Year of Faith reminds us of this mandate, renews its summons to true Christian fidelity.

What We Resolve To Do

Without developing further the issues we must face, the tasks we must undertake as the demanding labors of **the New Evangelization** for us, the Church in our country, we see why

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our leaders, ordained and lay, our Bishops first of all, are urging us to renew once again – more earnestly, more deeply, with greater preparation – **our Consecration and Entrustment to the Immaculate Heart of Mary**, as well as – necessarily *accompanying it* – our renewal of consecration to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

As part of our Consecration to the Immaculate Heart, there are also the adjoint practices of (1) the Mass and Communion of Reparation on the First Saturday of each month, and (2) Prayer and Penance, in our daily lives offered also by us, in union with Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. As much as possible, the daily recitation of the Rosary will be the ongoing-practice of prayer asked of us. We are reminded that the Fatima message teaches the “immense power of the Rosary” for faith-life in the world of grace.

With this Pastoral Exhortation we send out to you a booklet prepared for us, which sets down (1) the specific pastoral activities and programs which can be followed and activated in each diocese, parish, local school or other institutions and which (2) develops briefly and clearly, we hope, some theological reflection on the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart and accompanying practices of spirituality and devotion.

We are also sending out the poster visually representing and fostering the program of these events, an image of the **“Madonna and her motherly mantle” (the Schutzmantel Madonna)**, an icon of Mary known and loved in Europe from long ago, but locally “inculturated” for us. Fr. Armand Tangi, SSP, the well-known Paulinian priest and religious artist has created this image for us, from his heart and hand, as a labor of love. Mary of the Immaculate Heart, Mother of Christ and our

Mother, here holds our Filipino people under and within her loving and caring mantle—all of us, men, women and children, of every region of our land; of every age, gender, color of skin and sector of society; Christians and people of other religions, churches and faith communities, all Filipinos of good will, -- all of us who make one people, one nation, one. Our Lady's love and care, received by us, have brought and can bring us together and make us one.

We repeat as we end this message: ***we will hold a simultaneous National Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at 10:00 in the morning in all Cathedrals, Parish Churches, Shrines and Chapels led by the Bishops in their respective Arch/Dioceses, Prelatures and Apostolic Vicariates, all over the country.***

**“Pueblo Amante de Maria”:
Isang Bayang Sumisinta Kay Maria**

This is the purpose of our Act of Consecration to her Immaculate Heart, that she, the Mother of us all, really help us to become more truly one. ***Bayang sumisinta kay Maria, isang bayan, isang bansa.*** In our past history, in times of trouble and need, of darkness and loss of hope, whenever we prayed to her, she always came to be with us and raise us up. Ina of Peñafrancia in Bikol Region, Nuestra Señora de Guia of Ermita, Manila, Virgen de la Paz y Buenviaje in Antipolo, Virgen del Santissimo Rosario of La Naval in Manila and Manaoag, Mother of Perpetual Help in Baclaran, Our Lady of Piat in Cagayan, Our Lady of Caysasay in Taal (Batangas), Virgin of Miraculous Medal of Sucat, Parañaque and San Marcelino in Ermita (Manila), Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe of Makati and Cebu,

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Our Lady of Lourdes of Santa Mesa Heights (Quezon City), Nuestra Señora de Candelaria of Jaro (Iloilo), Nuestra Señora del Pilar of Zamboanga ... this is just the beginning of a litany, a much longer litany, wherein almost every corner of our land will finally add its name.

As the late Jaime Cardinal Sin wrote of our people during our Marian Year of 1988: “When our land was not yet one land, and our people not yet a nation... it was she, the Mother of Jesus the Incarnate Son, who became our first bonding tongue, the first common language of our hearts, the symbol of a new race to whom oneness and peace would come in time, as a gift of the Father in heaven, but as a gift which would reach us through her loving hands.”

We change his last lines a little. “This Year of Faith, of our Consecration to her Immaculate Heart, will be a firm renewal of our unshakeable trust in her, of our filial love for her, -- she who is now, as ever in our past, our Queen and our Mother of mercy, -- *vita, dulcedo et spes nostra*: yes, of all our people, our life, our sweetness and our hope.

Let the bells ring throughout the land, singing our people’s hymn to Mary. They shall be bells which celebrate our hope.” Amen. Amen.

For the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines,

+ JOSE S. PALMA, D.D.

Archbishop of Cebu

President, CBCP

April 10, 2013

PLAN OF ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

Saturday, June 8, 2013, 10:00 AM,
Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

- WHO: ALL THE FAITHFUL – BISHOPS, PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS,
LAITY IN THE 86 DIOCESES, PRELATURES, APOSTOLIC
VICARIATES and MILITARY ORDINARIATE
- WHERE: IN THE CATHEDRALS AND/OR CHURCHES AND
CHAPLAINCIES
- WHY: IN THE YEAR OF FAITH,
AND THE ERA OF NEW EVANGELIZATION
- WHAT: REPARATION, LIFE OFFERING, CONVERSION
AND KINGDOM OF GOD (ROCK)
- HOW:

I. PREPARATORY (APRIL AND MAY)

Catechesis on Marian Consecration

(33 days preparation acc. to St. Louis de Monfort)

Family Rosary

First Saturday devotion of Reparation

Celebration of the Sacrament of
Reconciliation

Flores de Mayo celebration for Children and Youth

Promotion of **Family Consecration to
the Immaculate Heart Mary**

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Celebration of Pentecost

(vigil, Sunday celebration)

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

(Friday, June 7)

***World Day of Prayer for the
Sanctification of Priests***

II. CELEBRATION (Arch/Diocesan)

Novena to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

(Procession)

Eucharistic Celebration

Consecration

III. DEEPENING

Catechesis continues

Family Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

First Saturday Devotion of Reparation

Renewal of Consecration on First Saturdays (Parish level)

IV. ANNUAL RENEWAL OF CONSECRATION

RECOMMENDED CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

MARCH 2013:	CBCP LETTER TO ALL BISHOPS (Reminder) Organize National, Preparation of helpful materials Communications plan readied
APRIL 2013:	Distribution of materials CBCP Pastoral Exhortation on the National Consecration Announcement / invitation to the Public Website launched (national) Organize Diocesan and Parochial ExeCom

Catechesis on the Marian consecration
begins at all levels
Flores de Mayo activities
Media promotion
Promotion of Family consecration
Cenacles of the BVM
First Friday / Saturday Vigil of Reparation
Pentecost Solemn Celebration
Marian Symposiums / Conferences

JUNE 2013: Novena to the Immaculate Heart of Mary
(May 30 – June 7)
Solemnity of Sacred Heart of Jesus (June 7)
Catechesis continues
Media promotion continues
NATIONAL DAY OF CONSECRATION
JUNE 8 at 10:00 A.M.
Simultaneous, with media coverage

JULY 2013: Catechesis continues
Promotion of Family consecration
Cenacles of the BVM
Parish Renewal of the Consecration
(1st Saturday)
Followed by monthly renewal until October

JUNE 2014: **Feast of Immaculate Heart of Mary**
Annual renewal of consecration
c/o Diocesan and Parochial ExeCom

Prepared by:
Bp. Guillermo V. Afable, D.D.
and the Ad hoc Committee on NCIHM

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

*To be recited jointly on 8 June 2013 in all cathedrals, churches, chapels in the Philippines with as many of the Catholic Faithful present. And, on the following four FIRST SATURDAYS, in July, August, September and October, to be jointly recited again, to complete the FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS asked for by the Blessed Mother of Fatima.**

“We have recourse to your protection, o holy Mother of God.” As we recite the words of this antiphon with which the Church of Christ has prayed for centuries, we find ourselves today before you, our Mother, in this Year of Faith. We, who make up the “Body of Christ” present in our land, recite the words of this present Act of Consecration and Entrustment, in which we gather, first of all, the hopes and anxieties of our Filipino people, at this moment of our history.

Mother of our people, we who rejoice in the name, “Pueblo amante de Maria,”--a people who love Mary, *bayang sumisinta kay Maria*-- you know all our sufferings and our hopes, you who have a mother’s awareness of all the struggles between good and evil, between light and darkness, which afflict the world today. Mother of our people, accept the cry which we, deeply moved by the Holy Spirit, address directly to your heart.

Embrace, with the love of the Mother and Handmaid of the Lord, our people and our land, which now we entrust and consecrate to you, for we are truly concerned for the earthly and eternal destiny of every individual among us and for all our people.

“We have recourse to your protection, o holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities.”

Behold, as we gather before you, Mother of Christ, -- as we gather before your Immaculate Heart, we desire, the Church of the Lord in our land, joined in heart and mind with all our people, *isang bayang Pilipino*, -- to unite ourselves with the consecration which, for love of us, your Son made of himself to the Father: *‘For their sake,’ he said, ‘I consecrate myself that they also may be consecrated in the truth’* [Jn 17: 19]. We wish to unite ourselves with our Redeemer in this his consecration for the world and for the entire human race, which, in his divine Heart, has the power to obtain pardon and to secure reparation.

The power of this consecration by your Son, Our Lord, lasts for all time and embraces all individuals, peoples and nations. Thus also it embraces our people and our land. The power of this consecration overcomes every evil that the spirit of darkness is able to awaken, and has in fact awakened in our times, in the hearts of men and women in human history.

How deeply we now feel the need for the consecration of our people, in union with Christ Jesus himself. For the redeeming work of our Redeemer must be shared in and by the world, and by our own people, through the Church.

We turn to you, Mother of our Redeemer and our Mother: above all creatures may you be blessed, -- you, the Handmaid of the Lord, who in the fullest way obeyed the divine call. Hail to you, who are wholly united to the redeeming consecration of your Son.

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Mother of the Church! Enlighten the People of God along the paths of faith, hope and love! Help us to live in the truth of the consecration offered by Jesus your Son for the entire human family, and for us, the Filipino people and for our beloved land.

In entrusting to you, O Mother, our people, your “*Pueblo amante de Maria*,” we entrust to you this very consecration itself, placing it in your motherly Heart.

Immaculate Heart! Help us to conquer the threat of evil, which so easily enters and takes root in the hearts of people today, and whose immeasurable effects already weigh down upon our country, and seem to block the paths toward the future!

From hatred, violence, conflicts which divide and destroy our people, *deliver us*. From sins against human life, from its very beginning, *deliver us*. From the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, *deliver us*. From every kind of injustice in the life of society, *deliver us*. From readiness to trample on the commandments of God, *deliver us*. From the loss of awareness of good and evil, *deliver us*. From sins against the Holy Spirit, *deliver us, deliver us*.

Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry, laden with, the hopes and burdens, the sufferings of each one of us, and of all our people. Help us, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to overcome and conquer all sin: individual sins, ‘social sins’ and ‘the sin of the world’, -- sin in all its manifestations.

Let there be revealed once more, in our own history as a people, the infinite power of the Redemption, the power of God's merciful Love! May it destroy the power of sin and evil among us! May it transform consciences! May it change hearts to the likeness of the Heart of Jesus, and your own heart! May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all, in our land and through all the world, the light of hope! O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, *our life, our sweetness and our hope!*



*Adapted for our 8 June 2013 “National/Philippine Act of Consecration/Entrustment to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” Shortened and directed to our present context, from the “official act of consecration” written by Blessed John Paul II himself for 25 March 1984, Feast of the Annunciation. It was meant to be offered by himself and all the bishops of the Catholic Church. Our Philippine hierarchy, led by Cardinals Jaime Sin of Manila and Ricardo Vidal of Cebu, in the name of all of us in the Church in the Philippines, took official part in this solemn act of offering.



Mary, Queen of Peace, Our Lady of EDSA

CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY AND THE YEAR OF FAITH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PHILIPPINE SITUATION

Part One

A Marian Consecration in the Year of Faith

We are at present “earnestly living out” the Year of Faith, as set in motion by Pope Benedict XVI for the whole Catholic Church from 11 October 2012 to 24 November 2013.

In its 106th Plenary Assembly last January 28, 2013, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference (CBCP), in a concerned initiative of its own, has urged that the faithful, the “People of God” “in the Philippines, -- gathering together as many of the faithful as possible in each parish and diocese, -- should solemnly celebrate **“a simultaneous NATIONAL CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY on June 8, 2013, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at 10:00 in the morning in all the Cathedrals, Parish Churches, Shrines and Chapels in the respective Arch/Dioceses, Prelatures and Apostolic Vicariates”**. (CBCP Circular Letter No. 01 – s. 2013)

Of course the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will also be renewed together with the entrustment of our people “from Aparri to Jolo” to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

When our new Holy Father, Pope Francis, was first greeted by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle after his election as the new

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Bishop of Rome, as successor to Peter the Apostle, he expressed the hope that the Catholic faithful in the Philippines would “move forward in hope” to renew and deepen their Christian Faith, especially by entrusting themselves more earnestly to Our Blessed Mother Mary and by committing themselves more and more truly to the love, the care and active concern for the poor in our country.

With this in mind, we find this day of consecration to Mary’s Immaculate Heart on 8 June **as fulfilling a kind-of “mission” given to us.** And with our own Bishops’ urgent mandate, it will be *an especially significant event of this Year of Faith in the Philippines.*

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart

A quasi-history of the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary cannot be essayed here. Only a few facts of interest and relevance can be indicated. Moved by the “request of Our Blessed Mother made through Sister Lucia dos Santos of Fatima”, Pope Pius XII, broadcasting to Portugal on 31 October 1942, spoke these words, addressed to Mary:

To you, to your immaculate heart, we entrust, we offer, we consecrate, not only Holy Church, the Mystical Body of your Son, Jesus, which suffers and bleeds in so many places and in so many ways, but also the whole world, torn by mortal strife, ablaze with hate, and victim of its own sins.

Some twenty years later, on 13 May 1981, Pope John Paul II was struck down by a would-be assassin’s bullets at St Peter’s Piazza in Rome, and only saved from death— so the Holy

Father himself firmly believed -- by the intervention of the Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Fatima. After his recovery, a year afterwards, on 13 May 1982, he went to Fatima to thank Our Lady, and having previously informed the Church's bishops all over the world, offered an act of universal/world consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Here are citations from his prayer of consecration:

Before you, Mother of Christ, before your Immaculate Heart, we desire, together with the whole Church, to unite ourselves with the consecration, which, for love of us, your Son made of himself to the Father. "For their sake [he said] I consecrate myself, that they too may be consecrated in truth." [Jn 17:19] We wish to unite ourselves with our Redeemer in this, his consecration for the world and for the human race, which in his divine Heart has the power to obtain pardon and to secure reparation.

The power of this consecration lasts for all time and embraces all individuals, peoples and nations. It overcomes every evil that the spirit of darkness is able to awaken and has in fact awakened in our times, in the heart of man and in his history.

Hail to you, Mother of Christ, who are wholly united to the consecration of your Son.

Hail to you, Mother of the Church! Enlighten the People of God along the paths of Faith, Hope and Love. Enlighten especially the peoples whose consecration and entrustment, by us, you are awaiting. Help us to live in the truth of the consecration of Christ for the entire human family of the modern world.



Pope John Paul II consecrates the world to the Immaculate Heart on the Feast of the Annunciation during the Great Marian Year 1984.

By entrusting to you, O Mother of the world, all individuals and peoples, we also entrust to you this very consecration of the world, placing it in your motherly Heart!

Then, early in the year 1984, John Paul II sent copies of a new Act of Consecration he had written, to all the Catholic and Orthodox bishops of the world, expressly asking them to join him in making this formal entrustment [*affidamento*] to Mary's Immaculate Heart. This entrustment included all the peoples of the world, “especially the people whose consecration and entrustment you are awaiting from us”. **On the Feast of the Annunciation, 25 March 1984, in Rome, before an image of Our Lady of Fatima, with all solemnity, the Act of Consecration was offered by the Holy Father.**

All the Catholic bishops of the Philippines, “through a solemn, public and collegial act” – many of them gathered at the Manila Cathedral, with most others in their own diocesan cathedrals – led the “national consecration of the Filipino people to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 8 December 1983.” The Philippine hierarchy also joined the solemn Act of Consecration of the whole world and of all nations, led by Pope John Paul II mentioned in the previous paragraph the following year, on 8 December 1984.

Then the entire Church in the Philippines opened the “**Bimillennium Marian Year**” declared by the CBCP (from the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1984 to the day of the same feast in 1985), entrusting our country to the Blessed Mother in a genuine “hour of crisis”, imploring her intercession to bring genuine freedom and peace to our land. We must remember that our people were in great distress

and undergoing much suffering, even a widespread sense of near-hopelessness, under the dictatorship at that time. The *"People Power Peaceful Revolution"* took place in February of 1986, -- surely Our Lord's answer to our prayers and longings, an answer given us -- so we believe with all conviction -- *through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.*¹

In 1987, the year following the great events now known as EDSA UNO, a first-ever **International Theological/Pastoral Congress on "the Alliance of the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary"** was held in Manila, 30 November to 3 December. This was a follow-up on an International Theological Symposium on "The Alliance of the Two Hearts" held in Fatima, Portugal on 14-19 September 1986, but organized under the sponsorship of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines (CBCP) and the Assisi Development Foundation, and chaired by Jaime Cardinal Sin. This Fatima Conference was given unusual blessing and backing by **Blessed Pope John Paul II**, from whom the inspiration of the **"movement of the Alliance of the Two Hearts"** had come.

On 3 December 1987, at the conclusion of the Two Hearts Congress in Manila, all its participants, led by three Asian Cardinals, Jaime Sin of Manila, Ricardo Vidal of Cebu, and Stephen Kim of Seoul (South Korea) solemnly made **An Act of Consecration to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, and an **Act of Entrustment (affidamento) to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

¹ The book, BIMILLENIUUM, 1985 MARIAN YEAR BOOK, is an important remembrance volume of the events of that 'C-O-R Year of Our Blessed Lady'. Makati, 1986, Bahay Maria/ Assisi Foundation

More recently, the Philippine Bishops, supporting the initiative first taken by several movements of Filipino Catholic Laity, declared **“A Year of Renewal, of Consecration and Commitment offered to the Two Hearts”** (19 June 2009 to 11 June 2010).

In opening this “Year of the Two Hearts”, the CBCP declared: We proclaim and open the Year of the Two Hearts to reaffirm our true and total need of the grace of God and ‘the power of the Paschal Mystery’. We open this Year of the Two Hearts so that we individually and as a people might move forward toward conversion and renewal in our personal lives, in our public activity, in our endeavor to renew our society. We must begin with our recommitment to the Gospel, and thus also our renewed consecration to the Heart of Jesus and to the Heart of Mary, the mother of the Lord. (CBCP, April 2009)

In recent years, **Cardinal Ricardo Vidal** has taken up notable leadership in promoting the Movement of the Alliance of the Two Hearts, and it was he who first led and inspired the CBCP this year to take the strong initiative for this new **June 2013 National Act of Consecration, by the Filipino Catholic faithful, entrusting our people and our nation at this moment of our history, to the Two Hearts, and in special way to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

A Consecration for Today

“Our country is at present at a new crossroads,” so did the CBCP Bishops’ Statement of the Year of the Two Hearts begin, in April 2009. In a true sense, this can also be said now.

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There are not a few troubling, critical situations in our part of the world at present. It suffices to mention the North Korea/South Korea situation; the conflicting territorial claims regarding the West Philippine Sea; the recent and still unresolved Sabah problem; the long-ongoing Mindanao unrest with its many episodes of violence, and the even decades-old Communist-led revolutionary movement; the recent controversies regarding legislation on “reproductive health” and the enactment into law of the RH-Bill; the threat of forthcoming proposals for yet new bills legalizing divorce and other practices which our Catholic moral doctrine firmly holds as contrary to divine law, etc. Of course too, there will be local and national elections to be held in the coming month of May; in our country, the election-period is always something of a “crisis-time”, often involving violence.

We must of course give due credit to the present government for the economic upturn, now recognized widely even internationally; its sincerely undertaken anti-poverty efforts in synergy with civil society organizations; earnest initiatives at improving the programs, projects and institutional support for the education of our young people; the campaigns to diminish dishonesty and corruption and improve effective governance in diverse sectors of public life and society; etc. Of course, and understandably, so very *much remains to be done*, especially in the anti-poverty areas, but real positive endeavors deserve due recognition and support from us all.

However, **...the genuine “return to God”** in our minds, hearts and lives; the true turning-away from growing secularism, relativism and “practical atheism” in our personal

lives and in society (even when we consider ourselves “believers”!); the genuine conversion and reform called-for in our private and public morality; a recommitment to **really “living according to the Gospel”** . . . all of this we have constantly to keep before our minds and in our daily activities, all of this we must tirelessly pursue, -- *faithfully, even heroically, by God’s grace*. We recognize, in all truth and honesty, also so very much *remains to be done!*

We know we cannot ourselves live this **“authentic life according to the Gospel”** without the constant loving help of God, we cannot by ourselves truly reform and renew ourselves and our society without the presence and power of God and the Spirit of God working within us and in our actions. We recall the words of Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Spe Salvi*: **“Let us put it very simply, man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope.”**

We do not want now to develop all this much more fully. All that has been taken up above enters into our endeavors for **the Year of Faith**, and enters into our long-term preparation for the **2021 Year of Jubilee**. We gather, thanking God for 500 years of Christian faith-and-life in our beloved land; resolving **with God’s help** to “move forward” in the deepening of our Christian Faith and genuinely “realizing” [*making real*] conversion and true Gospel living; renewing and fostering our devotion to the Blessed Mother of the Lord; and “never forgetting the poor among us,” by preferential and active love and concern for the poor and the powerless in our country and around us. [We recall Pope Francis’ words of hope addressed to us!]

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What our Consecration means and hopes

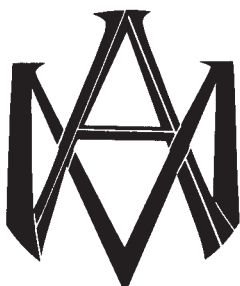
We have tried to sketch the context for the **National Act of Consecration-and-Entrustment to the Immaculate Heart of Mary** for 8 June 2013, as proposed and urged by our Philippine Bishops. This solemn public act is to be done – our bishops **very earnestly urge** -- in every parish and diocese in our Church, at a Mass celebrated, if at all possible, at ten o'clock that Saturday morning, the First Saturday of June. This will thus be one of the most important and significant public events for the Year of Faith in the Church in the Philippines.

By this consecration-and-entrustment to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we who make up the Catholic Church in the Philippines, **“pueblo amante de Maria, bayang sumisinta kay Maria,”** earnestly turn to the Blessed Mother, Mother of the Lord Jesus, Mother of the Church and of us all, and **we ask her to take us all under her motherly mantle of love and mercy, to intercede for us, that we may become truly one people – truly ISANG BAYAN, ISANG BANSA – a genuine “People of God” in this part of the world. How?** We repeat: *through true conversion, through sincere sacrificial offering of our daily lives through persevering prayer and penance, through commitment in practice to the Gospel and its values . . . with the Faith, Hope and Love the Spirit will pour out in our lives.*

In the past history of our people, it has been Our Lady the Mother of Jesus who was so instrumental in making our people into one people. It has been our Mother Mary who has “stepped in” to help in times of trouble, of calamity and crisis.

The Bimillennium Marian Year of renewal and the EDSA UNO events of 1986, we sincerely believe came through her intercession and guidance of our “bayang sumisinta kay Maria”.

Let us then, all of us, really commit ourselves to this DAY OF CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY. Let us make it known to everyone in our families, among our friends and associates; let us work to make it a “really special event” in our country in this Year of Faith. Let us, each one of us, make it our own project, under God’s providence, as if it all depended on our prayer and earnest efforts. Let all this really come from our hearts, so that our one people, truly one this time, will truly give its heart to Our Lord and Our Lady, our heart to the Two Hearts, Amen. Amen.





Visiting Fatima in 13 May 2010, Pope Benedict XVI said: “One deceives himself who thinks that the prophetic mission of Fatima is concluded.”

Part Two

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

In our time, **the devotion and especially the ‘Consecration’ to the Immaculate Heart of Mary are decisively linked with Our Lady of Fatima.** In fact, it has been authoritatively said that **“the very center -- the very heart -- of the Message and Meaning of the Fatima Apparitions is the Immaculate Heart of Mary”²**

Mary’s Immaculate Heart is “the great sign” revealed by Our Lady herself at Fatima; the sign of her motherly love, its presence and its mediation of divine mercy; the sign of her constant and continual invitation to open ourselves to her intercession, and to her invitation to enter with our own hearts into *the redemptive reparation of the Son, into His communion with the Father through the Holy Spirit.*

The three fundamental practices prescribed by the Message of Fatima are:

- **prayer (linked especially with the Rosary);**
- **reparation and penance (linked with the Communion of Reparation of Five First Saturdays) and,**
- **consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

² Cf. Fr Michael O’Carroll, in his book, *ALLIANCE OF THE TWO HEARTS*, Hope of the World, wrote: **“Fr. Joaquin Alonso, the great historian of the events of Fatima, has said: “The soul of the mighty drama of Fatima is the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”** (p. 57). Also, Joaquim Alonso CMF and Abilio Pina Ribeiro CMF, *FATIMA. MESSAGE AND CONSECRATION*, Quezon City, Claretian Publications, 1984. For ready and brief reference. Fr. Alonso, is *peritus* on the theological study on the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the history of the Fatima apparitions.

Here, by way of a “primer”, we will develop rather briefly a basic *theology* of the consecration to the Immaculate Heart, this “core-theme” of the Message of Fatima.

The Meaning of Consecration

“Consecration”. Every Christian is fundamentally and primarily **“consecrated”**, -- brought into union with “the sacred”, that is, with the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit -- **in and through Baptism**. St Augustine teaches, *“It is Christ Himself who baptizes.”* It is God himself who “consecrates” the baptized person in Baptism, *per ipsum, et cum ipso et in ipso*, through Christ Jesus, with Christ, and in Christ, -- in oneness with the Holy Spirit. This fundamental consecration is in a true sense renewed and ‘real-ized’ in every sacrament.

Over and above this primary consecration, the Church has recognized **‘other consecrations’** which “focus” (so to speak) and renew the sacramental consecration. In these other consecrations, the consequences of the baptismal consecration are, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, activated, ‘real-ized’ (made more and more real) and experienced in the Christian life.

Vows of religious life, e.g., the vows taken by those who enter into the “consecrated life” as members of religious Orders or congregations, are perhaps the best-known officially and canonically validated “other consecrations.”

Yet ‘other consecrations’, **“consecrations of devotion”** are often linked with particular apostolic projects or with “devotions” accepted and blessed by the Church. With the

grace of the Spirit, they enable and foster an **ever-fuller self-giving of baptized persons** and of groups and communities of baptized persons. These consecrations foster *an ever-fuller, more intense, more committed self-giving out of love, to God and to our neighbor, in the living-out of Christian life and mission.*

This is the Christian's personal receiving of **God's own gift-initiative of mercy and love**, inviting him/her to live out his/her consecration "in practice" through the years, and at special moments in life. *This is the Christian's entering into the sacrificial self-giving of Jesus to the Father, sharing in it ever more fully, so that he/she may genuinely imitate the life of Jesus and be transformed by the Spirit of Jesus more and more into the likeness of Christ.*

Thus does Jesus unite the Christian more closely with himself. The Christian, as an adopted child of God, is inserted into the inner life of His Body, which is the Church on earth, and thus enters into Jesus' own communion with the Father. Thus does the living Jesus himself take up more fully the Christian's life and activity into his own. Thus does the Christian man or woman share in the redemptive presence and action of Jesus in the world and in time. Thus does the Christian person also participate in special ways through his/her own "apostolate" in the mission of Christ and His Church today.





Consecration to the Two Hearts

Among these ‘other consecrations’, here we single out especially the **Consecration to the Sacred Heart (“the pierced Heart”) of Jesus, and the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

The words in Jesus’ last supper prayer (Jn 17: 9, 17-19) indicate the “root” of our consecration to God, “*For these I pray – ... for these you have given me, for they are really yours. ... Consecrate them by means of truth, your word is truth. ... I consecrate myself for their sakes now, that they may be consecrated in truth.*”

As Jesus consecrates himself to the Father “for our sakes”, he can take us and our offerings up into his own self-consecration. Our acts of self-giving and consecration to God are thus *received by ‘the living Jesus in glory’* into his own giving of himself to the Father through the Spirit. Then the living Jesus gives to us also the grace necessary to ‘realize’ our own offering in our lives.

Our acts of self-offering and consecration are first and fundamentally **“to Jesus, to the Heart of Jesus”**. (Ultimately to the Father, in, with, and through Jesus and the Heart of Jesus). Imitation of and insertion into the life and heart of Jesus is the ultimate term of the spiritual life of every Christian and of every Christian community. Our self-offering and **“consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary”** is then necessarily joined to our consecration to the Heart of Jesus. In a true sense, necessarily, the consecration to the Heart of Mary is linked with, and goes side-by-side with the consecration to the Heart of Jesus.

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Our consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is to **the person of Mary as united to her Son, the Word Incarnate**. This oneness is unequalled and unique, because she is His Mother, because of “the bond of her divine maternity”; because of her unequalled and unique association with her Son’s redeeming work and her Son’s salvific mediation; and because she is Mother of the Body of Christ (the Church) and Mother of the members of the Church. We consecrate ourselves to her *Immaculate Heart* as “*the sign of her maternal love and her mediation for us of the divine grace and mercy.*”

Pope John Paul II’s teaching is that “to consecrate ourselves to God through the virginal and motherly hands of Mary, **through her Immaculate Heart**, is to consecrate ourselves to Her as ***Mother of Jesus and Mother of us all, as mother of unbounded Love and Mercy.***” Our blessed Lady, speaking to Sister Lucia, mandated her to dedicate herself to the work of bringing together, to bringing side-by-side, the devotion to the Heart of Mary and the devotion to the Sacred Heart. This is why Pope John Paul II fostered the consecration to the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, a consecration brought by the Spirit into “**the Alliance of the Two Hearts, of Jesus and Mary.**”

To sum up the foregoing paragraphs, let us listen to the words Pope John Paul II spoke at Fatima on 13 May 1982:

“Behold, as we stand before you, Mother of Christ, as we stand before your *Immaculate Heart*, we desire, together with the whole Church, to unite ourselves with the consecration which, for love of us, your Son made of himself to the Father, “**For their sake [he said] I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth. [Jn 17:19]** We wish to unite ourselves

with our Redeemer in this, his consecration for the world and for the human race, which in his divine heart, has the power to obtain pardon and secure reparation.”

“The power of this consecration lasts for all time and embraces all individuals, peoples and nations. It overcomes every evil that the spirit of darkness is able to awaken and has in fact awakened in our time, in the heart of man and in his history.”

“Hail to you, Mother of Christ, who are wholly united to the redeeming consecration of your Son.”

Some “specifics” of the Devotion and Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

We must, at this point, take up Our blessed Lady’s words to the children at Fatima, and words in later years spoken by her to Sister Lucia dos Santos. Our Lady lays down **certain specific elements of the devotion-and-consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

To live out this consecration in practice involves:

- (1) **PENANCE AND PRAYER.** Penance and Prayer, offered earnestly for conversion from sin and the conversion of sinners (“those who do not believe, who do not hope and do not love”). This penance includes sacrifices and the bearing of suffering, offered for sinners. The prayer is above all **prayer of the Rosary**, as much as possible **prayed daily** for conversion from sin and peace in the world.
- (2) **REPARATION FOR SIN.** In traditional devotion, e.g., in the practice of the Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament, reparation was understood as “consoling the heart of Jesus for

the sufferings he endured in his passion and consoling him in face of the sins offending him in our time.” But we are reminded that Christ in the Eucharist is the crucified-and-risen Jesus Christ in his glory. Christ in his glory suffers no more; the sufferings of his historical passion and death are present no longer. Regarding this “reparation of consoling Jesus”, many theologians today ask if this understanding of reparation is a valid and helpful one.

Reparation for sin: Another approach to reparation has been developed. The objective of reparation is this: that God may be less and less offended by sin and sinful lives, *reparation is understood rather as striving earnestly for fidelity to God’s will in fulfilling the tasks and duties of our daily lives; to practice genuine ‘justice’ (righteousness and fidelity) in our own observance of God’s law. This is done also with the intent “of countering, of making up for, of repairing” the sin-and-sinfulness which disobeys God’s law, which offends God by violating his commandments and going against his will in our lives, personal and social.*

Reparation is then understood (it seems, more correctly, theologically) as devoutly *“joining in, as sharing in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus; as sharing in Jesus’ mission of vanquishing sin and overcoming the power of sin in the lives of human persons and in the life of human communities.”* Reparation then, means, “sharing in the sacrificial and redeeming work of Jesus, in him and through him overcoming sin and repairing the effects of sin, of selfishness and injustice, of violence, as these injure and destroy human lives in today’s world.”

Pope Paul VI said that “the fullest reparation desired by the Heart of Jesus [and we add, by the Heart of Mary] is the building up of an authentic civilization of love.” This means building up human solidarity, justice, and compassionate love in our relationships, in our communities, *through prayer and penance* in and with the Heart of Jesus, *through action for justice and peace*, rooted in and empowered by Christ’s love. **Pope John Paul II**, after Pope Paul VI, took up and also fostered this understanding of reparation, “the building up of an authentic civilization of love.”³

Reparation by prayer and action: we are asked to real-ize, i.e., “make real in practice” this reparation – through and with the Pierced Heart of the Crucified-and-Risen Jesus, and through and with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, by the power of their covenant love and mercy.

Finally, the **Communion of Reparation, offered on the First Saturdays of each month -- (of five or more months) --** for the intentions mentioned above: *prayer, penance, reparation...* for conversion from sin, for the conversion of sinners, in reparation for sin and the effects of sin in humanity and in the world. *Sacramental confession* should also be made, but not necessarily on the same Saturday or the same weekend. Some fifteen minutes are to be “spent with Our Blessed Mother” praying the Rosary and reflecting on the mysteries of Our Lord’s and Our Lady’s life.

³ Sister Lucia wrote also that one evening, while keeping the Holy Hour of Reparation, Our Lord told her: “The fulfillment of duty and the observance of my Law is the sacrifice [of reparation] required of each one. This is the penance [and reparation] I now ask for and require.”



As is also well-known, a **“great promise”** is linked with the observance of the First Saturdays: for those who strive to fulfill this practice asked for by Our Blessed Mother: “assistance at the hour of death with all the graces needed for their salvation.” We must add that this “great promise” -- and its consequences -- of course inevitably reaches into society, into the lives of families, communities, nations and peoples, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, of divine grace, healing and purifying hearts, and thus reaching deeply into our human communities and our common history.

We recall again, as we end these paragraphs, the words of Pope John Paul II at Fatima (13 May 1982): *“Hail to you, Mother of Christ, you who are wholly united to the redeeming consecration of your Son. Mother of the Church, enlighten the people of God along the paths of Faith, Hope and Love. ... Help us to live in the truth of the consecration of Christ for the entire human family of the modern world. In entrusting to you, O Mother of the world, all individuals and peoples, we also entrust to you this very consecration of the world, placing it in your motherly heart.”*

A Consecration Urgent for Today

TO CONCLUDE: Pope Benedict XVI on 13 May 2010 said in his homily at Fatima: *“He deceives himself who thinks that the prophetic mission of Fatima is concluded.”*

What the Message of Fatima has asked of us: penance and prayer, conversion from and reparation for sin, sacrifice and consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the practice of “the First Saturdays”, ... these are still our “assignments” from the historic events of Fatima. Their work, under the

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Holy Spirit, toward bringing conversion into our lives and helping to build a civilization of justice, love and peace, is ongoing, unfinished.

What the CBCP in its turn asks of all our dioceses and parishes — that is, our Catholic faithful in the Church in the Philippines — to do and offer earnestly this coming 8 June 2013, is ***an act of faith in this Year of Faith.***

*This consecration of ourselves and our country, “in the spirit of Fatima,” is at this time to be our people’s earnest prayer, **joined to the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the redemptive power of the Heart of Christ,** to implore the grace of conversion and reparation for us all in our country, to implore the grace for the genuine pursuit of integrity and justice, of true and lasting peace in our communities throughout our land.*

This Year of Faith should be also a year of authentic Hope for our country and especially for the Church in our country, as we move forward to the remembrance and celebration — in 2021 — of ***the gift of the Christian faith-and-life to our people five hundred years ago.***

Our renewed consecration of ourselves and our land to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to **the Immaculate Heart of Mary** will then be a truly a “special event” in our history as a people of faith, as “*pueblo amante de Maria, bayang sumisinta kay Maria*”. “Isang bansa na naghahandog ng puso sa puso ni Maria”: **a people giving its heart to the Heart of Mary.** As our old time beloved hymn puts it: “El pueblo Filipino te da su corazon.”

To the Heart of Jesus, and to the Heart of Mary, **all of us Filipinos, on 8 June 2013**, will cry out as “isang bayan”, one united people: “Jesus and Mary, we give you the offering of ourselves and our lives, this “bayang magiliw” we entrust to you. In Faith, Hope and Love, we give you our hearts!”

C. G. Arevalo, S J / 4 April 2013





PUSO NI MARIA INA NG BAYANG SUMISINTA

The icon of *Puso ni Maria, Ina ng Bayang Sumisinta*, especially rendered for this event by priest-artist Fr. Arman Tangi, SSP, is an inculturation of the *Schutzmantel* [mantle of protection] Madonna, a popular image in German iconography.

Our Lady is represented with her Son, overshadowing the people with her mantle. As an icon that strives to portray the meaning of our act of consecration, it is a visual form of sacred writing that when devoutly “read” and prayed on may help us to enter into the mystery that it represents: the motherly heart of Mary and the people who loves her so.

Mary, a Filipina?

Our Lady is represented in the icon as a young Filipina woman in traditional Philippine attire. Wearing a working woman’s *tapis* and even a *bakya*, the chosen daughter of Israel is shown as one with our own people, and in a very special way identified and solidary with the simple and the poor, together with her Son.

For us, Mary is not just a historical figure from first century Palestine, fondly remembered yet strange and distant. Rather, as we have seen in our own history especially in the pivotal events of our life as a nation and as we continue to experience even today, in our personal lives, too, she is close to us and one with us, with “**a mother’s awareness**” of our joys and hopes, our fears and struggles. Thus, we dare claim that Our Lady is also and truly Filipina, with and in her Son, who by his Incarnation, has become truly one with us.

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Indeed, she is the **“Mother of our people”**, so deeply in love with her: ***pueblo amante de Maria***. The Mother and Type of the Church Universal as acclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, she is shown here to be the Mother and Type in a particular way of our local Church in the Philippines that has expressly committed itself to be a **“Church of the Poor”** (Second Plenary Council of the Philippines).

Mary’s maternal mantle

In the image, Mary covers the people with her mantle, like a mother hen brooding over her chicks. In many of our own Marian shrines, the mantle of Mary has been a palpable sign and mediating instrument of her maternal care. It has been our custom to reach out with hands of faith to touch even just the hem of her garments. In certain places even, the people borrow these mantles of Mary and use these to cover themselves and especially their sick loved ones in an unspoken but deeply sincere prayer. And, like the woman praised by the Lord in the Gospel who sought in the simplicity of her belief to touch the fringes of his cloak, many if not all of us have also found healing and help through these simple means, from Jesus through her.

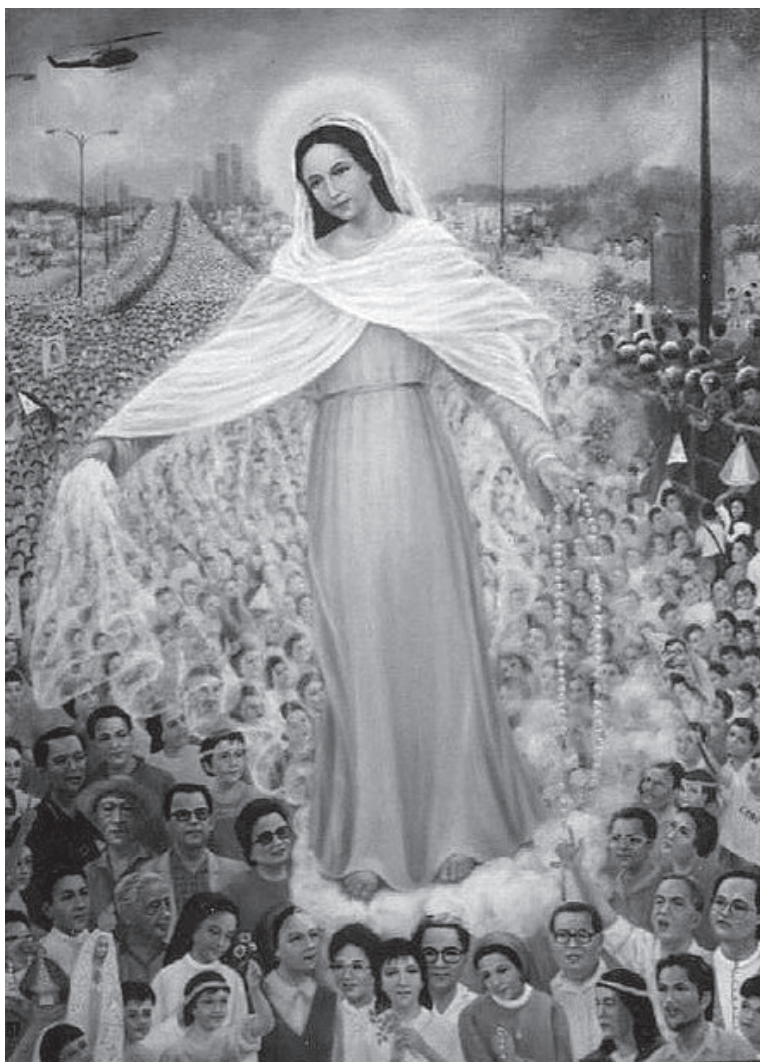
People from all walks of life, regardless of creed, status or culture, all find a place under the mantle of Mary: men and women, rich and poor, believers and non-believers. Deliberately emphasized are those who are most vulnerable among us: the poor, the sick and elderly, young people and children, the indigenous peoples. Mary’s motherly care mirrors and mediates the unconditional love of the Father for his children, and the salvation won by her Son for all humanity. Indeed, the motherhood of Mary is for all of us, an

incomparably precious and singular gift of the Father together with the Son, who on the Cross gave us to her, and her to us.

Thus, consecration to Mary does not actually seek to obtain what we do not yet have, which is to belong to Mary, and through her, to her Son and to the Father. Rather, it is claiming and receiving ever more deeply this great gift that is ever so graciously given, which in fact we may never aspire to obtain by ourselves alone if it were not given, along with the responsibility that comes together with it of living in a manner that befits children of God and children of Mary.

How deeply we now feel the need for the consecration of our people... The bleak and alarming truth is that today, this beautiful picture of a people enfolded in the maternal embrace of Mary and living in faith, hope and love under her guidance, is slowly fading for our people today. The erosion of religious and moral values, in both the public and private spheres, and the disastrous effects of this rejection of the divine will both inside and outside of our country, can only demonstrate the fearsome but real possibility of turning down the consecration by which Jesus made us his own people redeemed by his blood, adopted children of the Father, and by his explicit will, adopted children too of his mother Mary.

Hence, it can only be timely and helpful at this point to turn once again to Mary, **the handmaid of the Lord, who in the fullest way obeyed the divine call**, and to unite ourselves to her who was **wholly united to the redeeming consecration of [the] Son**. By consecrating ourselves to the Mother of Jesus, we are but renewing our baptismal consecration in



An artist's depiction of the vision of Our Lady at EDSA

Christ to the Father, along with the promises we made to live faithfully as his children and hers. Belonging more fully to her who in turn belongs so fully to Jesus, we can only belong more fully to him.

Therefore, we consecrate ourselves to Mary, running to her in these, our troubled times, echoing the oldest known prayer addressed to her by the Church: *Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix...* **We have recourse to your protection, o holy Mother of God.** We run to her motherly mantle not only as to a temporary refuge or shelter. Indeed, by placing ourselves beneath her tender gaze, we are really coming home to our true dwelling with the Father and with Christ.

It is at her feet that we, as a people, freely, consciously and lovingly desire to place ourselves. We dedicate ourselves anew to her, and through her to God, as proclaimed in the words embossed in *perpetuum* above the doors of the Cathedral of Manila, head of all the churches in this nation: *Tibi cordi tuo immaculato concredimus nos ac consacramus.* To you, to your Immaculate Heart, we entrust and consecrate ourselves.

In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph

We know from experience the effects of this consecration. In 1986, shortly after the Great Marian Year, when our people renewed its consecration to her, she obtained for us, so we firmly believe, the great miracle of EDSA. Some soldiers who were then about to conduct an aerial attack on the people who were gathered in prayer give testimony of having seen a Lady, hovering over them with her protective mantle.

“Let there be revealed once more in our own history as a people, the infinite power of the Redemption, the power of God’s merciful love!” Our good mother accepts our humble consecration to her in faith and would then, as in past, willingly show us the strength of her arm, [with her sleeves even drawn back, as the icon may suggest] tender and weak and yet strong in “the mighty arm of God working wonders for his little ones” of which she sings in her Magnificat (cf. Lk 1:51), as she extends over us the fullest reach of her mantle.

She has done it in EDSA. She has done it many years ago in *La Naval*. She has always done it in our cities and villages whenever our people had recourse to her in time of peril. She has done it for each of us also in our times of need. And so, we have such great confidence, she will do the same for our nation again today and this, too, in the will and strength of none other than her very own Son who is himself the one who first extended and continues to extend today this mantle of hers over us.

Shown in the icon, Jesus holds out the rosary, as if to remind our nation that once held out its rosaries to battle tanks in a now historic highway, as it once did to a formidable fleet of invading ships, and also did countless other times before fires, floods, pestilence, outbreaks and threats of every sort, to raise the standard of Mary once again today. As one fine Filipino theologian observed about the history of our nation: “Whenever the standard of Mary is raised, miracles happen.”

So do we hope as expressed silently in this beautiful icon. So do we hope because Our Lady herself promised at Fatima the ultimate triumph of her Immaculate Heart that will deliver us from everything that keeps us from God, as individuals and as

a people. So do we hope in a future where our people may once again delight under the shadow of Mary's motherly mantle, with her Heart together with the Heart of her Son, the purest, the holiest and the sweetest of all hearts, shining brightly over our beloved land.

“May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all, in our land and throughout the whole world, the light of hope! O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, our *life, our sweetness and our hope!*



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