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St. Scholastica's Priory
Manila

Dear Sisters,

The second reading of the First Sunday of August is about the most profound, most ecstatic, most emphatic and most totally committed declaration of loyalty to the person of Jesus Christ ever uttered or written. It deserves to be quoted in full and I am quoting from memory because it is my favorite Scripture passage:

I AM CERTAIN THAT NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE, NOR PRINCIPALITIES NOR POWERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION WILL EVER SEPARATE ME FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

It almost needs no further commentary. But it does no harm to reflect on it. I have often recited this passage to myself all through my long years of religious life that I sometimes think I truly mean it. But when one is honest with oneself, one will have to admit that although one would like to mean it, it is not quite true that in our actual decisions, choices or actions, that Jesus always comes first in our life—sometimes our family comes first. Aren't there times when all our thoughts and emotions are consumed with worry about our family, we really actually have no thoughts to spare? Is it not possible that at some time in our religious life, we have actually preferred someone, or something, or some work, or some ambition to the promises we have made to Jesus? When we refused an assignment, when we took the least resistance, when we stuck to our opinions and perceptions, didn't we prefer our own will? And yet amid all these failures and all these infidelities, the SPIRIT still gives us the strength to repeat what we in our deepest heart would like to be a reality in our life; that NO ONE, NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE, NOR PRINCIPALITIES NOR POWERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT NOR THINGS TO COME WILL EVER SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

Lovingly yours,



Sister Mary John Mananzan, OSB

S T A T I O C O N F E R E N C E

OBEDIENCE

by Sister Mary Bernard Lansang, OSB

In the early 80's, I had the joy of living in community with Sister Concepcion. I have known Sister for years and years as a strict disciplinarian, a committed educator, feared by the students especially the small boys, but very much loved by the teachers and our lay mission partners who worked closely with her. When we were together in the Angeles community, I got to know more of her. She was someone who enjoyed watching basketball games and boxing on TV, someone who had such a compassion for the poor that she would keep in her pocket a candy or a biscuit to give to any beggar in the church *patio*.

I have one experience with Sister Concepcion that has left an impact on me until this day. It was "*hatching season*." Mother Irene, then prioress, informed me that Sister Concepcion was needed in another community. Mother Irene would have wanted to talk with Sister herself but (at that time) we had neither intercom nor extension lines. After the phone call, I went to Sister Concepcion and informed her of what transpired between Mother Prioress and me. I assured her that Mother would call her up regarding the matter. Right away, without any hesitation nor second thought, Sister said, "*When Mother Prioress calls up again, please tell her that she need not talk with me. My answer is YES to any plan that they have for me.*" ***Oh my God, I thought to myself . . . what generosity, what selflessness . . . a YES without any condition!***

I know we have many sisters who have the same spirit:
women with a LISTENING HEART !

A Heart open to Obedience

It still remains a fact, however, that some of us, at one time or another, put up a wall of resistance against anything that is contrary to our wishes. St. Benedict knows that obedience is not easy and so he speaks of ***the labor of obedience or the toil of obedience***. There are moments when we cannot accept anything different from our own perspective; at times, consciously or subconsciously, we protect our own interests. Hence, we resist any move to transfer us to another community or to change our assignment. We might even become resentful when what we consider a privileged position of ours is given to another sister. We feel we become powerless.

Our statio on Obedience is meant to remind us that we are to become
***Women with A LISTENING HEART AT THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH
though THE MISSION OF OUR CONGREGATION.***

Today, let us reflect on our life LIVED WITH CHRIST AT THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM.

Our Mission in Today's World

This year's CEAP-NCR Convention, July 15-19, 2008, had for its theme: *Nurturing a Filipino Conscience*. The topics revolved around the problem of corruption. *How can we Teach Values in A Corrupt Society?*

Monsignor Gerado Santos, CEAP- NCR Director, quoted some lines from an article written by Mr. Juan Miguel Luz, former Undersecretary of the Department of Education:

June 25 issue of the Inquirer cited a World Bank Study: Corruption in RP worst in East Asia. Written by Doris Dumlao, the study points to the Philippines to be the worst among East Asia's leading economies and has shrunk even lower among those seen to be lagging in governance reforms. While Indonesia was the worst last year, it was edged out by the Philippines this year. The World Bank defines corruption "as the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including petty and grand forms of corruption as well as the capture of the States by elites and private interests."

While it is true that we are not directly involved in matters that entail graft and corruption like the questionable RP-Japan deals regarding the broadband transaction, and that we have a hand in the rice shortage and the rising price of oil and that we are not engaged in the manipulation of public funds, we must admit **that the factors involved in corruption on a macro-level are present in us in varying degrees and different shades.**

We are faced with values of our post-modern society: a consumeristic, materialistic and power-driven society. Consciously or subconsciously, we allow our self-will to dominate us. Greed for power, position and a strong need to control makes us want to assert ourselves even to a point of annihilating others' opinion. We want to maneuver decision-making in community assemblies. Bitterness, anger, or resentment towards a sister make us grumble, thus causing faction in community.

We are called to a mission: to denounce the evil around us and to proclaim Christ's values of justice, truth, peace, compassion, and service to our brothers and sisters. This is our following of Christ.

Michael Casey, OCS speaks of Obedience as a break-away from self-will and opening up oneself to authentic receptivity of God. We are called to follow Christ in the Benedictine way of life. Positive **attachment to Christ necessitates detachment from sub-personal forces.** In chapter 4 of his Rule, St. Benedict makes this point clear and explicit *"To deny oneself in order to follow Christ."*

Let me quote largely from Fr. Casey's writing:

Fervent discipleship is at the heart of Benedictine spirituality. One is fired by a great love for Christ; open to being guided by Christ and willing to deny personal inclinations in order to put Christ's teaching into practice. This is what is meant by describing the Benedictine way as Christo-centric. Whatever asceticism or self-denial is involved in

following this way serves only as an instrument to safeguard the primacy of the person's Christian discipleship.

The discipleship is closely linked with humility. Both involve submission to Christ as Master; not being oneself the controller of one's life . . . What great love there must be to cause a man to give so much, to endure so much and to demand so little for oneself. Self-control and self-denial are significant because, when they are authentic, they indicate what is beginning to displace selfishness in the details of daily life.

Fr. Casey further explains that discipleship requires being open to formation by Christ. This involves accepting Christ and His word as it comes to us in myriads of way: at Lectio Divina, or through our conscience and, harder still, when it comes to us through other persons, both our own sisters or from friends and co-workers. Christ comes to us in unexpected ways: in the sudden turn of events, in moments of success as well as in failure. He comes to us in sickness and in death. We embrace everything as coming from God.

Listening to our superiors or to other persons necessitates that we can say "NO" to ourselves. If self-will is our priority, then we cannot be followers of Christ. We cannot follow Christ in his obedience.

Becoming WOMEN WITH A LISTENING HEART.

St. Benedict opens his Holy Rule with the word, LISTEN. Time and again, we tried to meditate on the word "*ob-audire*" Listen with the ear of your heart. This time, I am borrowing the thoughts and writing of Esther de Waal in her book, "Lost in Wonder." The writer knows the movements, the yearnings and cravings of the human heart. She knows how thoughts and passions clutter the heart. And so, she writes.

*Uncrowd my heart, O God
until silence speaks
in your still, small voice.
Turn me from the hearing of words,
and the making of words
and the confusion of much speaking,
to listening,
waiting,
stillness
silence.*

David Tomlins, the abbot of the Cistercians of the Abbey of Tarrawarra writes:

"The most deafening voice is our own. Desires, fears, anxieties, and obsessive worries, treadmill of thoughts, issuing from a constantly chattering mind."

Esther de Waal motivates us to guard our hearts and to keep watch over our thoughts in order to create an attitude and a capacity for cultivating a listening silence, attentive listening and *expectant listening*.

Responsible Obedience: Women with a Discerning Mind

Obedience does not mean just saying YES without making any discernment of what is asked of us. It can happen that the one in authority or the one giving the command can be misguided in her decisions regarding some matters. This can be due to lack of information or some wrong perception on account of some situations that have arisen. Responsible Christian obedience demands from us a discerning mind. If we feel that the command or the decision made by the superior or the council can bring about negative result, it is our duty to speak up openly, candidly and with sincerity, voice our opinion or a dissenting voice. This demands from the superior a magnanimous heart and a sincere desire to seek God's will and not her own.

The Challenge of Obedience in the Rule of Benedict.

I do not intend to take up all the chapters and passages of the Rule of St. Benedict on obedience. But I want to dwell on Chapter 68: Assignment of Impossible Tasks. Mayeul de Dreuille, OSB writes a very helpful commentary on this chapter.

“If it should happen that burdensome or impossible tasks are imposed on one of the brethren, he should accept with all meekness and obedience the command of the one who so orders.

Comment: The order may have caused a reaction of anger or discouragement. The brother should then make a willing effort to examine the order without passion and even, if possible, try to carry it out. If the difficulty persists, dialogue should begin.

Then, he writes an excellent guide to dialogue.

Such a dialogue can be fruitful only if those involved are able to speak together calmly, before God. On the monk's side, besides patience, meekness, and obedience, there should be an attitude of calm, humility and right-mindedness. The abbot should be approached at a ***suitable moment, that is, when it could be expected that he also might be suitably disposed, not when he is tired, nervous, or in a hurry.***

But, if after the explanation, the one in authority remains firm in requiring what he has ordered, the junior must understand that this is good for him, and let him lovingly trust in God's aid and so obey.

The brother has to carry out the order given, knowing that this act of obedience is good for him . . . that is, it is good for his soul. He obeys lovingly LIKE CHRIST IN HIS PASSION, TRUSTING IN GOD'S HELP.

This brings us to

The Biblico-Theological foundation of obedience as stated in our Constitutions:

Our Constitutions, Chapter II on Profession state:

- 10: Obedience unites us in loving response to Jesus Christ who, as Son, submitted entirely to the Father by becoming obedient unto death. the goal of our obedience is union with God and the fulfillment of His saving will in the world.

Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, CMF wrote a series of booklets on the evangelical counsels. He explains obedience from the biblico-theological foundation of Christ, sent to do the Father's will. From early childhood, Jesus lived under the Father's will. His first recorded words were spoken in the Temple when His parents looked for Him and found Him among the elders, "***Why did you search for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's House?***"

I do not intend to go through all the Biblical passages where Jesus sought the Father's will. But, we know that His life was lived totally for the Father and the Kingdom. At the end of His life, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He went up to the place of His agony and He cried to the Father, in sweat and blood, "***Father, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless, if it is your will, let it be done to me as you will.***"

At the end of His passion. He cried out, "***Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit.***"

Jesus faced up to the fulfillment of His mission, with a filial commitment, filled with generosity. At every moment, He sought the will of the Father. St. Luke, in his Gospel, presents Jesus as time and again, going up to a lonely place to be with the Father.

This is the secret of our obedience: a life of communion with our loving Father. Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation VITA CONSECRATA, explains that ours is a life deeply rooted in the example and teaching of the Lord. . . Obedient to the Father's call and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we have chosen this special way of following Christ with "***an undivided heart.***" Like the apostles, we have left everything in order to be with Christ and to put ourselves at the service of God, and our brothers and sisters. This is a GIFT FROM THE FATHER. LET US CHERISH THIS GIFT and LET US PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS THAT OURS IS A LOVING GOD

GUIDE FOR PRAYER

1. VITA CONSECRATA tells us that consecrated life is a GIFT FROM THE FATHER. Spend time thanking the Lord for the gift of religious life in a Benedictine community.

2. Do a LECTIO on the Gospel passages on Christ's obedience to the Father even unto death: Matthew 26: 36-48

GUIDE FOR SHARING

1. Share an incident when you found obedience painful or stressful. Share how you struggled through it and what you experienced after having obeyed.
2. What helps you obey even in hard and unpleasant circumstances?

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**MARY'S ASSUMPTION:
IRRELEVANT AND IRREVERENT**
by Mark Brumley

“We pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory.” With these words, Pope Pius XII formally declared, in 1950, the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven to be a dogma of the Catholic Church.

Nearly fifty years later the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary remains Catholic dogma - that cannot change. But in the intervening years, the attitude of many Catholics regarding Our Lady has changed. For them, the Assumption of Mary has become largely irrelevant - a doctrinal antique cluttering up the Church's theological attic. They may well nod affirmatively when asked whether they believe it, but their minds are not gripped by its meaning. They see no point to the doctrine.

Evangelical Protestants, on the other hand, think the dogma of Mary's Assumption anything but irrelevant. For them, it is all-too-relevant because it is utterly irreverent, and this for at least two reasons. First, because, in their view, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin unduly exalts Mary's role in salvation history, giving her an honor they say is due Christ alone. Second, because, resting on the claim of the Pope's authority to define dogmas, the Assumption is regarded as the most recent and perhaps most vivid demonstration of the Catholic Church's alleged penchant for "inventing" new dogmas without warrant in Scripture and then imposing them of the faithful as infallibly true.

But the Assumption of Mary is neither irrelevant as some Catholics think, nor irreverent as most Evangelicals believe. It is an immensely important truth, which neither diminishes the honor of Christ nor imposes on believers something contrary to Scripture.

Faulty Assumptions

But before anything else is said on the subject, some false assumptions about the Assumption must be cleared away. The first concerns the word assumption itself. Many Catholics assume people understand what the Church means by the word, when in fact they often don't. In this context, the word assumption doesn't mean, as it usually does in contemporary English, a statement one holds without proof or demonstration. Assumption means here “to take up” and refers to Mary's being “taken up” body and soul to heaven by God.

This last point needs underscoring. We speak of Mary's Assumption, not her Ascension. Christ ascended, but the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven. In other words, unlike her Son Jesus, Mary didn't “go up on her own power” to heaven, so to speak, but was taken up by the power of God. The Assumption of Mary, then, is something God did for her, like her Immaculate

Conception and Virginal Motherhood, not something she did herself. It is a result of Christ's redemptive power applied to the Blessed Mother.

Another erroneous assumption people sometimes make is to conclude that the Assumption means the Blessed Virgin never died. In reality, the doctrine says only that “having completed the course of her earthly life, [the Virgin Mary] was assumed body and soul into heaven,” not that she in no way experienced death. Some theologians have argued (rightly or wrongly) that Mary didn't die, but the dogma itself doesn't say this.

The dogma of the Assumption means that the Virgin Mary now experiences in heaven that union of glorified body and soul which her son enjoys. She is no disembodied spirit, but a complete human person, body and soul, matter and spirit, reigning with Christ.

One final faulty assumption often made: that the doctrine of the Assumption is exclusively about Mary herself, without reference to Christ or the Church. But as Pope John Paul II reminds us, Catholic teaching about the Blessed Virgin Mary must be understood in light of the mystery of Christ and of the Church (Redemptoris Mater, no. 4). These two basic Marian principles, as we might call them, help us understand the Blessed Virgin's Assumption too.

The Assumption and Christ

Consider the first principle - that Mary should be understood in light of the mystery of Christ. This principle explains why the Evangelical criticism about the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin misses the point. Mary's Assumption takes nothing from Christ himself, but rather demonstrates his power - the power of his Resurrection - at work in raising Mary, the first to believe in Christ, to the glorified life of heaven. It is, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection” (no. 966), not a salvific event which stands on its own.

Undoubtedly we can ask why Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. The immediate and obvious answer is that this was a “favor” Jesus granted his mother. If we could to take our mothers body and soul to heaven, wouldn't we do it?

The idea of the “Perfect Son's love for the Perfect Mother” certainly casts some light on the Assumption. But Jesus' relationship to Mary, though as human as our relationships with our mothers, entails more than mere personal love and devotion. If the Assumption were only about that, then Jesus needn't have bothered to reveal it to us. That he did so implies it has something more to teach us - something more about himself and about us.

The relationship of Christ's redemption to Mary's “privileges” is, foremost, that of cause to effect. The whole, salvific mystery of Christ - his Incarnation, death and Resurrection - is the cause of Mary's divine motherhood, her Immaculate Conception and her Glorious Assumption. And not just the “final cause” - that for which these Marian privileges came to be - but also the “efficient cause” or that by which they came about.

“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior,” Mary said in the Magnificat (Luke 1:47). Fundamentalists quote this passage against Mary's Immaculate Conception, arguing that since she needed a savior, she couldn't have been free of sin. But it was precisely because God was her savior that Mary was free of sin. God saved her from sin in advance, through the saving action of Jesus Christ to come. The Immaculate Conception, then, was a preemptive strike against sin, the full spiritual benefits of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary having been communicated to Mary in anticipation of the Incarnation. And the Assumption was God's way of finishing the job he started at Mary's Immaculate Conception, redeeming her body from the effects of sin as well.

The Assumption of Mary and the Church

The second Marian principle is that we should understand Mary in light of the mystery of the Church. Vatican II's Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, tells us that Mary is a symbol or icon of the Church, of all Christians. She is not only the first Christian and most preeminent member of the Church, she is also a model of the Church, a paradigm for what God wills to accomplish in and through the Church. Consequently, by reflecting on the graces God gave the Blessed Virgin, we understand more about his gifts to us. The Assumption of Mary points to a profound gift to all believers - the resurrection of the body.

But wait, someone might object, “isn't Christ our model, rather than Mary?” Yes, Christ is our model, but in a different way. Christ is a divine person, God the Son, who worked through human nature to redeem us. He effected the perfection and elevation of human nature by grace. Through Christ, we become children of God and are empowered to follow his example of humble submission to the Father. But Mary is a human person, fully redeemed by Christ, and one who followed Christ's humble submission perfectly. She represents the perfection and elevation of the human person by grace. And the human person, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, consists of body as well as soul, of matter and of spirit (nos. 362-368). A fully redeemed human person, then, would be redeemed in body as well as soul, as was the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In this way the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin reminds us of who and what we are as human beings. There is a kind of puritanism, to use the word in its pejorative sense, which suggests that only the soul is important; the body is at best a hindrance and at worst, evil. The Assumption of Mary reminds us that we are more than souls: whatever the weaknesses of our bodies after the fall of humanity, the body, as such, remains good and is part of our ultimate destiny.

When the fullness of redemption comes, then, it will include our bodies, not simply our souls. These glorified bodies will be spiritualized, yes - properly subordinated to the spiritual order - but they will still be real bodies. The Christian hope is not so much the immortality of the soul, which many pagans affirm, but the Resurrection of the Body. The Assumption of Mary reminds us that our bodies too will be redeemed.

Why did Mary experience bodily redemption before the rest of the Church? No doubt God has reasons for this which we cannot glean, but one reason seems obvious enough. If Mary is to be a model of the Church, then it makes sense that she would experience in advance the fullness of

bodily redemption that awaits the whole Church at the end of time. Mary's Assumption is a vivid portrait of that glorious destiny to which all Christians are called.

So the doctrine of the Assumption also tells us where we may be headed - may be, that is, if we are part of Christ's Body, the Church. In this sense, Our Lady's Assumption wasn't a "singular privilege" of Mary in precisely the same way as Immaculate Conception. For the Assumption was an anticipation of the hope of all men - the Resurrection of the Body. It was a symbol of the general resurrection of believers - of what the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and Bride of Christ will experience at the end of history.

There's another lesson, though, we might draw from Mary's Assumption, one relevant to present debates about gender and the Church. The Assumption reminds us that gender isn't an ephemeral, superficial part of who we are. It is integral. Even after experiencing the fullness of redemption, the Blessed Virgin remains female - Virgin and Mother, in fact. Although in the resurrection there is no "marrying, nor being given in marriage" (Matt. 22:30), our sexual identities as men and women persist. There is "neither ... male nor female" when it comes to accessing the life of grace (Gal. 3:28), but this doesn't obliterate the distinction between men and women altogether, nor does it imply they must have identical roles in the Church. Christ remains the Bridegroom of the Church; Mary remains Mother of the Church. Their personal identities remain gender-specific.

A final point on the Blessed Virgin's Assumption and us involves the Queenship of Mary. This notion is really a corollary to the doctrine of the Assumption. Like Christ, Mary too was raised bodily to reign in God's kingdom. Her Son is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," so she is "Mother of the Lord" (cf. Luke 1:43) - the "Queen Mother" as it were - sharing now in Christ's reign. Again, in this she is both a model of the Church and its precursor. As Paul says of all Christians, "If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we persevere, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 3:11, 12). Through her glorious Assumption, Blessed Virgin Mary has begun to reign with Christ as all Christians shall at the Resurrection of the Dead.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, then, is neither irrelevant, nor irreverent. It is relevant because of what it says about who we are as human beings - beings of body and spiritual soul - and who are called to be - sons and daughters of God who will share in the fullness of divine life with Christ in heaven, a life of body and soul. And it is reverent because it exemplifies Christ's power in thoroughly redeeming his Mother, a redemption in which we hope to share one day. Until then, as *Lumen gentium* reminds us, "the Mother of Jesus in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise she shines forth on earth ... a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God" (no. 68).

[Mark Brumley is the managing editor of Catholic Dossier.]

CHOOSE THE LORD! REJECT EVIL!

Pastoral Statement on the Proposal to Operate the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant

Many people remember Bataan because of the Second World War. In fact, our country commemorates each year on April 9 the Fall of Bataan in the hands of the Japanese forces in 1942. In the past students in our schools were required to learn to heart the literary piece Bataan Has Fallen by Salvador P. Lopez, as a way of fostering civic duty and love of country.

SYMBOL OF EVIL

More than twenty years ago, Bataan once again became known because of the nuclear power plant that was built in the town of Morong. This nuclear power plant became the most visible and flagrant symbol of corruption in government, especially as practiced by the Marcos administration. Today it stands as a mute witness of this abominable greed and corruption and as reminder to all Filipinos that such deeds that only bring untold suffering should never again be foisted on our country.

Today our country's leadership has floated the idea of reviving this monument of greed and incompetence in an effort to address the global energy crisis. This move follows what is being seen as the increasing incidence of unbridled and shameless graft and corruption that the country had in the 70's and 80's. They are twins born three decades apart.

THREAT TO HUMAN BEINGS

The Bataan nuclear power plant has long been declared UNSAFE for two reasons that are impossible to refute:

First, the power plant was built at an area at the foot of the dormant volcano Mount Natib and any volcanic eruption or earthquake can pose fatal hazards to the lives of millions in Central Luzon and Metro Manila. If the Bataan Nuclear Plant had been operational at the time of the eruption of the Mount Pinatubo, the devastation would have been tremendously incalculable and unimaginably catastrophic.

Second, the construction of the plant was attended by numerous irregularities among the contractors, especially on the part of the government, sacrificing safety, quality and rigidity of methods and materials. None of those involved in the construction of the nuclear power plant could give an assurance that they complied with internationally acceptable standards. In fact, some of our fishermen in Morong were hired as welders during its construction without any briefing on safety and the hazards that their carelessness could result in.

MORE TRAGIC THAN WAR

If the national government will operate the Bataan nuclear power plant, the Fall of Bataan in 1942 will pale in comparison. In a matter of time, the world could be remembered with “Bataan Has Exploded” in a more sensational way than “Bataan Has Fallen.” Should the nuclear power plant constructed on the Bataan peninsula, a peninsula lying on a major earthquake fault, be made operational, a nuclear accident will be a tragedy just waiting to happen to plunge the nation into a disaster in the likes of Chernobyl.

LEGACY OF GOOD NOT EVIL

We therefore appeal to the national leadership to look beyond the present energy crisis and see the adverse effects of nuclear power on the rest of the world. Until now there is no safe and permanent technology for the disposal of radioactive waste materials from nuclear power plants in First World countries. Radioactive waste is a perennial threat to our people. Nuclear garbage is radioactive for thousands of years and can cause harm to our children for hundreds of years to come. Will this be the legacy we shall leave behind?

It threatens to destroy the marine life around the Bataan Peninsula because of the heat that nuclear power plants discharge into the ocean. Hot waste water will destroy our fish and prevent the normal development of fish eggs. Is this what we want for our children?

Do we imperil the future of our children—and our land—for the slight comfort of having low cost electricity now?

CHRISTIAN WITNESSING

As Christian disciples, we must support and help in the progress of people. Our support for human development is a mandate of our Christian witnessing in the world. Progress and development are not absolute goals that must be attained at all cost. We are only stewards not owners. We must be responsible stewards not hirelings.

The issue of the Bataan nuclear power plant must be faced with the heart and eyes of the Gospel. If Jesus were in Bataan, I am sure the good Lord will oppose it. Let us choose the way of Jesus. The way of Jesus is the way of responsible stewardship of creation. Jesus wills the path of development that is truly human—protecting humanity, caring for humanity, saving humanity. Let us choose the way of the Lord.

From the Cathedral of Saint Joseph, Balanga City, July 7, 2008.

+SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS
Bishop of Balanga