

Catholic Church in PH alarmed by extrajudicial killings; 'Walk for Life' slated Feb. 18

Written by Christina Quiambao, Couples for Christ
Monday, 23 January 2017 17:51



From left, Congressman Jose “Lito” Atienza, Mrs. Zenaida Capistrano, Most Rev. Broderick Pabillo and Atty. Jose Tale.

According to Philippine National Police statistics, the war on drugs of the current administration has taken more than 6,000 lives during the period from June 2016 to the present.

The daily news about the extrajudicial killings were recently replaced by the proposal by the

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House of Representatives Justice Committee to reimpose the death penalty in the Philippines.

These developments are a source of concern for pro-life advocates, particularly the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

What has been even more alarming is that even those who call themselves Christian seem to approve of the killings and of reimposing the death penalty.

The Council of Laity of the Philippines or Laiko held a press conference on Jan. 11, 2017 to further articulate their sentiments with regards to the reimposition of the death penalty and the war on drugs.

The members of the panel who faced the press were Mrs. Zenaida Capistrano, President of Laiko; Atty. Jose Tale, Chairman of Couples for Christ; Congressman Jose "Lito" Atienza; and Most Rev. Broderick Pabillo.

The Council of Laity of the Philippines is a national public association of the lay faithful composed of 52 lay organizations and 51 diocesan councils.

Couples for Christ is one of these lay organizations.

Most Rev. Pabillo noted that the Church is mostly composed of the lay faithful, not the clergy.

He reiterated that the conference was held to give the lay faithful a chance to speak and be heard.

To the oft-repeated claims of some that the Church has remained silent when it comes to issues affecting life, Rev. Pabillo said that the Church has kept on speaking even if no one was

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listening.

The Church's stance opposing extrajudicial killings and the death penalty remains constant, recognizing the value of the life of every individual, even those who have committed wrongdoings.

Bishop Pabillo added that the Church encourages the lay faithful to be involved in politics.

"Politics is supposed to be a higher form of service. It is a service for the common good. Politics is an exercise of love, love for the common good," Rev. Pabillo concluded in his opening statement.

The press conference was also called because Laiko is launching "Walk for Life," an annual event that aims to promote the value of life.

"'Walk for Life' is not a form of protest [by the Catholic community] but it is an expression of our gratitude for life," Mrs. Capistrano stated.

"Walk for Life" will be held at the Quirino Grandstand on Feb. 18, 2017.

Details of the event are published on the Laiko website.

Mrs. Capistrano added that she is 100% against the reimposition of the death penalty.

"For us, life is valuable. It is given to us by God and only He can take it away."

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She highly encouraged the institution of reforms instead of capital punishment and encouraged the lay faithful to support the Church's position.

Atty. Tale emphasized that "Life is a precious gift from our creator. We are called to preserve it, nurture it and help others live it with dignity."

He informed the media present that Couples for Christ is fulfilling their part in preserving and nurturing life and responding to the problem of drug addiction through a program for substance abusers called Project ReForm, an acronym for Rehabilitation and Formation.

"We know that some of our members had substance abuse problems but we have seen them change. They changed because they have accepted God in their lives once again. This is an actual experience that shows that the solution to drugs is not to kill the addicts but to introduce them to the Lord and guide them toward reformation," Atty. Tale added.

He also mentioned that strengthening family ties and teaching every family member to value life is a lasting and effective solution to problems such as substance abuse.

Cong. Atienza, a devout Roman Catholic, remains pro-life even in the realm of politics. He has voiced his opposition against any campaign that encourages the culture of death. "We continue to fight in valuing life." Cong. Atienza said.

To the question on "why do some approve of the killings even if the Philippines is a religious country?"

Cong. Atienza replied that fear and anger feed the justification for the killings.

The Church and the lay faithful have joined the war against drugs but their methods are different from the government.

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At the core of their efforts are programs meant to give drug users hope that they can change and that people care, such as feeding programs, medical and dental missions, and the conduct of values formation programs.

As Laiko explained, the press conference was held not only for the lay faithful but for the common masses, to affirm that the war on drugs can be fought and won without sacrificing our moral values, to inform the public that there are existing initiatives to help others who are distraught and to remind everyone that, as Christians, we are all called to value life.