

## **CBCP Declares First Sunday of February as the NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING (NDPAHT)**

### **Chairman's Message**

**A**s I write this reflection, still fresh in my mind is the First Reading in Today's Liturgy, Friday in the Second Week of Lent. It told the story of Joseph, the youngest of the sons of Israel (Jacob), thus his favourite, sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelite traders who were on their way to Egypt. This they did out of jealousy. At first, they wanted to kill him, and make it appear that he was attacked by a wild beast. Reuben, one of Joseph's brothers, prevailed over the others in not killing him, but to throw him into a dry cistern, planning to rescue him and bring him back to their father. Judah, upon seeing the Ishmaelite traders, told his brothers to sell Joseph to them (Ishmaelites).



The story of Joseph is a story of human trafficking. Joseph was transported from Canaan to Egypt. He was sold by his brothers for a sum of money, thus gaining for themselves some amount, making Joseph a commodity or merchandise, a slave to whoever bought him, becoming a property of that person.

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery. Out of dire need, a person is sold, and he, or she, becomes the property of the "master", compelled to do what the master wants. There are people who take advantage of the weakness and needs of others. They prey on the vulnerabilities of these people. Because of a real need, many people sell their lands and beasts of burden, or incur loans with high interest rates, only to find that they had been fooled. They sign up for non-existing jobs or jobs that are different from what is promised in their contracts, or deal with agencies that are "fly-by-night" and not recognized by the government.

We hear of cases of maltreatment, of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, being experienced by these trafficked people, whose dreams for a better future for their families come crashing down, that led some to despair, others to insanity, and still others to suicide. The Calvary of trafficked people is real. It is our Christian duty to help them. With the help of groups and organizations, government and non-governmental agencies, we can help them rise from the quagmire they are in to a situation of an Easter joy.



Bishop Narciso V. Abellana, MSC, D.D.  
CBCP-ECMI Chairman & Bishop of Romblon

### **Editorial**

by: Fr. Roger C. Manalo, CS  
Executive Secretary

Last year, U.S. Department of State put Philippines in TIER 1 in combating human trafficking. Since 2016, the Philippine government fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking. Although the Philippine government is in Tier 1, it has received the following recommendations: to increase effort to investigate, prosecute and convict complicit officials and labor traffickers; to strengthen the capacity of LGUs to provide re-integration services for trafficking survivors, including trauma-informed care, job training, and in-country employment; to increase support to government and NGO programs that provide specialized care for trafficking victims, including child victims of online sexual exploitation; to establish and implement a process to ensure

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# Diocesan Pastoral Reflection for the National Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking

Sunday, 05 February 2023 at Parish Church of Saint Josephine Bakhita in Tala, Orani, Bataan

## Human trafficking is modern-day slavery

### Introduction:

By the mere word *traffic* connotes inconvenience. It could lead to delay or could mean there's trouble ahead. When we apply this word traffic to travel and transportation, this would describes movement, whether moderate or very slow; ongoing or at full stop.

And when we refer *traffic* to persons as human trafficking, it is no longer delay but destruction or even death; no longer trouble but agonizing pain and recurrent problems.

Human trafficking leads to nothing but to total of persons and properties. It is all wrong and all evil. Why?

Human trafficking is most cruel and brutal act a man can inflict to his fellowman. One being trafficked or illegally recruited is taken not as a person, not as a human being but as a tool for profit or for pleasure. He is considered as mere commodity.

Human trafficking violates man's dignity, exploits his human rights. One's life is in danger of death and destruction. Also his family suffers separation and agonizes for uncertainty of its illegally recruited family member.

Human trafficking is a major scourge in our society. It is exploitation to the highest degree because it destroys lives especially of the vulnerable-children and of women- to whom we should always accord protection, caring and security. His Holiness Pope Francis affirms that *"human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the Body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity."*

### Who are the human trafficked:

In the descriptions of our Holy Father, they are the vulnerable and the voiceless. Who are these vulnerable? They are those in a situation which they cannot avoid and they have to face and accept. With that pressing condition they become defenseless, powerless and even helpless. And so even against their will they can be easily influence and forced. They succumb. They yield. They fall prey to human traffickers.

Marissa has ailing parents. She is the eldest of four children. Her parents are always in dire needs of medicine. Her sister and brothers wanted to study. With a promise of good job and advanced payment for the hospitalization of

her parents, she eagerly agreed and consented for recruitment to Taiwan. And there she has to work eighteen hours a day, seven days a week.

### Who are the voiceless?

They are those because of threat or indebtedness they cannot express their opinion or cannot exert their decision. They remain silent. They just follow.

Marissa was rescued from forced labor of eighteen hours a day. How can she did not do anything. Why she did not protest or ask for any information before agreeing to travel to Taiwan. She said she did not know anything. She was just told *"may trabaho, may malaking suweldo, bastasa Taiwan, at basta may taonasundosa airport."* And when she asked and insisted what kind of work, how much is the salary, where in Taiwan and who is the employer, she was told *"kung gusto mo, hurwag ka nang magtanong-tanong,"* if you want works, don't ask question, just follow and there are many out there waiting for your work."

These vulnerable and voiceless-women, children and the poor- are not numbers. They are not statistics. They are not with price tags or



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with labels. All of them, whoever and whatever, are special. All are important. They are not commodities. They are not objects. They should be treated humanely, with respect and as person. Our Holy Father made this appeal, urging us *“together we can and we must commit ourselves so they may be freed and this horrible trade can be put to an end.”*

### The How of human trafficking:

There are three essential elements. These are **movements, means and motives**.

**FIRST** is movement. It is what the trafficker does towards to his victim. And these are action verbs. The traffickers recruit and receive. They offer and obtain. They hire or harbor and maintain. They transport and transfer whom they trafficked. And from the victims they get money, services or material pleasures.

The traffickers are always moving, on the go in order to search for prey or to get away from government authorities.

**SECOND** is their modus operandi, the means. With non-violent means the traffickers make use of fraud, deception and handling of money or gifts. Like for example one is sweet talked of huge amount of money just to accept to carry a suitcase and hand it to a designated person supposedly to be waiting at a certain arrival area. Without knowing it is already a modus operandi of being a drug mule. And this is a serious crime with extreme consequence of death sentence in that country. Other violent means of human trafficking are threat, force or coercion and abduction. A Filipina was trafficked in Malaysia and ended up in a KTV Bar. Fortunately she was rescued. At the embassy she was asked why she did not escape. She revealed that her passport was kept by her employer. She was told that she cannot go to the Police, because they will just bring her back to her employer and she will be branded as runaway and a thief. And what she feared most was that she was threatened of death and also something bad will happen to her family in Zamboanga.

**THIRD** element is the motive. The human trafficking is solely exploitation. And it is sexual, labor and human organ exploitation. In human trafficking sexual exploitation refers to prostitution, pornography, and sex tourism. Forced labor, debt bondage and slavery are all labor exploitation. For example when this Filipina came to work in Kuwait, she was told that she will not receive any salary for a year. She was surprised and asked *“how come I would not get any monthly salary?”* The employer replied *“I bought you from that person of that agency. And you have to pay me with your labor for a year.”*

### What to do in human trafficking:

We can do something and we must do. And our response is also action verbs. These are to **prevent**, to **protect** and **prosecute**.

Both the Church and the government must increase their efforts in educating our people about the temptation of easy money. Our first act is always to prevent them from being recruited. Prevention

is to inform, to urge them to be more careful, attentive and always make background check on the deployment agency or recruiting person. They should know whether they are licensed, or allowed and recognized by the duly government agencies.

To prevent human trafficking is to make our immigration officials at the port and airport terminals to be more strict, straight forward and dead serious with their works. Example of this could be like this: If the purpose is tourism ask what specific attractions in that country he wants to see, how much money he has, or where he will stay. If he cannot name the tourist spots, or he has just small amount of money or just staying with a friend, that person could be trafficked or illegally recruited.

Just think: if a certain person has not visited any beautiful place and any landmarks outside his province nor has not travel around the Philippines, and then he will be tourist to another country, then there is possibility he is trafficked.

Both the Church and the government have a common duty to remind our people not to be taken in by any ideology which sow violence and hatred. Affiliations to these harmful and dangerous groups will only lead to sinful and fatal end. We should always ask them to avoid anything and anyone who propagate destructions and death. So before accepting anything or conceding to anything, they should always ask themselves: will this lead me and my loved ones to safety and security? Will this make me and my family happy and at peace? And finally are all these right, legal and moral?

Our people will be well prevented from human trafficking if their government will provide and create more jobs. These jobs should be stable and secured. They should be more humane, just and dignified. With sufficiency of jobs people will never be forced to look for jobs abroad. And looking for jobs outside will be just a personal option. The papal encyclical **Rerum Novarum** states that *“if people are paid just wages then they do not migrate”* (47).

For example one is recruited with promise of high paying job or a successful career. But once there in that certain country he ended being used for illegal activities or forced to prostitution. Let us remember that every person has dignity. Every person is human being, endowed by God with rights and dignity. Any person is special to God. He is valuable and important. He should not be used for any reason nor abused for one's personal advantage. Pope Francis asserts that *“things have a price and can be for sale. But people have dignity that is priceless. And worth far more than things.”*

Second is to protect. A trafficked person is a victim. And there is no willing victim. He must be protected. To protect our people is to make them well-informed about working abroad. They should be made aware of their rights. These should be imparted to them:

Be extra conscious and be watchful about the jobs being offered through the internet. Be reminded that if they ask for money as reservation or registration fees, be suspicious that they are just after your money.



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Always report to proper authorities any under the table ways and means of those processing your papers to work abroad. An example is this: they will tell you that you have to go travel first to an Asian City and from there your visa will be processed for your final destination, or wait for a certain person who will facilitate everything for you. This is surely human trafficking.

Have always a complete knowledge, names and addresses of our Embassy officials in those foreign countries. Know also the name and place of our Filipino chaplaincies.

They must know that it is against the law for an employer to ask and to keep passports of their workers. It is the workers themselves who have to take hold and keep their own passports.

The Church stands by and always sides with her people. The Church welcomes them and they can find home in her. The Church sees and realizes their everyday struggle, sacrifices and even sufferings. The Church prays hard for their deliverance from those who has evil plans and selfish motives, provides what is beneficial to them and works to bring them safely back home. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis urges us to *“provide victims with welcome, human warmth and the possibility of building a new life.”*

And lastly is to **prosecute**. Human trafficking is a major scourge in our society which deserves nothing but serious prosecution and severe punishment. It is modern-day slavery. Those illegal deployment and recruitment agencies should be closed, properties sequestered and money should be returned and used as reparations to the victims.

A case against human trafficking should be filed at the court, should be decided swiftly and firmly. No one should influence a victim to desist from court care, nor force to issue an affidavit of desistance. And lastly the privacy of the trafficked person must be applied, observed and fully respected.

His Holiness Pope Francis made this appeal, *“how I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: where is your brother (Genesis 4,9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved.”* Heeding to the call of our beloved Holy Father we must search out for them and rescue them from slavery of human trafficking. We help them to rebuild their lives and give them hope by reintegrating them to our family and to our Church. With our acceptance and caring we restore to them their dignity and self-worth. Following what Jesus did *“has come to seek and to save the lost”* (Luke 19,10) let us now do the same.

**Bishop Ruperto Cruz Santos, DD**  
CBCP-ECMI Vice Chairman and Bishop of Balanga

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systematic and ongoing input from a diverse community of survivors on the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of anti-trafficking policies and programs; to increase efforts to ensure victims receive court-ordered restitution and compensation ordered through civil judgments; to increase resources for anti-trafficking task forces to conduct timely investigations, coordinated operations, and prosecutions while providing robust victim and witness assistance services; to increase efforts to identify and assist labor trafficking victims, including by providing training to law enforcement, social service providers, and labor inspectors on indicators of trafficking; to increase resources for law enforcement units designated to investigate all forms of trafficking; to consistently implement the coordinated interagency response to providing services to returning Filipinos exploited in sex and labor trafficking overseas and to create a central database for information on illegal recruiters and human trafficking cases to facilitate interagency coordination in detecting, investigating, and prosecuting traffickers.

Penalties for human trafficking in the Philippines is one of the toughest in the world with up to 20 years’ imprisonment and fines between 1 to 2 million pesos for labor and sex trafficking offenses. Last year, the government reported doing 168 anti-trafficking investigations and prosecuted 298 alleged traffickers (62 for labor trafficking, 224 for sex trafficking (228 men, 742 women, 197 boys, and 545 girls) and 6 adult female for labor trafficking. Most of the victims were women and children from the provinces especially the disaster-affected areas, and from the poor communities in towns and cities. Report says family members sold their own children for domestic labor or sexual exploitation, and there is an approximately 50,000 Filipino children employed as domestic workers in the Philippines, about 5,000 of them are younger than 15 years old. There were reports of cryptocurrency and POGO related human trafficking in persons as well victimizing vulnerable women in groups.

There is a high prevalence of sex trafficking in tourist destinations like Boracay, Angeles City, Olongapo, Puerto Galera and Surigao. Report says that many sex tourists in the Philippines are convicted pedophiles mostly from Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Morocco, Iraq, and Denmark. The Philippines is one of the largest sources of online sexual exploitation of children in the world whose traffickers are often the parents or close relatives and many child victims are younger than 12 years. The identified hotspots for OSEC are Iligan, Lapu-Lapu, Pampanga, Quezon City, Malabon, Pasig, Taguig, and Caloocan and clients are mostly coming the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. There was a 265 percent increase in unconfirmed reports of online child sexual abuse during the pandemic.

CBCP has been actively campaigning for the end of this modern-day slavery and trading of human flesh. Beside collaborating with other NGOs, UNHCR, faith-based organizations and GOs, the CBCP Cluster Against Human Trafficking asked the CBCP Plenary to declare the first Sunday of February each year to be the National Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking which was launched last February 5, 2023 at Edsa Shrine Church with a Mass presided by Bishop Mylo Vergara, DD Bishop of Pasig.

In this issue of Itinerant, you will find other initiatives of the Catholic Church through the efforts of different CBCP commissions to fight and end human trafficking.



# Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita

## Patron of Human Trafficking Survivors

For a long time in the history of humankind, slavery was legal. During the 16th Century, Portuguese traders travelled to Africa to buy or capture people to take them back to Europe to be sold as slaves and many European nations followed. From 1500 to 1866, some 12.5 million African slaves were shipped around the world. It is only in the 19th Century that an international movement calling for the abolition of slavery in all its forms started and so as the fight against human trafficking. The Slavery Abolition Act 1833 abolished slavery in all British colonies and the 1865 Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution abolished slavery in the United States that made slavery illegal but human trafficking still occurs in every country. It is around this era when Bakhita was born.

Bakhita was born around 1869 in western Sudan. In 1877, at around 8 years old, she was abducted by Arab Slave traders and was brought to El-Obeid, Sudan. In 12 years, she was sold five times. 'Bakhita' (Arabic word for 'fortunate') was the name given to her by slave traders as she was forcibly converted to Islam. She cannot recall the name given to her by her parents because the trauma of her abduction caused her to forget her original name.

Bakhita was bought by a rich Arab wherein one of the sons lashed and kicked her so severely that she spent more than a month unable to move from her straw bed. Her fourth owner was a Turkish general whose mother-in-law and wife were cruel to their slaves. "During all the years I stayed in that house, according to her, "I do not recall a day that passed without wounds." The most terrifying of all of her memories there was when she was marked by a process resembling both scarification and tattooing. A total of 114 intricate patterns were cut into her breasts, belly and into her right arm.

In 1883, Bakhita was bought by the Italian Vice Consul Callisto Legnani. She came to Italy with Legnani and was given to Maria Turina Michieli who took Bakhita to Veneto. Bakhita became nanny to Michieli's daughter. Augusto Michieli decided to permanently move to Sudan but since they cannot bring little Alice and Bakhita with them, they left them in the care of Canossian Sisters in Venice. Bakhita encountered Christianity in the convent for the first time.

After settling down, Michieli came back to take Alice and the maid back

*"If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today".*

to Sudan but Bakhita refused to go with him. It was declared by an Italian court on the 29th of November 1889 that because the British had outlawed slavery in Sudan before Bakhita's birth and because Italian law had never recognized slavery as legal, Bakhita had never legally been a slave. Free now to decide, she chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters. On 9 January 1890, Bakhita was baptized with the names of 'Josephine Margaret' and 'Fortunata' and on the 7th of December 1893, Josephine Bakhita started the novitiate of the Canossian Sisters and took her vows on 8 December 1896. In 1902 she was assigned to the Canossian convent at Schio, Vicenza, where she spent the rest of her life. A strong missionary drive animated her throughout her entire life – "her mind was always on God, and her heart in Africa." Once Bakhita was asked: "What would you do, if you were to meet your captors?" Without hesitation, she replied: "If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their



hands. For, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today".

In her 42 years as a nun, she was assigned as a cook, sacristan, and doorkeeper and was in frequent contact with the local people who fondly remember her gentleness, calming voice and ever-present smile. Her special charisma and reputation for sanctity were noticed by her order and they published her story (Storia Meravigliosa by Ida Zanolini) in 1931. Her last years were marked by pain and sickness but she retained her cheerfulness, and if asked how she was, she would always smile and answer: "As the Master desires." In last hours of her life, her mind was driven back to her youth in slavery and she cried out: "The chains are too tight, loosen them a little, please!" Bakhita died at 8:10 PM on the 8th of February 1947. The petitions for her canonization began immediately after her death, and on the 1st of October 2000, she was canonized as Saint Josephine Bakhita. Now, she is venerated as a modern African saint, and as a statement against the brutal history of slavery. She is the patron saint of Sudan and human trafficking survivors. Saint Josephine's legacy is that transformation is possible through suffering. Her story of deliverance from physical slavery also symbolises all those who find meaning and inspiration in her life for their own deliverance from spiritual slavery.



# CCAHT KICKS OFF THE NDPAHT

By Ma. Dyz Pumarada

The Philippine Catholic Church intensifies its fight against human trafficking which in the words of Pope Francis is a scourge in the body of Christ and a crime against humanity. Seeing the urgency, the **Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)** solidifies the programs and services provided by different commissions, namely, the migrant's commission, the youth, women and social action and formed itself into a network dubbed the **CBCP Cluster against human trafficking or CCAHT**. In 2016, The CCAHT started its diocesan engagement by conducting diocesan consultations to know the realities of human trafficking in the provinces. The pandemic stalled most of its plans but it does not stop from looking for other ways to conduct awareness programs. In fact, at the culmination of the Bishops Plenary Council in January 2023, the CCAHT's appeal was heeded by this august body and declared every first Sunday of February a National Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking (NDPAHT). This hopes for a wider reach of information and awareness about this menace down to the parishes and communities. Thereby, more and more will be enthused to act not only through prayer but proactively participate in awareness-raising and reporting of cases.

The CCAHT at the national level of which **Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI)** is mandated to be the lead convener has expanded, adding to its network some more **Episcopal Commis-**

**sions** actively participating namely, **Commission on Family and Life (ECFL), Commission on Ecumenical Affairs (ECEA), Commission on Health Care (EHC), Commission on Indigenous Peoples (ECIP), Commission on the Laity, Commission on Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC), and Permanent Committee on Public Affairs (PCPA)**, to name a few. This network spearheaded the kick-off of the NDPAHT held in Edsa Shrine supported and hosted by Rev. Fr. Jerome Secillano, who is the Rector of the Shrine, and the Executive Secretary of the Commission on Permanent Council on Public Affairs, one of the member-network of the CCAHT.



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CCAHT CLUSTER - NASSA : Linda Noche, Commission of Youth (ECY) Ms. Nikko A. Sebastian, Commission on Permanent Council on Public Affairs (PCPA) Rev. Fr. Jerome Secillano Executive Secretary Commission of Migrants (ECMI) Rev. Fr. Roger C. Manalo, CS Executive Secretary and Ma. Ediza A. Pumarada



The Talitha Kum and the Arise Foundation welcomed the celebration of the NDAHT and vowed to continue partnership in combating human trafficking.



Rev. Fr. Roger Manalo, CS, Executive Secretary of ECMI announces to the media the strengthened programs and services of the Church to fight against human trafficking and protect the victims/survivors.



The Voice of the Free ,the International Justice Mission (IJM), the ANAK-TnK Foundation, and the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches expressed their continued support to the CBCP's efforts to strengthen actions toward protecting the victims/survivors of human trafficking especially because these are their respective expertise, programs and services.



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The first part of the celebration was the partners fellowship and sharing where different groups within the Church like the Talitha Kum Philippines and other religious congregations and organizations, the Philippine Interfaith Movement against Human Trafficking (PIMAHT), Non-government organizations like the Voice of the Free, Int'l. Justice Mission, and Arise Foundation came together to express support and willingness to strengthen collaboration on programs and services to eradicate human trafficking and to protect the vulnerable victims and survivors.

The CCAHT vowed to continue engaging with dioceses especially those with a known high prevalence of human trafficking by conducting regional consultations and capacity building among the key actors, e.g., diocesan ministry directors or coordinators and help in the establishment of a diocesan committee against human trafficking (DCAHT) as it may be found necessary to start and sustain program on trafficking in persons.



The kick-off of the NDPAHT was simultaneously celebrated by some of the dioceses in the three regions. In Luzon, the celebration was held at the St. Josephine Bakhita (SJB) Parish in Orani, Bataan, the lone parish church in Asia that is under her titular name. The celebration coincides to the feast day of St. Bakhita. The Bishop of Balanga and also the Vice-Chair of the CBCP Migrants Commission, His Excellency Ruperto Santos, DD, presided over the Eucharistic Celebration. Festive celebrations happened for the rest of the celebration. *(See separate story).*

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The diocese of Nueva Caceres in Naga also reported a week-long celebration of the NDPAHT from February 5-11, 2023 spearheaded by the diocesan Office on Women that started on the launching of the celebration, and the first day of the triduum Mass & Feast Day in honor of St. Josephine Bakhita whose Feast Day is celebrated on the 8th of February. This was held at the Holy Cross Parish Tabuco Naga City. The Triduum Masses continued until the February 8, Feast Day and Triduum Mass. Other than the Eucharistic celebrations, the diocese also organized an online anti-human trafficking poster-slogan-making contest and a series of awareness activities.



***Migrante nga Pamilya Estehanon***  
Commision on Migrants | Diocese of borongan



In the Visayas, the NDPAHT celebration was announced and discussed at the VWTV radio and TV program entitled Migranteng nga Pamilya Estehanon which is aired every Tuesday at 1 PM. Even on short notice, some parishes were able to celebrate with special prayers and candle lighting for human trafficked victims and survivors during the regular Eucharistic celebration of their respective parish.



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The diocese of IPIL in Zamboanga Sibugay in the region of Mindanao has also celebrated the NDPAHT with no less than His Excellency, Most Rev. Julius Tonel, DD who gave his reflection on the issue during his homily at the St. Joseph the Worker Cathedral on February 5, 2023. He particularly underscored the alarming situations of human trafficking, and the importance of proactive involvement of the parishioners in the fight against human trafficking by way of a deeper understanding of the issue, and eventually reporting cases of this menace in society. Simultaneously, several other parishes held their respective observance led by the migrants' ministry namely, Sto Nino Parish, RT Lim, Sta Clara Parish in Naga, Kapilya Imaculada Concepcion of San Lorenzo Parish in Sampoli, St Padre Pio Parish in Tiayon, San Roque Parish in Tungawan, Kapilya Birhen del Pilar of San Miguel Parish and the Immaculate Conception Parish in Alucia in Zamboanga Sibugay.



**Sto Niño Parish  
Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay**

**NDPAHT 2023  
Diocese of Ipil  
Immaculate Conception Parish, Alucia  
Mass with Fr Nane Gallan  
collaborated with the youth**

The declaration of the NDPAHT every first Sunday of February annually is envisioned to be the foundation of more vigorous efforts of prayer and action through awareness campaigns and by involving and mobilizing the members of the basic ecclesial communities in the parishes to be proactive marshals in combating human trafficking in our midst.

The Migrant's Ministry leaders in the Diocese of Kalookan celebrated the Feast Day of Saint Josephine Bakhita last February 8, 2023 in their respective parishes. The Kalookan Diocesan Ministry for Migrants and their Families (KADMI) spearheaded the celebration through its Director Fr. Joey Enriquez and Lay Coordinator Arlene Rosales.





# NOVALICHES DIOCESE HOLDS CAPACITY BUILDING SEMINAR FOR ADVOCATES AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Diocesan Ministry Against Human Trafficking (DMAHT), a ministry under the Commission on Advocacy and Research (CORA) in the Diocese of Novaliches, conducted a whole day Capacity Building Seminar for Advocates Against Human Trafficking last March 18, 2023 held at the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of Our Lady of Fatima, Urduja Village, Calocan City.

Ms. Ruby Ramores, the Lay Coordinator of Novaliches DMAHT, emphasized the importance of this training since some of the areas in the Diocese of Novaliches are possible hotspots for human trafficking. “The Diocese of Novaliches acknowledged the importance of DMAHT that is why our Bishop, Most Rev. Roberto Gaa created it as a separate ministry and designated priests to lead including Fr. Ronnie Provideo as our Minister and Fr. Joel Saballa as Assistant Minister and these noble actions is very inspiring to us that we should be proud of”, Ramores reiterated.

The capacity building seminar was loaded with different learning sessions. The DMAHT invited resource speakers from various government agencies handling this concern. The Department of Justice (DOJ), Inter-Agency Council Against Human Trafficking (IACAT) discussed Salient Points of Anti-Trafficking Laws and Human Trafficking Situationer in the Philippines and the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC). Other topics include:

- How to identify cyber and human trafficking activities in the communities by PCOL Renato Mercado, Chief of Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division of PNP-WCPC
- Role of the Women and Children Protection Center



- in the Investigation of Trafficking Cases and Protocols in Reporting Suspected Human Trafficking Cases by PCOL Mary Grace Madayag, Chief Operations Management Division of PNP-WCPC
- Reporting of Human Trafficking Cases thru 1343 Action Hotline by Ms. Janet Ramos of Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO)
- The capacity building seminar was attended by about 120 participants from the 10 parishes of 2 priority vicariates, Barangay officials and 36 catechists and also the participation of Migrant’s Ministry Leaders in the Diocese of Kalookan.



# ECMI spearheads Luzon NDPAHT launching in Bataan

by: Edmundo H. Ruga

In line with the feast day of Saint Josephine Bakhita, known as the patroness of the victims of human trafficking, the Luzon Regional Migration Desk (LRMD) of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI) spearheaded the Luzon launching of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) declaration of National Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking (NDPAHT) last February 5, 2023 at St. Josephine Bakhita Parish (SJB) which coincided also of its parish fiesta and at the Santuario Diocesano dela Sagrada Familia both in Orani, Bataan.

The Luzon NDPAHT celebration which was hosted and in partnership with the Diocese of Balanga through its Diocesan Apostolate for Migrants in Bataan (DAMBANA) and the Parish of Saint Josephine Bakhita, was participated by around 300 delegates coming from the migrants' ministry

leaders in 9 dioceses in Luzon and migrant families and church leaders from the host Diocese of Balanga. Dioceses that travelled long hours just to participate for NDPAHT Luzon launching were the Archdioceses and Dioceses of Kalookan, Cubao, Antipolo, Imus, Lipa, Lingayen-Dagupan, Urdaneta, San Fernando-Pampanga, and Balanga.

Bishop Ruperto Santos, who is the Vice-Chairman of ECMI and Bishop of Balanga, led the NDPAHT celebration as the main celebrant of the Eucharistic Celebration together with Fr. Carlo Bitante, FdCC Superior General and some of the clergy in the Diocese Balanga.



The one-day program was loaded with creative and informative topics which include human trafficking situationer particularly on labor trafficking presented by Voice of the Free (VF) Executive Director Sheryl Loseño, sharing from a human trafficking survivor, solidarity messages and support from the provincial government of Bataan which prior committed to establish cooperation and partnership with local Diocese of Balanga, and cultural presentation on the life of

**ECMI spearheads Luzon.. /page 12**





## ECMI spearheads Luzon.. / from the page 10

Saint Josephine Bakhita by the SJBP youth group Teatro Bakhita. The program was also highlighted with the signature signing commitment from the participants to help stop human trafficking and the commissioning of migrants ministry leaders of Luzon designated as anti-human trafficking coordinator.

At the end of the program, an undertaking of action plans were mentioned as facilitated by ECMI Luzon Coor-

inator, Edmund Ruga, such as; coming-up with a cyber-security training and creative multi-media campaign in partnership, capacity training for migrants ministry coordinators on labor trafficking all in partnership with Voice of the Free.

It is expected that in 2024, Luzon NDPAHT celebration is proposed to be possibly held in the Archdiocese of Lipa and or the Diocese of

San Pablo. On the other hand other dioceses are expected to schedule to have their own awareness campaign and celebration.

The ECMI Luzon is very grateful for the initiative and support delivered by DAMBANA leaders led by its Director Rev. Fr. Antonio Germano, FdCC and generous sponsors which names withheld to be mentioned.





## DIOCESES IN PANGASINAN TACKLES ISSUES OF OFW SECTOR IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

As per one of the directions suggested in the ECMI Luzon regional plans particularly in engaging partnership and collaboration with the local government, the three (3) dioceses in Pangasinan for Migrant's Ministry namely Urdaneta, Alaminos, and Lingayen-Dagupan responded to the recommendation and made their courtesy visit with the Office of the Governor last March 17, 2023 at the Provincial Capitol in Lingayen, Pangasinan wherein matters concerning the OFW sector were discussed.

The ECMI Luzon Coordinator Mr. Edmund Ruga, presented the briefing paper and helped presided the meeting. The Catholic Church group presented their pastoral care for the OFW families and their children, while the provincial government presented its ongoing initiatives for the OFW sector through the programs and services being done by the Migrants Desk of the provincial Public Employment Services Office (PESO).

At the end of the meeting, both parties agreed on the following; that the PESO has to check on the possible inclusion of the Catholic Church group particularly the 3 Diocesan Migrant's Commissions in their existing Provincial Migration Development Council and to make note of all of the suggestions mentioned in the meeting particularly concerning OFW families and children leading towards for partnership undertaking through signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The Provincial Government of Pangasinan was represented by Special Assistant to the Governor, former Provincial Board Member Von Mark Mendoza who authored



the existing provincial ordinance of setting-up of an OFW Desk in the province together with Dr. Raymund Guevarra from the Governor's Office, Guillermo Reyes II from the Office of the Vice Governor, Provincial PESO Migrants Desk Officer, Christopher Dioquino. While the Catholic Church group was represented by Edmund Ruga of CBCP-ECMI, Sr. Marites Perez, SJBP of Diocese of Alaminos, Ramon Ordanza of the Diocese of Urduaneta, Sr. Lucila Vasquez, SP and Janice Roma Hebron of the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan.



## PARISH ANAK OFW YOUTH ORGANIZATION (PAYO) LAUNCHES IN THE DIOCESE OF CUBAO

With the theme “*On the Wings of Love*”, the ECMI through its Luzon Region and in collaboration with the Diocese of Cubao Migrant’s Ministry (DCMM) had finally launched its parish formation program for the migrant’s children which will be known as Parish Anak OFW Youth Organization (PAYO) held last February 26, 2023, from 12:00-5:00 in the afternoon at the Nativity of the Lord Parish, Cubao, Quezon City.

The PAYO launching came-out during the meeting with the Cubao Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Concerns Fr. Alfredo Pascual, Jr. last December 12, 2022 which in the discussions popped up the emerging issues and concerns of the youth in Quezon City. Likewise the pending clamour among to come-up with a program for the migrant’s children at the parish level since ECMI had already implementing its program for migrant’s children in the school since 2003 through its Sons and Daughters of OFW Formation Program (SDOFP). Having that same direction in mind, ECMI Luzon and DCMM agreed to launch the PAYO.

About 40 Anak OFWs from the different parishes in Cubao participated in the launching. In the program, inspirational messages were given by Fr. Jun Pascual, Fr. Roger Manalo and an online message from Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco. Then followed by the presentation of Mr. Edmund Ruga of ECMI who facilitated and processed the Buhay Anak OFW using the pre awareness test and post test



validation methodologies somewhat similar in the school’s SDOFP. The results of these tests will be used in programming the direction of PAYO in the Diocese of Cubao. The Migration Resource Center (MRC) of Quezon City provided a talk on Anak OFW, Di Ka Nag-iisa, emphasizing the programs and services that the Quezon City Government is doing to be of help for the migrant’s children.

The Diocese of Cubao Ministry for Youth Affairs (MYA) played an important role in the PAYO launching from helping in the conceptualization and until the actual



facilitation details of the program. Other ministries involved were the Ministry for Family and Life led by its Minister Fr. Victor William Garcia, and Ministry for Basic Ecclesial Communities.

The PAYO will now be introduced to other dioceses and concept guidelines have been already established. The PAYO formation

is an inter-ministeriality approach with direct partnership and cooperation with the Youth Ministry.

The DCMM is headed by its Minister Fr. Fernando Santos and Lay Counterpart Coordinator Sis. Melde Gamonez and assisted by Parish Migrant’s Ministry Coordinators in the different parishes.





# MIGRANT'S MINISTRY LEADERS IN LUZON PARTICIPATES IN THE VOICE OF THE FREE REINTEGRATION TRAINING

About fifty-three (53) migrant's ministry leaders in Luzon from twenty (20) dioceses sent their official delegates to the two-day Safe to Migrate and Ready to Return Trainors Training organized and sponsored by Voice of the Free (VF) held last March 3-4, 2023 at Manresa Retreat House in Banawe, Quezon City.

The ECMI accepted the invitation of VF to be the recipient of this training in Luzon because of the same vision the need to educate OFW leaders on the issue of reintegration. During the training, the participants were given enough knowledge and skills to design and implement local capacity building on reintegration.

Different concepts and modules for reintegration evolved during the training. Mr. Roland Pacis of the Voice of the Free who facilitated the two-day training presented and discussed the different modules for reintegration which he himself authored these modules. Ms. Sonia Aquino, a known advocate of Economic Reintegration for OFWs and their families presented and discussed the topic on "How to Set-up your Own Business". While Mr. Venecio Legaspi, who is the Assistant Secretary for Reintegration of the Department of the Migrant Workers (DMW) and Head

of the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRCO) presented and discussed the government's 5-year development plan for OFW Reintegration.

At the end of the training, the participants committed to re-echo the training. During the plenary discussion, which facilitated by ECMI Luzon Coordinator Mr. Edmund Ruga, the participants agreed on the different steps on how to start the economic reintegration activities in their respective areas.

The participating dioceses were from, Archdiocese of San Fernando-Pampanga, Alaminos, Lingayen-Dagupan, Kalookan, Lipa, Cubao, Antipolo, Calapan, Manila, Imus, Novaliches, Tarlac, Bayombong, Urdaneta, San Fernando-La Union, Cabanatuan, Baguio, Ilagan, Balanga and San Pablo.

The Voice of the Free and ECMI is expected to look forward for the signing of



Our recent "Safe to Migrate, Ready to Return" Trainor's Training event on March 2-3, was participated by local stakeholders, archdioceses, dioceses, parishes, and migrant associations.



Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to happen which commonly agreed by Fr. Roger Manalo, CS of ECMI, together with Ms. Sheryl Loseño, Executive Director and Ms. Cecilia Pacis, Founder of the Voice of the Free.





*OWWA-NCR and DMW joins in the assembly*

## METRO MANILA DIOCESES HOLDS ITS REGULAR ASSEMBLY FOR THE MIGRANT'S MINISTRY

**A**round 33 migrant's ministry leaders from five dioceses in the seven diocesan composition of National Capital Region (NCR) cluster for the migrant's ministry attended the Sub-Regional Assembly last March 9, 2023 from 9:00 in the morning until 1:00 in the afternoon at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, in Sta. Mesa Manila. The Archdiocese of Manila Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI) hosted the assembly.

Two government agencies were invited to present their programs and services in the NCR. These agencies were the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) represented by Ma. Terasa Capa, the Regional Director in the NCR, and Atty. Kristina Marie Joy Andal of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW).

### The NCR Cluster agreed on the following action points:

- The Dioceses in the NCR together with ECMI Luzon and OWWA-NCR



agreed as proposed to have capacity training for the diocesan focal persons for collaboration undertakings. Each diocese has to identify and appoint 5 focal persons for OWWA-NCR collaboration. The capacity training will also include OWWA-NCR FWO and PESOs in the NCR. OWWA-NCR Regional Director and ECMI Luzon Coordinator agreed to prepare for the capacity training.

- To have a courtesy visit to DMW as soon as the Regional Office for NCR is set-up.

- To have capacity training on Human Trafficking to be organized together with the lead Diocese of Novaliches – DMAHT. Dioceses were also asked to talk first with Ministry Directors involved in Human Trafficking as part of DCAHT protocols to know their respective roles and functions.

- For school-based SDOFP (migrants children program), ECMI Luzon will call for the

NCR Diocesan Schools Superintendents meeting soon.

- For parish based PAYO (Parish Anak OFW Youth Organization), all NCR dioceses are encouraged to talk and collaborate with the Youth Ministry since template for this was already done by ECMI-Luzon in the Diocese of Cubao.

- In preparation for the Silver Anniversary of ECMI Luzon (the LUDICMA or Luzon Inter-Diocesan Coordinating Council for Migrant's Apostolate) on the first week of October 2023, NCR Cluster agreed to prepare what to do as a cluster. NCR dioceses submitted 3 names to ECMI Luzon to be part of the preparatory committees.

- There is a plan to have a courtesy meeting with the DILG-NCR for LGU collaboration since one of the parish migrants ministry head in the Diocese of Cubao

The next NCR Cluster Assembly is on June 2022 to be hosted by the Military Ordinariate of the Philippines (MOP).





## DIOCESE OF ANTIPOLO MIGRANT'S MINISTRY ORGANIZES PARALEGAL AND COUNSELING SEMINAR

The Diocese of Antipolo Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People (DACMI) conducted a training-seminar on Paralegal and Counseling for their parish migrant's ministry leaders last March 18, 2023, from 7:30 – 11:30 in the morning at the Holy Trinity Parish, Village East Executive Homes, Cainta, Rizal.

A total of 65 migrant's ministry leaders from 24 parishes in the Diocese of Antipolo (covering City of Marikina and Rizal Province) attended in the training. The training is intended to train the participants to be equipped to respond in the setting-up of ECMI's Parish Assistance and Information Desk for OFWs (PAIDO).

DACMI invited veteran OFW advocates to be of help in capacitating the skills of their migrant's ministry leaders designated to respond for PAIDO. Atty. Henry Roxas, President of Lawyers Beyond Borders talked about different legal instruments and on how to respond and assist on the OFW legal cases. Then Ms. Ellene Sana, Executive Director of Center for Migrant's Advocacy (CMA) together with their case officer Ms. Anna Navarro talked about on the situation of migrant workers and how to become paralegal and counselor for OFWs and their families.

The training would not be possible to happen if not the noble efforts of DACMI and its leaders, particularly its Director, Fr. Jose Bautista, the Director of Ministry for Human and Social Development (MHSD) Fr. Bienvenido Miguel and DACMI Lay Coordinator Bro. Ronnie Abeto.





## IPIL TAKES ON SDO'S ISSUES AND CONCERN

For eleven years now, the Diocesan Migrants' Ministry of the Diocese of Ipil has been at the forefront of pastorally taking care of the returning migrants, the families in need of legal help, facilitating and accessing government services for the livelihood of their organized groups, skills upgrading, involving themselves in OWWA's Family Day and the National Migrants' Sunday.

In the past, there were already a number of activities where the children of the OFWs have been present and taking part of the activities with their parents and relatives. But this time, through the initiative of Sr. Mary

Ann Guevarra, with the support and encouragement of the CBCP-ECMI Mindanao, took the initiative of gathering some migrants' ministry parish coordinators, selected guidance counselors from public and private schools, the diocesan and parish youth coordinators and the diocesan media – to discuss the conditions of the sons and daughters of the OFWs in schools and considers organizing them and give them formations and sustaining activities beginning this year onwards.

This movement is fully supported by the ECMI Mindanao Regional Coordinator and will be there at the initial stages of the formation and organizing sometime in the month of May.

### SR. MARY ANN GUEVARRA ATTENDED THE SAFE MIGRATION AND SAFE RETURN SEMINAR

The Voice of the Free (VF) in collaboration with the CBCP-ECMI National Office, sponsored a 2 days seminar on Safe Migration and Safe Return at Manresa Retreat House in Quezon City last February 28 to March 2, 2023. The seminar was intended for the Luzon Migrants' Ministry Coordinators and workers but the LRMD Coordinator, Edmund Ruga, and the VF executives; were kind enough to extend the invitation to the Regional Coordinators of Visayas and Mindanao and to Sr. Mary Ann Guevarra of the Diocese of Ipil.

Sr. Mary Ann Guevarra, DC, the Diocesan Migrants' Ministry Coordinator was jovial and thankful that she was able to attend considering that her diocese and the migrants' ministry are seriously focused on the reintegration of the returning OFWs. The MRMD Coordinator, Sr. Mary Ann, and JM Net Dacanay of the Diocese of Pagadian will sit down together to make a PowerPoint presentation out of the ten modules given by the Voice of the Free.

#### Activities Ahead:

- On March 25, 2023, there will be a Migrants' Forum sponsored by PMRW in partnership with CBCP-ECMI at Centro Pastoral, Zamboanga City.
- On April 27-29, 2023, a Regional Trainers' Training on Human Trafficking will be held at New Agong Building, Harmony Village, Sinunuc, Zamboanga City





# Strengthening the Migrants Ministry in Zamboanga

by : Lualhati Judei Rose S. Birondo, EC

At exactly 8:00 in the morning on March 11, 2023, representatives from the different parishes from Central, Eastern and Western Vicariate of Zamboanga came together in Harmony Village for the **Diocesan Awareness Seminar on Migrants' Apostolate (DASMA)**. Harmony Village is a 14 hectare farm and woodland nestled on a hill in Pitogo, Sinunuc located 7 kilometers from the city proper West Coast of Zamboanga.

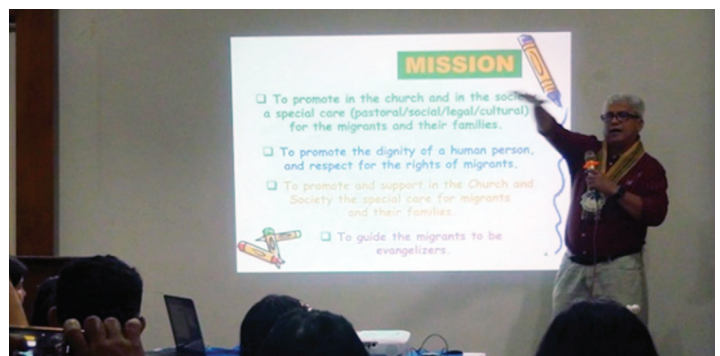


During the arrival and registration of the participants; (Right) with Aminda E. Saño, EDC, as the facilitator.

The Village has an abundance of silent places for meditation, where people of different ages, genders, backgrounds, races, religions, cultures and traditions can gather and dialogue freely. And so, it is a perfect venue for the said event and it was in the New Agong building to which the seminar was held. This initiative was spearheaded by the Executive Secretary of the CBCP Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI) Fr. Roger C. Manalo, CS and by the ECMI Mindanao Regional Coordinator, Mr. Cristelito "Lito" T. Abadilla.

The session was facilitated by Aminda E. Saño, EDC, the Silsilah and Emmaus Dialogue Movement President. It started with the Harmony Prayer Song and a very unique Ice Breaker given by Mr. Abadilla. Then, an inspirational message by Fr. Emmanuel Rodriguez. After the presentation of the objectives, Mr. Abadilla then presented his **first topic**: The Filipino Labor Migration and Its Impacts and Challenges to Filipino Families, wherein he highlighted the following:

1. the "benefits" of international migration in terms of individual remittances;
2. the "costs" of international migration in political level, economic level and social level that has a great impact to couples, gender role and to family structure;
3. common problems experienced by Overseas Filipino Workers or OFWs during the Recruitment, Pre-Departure, Departure, Arrival & Reception, During Employment at Jobsite, Termination and Re-entry Stages and some inputs on how to avoid these problems and how to help victims; and



Mr. Lito T. Abadilla during one of his presentations.

4. the effects of migration to children, family and society.

The **second speaker**, Fr. Roger Manalo, CS, presented the Church Social Teaching on Migration wherein he started in the history of migrants and refugees during the World War II and even in the time of the Holy Family's flee to Egypt. Fr. Roger also presented the Magna Carta of Migration and the different encyclical and circular letters and decrees related to it. Fr. Roger also emphasized that the Christians were called on to not only to be tolerant but also to respect the others' identity; to open a way towards sharing with people of different origins and cultures a "respectful proclamation" of their own faith; and called to a culture of solidarity so as to achieve together a real communion of persons. Before he ended his presentation, Fr. Roger quoted a passage from the Gospel of Matthew to sum up his presentation: "I was a stranger and you made me welcome."

Restrengthening the Episcopal .. /page 21



## Restrengthening the Episcopal ../ from page 18



Fr. Roger C. Manalo, CS during his presentation on the Church Social Teaching on Migration.

An open forum followed where the participants raised their concerns, expectations and hopes in the future. Meanwhile, in the afternoon, the participants were grouped according to their sending vicariate for their Action Plans and presented it to all. The groups were the Central, Eastern and Western Vicariate.

An open forum followed where the participants raised their concerns, expectations and hopes in the future. Meanwhile, in the afternoon, the participants were grouped according to their sending vicariate for their Action Plans and presented it to all. The groups were the Central, Eastern and Western Vicariate. Mrs. Adelita A. Diaz of St. Ignatius Parish, from the first group, the Central Vicariate, presented their action plan with the emphasis on the parish/BEC profiling, parish orientation and creation of Parish Migrant Ministry. While the second group from the Western Vicariate, Ms. Leslie Jane B.

Sabonio from Our Lady of Peñafrancia and another participant put emphasis on the school levels. Lastly, Mr. Marmiel G. Jalon from St. Stanilaus de Kotska Parish of the Eastern Vicariate highlighted the importance to communicate with the parish priest and to gain permission first, before implementing all the planned activities.



Brainstorming and making of Action Plans of each Vicariate.

Before the event ended, a thorough synthesis was given by Maria Fe R. Banua, EC, one of the Silsilah and Emmaus Dialogue Movement Member and Mr. Abadilla reminded all the participants for the next activity on March 25, 2023 at Centro Pastorale.

It was indeed a fruitful and meaningful day for each and everyone. Yes, there will be a lot of challenges that the group will be facing upon this new journey with the migrants—journeying and dialoguing with the OFWs and their families with different cultures, religions and traditions. But let us not also forget, just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus will be accompanying us when get confused, frustrated and tired and will make our eyes open and our hearts burning all over again.



During the reporting of the Action Plans of each Vicariate: Central, Eastern and Western.



## ECMI Mindanao coordinator meets key people from the Diocese of Pagadian

Last February 25, 2023, with the help of the staff of OWWA 9 Satellite Office through their contact, JM Net Dacanay, an active parishioner and lector, and a former Overseas Filipino Worker; brought me to the house of Bishop Ronald I. Lunas, DD, who warmly welcomed us. Bishop Bong (as people fondly called him) took time to listen and interact with me and positively gave his blessing to begin putting up the ministry which led me to meet Fr. Vincent S. Romanos at his parish who has a heart for the migrants and had the experience working with seafarers.

The kind of experience from the start of my arrival accommodated by

OWWA 9 staff, escorted by a newfound friend, JM Net Dacanay, a surprised meeting with Bishop Bong and ended up at the parish of Fr. Vince, was overall, an event singlehandedly prepared by the Holy Spirit for me to witness and believe that the ministry I brought in the diocese of Pagadian was blessed by God.

A Diocesan Awareness on Migration Apostolate is set to happen on March 18, 2023, at the Bishop Residence Chapel in Pagadian City.



## PAGADIAN DIOCESE HOLDS D.A.S.M.A.

The Diocese of Pagadian through the effort of Most Reverend Ronald I. Templa, DD, and Fr. Vincent S. Romanos, DCP, the Migrants' Ministry Director, held a one-day Diocesan Awareness Seminar on Migrants' Apostolate (DASMA) last March 18, 2023 at the Bishop's Chapel attended by 26 participants coming from the different parishes.

Highlighting the event was the presence of ECMI's Executive Secretary, Fr. Roger C. Manalo, CS, who chronologically presented the background of why ECMI came into its existence starting off from the story of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini until a series of Social Teachings of the Church, Encyclical Letters, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) Statements, CBCP's Pastoral Letters, PCP II and Pope Francis's Dicastery for Promoting



Integral Human Development. On the other hand, Mr. Cristelito T. Abadilla, the MRMD Coordinator for Mindanao has presented the Migrants' situation; Issues, and Concerns that include the situation of the sons and daughters of the OFWs. After listening to the two sharings of the resource persons, a challenge was thrown to the participants whether or not the diocese will consider taking care of the migrants

and their families living in their diocese. Taking the challenge positively, as a result, a trainers training will be held in the month of June; 2023. The DASMA will not also be made possible without the support of the Secretariat composed of JM-the Facilitator, Lynette, Rezeil, Nene, and Emilyn (all returning Overseas Filipino Workers from Brunei, Malaysia, and the Middle East).



# MIGRANTS' FORUM HELD IN ZAMBOANGA

The Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW), the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), the Italian Catholic Church (CEI) "8 x Mille Fund" in partnership with the Archdiocese of Zamboanga, held a Migrants' Forum attended by His Excellency, Bishop Moises M. Cuevas, DD, some members of the Clergy and the 72 delegates coming from the different parishes including the Religious Sisters from the different congregations, last March 25, 2023 at Centro Pastoral, Zamboanga City.

Citing the indefatigable spirit of volunteerism exhibited by Fr. Manny and Sr. Minda, Bishop Moe was moved and inspired by them that he encouraged everyone to act and do something as a timely intervention of the local Church to care for the migrants and their families including those transient victims of human trafficking happening in Zamboanga Peninsula for a long time. Fr. Emmanuel S. Rodriguez, the Migrants Ministry Director, had so much hope that with this support shown by the parish priests, the lay delegates, and the Religious, he is very positive that soon the migrants' ministry will be put up in the parish to cater to the needs of the migrants and their families.

Highlighting the event was the presentation of PMRW by Lance Alexander S. Velasco introducing his PMRW organiza-

Migrants' Forum .. /page 24



Bishop Moises M. Cuevas Bishop of Zamboanga, Fr. Emmanuel Rodriguez- Director ng Diocesan Migrants Ministry ng Archdiocese of Zamboanga, Cristelito Abadilla- ECMI Mindanao Coordinator and Lance Alexander S. Velasco- PMRW



## Migrants Forum ../ from page 23

tion before proceeding to his topic: The Migrants' Situation: Issues and Concerns. Lance's inputs gained various reactions from the audience that there are a lot of questions raised and sharing of experiences from the participants. Following Lance's input was the presentation of Cristelito T. Abadilla, the MRMD Coordinator for Mindanao putting much weight on the implementation of the Parish Migrants' Ministry and its S-tart, O-perate, and S-ustain (SOS) Framework. Since everyone is committed to doing the work, a trainer's training will follow on May 27-28 to equip the parish workers with the skills and knowledge they need for the ministry. Bishop Moi attended the whole day's activity before proceeding to his Mass at Port Pilar. Outstandingly facilitating the forum was Sr. Minda Sano.

The event will not be successful without the support of the Silsilah Harmony Village's Staff who served as the Secretariat and who were already busy the day before the event took place.



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