



OFFICE OF THE
ARCHBISHOP of CEBU

MESSAGE

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:19)

Dear Friends of the Archdiocese of Cebu,

The Church has always been in need of reform so as to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph 4:13) The Church is the body of Christ but “we have this treasure in jars of clay to show this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Cor. 4:7).

We acknowledge as an Archdiocese that sexual abuse of priests involving minors deeply wound the very fabric of our faith life and community and cause irreparable damage to the lives of the victims that can scar them for life. As we continue to confront these painful realities, we continue to invite the faithful to accompany her ministers with prayers and to help in the vigilance of creating and fostering safe spaces in the Church most especially for the most vulnerable of her members.

In Matthew 18:6, Jesus warns, “But whoever cause one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the seas.” This highlights the serious duty of everyone in the Church to be committed to the safeguarding of the children and vulnerable adults as a responsibility to bear



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Furthermore, we find solace in Psalm 147:3 that assures us that the Lord “heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds.” The Archdiocese of Cebu is fully committed to support survivors and their families to be heard with justice and accountability.

The recent release of the database of Filipino priests referred to in the list, reminds us all of the need to continue to come together with renewed energies to make the Archdiocese of Cebu one hundred percent compliant to all the necessary measures needed to embody the holiness and compassion that Christ call us all to live out.

On this note we attest that of the names listed, only three names are identified as incardinated in the archdiocese and have already been re-integrated in active ministry today but only because they have gone through the required legal and canonical processes in the past and have been determined by competent civil and ecclesiastical authorities as fit to return to active ministry but with continued guidance and supervision.

One priest is currently in Cebu but incardinated in another diocese. His presence in Cebu was intended to facilitate an ongoing renewal program that was required of him by his diocesan bishop. He has been fully cooperative with both civil and ecclesiastical authorities that are overseeing his situation. This also applies to some other names of priests who once served the archdiocese and were assigned by their religious superiors from their respected congregations but are no longer connected with the Archdiocese of Cebu or are made part of the diocesan clergy. To the knowledge of the archdiocese, one is reported to have been dismissed from the clerical state and one passed away years ago.



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Nonetheless, independent of these recent concerns brought about by media sources, the archdiocese has always been proactive in her stance towards the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults. In fact, the Archdiocese of Cebu is among the first in the Philippines to formally set up a Safeguarding Ministry office as mandated by *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* in 2019. Currently also, steps are made to require the members of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Cebu to undergo annual and obligatory participation in safeguarding measures for them to continue in active service.

In conclusion, one can only hope that while the guilty is to be punished, the innocently accused needs also to be spared. At times, the distinction is overlooked. At other times, there is just indifference up until one feels the sting of naiveté. **The problem, commonly taken as the problem only of the hierarchy and the parties involved in such cases needs a new paradigm.** Any problem that injures the rights of persons is the problem of the whole church. Being one Body of Christ, the interconnectedness is vital. **Partnership and collaboration therefore, are always among its purest expressions.** To remain fully human, one can spell faith and confidence in our capacity at recovery after every crisis. We do not face the crisis alone or restricted to particular persons. We move together as a community to find redemption. To this sense, we are all pilgrims of hope.

The present state of events constitutes a phase along the journey through history. It poses both lessons and challenge to be the church that we are supposed to be. *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda.*



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The church will always be undergoing changes and dealing with them demands an unwavering faith. That's the mark of being relevant. The efforts and desires to make the most of the processes involved ought to be an unending inspiration and task. The church is in the stage of purification until the moment it is fully 'configured' to its Founder and Savior. At that time, the truth will reign and genuine justice will be served. And that is based not on human capabilities but on divine guarantee.

May we request everyone to help the Archdiocese of Cebu to be faithful and worthy of her mission!

Yours truly,

✠ **JOSÉ S. PALMA, DD**
Archbishop of Cebu
30 January 2025

VO-M25-06