

THANKS FOR THE 35 YEARS OF FOUNDATION OF ANUNCIATA-FILIPINAS

“My dearest Sisters, **appreciate a lot your vocation**, and in **thanksgiving** of its great benefit, **serve the Lord with joy** (Ps.100,2), as He so command you, by David. This joy, as St. Basil says, “**is necessary to do marvelous things.**”¹

Great paths in life begin with small steps, apparently insignificant but of great value. It is worth remembering our simple history, 35 years from 25th of February of 1987 until this 2022, when our first sisters Dominicas de la Anunciata commenced their mission: Sisters Montserrat Casellas Rabaseda, Ma. Angeles Ortega Espinosa+; followed by Sr. Ma. Sagrario Llorente Herrero+ on the 2nd of February of 1988 and on the 9th of January, 1989,² Sr. Ma. Natividad Martinez de Castro arrived to Philippines. The four of them together ignited-initiated such foundation

We consider our first sisters as our pillars and points of references of our foundation, they untiringly sowed our Anunciata Charism in Philippines, now already growing (already in Vietnam, Indonesia, and hopefully other Asian countries). Others Sisters also came³ to join them, sent and assigned. The first three sisters: Ma. Angeles, Nati and Ma. Sagrario were already rewarded by God of eternal life in heaven. While we give thanks for the 91 years of Sr. Montserrat as she celebrates her birthday on Feb. 28, 2022; 20 years of which she ardently spent in Philippines.

I wish to highlight three important values which our first four sisters importantly taught us, similarly are challenges for us: *first*, the value-challenge of Anunicaita Identity, *second*, the value-challenge of a Spirituality of Incarnation and *third*, to ask ourselves where are we to collaborate most or how is our value of solidarity in the mission of God (*missio Dei*). Let us also thank everyone, our Dominican Sisters of the Anunciata in the world, especially to our Province St. Raymond of Peñafort, to our sisters who generously make such mission possible, for their love and support.

The support sisters remind us the value of Anunciata Identity. We live in a world that values more achievements and performances than the value of the human person. It is a world of competitions and comparisons. Oftentimes we forget that it is not a world of competitiveness and survival of the fittest that is important, rather the firmness of faith and steadfastness of one's fidelity. It is not only what we know but what we believe or whom do we believe. Where our faith is grounded?

¹ Padre San Francisco Coll, “Proyecto de Constituciones: Aprecio de la Propia Vocación,” en *Regla o Forma de Vivir, Escritos Dirigidos a la Congregación de la Hermanas Dominicas de la Anunciata*, Padre Vito García, ed. (Madrid, España: Publicación de las HH. Dominicas de la Anunciata, 1995), n.77, p. 405.

² Libro personal de la Comunidad de la Anunciata (Cubao, Quezon City, Filipinas). También en la Crónica Congregacional.

³ Las otras Hermanas que vinieron en Filipinas después de las primeras cuatro hermanas: Ma. Jesús Muñoz, Dolores Perales, Ildete Magalhaes, Bernadette Reid, Rolindes García, Marta Alicia Rivas, Isabel Martínez de Castro, Cirila Zarate Aguilar, Angele Gusemu Molha.

What criteria do we have when we confront situations or when we judge others? How do we relate to each other? How and what do we essentially communicate?

The Anunciata Identity, as Mary of the Annunciation-Incarnation, reminds us the art of listening, of dialogue, of communicating and of relating... not only through the mind but by one's heart. This implies silence, attentiveness, interiority-interiorization, listening, humility and sincerity. Mary invites us to empty ourselves and embrace our own limitations. This is what an incarnated spirituality implies, it is a spirituality of compassion and communion, of living fraternal-interculturally, and not of survival of the fittest. It is to purify our way of looking and of our mindsets.

Jesus, the Word-made-flesh, who dwells among us (Jn.1:14), calls us to deepen our Anunciata Identity by learning from His Kenosis⁴-*Incarnation*. This itself is His mission, that we may know how to live in human relationship engaging with others in the context of our own weaknesses and limitations. Pope Francis tells us:

“God decided to manifest His presence, thus, he fulfilled our redemption in human weakness. Jesus made it possible for us to enter into communion with God, prior to any law or religious precept, it is necessary to live concretely our relationship with God.”⁵

This is the joy of the Gospel and of the Good News, that God loves us not as angels but as human persons, sinners and pilgrims towards perfection, always in the process of conversion. This is the Church-mission, it is our Anunciata Mission, that we may be capable to communicate-dialogue, not of our achievements but of the great love of God that works in our life every day. We need the grace of preaching so that we may carry on our mission, the preaching of grace, as Fr. Quirico Pedregosa, OP writes.⁶

In the midst of crisis, of wars, of poverty, of this pandemic, we ask ourselves of these 35 years of our foundation: *Who are we truly? Whom do we intend to become? Where are we or where do we see ourselves years from now? Are we deeply aware of the Gospel values that form and purify our hearts? Does Jesus, our spiritual-sacramental nourishment lead us to embrace each others' differences and deficiencies? Do we know how to say “sorry” or “thanks” when situations ask us?*

Our first sisters reminds us through their life and witnessing of their vocation-mission, that which our Fr. Coll so desired, that we may continue the ministry of St. Dominic⁷ who counsels us that to be a good Dominican Sister of the

⁴ Philippians 2: 5-11

⁵ Cfr. Morning Meditation of Pope Francis, “The Scandal of Incarnation,” in *L' Observatore Romano* (Ingles), n. 23, 5 de junio, 2013.

⁶ Quirico Pedregosa, *For the Sake of Preaching the Gospel* (Quezon City: PDCIS, 2020),

⁷ Regla o Forma de Vivir, 7.

Anunciata, he tells us: "Arm yourself with prayer, practice charity, clothe yourself with humility and possess voluntary poverty." May God intercede for us and send us healthy, happy and hope-filled holy vocations.

H. Mariela (Filipinas)