



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

Statement of Solidarity to all Filipino women and all women in the world in celebration of the 110th International Women's Day

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28 RSV). This biblical passage posits the affirmation that God intends equality of all persons regardless of gender, generation, race or social geography.

Also, the biblical understanding succinctly expressed in the UCCP Declaration of Principles (CBL Art II, Sec 11), that all persons are created in the image of God (Gen. 1: 27), the Church upholds the inviolability of the rights and dignity of persons enshrined in the internationally acceded declarations for the protection of the right all persons to humane and decent life, specifically, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, agreements on economic, civil, political and cultural rights, the Convention Against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.

The Church joins in the celebration of the March 8 International Women's Day, a special day for women which began as a labor movement. Its early beginning was in 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter working hours, better pay and the right to vote. In 1910, the idea was suggested by Clara Zetkin to make the day international was tabled during a conference. There were 100 women there, from 17 countries, and they agreed on her suggestion unanimously. It was first celebrated in 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland.

The existing gaps in gender justice are not hidden from the Church, and the exacerbated interclass inequalities of women seen in the income disparity between working class women and those at the helms of economic and political power. The damage on the lives of women has been incalculable in the present dispensation and women are in a state of mourning wherein the "drug war" ravaged urban poor families leaving widowed teen mothers struggling to raise their children with scant opportunities for employment or education. This has worsened by the year-long quarantine lock down that further alienated the daily wage earners and women in the service sectors unemployed.

We are appalled of the impact of government's "whole-of-nation" approach to anti-communist insurgency share similar horrifying experiences of brutality and carnage by the police and military reinforced by the culture of impunity fostered by the government. The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the enactment of the Anti-Terror Act of 2020 have brought the present regime to new heights of state terrorism. The misogynist

state methodically uses militarist instead of health and welfare responses to the pandemic that resulted in the arrest and detention of thousands, with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) describing it in April 2020 as one of countries with worse pandemic-related human rights abuses.¹

We are well informed and frustrated that the state has instituted laws, policies securing the human, gender and economic rights, yet these are relativized and in large part disregarded under the overpowering psycho-social and political clout of patriarchy that relegates these encoded rights to the traditional culture of superiority and hegemony of men. The Philippines remains the top country in Asia in terms of closing the gender gap, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020. The report shows that the Philippines has closed 78% of its overall gender gap. It ranked 16th out of 153 countries with the narrowest gap between men and women, dropping by 8 notches from its place last year.²

Undoubtedly, however, women still accounts for 53% of the unpaid family workers while they constitute only 37.7% of the wage and salary earners. Though this shows that the regular income possibilities for women are still limited, the average household annual income of female-headed families is higher. The situation also pushes them to seek employment overseas. Increasing numbers of domestic helpers and entertainers are also being deployed both legally and illegally.

We are disheartened of feminization of migrant labor because of failure of the state to provide decent employment especially for women, increased vulnerability of women to sexual abuse, psycho-social abuse and others led to death. Almost half of the 232 million migrants worldwide are women. Women factory workers are underpaid, agricultural workers who have no security, domestic workers who are treated as slaves, health and care workers whose work is undervalued, women trafficked into the sex and other trades, and marriage migrants who are victims of social exclusion. Women migrants experience all forms of violence at home, in the workplace and in society.

We have observed that the lock down and quarantine protocols imposed to communities for almost a year exposed children and teenager to sexual and physical abuse due, resulting to teenage pregnancies of girls, children were bored, developed psycho-social deficiencies and temporary learning disabilities.

We are alarmed and deeply concerned of the recent report of the government's Population Commission that estimates around 2,250 children belonging to the 10-14 age group gave birth in 2018. The figure is more than double the estimated 1,000 in 2007, declaring it a national social emergency. It is about 40 to 50 Filipino children aged 10 to 14 years old give birth every week. On average, there are around 64,000 minors or those 18 years old and below who give birth every year, the report mentioned.³

We affirm our unwavering commitment to work for realizing equality of women with men and other genders in the Philippines and the global community, the Church joins in ministries and advocacies of organized women in communities and institutions for gender justice as seen in access to decent employment, respect and protection of the rights of women; access to adequate social services and equal participation in policy

¹ IBON INTERNATIONAL: <https://iboninternational.org/2020/12/10/mourning-and-resistance-womens-lot-under-duterte/>

² Philippine Commission on Women: <https://pcw.gov.ph/philippines-drops-8-places-in-gender-equality-remains-top-in-asia/>

³ Philippines Population Commission: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1116071>

making processes, program leadership and in significant initiatives that impact the lives of the poor, oppressed and the marginalized.

We pray: Loving and compassionate God, we thank you for creating us in your image and for the unreserved attitude of your Son Jesus Christ who did not deny persons of differing gender of healing and responding to their need for justice and peace. He genuinely ministered to those living in dire and dangerous situations. Confirm in us the assurance of your motherly accompaniment in our social services and in our advocacies for decent and meaningful life for women and the rest of the marginalized people. Let your enabling and tempering Spirit lead us to the new order of our society and the world. Amen.+

UCCP COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

March 07, 2021



Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog
General Secretary



Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa
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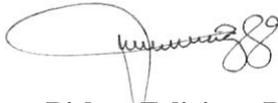
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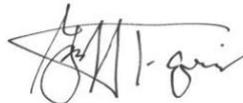
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