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St. Scholastica's Priory

Manila

Dear Sisters,

HAPPY ST. SCHOLASTICA'S DAY TO ALL. I will give my reflections on this feast in my common letter. Here I would like to call your attention to two important burning issues which you should be aware and vigilant about. These are 1) the Mindanao Situation 2) the coming Automation Election.

The Mindanao situation is a chronic crisis. But the issue I want to call your attention to is the so-called peace process which is connected with the BJE (Bangsa jurisdictional entity) You remember last year they tried to foist upon us a MOA about this which was averted by the restraining order of the Supreme Court. Now this MOA in a slightly modified version will be prepared for signing about March 30. The terrible thing here is that the genuine peace process and the genuine desire for peace is being used to serve the interests of the United States. The BJE will eventually be a protectorate of the United States and there will be a danger of slicing a whole portion of Mindanao from the Philippines. We need to be vigilant about this.

The Automatic Election System has been assessed by a group of technical experts that have banded together as AES watch. Their STAR (system trustworthiness, accountability, readiness) evaluation shows that the COMELEC is NOT READY for a FULL AUTOMATED ELECTION come 2010. It is urging the COMELEC to be honest about this to the people and should immediately prepare a contingency plan. This is crucial because a failed election will be a CRISIS OF FULL MAGNITUDE.

So let us all be watchful and really pray and fast for these intentions. Please try to organize symposia for your school community or your adopted communities regarding these. If you need resource persons, just call me.

Sincerely yours,



Sister Mary John Mananzan, OSB

125TH JUBILEE STATIO CONFERENCE

PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE

By Sorocaba Priory



“Virtue is the force of the soul that resists evil and follows the good”, according to Lacordaire. It is the habit of practising what is good. “*Virtus*” in Latin means force, value: in the achievement of virtue, something of combat and bravery is implied.

Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and that only violent persons will seize it. We will progress in the measure we decide to advance. Our active contribution is indispensable in using the current graces that God grants. Therefore, sanctity does not depend on how many consolations we receive, but on the effort we apply.

In RB, Prologue 50, St. Benedict says: “*Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom.*”

Our Vow of Stability is a promise of perseverance in the love and teaching of Christ. It is the personal fidelity to the New Covenant stamped by the Blood of Christ and lived in our Congregation. This perseverance will be put to the test. There is no Christian or monastic life that can escape the moments of discouragement or temptation. The Lord invites us to remain faithful even in the small things. The tests are necessary. They consolidate our faith and our hope.

“*Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope.*” (Rm 5:3-4) Like St. Paul we advance toward what is ahead and, like Anthony in the desert, resume courageously each morning, our efforts to progress, as if it were the first day.

It is in the perseverance of prayer that we will find the strength to fulfill, with fidelity, the service Jesus entrusted to us: “*Blessed those servants whom the Master finds vigilant on his arrival.*” (Lk 12:37)

Certain moments of ecstasy have no validity for the conquest of sanctity if we don't remain faithful. The saints did not become saints in one day, but in long years of perseverance. Without being discouraged, St. Augustine said, meditating the life of the first saints: "If they were able, why can't I be, too?" St. Francis of Sales, known for his mildness, struggled until the end of his life with an irascible temperament. St. Alphonsus Liguori, nonagenarian, had still to reject strong temptations against chastity.

Persevere! "Steady drops of water will break down the hardest stone", says a popular proverb. How many lessons of perseverance there are in nature!

The conqueror Tamerlane, discouraged by repeated defeats, wanted to give up his campaigns. For relaxation, he watched and admired a little ant that tried to climb a rock with a grain on its back. The little animal tried forty-nine times and fell down the rock with the grain, but on the 50th time it climbed with success. This encouraged Tamerlane, who eventually conquered an empire.

It took more than 20 years for Dante to compose his unsurpassed poem, the Divine Comedy. And why should we not be faithful in our effort?

Saint Paul admonishes: "*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain*" (1Cor 15:58). From this comes the great importance of patience in our daily life, in the engagements and failures. I need to be patient with the others as well as with myself. "*Cling to him, forsake him not;*" (Sir 2:3).

If it is difficult to be patient with others and in all circumstances, it is much more difficult to be really patient with oneself. This means to be sufficiently humble to accept our own limitations and to be available to serve the Lord and our neighbors day after day; it means to be contented with our own limits. It means to boast of, like St. Paul, our own weaknesses; it means to recognize like St. Philip Neri that "the more you sweep, the more dust you raise." It means to understand, like St. Francis of Assisi, one's own nothingness.

Patience with oneself does not mean to think much about our own miseries, but to correct oneself.

Patience with oneself means to be shaped in the Lord's way, waiting for the Lord, entrusting our life to him.

"By your perseverance you will secure your lives." (Lk 21:19)

There are two principles for acquiring patience: not to hurry and not to raise the voice. Hurry produces tension, mistakes, irritation. Raising the voice destroys peace and serenity.

By practising patience we will progress, too, in all the other virtues.

The order of spiritual life is very similar to the one of the universe: cause and effect, one thing leading to another one, and everything depending and leading to God, our Creator and Sustainer.

All spiritual life tends to simplicity, to the serious effort of persevering in the search of the essential, of sanctity.

St. Benedict associates perseverance to patience in its strongest sense of zeal in abandoning one's own ideas, in submitting, in waiting.

Sometimes perseverance can be translated with patience: *"In this obedience under difficult, unfavourable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape"* (RB 7:35). One feels that it is necessary to endure firmly even with tension, *"and supporting everything, he does not give up nor run away"* (RB 7:36). This simply means to endure firmly, not to run away, to bear the situation in which God placed those persons we find in it.

The Prologue of RB reminds us that this means to accept, to endure in faith, what will make us participate in the mystery of the Cross. This silent courage, this patience, this perseverance, this suffering, means first of all my self-acceptance to know who I am and not to run away from myself.

Each one of us said "YES" to herself before God; and what followed during this long way that finally will lead us to the Cross, but also to the new life in the Risen Christ, will be perhaps a series of crises, provocations and invitations, with so many trials that to bear them it seems, sometimes, that they are leading us to death; we are considered as sheep to be sacrificed (RB 7:38; Rm 8:36; Ps 44:23.) What is important is not to come out unharmed of our fights, and yes, not to run away, because it is only under the Cross where everything will reach its final solution. The only certainty we must hold on to is God. Our perseverance is an answer that reaffirms that HE is faithful and constant and that **"finally, never lose hope in God's mercy."** (RB 4,74).

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Guide Questions for Reflection:

- 1) What makes me "lose patience" with myself? Do I react, accept my limitations or run away from myself?
- 2) In RB 4:30 we read: "Do not injure anyone, but bear injuries patiently." How do I practice this in my relationship with persons?
- 3) Did I respond to God's faithfulness by my perseverance, daily devoting quality time to prayer?

Can we trust Comelec? MAPPING THE FUTURE

By Manuel A. Alcuaz Jr.

The coming May 2010 elections are critical for the future of our nation. We will have the opportunity to elect a new president, vice president, 12 senators, congressmen, governors, mayors, provincial board members, and councilors.

Our citizens seem to be clamoring for change and are looking forward to electing a new set of leaders in May 2010 but will their votes be counted properly?

I wish the answer were yes but Comelec's behavior in 2004, 2007, and in preparation for the coming elections give me cause to worry about what will happen in May 2010.

I hope and pray that I am wrong.

There is one or more good commissioner and I am sure there are hundreds of honest career employees in Comelec. But will they be strong enough to stop the corrupt elements in their midst?

Hello Garci!

In 2004 there was massive fraud in ARMM.

My comparison of Namfrel's partial count and Comelec's count indicated approximately 598,560 *dagdag bawas* in favor of GMA in ARMM alone.

In Pampanga the Namfrel ranks must have been infiltrated because GMA had 80.4 percent vs FPJ 10.6 percent. In neighboring provinces such as Nueva Ecija, La Union, Bulacan, it was the opposite.

Comelec has done nothing to punish those who committed fraud.

Maguindanao 2007

In Maguindanao in 2007 the administration senators won 12-0! Zubiri was number 1 and Chavit Singson was No. 2.

Zubiri got 95.75 percent of the Maguindanao vote, in his home province he got 84 percent. He beat Kiram, a Muslim and the No. 1 choice in the rest of ARMM.

In spite of the obvious fraud in Maguindanao and the killing of Musa Dimasidsing, a school supervisor who exposed election cheating in Maguindanao, the Comelec canvassed the Maguindanao COC. That is why we now have a Senator Zubiri instead of Sen. Koko Pimentel.

Comelec again seems to have done nothing about the fraud and the murder of their supervisor.

When they can't cheat you in the election, they cheat you in the recount!

Smartmatic contract

There are many who can point to bid specs that were irrelevant to the proper operation of an AES System and to biased evaluation on vendor compliance to said bid specs. Many bidders were eliminated.

But that would take time to prove.

However, the fact that the Comelec has already paid Smartmatic more than P1 billion for almost no delivery is not hard to see. The Comelec contract provides for payment of P719 million for project initialization, set up project management, and project systems including SW licenses and firmware. In the Smartmatic bid, the entire project management was P99,999,999 and software was less than P43 million! An overpayment of P576 million.

The second payment was for P359 million for 20 test machines. That's about P18 million per machine. In the Smartmatic bid each machine was P45,000. An overpayment of P358 million!

If Comelec and Smartmatic can come up with creative contract terms that are not in compliance with the RFP (request for proposal) and even Smartmatic's own financial bid, and these terms are very favorable for Smartmatic and unfavorable for Comelec, can we trust Comelec?

Fraud proof?

Unfortunately, the Comelec with the assistance of media companies and civic organizations is succeeding in creating the impression that automation will eliminate cheating in the counting and canvassing.

While it eliminates misreading 'mistallying,' and calculation errors, the Comelec-Smartmatic AES has no transparency.

It is very secure against hacking by outsiders, but has no safeguards against an inside job!

PCOS risks and safeguards

I will not discuss risks of equipment or software malfunction. I leave that for others to spend time on.

My main concern is with fraud-related risks.

OMR risks

The first risk is related to the OMR (optical mark reading) ballot.

The candidates' names are already pre-printed in the ballot. All the voter has to do is to mark an oval in front of the candidates of choice.

This seems convenient for the voter. Unfortunately, it is also convenient for the vote buyers. They can quickly mark the ballots of someone who has sold his vote.

Near the end of the day, in a precinct controlled by a warlord, all unused ballots can be quickly marked and fed into the PCOS machine.

How does someone file a protest? Difficult. With handwritten ballots one can identify common handwriting of names. How do you identify common shading?

Computer program risks

The real danger in the PCOS machine is in the formula that is used to add up the votes read when the ballots are scanned.

The various parties could demand to see the formulas of the 1,600 + municipalities or

congressional districts. But how can you be sure that the proper formulas will be loaded in all 82,000 PCOS machines?

Safeguard

The only safeguard I can see is to increase the manual audit of PCOS machines to 10 percent in each canvassing center. The machines to be manually audited should be chosen at random.

Every time a PCOS machine has a wide discrepancy, two more PCOS machine should be randomly selected for manual audit.

If no discrepancies are found then the results of the election would be credible.

Congress should require the Comelec to increase the machine to be manually audited from one per congressional district to 10 percent per canvassing center.

Is the comelec transmission and canvassing system transparent and auditable?

Unfortunately, my study of the Smartmatic bid shows that the transparency and 'auditability' of the old manual canvassing system has been completely removed in favor of speed.

We are faced with the danger that by May 15, 2010 a new president, vice president, and 12 senators may be proclaimed. But they may not be the ones the people voted for. They could be the ones that Comelec and or Smartmatic insiders cheated for!

The manual system is slow but the parties, citizens arms, media, and ordinary citizens get to see that the ERs have authentic signatures.

If the canvassing center has a board, they can see the results for each precinct and compare them with a printed copy of the ER or a photo they could have taken. They could even add up the votes of each candidate to verify that the COC is right.

No transparency and auditability in AES!

The Smartmatic proposed system has no transparency or 'auditability'.

According to Comelec and Smartmatic, ERs will be electronically transmitted from PCOS machines to municipal canvassing servers.

BEIs need an electronic key and password to enable transmission. But do they see what they are transmitting?

How can we be sure that what was printed by the PCOS is the same as what is transmitted?

The canvassing system generates canvass reports every 15 minutes. But nowhere in the bid does Smartmatic say that it will show the results received.

Comelec has not defined a process for watchers to compare their ERs (election returns) with what was electronically transmitted.

When all the ERs have been received a COC (certificate of canvass) is printed out.

That is scary, winning candidates can be proclaimed without any comparison of the tabulation being conducted!

Comelec claims that in compliance with RA 9369 it will transmit to the majority party,

minority party, citizens arm, and media electronic copies of the ERs.

Problems

In addition it has a website where all ERs will be available.

There are a number of problems with this scenario:

1. The audit should be done at each canvassing center not on a server somewhere in Manila.
2. The ERs will be encrypted. If the sender changes its encryption key, the receiver will just see unreadable information.
3. The Comelec website will definitely crash on election night and a few days after.

The best safeguard is to provide the parties, the citizens arm, and media with a PC and projector.

The PCOS machines should transmit to the Comelec canvassing server and the four PCs.

Prior to printing the official COC, a comparison should be made between the five machines. Any discrepancies should be reconciled.

This solution is not very expensive, a PC with a projector should cost less than P50,000. Let's say 7,000 sets are needed. That will only cost P350 million.

Much less than almost P5 billion being spent on 82,000 PCOS machines that will speed up the counting by 3 to 5 hours!

Let us do something to assure honest and credible elections. And that the voice of the people triumphs.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is president of Systems Sciences Consult Inc. Feedback at map@globelines.com.ph For previous articles, please visit map.org.ph)

“That in all things God may be glorified.”