

## Laiko Repot in Rome

September 2018

### Initiatives of the Laity in the Philippines

---

#### LAIKO

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines [CBCP] has a commission of bishops that takes charge of the Apostolate of the Laity. It set up the Episcopal Commission on the Lay Apostolate [ECLA] in 1950, made up of a Bishop Chairman and 4 other member-bishops. In order to facilitate the work of ECLA the various national lay groups and the diocesan councils of the laity were organized in 1957 into the *Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas* [LAIKO], or the Council of the Laity in the Philippines. The organization is governed by a 15-member Board, elected by the members during a National Convention held every two years. Currently, there are 55 national Catholic lay organizations and 57 diocesan councils of the laity who are members of LAIKO. For practical purposes LAIKO is the arm of the CBCP, as it seeks to implement the programs of the Catholic Church among the lay groups while it also engages in its own advocacies and programs that are proper to lay Catholics. As regards, membership, it is currently trying to invite the lay organizations that are affiliated to religious congregations to join LAIKO and helps the other 22 dioceses without councils of the laity to organize their own.

#### Engagement in politics

Conscious of our role in bringing the Gospel to the temporal order consequently bringing about social transformation, one of LAIKO's priority is to respond to the challenge of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* when he states: *"Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. We need to be convinced that charity is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)."*(205)

In a concerted effort with the leaders of the Evangelical Churches and Lay Associations, LAIKO collaborate with the Philippine Movement for

Transformational Leadership (PMTL) in 2015. Its main objective is to help the Christians identify leaders with credibility who are worthy of their support during national and local elections. They came out with **Gabay Kristo** [Guide according to Christ] which serves as guidelines for choosing Christian leaders. Once the choice has been made, support is expressed by campaigning for these candidates and once elected, these political leaders are carefully monitored to ensure that they govern well. The success of this initiative is yet to be seen when fully implemented.

## **PMTL**

### **PILIPINO MOVEMENT FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

#### **(A PRIMER)**

##### **I: OUR IDENTITY & REASON FOR OUR BEING**

Initiated in late 2014 and officially launched in September 2015, PMTL is a coalition of various Christian faith-based organizations from the Catholic, Evangelical and Protestant communities. The Convenors decided to come together in unity to do God's work in the political field, by providing a mechanism for our combined memberships, as well as our people in general, to be appropriately guided in electing honest, competent, dedicated & God-centered servant leaders who can lead our country towards national transformation in accordance with God's plan.

Among the Convenors of PMTL are BCBP (Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen & Professionals), CFM (Christian Family Movement), Familia Community, FTCC (Federation of Transparochial Charismatic Communities), LNP (Ligaya ng Panginoon), IFP (Intercessors for the Philippines), PJM (Philippine Jesus Movement), UMC (United Methodist Church), among others.

As our core values, we believe in 1) God-centered, honest, competent, committed, strong-willed, servant leadership; 2) good governance; 3) common good; 4) inclusive democracy; 5) inclusive economy and; 6) equal opportunities for all. We advocate against graft and corruption, political dynasties, monopolistic and oligarchic control of business, opportunities, land ownership, natural resources as well as nepotism, favoritism in appointments, political accommodations, among others.

Our long-term goal is to attain national transformation in accordance with God's teachings by setting up a mechanism that would help in electing honest, competent, servant leaders for our country.

Our immediate goal is to raise an army of millions of genuine Christian voters, within our ranks or among our combined memberships, who will all use our agreed or common voters' guide - - the GabayKristo - - in selecting the most qualified leaders for our people. GabayKristo is the PMTL's agreed common criteria or voter's guide composed of twenty (20) specific questions.

It is our desire for PMTL to become an institution for inclusive democracy in the country.

## II: OUR APPROACH: 2-Pronged

To achieve our short-term and long-term goals, PMTL has devised a 2-prong approach.

### 1) GabayKristo: A scientifically designed Voters' Guide

The country's population is approximately 85% Catholic Christians and 9% evangelical and protestant Christians.

The combined memberships of the PMTL member organizations have at least 15 million voting-age members, enough to elect national leaders like president, vice-president and senators for the country. This means that, if only these 15 million Christian voters, whose organizations are PMTL members, would really vote as genuine Christians, we can elect servant leaders for the people.

But the sad reality is that, a great majority of these 15 million Christian voters do not vote as genuine Christians.

So we ask the question, why?

Is it because the voters' guidelines being issued by the Catholic Church and the evangelical, protestant churches are not effective? Maybe. Why are they not effective? Perhaps we don't have an effective voters' education program for our people.

We believe that a good Christian must be a good voter and a good citizen.

It is on this premise and context that PMTL devised GabayKristo, a scientifically designed voters' guide. GabayKristo is a product of various minds of experts and leaders from different organizations. It went through many debates and refinements.

GabayKristo is composed of 20 specific questions, which are divided into 4 categories, namely – character, competence, integrity in leadership & public service, and faithfulness to God, country & people. Each question must be rated from 1 up 5, 5 being the highest. The rates in all 20 questions must be totaled. The candidate with the highest score is the most deserving to be voted on. GabayKristo is applicable for both national and local candidates, but the issues may differ.

GabayKristo is a breakthrough. This is the first time in the country's history that the faith-based organizations from the catholic, evangelical and protestant communities have agreed to use only one and common voters' guide to guide all their respective memberships in voting during elections.

We will conduct an intense and sustained voters' education campaign within our ranks, among the PMTL member organizations. We believe that if we can transform the 15 million Christian voters within our own ranks, we can elect servant leaders who can transform our nation in accordance with God's social teachings.

## 2) People's Primary

The People's Primary is a process where any PMTL member organization may choose to apply the GabayKristo among the candidates for a certain position, and would release the list of candidates with the highest scores to their membership for guidance.

Any of the member organization of PMTL has the discretion whether or not to conduct People's Primary among its members, using the GabayKristo. If it decides to conduct a People's Primary, it may choose not to release its results to its members. If it decides to release the results to its members, it will only serve as a guide and recommendatory. It will be purely voluntary for members whether to vote or not for the winning candidates. It will also be the sole discretion of the organization if it wishes to support and campaign for its winning candidates.

The PMTL, as a coalition, will not conduct a People's Primary. Instead, a separate and independent organization called the People's Choice Movement (PCM) may conduct the People's Primary using the GabayKristo.

PMTL will remain non-partisan, unlike the PCM.

### III: PMTL'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since its initiation in late 2014, PMTL has accomplished many things.

Its first accomplishment is the forging of unity among faith-based organizations from the catholic, evangelical and protestant communities. This unity is crystallized in the use of GabayKristo, a common voter's guide all their respective memberships.

Second accomplishment. The PMTL leadership was privileged to present PMTL to the leaders and members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). The CBCP, through its President Archbishop Socrates Villegas, issued a Pastoral Letter dated 11 August 2015 endorsing PMTL to all Catholic laity and organizations. After the CBCP Plenary Assembly on 23 January 2016, the CBCP through its President, issued another Pastoral Letter categorically affirming its support for PMTL and encouraging all Catholic laity and organizations to actively support and participate in it. The Bishops of the biggest churches and organizations among the evangelical and protestant communities also endorsed PMTL, namely – the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), NCCP (National Council of Churches in the Philippines), UCCP (United Churches' Council of the Philippines), PJM (Philippine Jesus Movement), Bible Mode, CBMAP (Christian Bishops & Ministers Association of the Philippines), Christian Patriots, CCL (Capitol Christian Leadership), NFS (Nameless Faceless Selfless) Ministry, IFP (Intercessors for the Philippines), and UMC (United Methodist Church).

Third accomplishment. The media networks and outlets of the catholic, evangelical and protestant churches have also endorsed PMTL

Fourth accomplishment. During the 2016 national elections, many organizations donated hundreds of thousands of copies of GabayKristo in 4

different local languages, which were distributed to various provinces of the country.

#### **IV: OUR COMMITMENT & PRAYER**

We will take the voters' education campaign seriously. The combined membership of our organizations is substantial in number and strength. We believe that if we can transform our combined membership to become enlightened and genuine Christian voters, using the Gabay-Kristo as our guide for voting, we can help in a major way in electing genuine servant leaders who can transform our nation in accordance with God's teachings.

We pray that every good Christian, that every good Filipino, wherever he/she maybe in our country or in the world, would join us in PMTL and help us attain our goals. We pray that, with our joint and collective efforts, we elect honest, competent, strong-willed, servant leaders who can transform and build our country in accordance with God's plan, so the Filipino may take his rightful place in the global community with pride and dignity, and that our nation may become a light to the world.

#### **Lay groups in families**

In the LAIKO there are several lay groups whose primary mission is to keep the Christian values deeply rooted in Filipino families as well as their constant renewal. These are the Couples for Christ, Marriage Encounters, Christian Family Movement and Christ Family Mission Movement among others. They help in the Family Ministries of the parishes, especially in preparing young couples for the sacrament of matrimony. Aside from the Philippines, they send families as missionaries in other countries.

#### **Lay groups in business**

The Brotherhood and Businessmen and Professionals (BCBP), is a nationwide lay organization the members of which are steep in giving witness to their faith in their profession and in their businesses. They help one another live their Christian faith in their work and businesses.

The Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals traces its beginnings to the Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon Covenant Community as well as to the community movement and Charismatic Renewal in the Philippines from which it sprang.

In July 1980, 24 men met at the Makati Sports Club, Philippines in what was to be the first Men's Breakfast of the soon-to-be Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen & Professionals. The initial breakfast flourished with more and more businessmen and professionals attending. This signaled the start of the first Life in the Spirit Seminar, the forerunner of the present Brotherhood Christian Life Program (BCLP). In a span of two years, the first BCBP chapter was established right from where it all started, Makati. To date, the BCBP has 79 full chapters and 45 outreaches including 1 chapter and several missions in BCBP USA, CANADA and SINGAPORE.

The BCBP has the singular distinction of having introduced and sustained the BCBP Christian Men's Breakfast that has changed the lives of so many businessmen and women and professionals throughout its years of existence. There are more than 120 breakfast venues every week throughout the Philippines where businessmen and women meet for food, fellowship, fun, and inspiration through the life sharing of a fellow Christian. The breakfast is the main entry point into the organization.

Members meet in Action Groups, attend Assemblies and other community activities, and participate in the various trainings and formation programs of the community. The BCBP identifies, trains, and develops Christian leaders to become agents for justice and sound development in the work environment. It also conducts workshops, seminars, and retreats as requested by companies, businesses, and government offices, that discuss and present ways by which the Christian businessman or professional can deal with evil in the marketplace.

The main Mission Activities of the Community include: the weekly BCBP Breakfasts, developing outreaches and growing them into chapters, conducting Marketplace Evangelization Programs in government agencies, NGOs and business offices, and the Brotherhood Christian Life Programs (BCLPs). All these activities and programs serve as venues for recruiting and bringing new members into the Brotherhood as well as expansion of the BCBP's influence in the business milieu.

Each chapter has its own Mission Team, headed by the Chapter's Mission Director. The Team includes the Breakfast Head, BCLP Course Leader, Outreach Coordinator, and Marketplace Evangelization Program (MEP) Head. The Chapter Head is the principal authority on mission work in his chapter, under the direction of the National Service Coordinator for Mission who sees to it that the proper ways and means are observed in identifying and carrying out viable mission programs in areas targeted for evangelization in order to achieve maximum and effective

exposure in all business centers in the country and beyond. The BCBP has a Spiritual Director who is a priest.

For more information, please visit: [www.bcbpkapatiran.com](http://www.bcbpkapatiran.com)

### **The Laity and the use of the social media**

Aware of the effect of social media in society today, LAIKO has its own website and Facebook account which is constantly updated. Through these channels LAIKO provides information about its stand on the burning social issues, and sees to it that these information are true, to counter the tide of fake news that pervade the social media landscape. The Laiko members are encouraged to open these challenges and to contribute to them so that they can become the hob of shared information and common action. Members are being formed and educated on the use of social media and its importance as a tool for evangelization.

Considering the importance of the proper use of social media as an effective tool in our apostolate, Laiko in partnership with Veritas 846 New Media, A Catholic Church owned Media Company is now organizing a one-day social media seminar nationwide. Topics are the following:

1. The importance of Social Media in our present society;
2. Basic Social Media Strategy
3. Social Media Analytics
4. Trending Graphics Design
5. Social Communications in New Evangelization

### **Lay participation in community rehabilitation of drug addicts**

Presently, the Philippines is becoming popular worldwide for its aggressive and violent war against drugs. Statistics show that more than 23 thousand have been killed as part of the government's drive against drug and its users. Most of the victims are the poor and a not a few are even innocent. LAIKO and other concerned citizens have been speaking against these Extra Judicial Killings [EJKs], and some others are involved in community rehabilitation programs. They offer counseling, group therapy and even livelihood programs for the drug addicts. Many of these programs are done in coordination with the police, the local village



officials and the parishes. These concerned lay groups maintain that the drug problem, is more a health and poverty issue rather than a criminal one.

Here are the brief descriptions of Church-based rehabilitation programs in the Archdioceses of Cebu and Manila, Philippines:

### **Archdiocese of Cebu**

Surrender to God or “SuGod” is a community program for addiction of any form, focused on having a renewed relationship with God to sustain recovery.

SuGod is initiated by addiction recovery professionals and lay leaders of Catholic Charismatic Communities in the Archdiocese of Cebu, Philippines to help address the problem of drug addiction affecting more than 3 Million Filipinos. The program is adopted by the Archbishop of Cebu, Most Rev. Jose S. Palma, D.D. as part of the Cebu Archdiocesan Program for Drug Dependents (CAPDD).

The World Health Organization considered Drug Addiction as a disease called Substance Use Disorder (SUD). For SuGod, as a faith-based program, S.U.D. also means S-urrender to God, U-understand addiction, D-ecide to change.

To address drug addiction as a disease affecting the body, mind and spirit, SuGod uses both scientific and spiritual approach. SuGod engaged trainers and facilitators who are internationally credentialed/certified professionals experienced in the field of addiction recovery, supported by lay people involved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal ministry.

The three (3) main programs of SuGod that provides addiction recovery and healing process, are the following:

1. SuGod Recovery and Renewal Program (SRRP) – a 6-days brief intervention program to stop using drugs and introduction to a life of renewal and surrender to God.
2. SuGod Continuing Care Program (SCCP) – a continuing program available in drop-in centers (mostly in the parishes) to sustain recovery and establish relationship with God while providing a life-time support community.

3. SuGod Living-in-Faith and Livelihood Program (SLLP) – a livelihood and life skills training, restoring dignity of individuals and becoming productive members of the society.
4. While the SuGod programs are basically Roman Catholic with charismatic orientation, non-Catholics are most welcomed and well respected.

SuGod caters to moderate and low risk cases of addiction only, while high risk and special cases are referred to the government and private treatment facilities.

For capacity building and involvement of more people in the community, SuGod continues to provide the following services:

1. Facilitators Training of individuals interested to serve
2. Addiction Prevention and Awareness Campaign
3. Family Pastoral Care Services
4. Healing and Deliverance Prayer and Services

### **Archdiocese of Manila**

The Archdiocese of Manila Philippines, has a ‘Sanlakbay para sa Pagbabagong Buhay’ program. The program is a response of the Catholic Church in the Philippines to become a refuge to the large number of drug addicts who surrendered themselves resulting from the Philippine government’s war against illegal drugs.

Sanlakbay is a parish community-based rehabilitation program that further encourages more drug dependents to surrender, undergo rehabilitation, and give themselves another chance to start a new life.

The rehabilitation program is set up in the parishes to reach people and is supplemented by 12 modules. Participants undergo spiritual formation, counseling, livelihood projects, and skills formation training, as well as arts and cultural program and sports activities that will help them develop holistically.

The Sanlakbay program works in partnership with Caritas Manila’s Restorative Justice Ministry, Center for Family Ministry, University of Santo Tomas (UST)

graduate School of Psycho-Trauma, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and other cause oriented groups.

### **Concrete Response to Laudato Si of Pope Francis**

LAIKO is promoting the teachings of *Laudato Si* of Pope Francis to many lay groups in coordination with Global Catholic Climate Movement –Pilipinas [GCCM-Pilipinas]. Seminars are conducted to deepen awareness on one's responsibility to care for the environment. In coordination with WeGen, a solar company, LAIKO has installed solar panels in its building and encourages parishes and Catholic schools all over the country to promote this use of renewed energy.

There are so many initiatives that are on-going, whole year round in our country regarding care for our environment. The Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas collaborate with other institutions such as the Global Climate Change Movement Philippines (GCCM Pilipinas) and other ecological movement of catholic individuals, groups, organizations and institutions in actively responding together the call of Catholic Church teachings; in particular, to the call of LAUDATO SI.

The Yearly Walk for Creation in our capital city, Manila during the month of September is now institutionalized in our country. It is our way of celebrating the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and opening the Season of Creation. It is being participated by thousands of Filipinos.

Example of the latest edition of seminar that we have is the Lay Caucus on Care of Creation. Our speaker who is a priest speaks on the on-going plan of our government to construct a dam that will greatly affect negatively our environment as well as the indigenous people in the area. As a result, the different National Lay Organizations and Councils of the Laity pledge to oppose this project and will help in raising awareness on this concern.

### **In defense of Life and Family**

There are several bills being introduced in Congress that are inspired by the culture of death. There is an attempt to bring back death penalty, justify abortion in selected cases and promote the use of contraception. Many lay faithful make a stand against these bills by creating lobby groups, let their Christian voices be heard, and to persuade the lawmakers not to pursue the enactment of these laws.

Other bills being introduced in Congress that are anti-life and anti-family, are the recognition of same-sex marriage, the LGBT agenda, and the legalization of divorce. Lay Catholic groups together with Evangelical Churches join hands in fighting these bills.

Starting in 2017 Laiko has organized **WALK FOR LIFE** annually. All lay groups are encouraged to join an early morning March in several cities of the country to protest against Extra Judicial Killings and to promote the culture of life. In the two years that Walk for Life has been organized we were able to mobilize around 30,000 people, young and old, to stand up and walk for life. This brings out concretely our consciousness to life and human dignity among the lay people.

The Catholic laity is a strong force in Philippine society, considering that of the 110 million Filipinos, 83% are Catholics. Yet in the immediate past we were like the SLEEPING GIANT. However, **we have awakened** not only to our role and mission in the transformation of our society, but in our need to be equipped with the right weapons, i.e., education and formation. We are gathering enough courage to defend our faith and to make the Catholic voice be heard. We are now in the forefront in defense of Life and of Family. We are ready to risk our lives to defend what is true and just.