



FLOODS — GOD'S CALL

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines reiterates its appeal for prayer and sacrifice in the unprecedented disaster that has befallen our people. If prayers are indispensable every day of our lives, their need is more urgent still in this time of special trial, especially in the greater challenge ahead of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

There are those who see in the floods a special punishment of God. Certainly Holy Scripture leaves no room for doubt that even in this life God punishes sin, and it may be that what is happening is in some measure allowed by God because we have turned from Him. It is, however, risky and presumptuous to identify any given affliction as the punishment of a definite sin (Jn. 9:2; Jer. 12:11).

It could also be that God permits such sufferings in order to remind all those who rightly seek reforms in our society in favor particularly of the poor and less privileged, that this cannot be achieved should we abandon God and forget the life hereafter.

It is not unlikely that God also is rebuking Christian spiritual leaders both those who have ceased to see the need of prayers as well as those who fail to translate their prayers into works of justice and love.

This disaster could also be a call by God to a keener sense of community, to a deeper concern for our fellowmen, so that we may be one flock under one Shepherd, one family under the fatherhood of God.

Bishop MARIANO G. GAVIOLA
Secretary General, Bishops Conference
(From M.T. Aug. 9, 1972)

FAILURE OF AUTHORITY

An allied reason for the growth of violence is the failure of authority to exercise itself as a bulwark against crime. This failure is also due to the weakened faith of both civil and religious authorities. As the poet Yeats so well expressed this problem: "The best in society seem to lack all conviction, the worst are full of passionate intensity". For violence proliferates with the breakdown of authority. And authority breaks down

when Christian convictions are denied in theory or cowardly betrayed in conduct. When governors, superiors, law-makers, administrators and teachers cease to believe they have a body of truth to teach and a code of Christian goodness to live, inculcate into others and die for, both of which come from and bind men to the God of Goodness and Love, then the community is abandoned by its leaders and left a prey to professional inciters of murder and rapine. For once bereft of effective Christian leadership, the masses are pathetically prone to heed the siren call to revolution. When authority is confused, apathetic, fearful of performing its duty, then society falls into the hands of the most cunning and powerful who are usually organized and proceed ruthlessly to amalgamate communities into communes. When authority is weak it often succumbs to blackmail thus becoming a catalyst to fiercer attacks of the revolutionaries. For successful violence inevitably calls forth greater, bolder violence. What civil, and especially religious authorities must realize is that the apologists for organized violence know no loyalty, reverence no reality. They are neo-nihilists, spiritually famished, deprived of God by self-denial, deprived of mature personhood by self-destruction. They are waifs of a materialist, godless civilization. What they need is not coddling, but discipline. What they admire and respond to is not cowardly capitulation, but firm convictions and adamant enforcement of moral and civil laws. When authorities, civil and religious, show a courage that is the fruit of deep Christian convictions and conduct, then the rising tide of violence, fruit of a disintegrating Christian civilization, will begin to fall to a low ebb. Then the spiritual starvelings who are fascinated with the violence of gangsters may be won instead to the violence of saints which conquers the kingdom of heaven and leads to a life of love with God and man.

— Rev. VINCENT MICELI, S.J.

(L'Osservatore Romano, June 29, 1972)

MOST REV. JUAN C. SISON, D.D.
Archbishop of Nueva Segovia

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of his episcopal ordination — July 25, 1947 — the Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas extends prayerful greetings and congratulations.