

Press Briefing
Fr. Jeffrey C. San Nicolas
September 20, 2016

Clearly the issue at hand is the merits of Bill 326-33 that seeks to lift the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse civil claims. The Church acknowledges and uphold the good intention of this bill. I will address this, but first I must speak to the context of the Bill within the Catholic Church on Guam. My first love is God and his people and there are issues surrounding this bill that must be addressed.

[Archbishop Apuron and the Neocatechumenal Way](#)

First of all Archbishop Anthony S. Apuron has been accused of child sexual abuse on four accounts. This itself is tragic. But even before this, his actions and decision making has caused deep pain in the vast majority of the faithful on Guam.

Highlighting this was the wide spread believe that Archbishop targeted two beloved priests, Fr. Paul Gofigan and Msgr. James Benavente because they failed to cooperate with the agenda of the Neocatechumenal. Unfounded charges where placed against them. They were removed from their posts and publicly disgraced.

In addition to this, treatment of the former Archdiocesan Finance Council that was fired all at once was scandalous to the faithful and meanwhile Archbishop Apuron and the Vicar General were covertly alienating the Yona Church land on which the Redemptoris Mater Seminary sits.

As these issues have come to light, rather than apologies and seeking to create avenues of reconciliation, Archbishop Apuron has been supported by the Neocatechumenal Way, locally, nationally and internationally to deny all charges and obfuscate the issue.

This arrogant attitude of denial and obfuscation continued when he was faced with the credible accusations of child sexual abuse against him. This is sad.

Archbishop Hon has spoken to Vatican officials on behalf of the People of God on Guam. I am hopeful that the strings disproportionately empowering the national and international leadership of the Neocatechumenal Way to interfere with our local Church affairs will be cut. Opposing this are other Vatican officials pushing the Neocatechumenal Ways' agenda and interests to the detriment of those who are not in this group. If the Neocatechumenal Way is to minister to our faithful let it happen organically, not through force and manipulation.

[Here is Evidence:](#)

I would like to share with you a series of documented events that illustrated this unnecessary interference into the affairs of our local Church.

On Friday, September 2, 2016, I received an email with an attached letter from the Laity Forward Movement (LFM) notify Archbishop Hon that they intended to visit the seminary on Thursday, September 8, 2016. Knowing the history between the LFM and the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, I, as the Delegate to the Apostolic Administrator, sought to personally mediate the visit so that it may be a breakthrough for dialogue and mutual understanding.

On Monday, September 5, 2016, I visited the Redemptoris Mater Seminary for Mass in the morning and preached on the Gospel of John 20, exhorting the seminary community “Do not be afraid,” that Christ comes to them to announce “Peace.” I shared that we all called to have the courage to be open and loving. God is with us.

Unfortunately, that afternoon when I meet with the RMS leadership and share with them the proposed visit of the LFM, they informed me that they did not approve of the visit. I told them that I heard their concerns but I would personally take charge of the matter and that I would keep them informed.

On Wednesday, September 7th I received a letter from Msgr. David C. Quitugua, the acting-rector of RMS. It reads: [see attachment]

This letter is all about authority and power. While intimidated at first, I came to realize that I was the proper church authority in the absence of the Apostolic Administrator, so I simply had to write the acting-rector to let him know my intention as instructed by Cardinal Filoni.

When I shared with him what I was about to do he sent me an email stating:

“Sincerely, it is my hope that this visit is not an attempt to circumvent Cardinal Filoni’s authority over this matter involving the LFM.”

The intent of Msgr. David’s letter was now clear to me. Neither I nor Archbishop Hon is the church authority over decision making regarding the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, even over simple matters such as who can visit. Cardinal Filoni is in charge.

I was also instructed not to release the seminary visitation report. I will do just that soon after this press briefing.

I realize that I am taking a stand against my superiors, but I must because the vast majority of the People of God on Guam, who have suffered from a leadership gap over the past several years, have not been kept informed about issues that directly concern them.

Personal Plea

To Cardinal Filoni and those leaders in the Neocatechumal Way who are seeking to advance the agenda and interests of the Neocatechuamal Way: Please have mercy on the People of God on Guam. The lines of authority in this Archdiocese are not clear. Please practice the principle of subsidiarity to allow local Church leadership to make decisions on local Church matters.

To members of Lay Forward Movement, Concerned Catholic of Guam, Silent No More, Neocatechumenal Way and all devoted Catholics: You are a beautiful witness to the world of your love for Jesus Christ and your firm faith. Do all things with the love of God and neighbor in your heart. God is with us. Saint Paul tell us in his letter to the Philippians chapter 2:

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing.

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others.

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Stay loyal to Jesus Christ, his Vicar on Earth, our Holy Father Pope Francis and the legitimate successor of the Apostles. I am convinced that Archbishop Hon is doing his best to bring healing to our Church.

To the Holy Father: Please hear our plea and declare the Archdiocese of Agana, *sede vacante*

To the survivors of abuse at the hands of our clergy: I would like to read you something:

“For those who were abused by a member of the clergy, I am deeply sorry for the times when you or your family spoke out, to report the abuse, but you were not heard or believed. Please know that the Holy Father hears you and believes you. I deeply regret that some bishops failed in their responsibility to protect children. It is very disturbing to know that in some cases bishops even were abusers. I pledge to you that we will follow the path of truth wherever it may lead. Clergy and bishops will be held accountable when they abuse or fail to protect children.”

These are not my words. They are the words of Pope Francis when he was in Philadelphia about one year ago. He is so on point that you would think that he is speaking directly about our situation. I would like to think that he is.

Bill 326-33

Regarding Bill 326-33, the Archdiocese of Agana is not seeking to protect child sexual abusers of any kind, it simply desires for the People of God to be well informed about the true effects of Bill 326-33. Bankruptcy of the local church would be inevitable and attempts to exaggerate, minimize or obscure the effects of bankruptcy on the services provided by the Church is not helpful. The fact is that dioceses in bankruptcy have to make big sacrifices to fund the child abuse lawsuit settlements. Every diocese scrambles to keep the churches and schools open, but in doing so, they have to make huge sacrifices elsewhere. Each case is unique and the degree of sacrifice comes down to how much insurance coverage there is and whether parish assets and institutions are regarded by the court as assets of the diocese and available for lawsuits.

Conclusion

People of God, Senators and Governor: please consider carefully all the motivations behind this Bill. The Church desires for you to do what is right for the victims of abuse, but please safeguard the innocent people and services this Bill could harm. I respectfully ask you to pray about your decision. May almighty God bless you.



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September 7, 2016

Reverend Father Jeffrey San Nicolas
Delegate of the Apostolic Administrator
Archdiocese of Agana
196 Cuesta San Ramon Ste B
Hagåtña, GU 96910-4334

Dear Father Jeff,

This is to inform you that His Eminence, Fernando Cardinal Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, has been made aware of the preannounced “visit” of the Laity Forward Movement to the Seminary.

Cardinal Filoni’s instruction is that no such “visit” can be made to the Seminary and that nobody can demand inspection of any documents without expressed and written permission granted by the proper ecclesiastical authority. The Seminary is a private house of formation for the Sacred Priesthood that follows a defined schedule and rule of life which must be preserved.

We kindly ask you to inform the Laity Forward Movement that their “visit” and their demand for documents is not allowed.

Sincerely,

Msgr. David C. Quitugua
Acting Rector

Seminary Visit

1 message

Msgr. David C. Quitugua [REDACTED]

Wed, Sep 7, 2016 at 8:37 PM

To: "San Nicolas, Fr. Jeff" <delegate@archagana.org>

Cc: Julio Cesar Fr [REDACTED], David Atienza [REDACTED]

Dear Fr. Jeff,

After 7 PM tonight I just received your request to visit the seminary tomorrow at 11 am with several laity.

As you were informed today, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of the People has been informed of the Laity Forward Movement (LFM) request, and directed that there shall be no visit without written permission granted by the proper ecclesiastical authority. I will have a hard copy for you available tomorrow.

While the doors of the seminary are not closed to you, as the Delegate of the Apostolic Administrator, you should be made aware that your visit will be at a time the seminarians are in class. Your visit should not interfere or disrupt their lessons.

It would be extremely helpful that the purpose of your visit be identified since you just recently completed a visit with our institutions. Sincerely, it is my hope that this visit is not an attempt to circumvent Cardinal Filoni's authority over this matter involving the LFM.

I also ask that the laity be identified who will accompany you, and the purpose of their presence.

Sincerely,

Msgr. David

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Msgr. David C. Quitugua

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