



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST INT THE PHILIPPINES

877 Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, West Triangle, Quezon City
Telephone: (632) 8426-1729 * 8426-3790 * 436-9157 Fax: (632) 8426-1729
E-mail: ogs@uccpchurch.com Website: www.uccpchurch.com

STEADFAST IN FAITH, UNWAVERING IN PROPHETIC MISSION A Pastoral Statement on the Commemoration of the 52nd Year of the Declaration of Martial Law in the Philippines

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy”

(Proverbs 31:8-9)

As the country marks the 52nd anniversary of the imposition of Martial Law, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) joins the Filipino people in commemorating this historic day. The UCCP restates its conviction that Martial Law is fundamentally bad. It blatantly disregards the rule of law, democracy, human rights, and justice, amply demonstrating a corrupt system of government.

In the face of repressive systems that oppress people and violate their inalienable rights to live in peace and completeness, the UCCP never wavers in its prophetic mission. The UCCP Constitution and By-Laws, Article II, Section 5, Declaration of Principles, states that "the fundamental values of love, justice, truth, and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church."

Even though Martial Law was imposed more than 5 decades ago, this horrible period in Philippine history is still well remembered by many. We denounce the use of Martial Law as a weapon against helpless civilians and anyone who dared to oppose the dictatorship. We also detest the fact that it benefited a small elite class at the expense of the mass of the poor, who still face hardships in an economy dominated by free-market and neoliberal policies.

The aftermath of Martial Law is still felt today. Tyranny can take many different forms, such as extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, red-tagging, false accusations, and other abuses of human rights. These deeds diminish the dignity of people created in God's image. The return to power of Ferdinand Marcos' heirs, who still profit from the resources of the country and the labor of its citizens, exacerbates this.

The vestiges of Martial Law have been resurfaced in the attempts for Charter Change, whose main objectives are to allow 100% foreign ownership of properties, term

extensions of elective officials, forming a unicameral legislature, removing pro-people provisions of the Constitution. These hidden agenda are in essence legalizing dictatorship now being controlled by political dynasties led by Ferdinand Marcos Jr. himself.

As your Council of Bishops, we call upon all followers of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, to remain steadfast in promoting and defending human rights, which are essential in realizing the vision of shalom in our communities.

As a well-known hymn tells us, let us "learn the lessons of the past and not repeat history." Although foreign dominance and colonization have played a significant role in our history, it is also a tale of rebellion and fight against oppression. History can teach us important lessons that we can apply to our decisions and actions in the present when we see it through the eyes of faith.

The good news is that in the end, justice that we continue to hope and work for will be served by God. In order to ensure that God's justice will always prevail, believers are empowered and guided to live out their faith in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 34:16, which states, "*The Lord's face is against evildoers, To wipe away their memory from the planet,*" serves as an inspiration to us.

Finally, we enjoin all the faithful to reaffirm UCCP's solemn pledge in building a peaceful society:


1. **Challenging all to a Life of Faith and Holiness:** Begin by calling those within the fellowship of the Church to lead a life dedicated to faith and holiness.
2. **Rendering Unto Caesar and Unto God:** We will faithfully give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God, upholding the balance between civic duties and spiritual commitments.
3. **Praying for Those in Authority:** We will pray that those in authority may be used as instruments of God to maintain peace and order, promote righteousness and justice, secure equality and opportunity for all, and safeguard the worth and dignity of human life.
4. **Pursuing Truth and Freedom:** We will seek the truth that makes us free and strive for the freedom that completes and unifies humankind.
5. **Witnessing to the Gospel's Liberating Power:** We commit to witnessing the liberating power of the Gospel, which frees both the oppressed and the oppressor.
6. **Opposing Corruption and Abuse:** We stand firm in opposing all forms of corruption and abuse, whether in the Church or in government.
7. **Equipping Through Education:** Our educational programs will be designed to address the urgent needs of our people, ensuring that they are equipped for meaningful change.


8. **Engaging in Christian Service:** We pledge to serve those detained without charges, prisoners in need of spiritual support, farm and industrial workers seeking fair wages and better living conditions, and the poor and underprivileged who long for the touch of Christ's love.
9. **Upholding Democratic Processes:** We will uphold the due processes of democracy, both within the Church and in society at large.
10. **Cultivating Bold Discipleship:** We commit to nurturing church members toward a bold and dynamic discipleship that will dispel fear, empowered by the spirit of love, not fear.
11. **Being Prophetic in Witness and Service:** We pledge to be prophetic in our preaching, serving, and witnessing, faithfully adhering to the mandates of our Lord.
12. **Fostering Reconciliation:** Finally, we commit to being agents of reconciliation, working to heal broken relationships and foster understanding, trust, and brotherhood.
 - *A Statement on Martial Law and Expression of Concern on Related Issues, General Assembly, 20 May 1974*


THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog
General Secretary


Bishop Joseph G. Agpao
Acting General Secretary

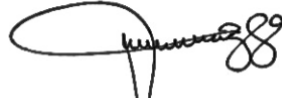

Bishop Marino I. Inong
Acting Bishop
North Luzon Jurisdictional
Area


**Bishop Francisco
S. Aviso Jr.**
Middle Luzon
Jurisdictional Area


Bishop Victor L. Paller
South Luzon Jurisdictional
Area



Bishop Jerby S. Salor
East Visayas Jurisdictional
Area



**Bishop Feliciano
P. Tenchavez**
West Visayas
Jurisdictional Area



**Bishop Ligaya
F. San Francisco**
Northwest Mindanao
Jurisdictional Area



**Bishop Daniel
R. Palicte**
Southeast Mindanao
Jurisdictional Area

Bishop Emeritus

Bishop Arturo R. Asi

Bishop Jerome C. Baris

Bishop Jezer E. Bertoldo

Bishop Erme R. Camba

Bishop Ebenezer C. Camino

Bishop Constante D. Claro

Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza

Bishop Roel P. Mendoza

Bishop Jaime R. Moriles

Bishop Emergencio D. Padillo

Bishop Eliezer M. Pascua

Bishop Dulce Pia-Rose

Bishop Elorde M. Sambat

Bishop Anacleto G. Serafica

Bishop Jessie S. Suarez

Bishop Rizalino Q. Taganas

Bishop Joel E. Tendero

Bishop Hamuel G. Tequis

Bishop Modesto D. Villasanta