AT THE SERVICE OF MISSION
The Philippine Association of Catholic Missiologists

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The Philippine Bishops chose to make mission and evangelization central to the entire Jubilee Year 2000 experience: they conducted a three-day workshop on Mission and Ecclesia in Asia for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP); they issued the inspiring document “Missions and the Church in the Philippines: A Pastoral Letter on the Church’s Mission in the New Millennium; they sponsored the large National Mission Congress in Cebu, which they viewed as the “fitting culminating activity” of the Jubilee Year celebrations and the “first step as a Local Church into the Third Millennium.”

In this context of a genuine “mission awakening,” several of the missiologists serving the Philippine Church, encouraged by Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, S.V.D., chair of the CBCP Commission on Missions, began to explore the feasibility and advantages of forming a professional missiological organization. The purpose of such a group would be to foster and animate the Philippine Church being a “Church-in-Mission” (cf. PCP-II 102-15).

Dreams and hopes became concrete realities when eleven Catholic missiologists gathered in Cebu (17-19 August 2001) to begin work on the National Mission Plan for the CBCP (a pivotal recommenda-
tion of the Cebu National Mission Congress); the participants also explored the possibilities of forming a missiological society. During this historic meeting, the assembled missiologists decided to forge ahead and initiate the Philippine Association of Catholic Missiologists (PACM). Ricardo Cardinal Vidal hosted the PACM at a luncheon, encouraging its members to pursue a variety of activities focused on mission animation within the local Church of the Philippines. PACM had been born!

The momentum continued; enthusiasm grew. The fledgling PACM held its first Plenary Assembly at the Lorenzo Mission Institute in Manila (20-21 October 2001). The Association augmented and refined the proposed National Mission Plan for presentation at the January 2002 CBCP meeting. PACM completed the tedious work of developing and ratifying its statutes; participants elected officers for 2001-2004; future plans and activities were explored. PACM had taken its first few steps.

The PACM “exists for the purpose of fostering and animating the Philippine Church being a Church-in-Mission.” It also “commits itself to promoting missiological research, studies and educational activities as well as encouraging collaboration among the Catholic missiologists of the Philippines.” Its members are “those persons who hold a graduate or post-graduate degree in the field of Missiology” (PACM Statutes).

Currently the PACM counts nineteen degreeed missiologists among its active members. Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao are represented. In terms of their affiliations, the members are: six diocesan priests, four Divine Word Missionaries (S.V.D.), two Maryknoll priests (M.M.), two priests of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (C.I.C.M.), one Dominican sister (O.P.), one Good Shepherd sister (R.G.S.), one Franciscan Missionary of Mary (F.M.M.), one member of the Mission Society of the Philippines (M.S.P.), and one member of the Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society (L.R.M.S.). Additional members will soon be added; several Filipinos are presently in Rome pursuing licentiates or doctorates in Missiology.
PACM officers for 2001-2004 are the following: President: Father James H. Kroeger, M.M.; Vice-President: Monsignor Manuel G. Gabriel; Secretary: Sister Ma. Jesusa G. Enginco, O.P.; Treasurer: Father Jose Vidamor B. Yu, L.R.M.S.

The PACM held its second Plenary Assembly in Tagaytay (21-23 February 2002); the group was graciously hosted by the seminary community of the Mission Society of the Philippines. Updates on mission activities were given; new members were welcomed; proposals were presented to ascertain how the PACM could contribute to the implementation of the National Mission Plan that was unanimously approved by the CBCP on 26 January 2002. Joyful enthusiasm characterized this second Plenary Assembly.

Members of PACM committed themselves to work in teams on five specific projects that emerge from the CBCP National Mission Plan: 1) Design Missiology course(s) for use in seminaries, schools of theology, and religious formation centers; 2) Complete a feasibility study on the establishment of a National Mission Institute; 3) Propose a design for various regional and diocesan mission congresses, employing various approaches for different levels and audiences; 4) Develop modules for mission animation and training of facilitators and educators; 5) Publish a Directory of Mission Resources (courses, personnel, publications, seminars, etc.) available in the Philippine Church.

A unique feature of the annual PACM Plenary Assembly is a half-day Mission Conference; this symposium is open to the public and addresses a current issue of missiological significance. The Tagaytay Conference, held at the Divine Word School of Theology on 22 February 2002, explored the question: “Is Dialogue Possible? Muslims and Christians in Mindanao.” Before an audience of 200 professors, students, and guests, Father Bill LaRousse, M.M., insightfully spoke of Muslim-Christian dialogue in the context of southern Philippines.

The keynote presentation was then followed by reactions from two respondents. Father Tony de Castro, S.J., a Church historian origi-

The third Plenary Assembly was held in Cebu on 20-22 February 2003. On the second day of the PACM gathering, the "Mission Conference 2003" was graciously hosted by the Seminario Mayor de San Carlos. The conference theme was devoted to "Inculturation in the Chinese-Filipino Context." Father Jose Vidamor B. Yu of the Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society and PACM member presented the keynote address, outlining the challenges, phases, and possibilities of genuine inculturation of the faith in the "Chinoy" context. Two dynamic responses to the Yu presentation were given by Sister Catherine S. Cheong, F.I., and Ari C. Dy, a Jesuit scholastic [all three papers appear in this issue of *Landas*].

Becoming a "Church-in-Mission" is an ongoing endeavor and commitment; yet, in fact, the realization of this dream is a hope that emerged from the Jubilee celebrations of the Church in the Philippines. The nascent PACM desires to do its small share, to make its humble contribution, to enabling this local Church to be a fully missionary faith community. A professional group of missiologists like the PACM (though it is less than twenty active members at this time) sees its yeast-like role within the local Church. From very modest origins, its mission contribution can grow and expand. In addition, PACM realizes that it is only one of the many, praise-worthy evangelistic initiatives existing in the Philippine Church.

The fourth PACM Plenary Assembly is scheduled for Davao City in February 2004; the topic of the "Mission Conference 2004" will center on the missionary potential of the Basic Ecclesial Communities movement in the Philippines. Two PACM members, each holding a doctorate in missiology from the Gregorian University in Rome, will be the featured speakers; they are: Monsignor Manuel G. Gabriel and Sister Ma. Fe Mendoza, R.G.S.
The PACM and its members see themselves “at the service of mission” within the local Church; they are profoundly aware that mission always remains “God’s Project” and that the Holy Spirit is “the principal agent of mission.” They follow the view that the Church by her very nature is missionary, that evangelization is her proper vocation, her deepest identity. In a word, the Church exists in order to evangelize; likewise, for the PACM, to live is to evangelize.