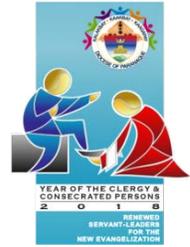




The Roman Catholic Bishop of Parañaque
8 Villonco Road, West Service Road
Sucat, Muntinlupa City, Philippines



PASTORAL LETTER

Dear People of God,

It is with great sorrow that in the period of six months, three of our Catholic Priests were gunned down and their cases remained unresolved, the latest of which is the brutal killing last Sunday of Fr. Richmond Nilo from the Diocese of Cabanatuan. This event is reflective of what is happening in our society. We are condemning the killings of our brothers and sisters, and all forms of violation against human life. Killing is basically evil. Killing must be opposed. In a civil society where human rights and freedom are considered sacred, the right to human life must be protected at all times and at all cost.

We are our brother's keeper. We are responsible to one another. We cannot simply close our eyes and ignore what is happening around us. We cannot go on with our life unaffected and treat these killings nonchalantly. While it is good to wish and pray for peace, justice and wellness of our people, it must be accompanied by concrete acts of charity. As Cardinal Tagle in his pastoral letter expressed, "*Wag lang tayo humingi ng patawad sa Diyos sa mga kasalanan laban sa buhay, sabayan natin ng gawaing magbibigay buhay ang paghingi ng patawad.*"

As your bishop and co-sojourner in faith, I enjoin our clergy, consecrated persons and lay faithful to commit ourselves to do the following:

- 1) Let us continue to keep in our prayers Frs. Richmond, Mark, and Tito. Starting June 16 to 24, the Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, all Evening Masses will be offered for the intentions of all three priests killed. May their deaths serve to intensify our faith, and shine a brighter light on Jesus, whose death on the Cross brought us salvation.
- 2) Let us, as one community of God's people, seek God's pardon for all the sins committed against life by our prayers and fasting even as we seek for new and better ways in advocating and fostering life such as our promotion of our Social Action Programs: Hapag-Asa, Sanlakbay (for drug rehabilitation), Journey of Faith in Action (JFA), etc.

- 3) Five (5) minutes before the start of the Evening Masses of June 16 to 24, bells will be rung for a minute to remember those who have been killed, especially the three priests, this being the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons.
- 4) A special Holy Hour is encouraged in all parishes on Friday, June 22, 2018, after the 6:30 p.m. mass for healing, peace and justice. The Commission on Liturgy and Popular Religiosity has provided us with a format. Also, a Prayer for Culture of Life and Peace should be recited after the post-communion prayer of this mass.

With Mary as our *Kalakbay, Kaakbay, Kaagapay*, let us not lose heart but continue to give witness to our faith, in season and out of season. God bless you all!

✠ **JESSE E. MERCADO, D.D.**

Bishop of Parañaque

14 June 2018