



MAY PAG-ASA PA BA?

A Pastoral Letter of the CBCP calling on the Faithful
to a Pilgrimage of Hope in the Jubilee Year of 2025

Dear People of God,

Greetings of Peace and Hope!

In hope, we conclude our **129th CBCP Plenary Assembly** where we reflected on the call for Transparency and Accountability towards becoming a more Missionary and Synodal Church. We also engaged in communal discernment on the current realities affecting our nation.

“Hoping against hope” (cf. Romans 4:18)

‘Abandon hope all ye who enter here...’ are the haunting words written at the entrance of the descent into hell in Dante’s *L’inferno* (Dante Alighieri). What the author was writing about in the context of the political turmoil and moral decay of his time, can mirror today’s Filipino People wrestling with hopelessness, striving to find hope amidst adversities.

Hoping against hope, like Abraham in the letters of St. Paul, we, Christians, examine ourselves and allow our faith in God to engage the situation which afflicts our nation. In trying to understand the reality around us, we experience frustration and anguish in the face of the following:

- In the sphere of morality, we sense a widespread confusion, indifference, apathy and helplessness because of murderous attacks against life, particularly against innocent ones. The culture of impunity, self-entitlement and loss of sense of sin are alarming.
- In the area of ecology, we are constantly traumatized by the effects of disasters and tragedies due to climate emergencies, worsened by substandard and underfunded structures. Private interests are protected over common good and the welfare of the marginalized, including the indigenous peoples and poor communities.
- In the area of economy, the increase of poverty, manifested by the rise of unemployment, price of commodities and services lead to a situation where the rich becomes richer, the poor becomes poorer, the powerful becomes more powerful.
- In the political realm, the scandalous misuse of public funds and resources; the questionable insertions, cuts and adjustments in the national budget; the anti-poverty programs which promote a culture of patronage and mendicancy are truly disturbing. And as the Elections draw near, we are again seeing how platforms of popularity, dynasty and patronage are again exploited, making politics into a family business.
- In the area of security and international concerns, we witness how our sovereignty and national security are constantly threatened.
- In the field of communications, falsehood, misinformation and disinformation are weaponized against the truth.
- In the area of governance, we wonder whether there is still check and balance.

Given this background, hope seems to be more elusive than ever. Thus we all ask: *“May pag-asa pa nga ba? (Is there still hope?) To whom do we turn to?”*

As we reflected on these situations, we realize that the first thing we need to do is to examine ourselves, and pursue the path of personal, institutional and ecclesial conversion in order to rediscover hope. This is the opportunity which the Jubilee Year provides us. Thus, we too make ourselves accountable before the Lord.

“... and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts” (Romans 5:5)

Into the darkest and starkest space of death, Jesus Christ, our Savior, did enter and transformed death by his salvific love. Black Saturday triggers not only pious thoughts of sadness at the death of the Savior, but it conceals a powerful force where God's love penetrates our suffering, our misery and death, saves and transform us. This space of abandonment is a place where hope and new life germinate. As believers, this is our anchor and our strength. Love generates hope, because hope is in Jesus who works within and around us.

Love piercing through darkness reveals glimpses of hope.

- We see sparks of hope in principle-driven leaders who champion good governance.
- We see sparks of hope in the idealism of young people and responsible citizens who do not sell their idealism and patriotism.
- We see sparks of hope in the spontaneous collaboration among NGO's, civic, religious organizations with government in times of disasters and calamities.
- We see sparks of hope in local initiatives and efforts of empowering communities for change.
- We see sparks of hope in public, religious, uniformed and civic leaders, ordinary laborers committed to sincere service even without recognition or reward.
- We see sparks of hope in responsible business practices which seek to protect the environment and serve the needy.
- We see sparks of hope in those who stake their reputation, even lives, to fight corruption and pursue justice.
- We see sparks of hope in the Filipino spirit of resiliency, and in those who dedicate themselves to genuine service despite being overwhelmed by their own need.

We sense a strong surge of hope, above all, in the feeling of uneasiness and disturbance - symptoms of an inner affliction, prodding us that something is wrong, yet at the same time urging us that something can and must be done within, among ourselves and our institutions.

"... through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5)

We your spiritual leaders, share the pain brought about by these wounds of affliction. We too feel the deep disturbance and seeming paralysis that plague many who are dragged into the pit of hopelessness. In this Jubilee Year of Hope, together we hold precious, the gift of hope sparked by the Holy Spirit. This hope is not simply optimism nor a positive feeling. But these are glimpses of the ***gift of hope*** that comes from the Holy Spirit urging us to act.

Any action of hope is sourced from the Holy Spirit. As such, we exhort you, our dear people, allow the hope within you to be rekindled. May it become a flame of hope.

Let the Holy Spirit renew the face of the earth and breathe transformation into the dark spaces and places of our lives and our nation. The grace of the Holy Spirit is a gentle breeze that spurs us to continue breathing, when we are tempted to give up on our seemingly hapless condition. Such grace is like a feather we possess, that when joined together with those of others, can become wings for us to rise beyond our apathy, and allow us to soar high in patriotism, volunteerism and pursuit of change. The same grace is a like a tempest that can sweep away the decay of corruption, paving the way to moral recovery.

We call upon all leaders, as we fervently remind ourselves, breathe the spirit of sincerity of God-directed service; breathe transparency and accountability. We call upon our young people, share your single feather to become your wings for a better world. Stand up for change and responsible leadership for the present and future of our country. We call upon our dear faithful, in government, in business, in public or religious communities, to harness a tempest of change by a sincere witness to our Christian values and fidelity to conscience. May we safeguard our dignity and our future by not selling them to the highest bidder.

Hopelessness can lead to despair. ***Yet to hope is not to be overcome by fear and despair.*** Hopelessness can paralyze and enslave us. ***Yet hope gives us courage and freedom.*** We pray for courage, so that we may always freely stand up for truth, uphold the good and the rule of law, as we protect democratic institutions and processes. Let us hold power to accountability. Let us

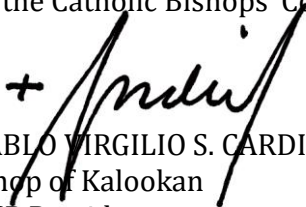
continue to build on what we have accomplished. May we have the courage and perseverance to walk the path of conversion -to change for the better, and relentlessly pursue the good of all, over personal interests. May we never tire of caring for the most vulnerable members of our society: the unborn and the children, the elderly and the sick, the poor and the marginalized, the weak, the voiceless and powerless. May we not give up on one another and our country, for God does not give up on us.

There is hope! May Pag-Asa! And St. Paul counsels us: *"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up"* (Galatians 6:9).

With our prayer for a spiritual revolution of hope, let us all walk together this Pilgrimage of Hope towards the Father's Kingdom. We pray with Pope Francis: *"May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when with the powers of Evil vanquished your glory will shine eternally"* (Pope Francis, Jubilee Prayer).

We entrust our journey and pilgrimage, as Filipino People, with our afflictions and dreams unto the hands of Our Blessed Mother Mary, Our Lady of Hope, that she may accompany and guide us as we follow the Way of Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines


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Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
