

**LETTER OF THE SECRETARIAT OF STATE VATICAN
NOVEMBER 9, 1977**

TO

**THE MOST REVEREND TEOPISTO V. ALBERTO, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF CACERES, NAGA CITY**

ON

**THE QUADRICENTENNIAL OF THE EVANGEL-
IZATION OF THE BIKOL REGION**

Your Excellency,

The evangelization of the Bikol Region was a striking fulfillment of the command by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. The quadricentennial commemoration is thus of great significance not only for those whose ancestors so readily responded to the call to the faith but also for the universal Church.

The Holy Father therefore joins wholeheartedly with the beloved people of the Bikol Region in thanking God for his gifts to them and, as Peter's successor, he praises the Lord, who in every age and clime raises up people to spread and deepen knowledge of him who is the way, the truth and the life.

Knowledge of Christ, the Word of God, is brought by words — words that pass from person to person, from tongue to ear and again from ear to tongue. This was the method chosen by him who had the words of eternal life, who "opened his mouth and taught" (Mt. 5:2), so that his listeners were "taught by God" (Jn. 8:45).

The response that we human beings are called upon to give to these words is faith: "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10:7). Faith is the acceptance of God's word as God's word. Faith means receiving a knowledge that, although imperfect now, since it enables us merely to see in a mirror dimly, is destined to become the knowl-

edge of one who sees face to face. Faith is the knowledge of the one true God and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, the knowledge that is eternal life (cf. Jn. 17:3) and the rejection of which brings condemnation (cf. Mk. 16:16).

Being part of the chain that brings God's word to mankind is thus a matter of life and death. It is a matter of life and death for each one whether he truly accepts in his inmost being the words of eternal life. It is a matter of life and death for others that these words should be passed on to them effectively: for "how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?" (Rom. 10:14).

It is the Holy Father's prayer on this happy and auspicious occasion that the Church in the Bikol Region will not only grow in the knowledge of Christ but will also play an important part in passing on that knowledge to others.

As a pledge of these two graces, His Holiness cordially imparts to the episcopate, the other members of the clergy, the religious and all the faithful of the Bikol Region his special Apostolic Blessing.

With my personal good wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

✠ (Sgd.) JOHN CARD. VILLOT