



Ottawa, September 21, 2020

NONCIATURE APOSTOLIQUE  
—  
APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE

My dear Friends of the Filipino Catholic Community,

As you gather together to begin celebrations to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> Year of Christianity in the Philippines (1521-2021), I am pleased to have this opportunity to greet each and every one of you participating in these ceremonies and through you, the entire Filipino Community both of the Archdiocese of Toronto and indeed, of the entire country. I also wish to communicate the affection and pastoral solicitude of our Holy Father Pope Francis for the Filipino Canadian community as they prepare to celebrate this remarkable milestone.

The theme for this commemoration “gifted to give” and as set forth by the Episcopal Conference of the Philippines is a reminder that those once evangelized are now in their turn evangelizing; for wherever people from the Philippines go, they bring with them their Christian faith and here in Canada as elsewhere, wherever they settle, whether for a temporary period or more permanently, they are enriching the Church and the wider community by their presence. We think of the clergy, religious and lay faithful who are active in parishes and dioceses in every part of Canada. May I also make note of those who are serving the Church in the Roman Curia such as your beloved Cardinal Tagle, and those in the Diplomatic Service of the Holy See.

A significant event in the journey to this celebration was the visit of Pope Francis to your homeland in 2015 where some of the largest crowds of any pastoral visit on the part of the Pope gathered to worship and pray and be inspired by his words of encouragement and challenge as also his words of consolation. It should be noted that in the story of the evangelization of the Philippines not all was as it should have been and it took a long time for the indigenous population to take their rightful place in the pastoral leadership of the Church. But the people of your land took to heart devotion to the Christ Child and found great consolation in devotion to the suffering Christ as they experienced their own afflictions whether the result of internal strife, being caught up amid the battles of warring nations as also the natural disasters that have brought great suffering.

They also found solace in devotion to the Mother of God. Who can forget the “People Power” revolution when millions gathered in a peaceful and non-violent protest, with Rosaries in their hands, and which made way for a transition from dictatorship to democracy! You begin your celebrations in this month of October dedicated to the Holy Rosary. During his visit Pope Francis recalled: “Filipino culture has, in fact, been shaped by the imagination of faith. Filipinos everywhere are known for their love of God, their fervent piety and their warm devotion to Our Lady and her Rosary! This great heritage contains a powerful missionary potential. It is the way in which your people have enculturated the Gospel and continue to embrace its message (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 122). In your efforts to prepare for the fifth centenary, build on this solid foundation.” (cf. *Homily, Manila Cathedral, January 16, 2015*).

May Our Lady intercede with her Santo Niño to guide each of you, dear participants as also the communities you represent, so that, having been enriched by the gift of faith, you may share that faith with others, “gifted to give.” In the name of Pope Francis, I am pleased to convey the Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of peace and joy in the Lord.

  
+ Luigi Bonazzi  
Apostolic Nuncio