“BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW”  
(Rev. 21:5) 
Message Of The National Pastoral Consultation  
On Church Renewal

1. In 1991 the Church in the Philippines sought to receive God’s gift of renewal in the event of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. The Council confronted the shadows of Philippine society, as well as the failures and sins of the Church. Hearing God’s call in these realities, it boldly challenged the Church in the Philippines to be a Community of Disciples, a Church of the Poor, committed to the mission of renewed integral evangelization, toward the building up of a new civilization of life and love in this land. Ten years later, from January 22 to 27, we, representatives of the vicariates, prelatures, dioceses and archdioceses of the Philippines gathered at the San Carlos Pastoral Formation Complex, Makati City for the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCCR). We reflected on how far we as a Church have fulfilled the grand vision and mission proposed by PCP II and the National Pastoral Plan. We looked at the past, we confronted the present, we discerned where the Spirit is leading us on this pilgrimage of renewal. Through this message, we want to share with you, sisters and brothers in the faith, the important concerns raised in the consultation.

RENEWAL AS GOD’S GIFT AND OUR RESPONSE

2. “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). Renewal is God’s dream and desire. It is God’s ongoing work in the world. Already, God has made all things new in Jesus Christ. In his ministry,
Jesus brought a new way of relating with God, a new way of being community, and a new way of being human. In his death and resurrection, Jesus is the beginning of the new creation, conquering sin and death by love. God's renewing Spirit moves through this suffering world, offering the gift of newness to all (cf. Rom. 8). The same Creator Spirit animates a new family of God to be the sign and servant of the renewal of all things in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10).

3. A decade after PCP II, we have come to recognize more clearly that the great challenges of PCP II—Community of Disciples, Church of the Poor, Renewed Integral Evangelization—were not obligations or projects we imposed on ourselves. Rather, they are a gift of newness and fullness of life offered to our Church and our people by the God of love. But we have to see more clearly too that the gift of renewal calls for a courageous response of faith and conversion (cf. Mk. 1:15). The gift must be boldly received by men and women—at the cost of letting go of old ways, of dying to old selves, of daring to risk new and unfamiliar paths and patterns (cf. Col. 3:9-10; Eph. 4:22-24; Rom. 6:4-6).

A FAITH READING OF THE CHANGING CONTEXT

4. Following the pattern of PCP II, we sought to discern God's call to renewal within our changing historical and ecclesial context. PCP II pointed to the strengths and gifts of the Filipino people. It also indicated the ills of the nation stemming from tragically unbalanced economic and political structures and ambivalent cultural traits. Unfortunately, much of what was said then is still true today. New causes and factors have spawned new forms of the old ills. The global economy, in tandem with superb new technologies and means of social communications, has produced a global culture that has been radically changing the culture of Filipinos, especially of the young, even in rural areas. Individualism, materialism, a "feel good" morality are eroding civic and religious values. Respect for tradition, committed relationships and self-sacrificing love are often sacrificed on the altar of pragmatism. New forms of oppression of the poor are appearing, systematically blinding and enslaving their minds and
hearts. Corruption in government has reached scandalous proportions, as demonstrated by the scandal of a presidential impeachment trial.

5. The Church in the Philippines has, to our shame, also remained unchanged in some respects. Due to weakness in formation and education, the lack of defined diocesan pastoral directions and programs, and deficiencies in structures, many prescriptions of PCP II have not been implemented. But beyond these factors, we see that failures in renewal have come from a deeper source: our hardness of heart and resistance to conversion. We confess that among those who make up the Church, even among some in positions of leadership and responsibility, the new attitudes, options, and lifestyles demanded by a Church that is Community of Disciples and Church of the Poor have all too often been honored in words but rejected in life. Moreover, largely due to inaction, uncritical acceptance of values and patterns of behavior of the dominant society, lack of consistent witnessing, we, as Church have to confess some responsibility for many of the continuing ills of Philippine society.

6. We rejoice, however, in the perseverance and increase of many movements of renewal in the Philippine society that have promoted the causes of women, the youth, farmers, laborers, fisher folk, the urban poor, overseas workers, families, tribal communities and the environment. We rejoice, too, that in the Church many committed lay people, religious women and men, priests, bishops, Catholic communities and institutions have sustained efforts to effect renewal through faith formation, the building of Basic Ecclesial Communities, livelihood and political education programs, and election monitoring, to name a few. Furthermore, the just concluded Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 and the three years of intensive preparation before filled our local churches with the blessings of purification of memory, active love of the poor and the earth, renewed awareness of and commitment to mission, and deepened hope. Still more recently, in the dramatic events of People Power II, we witnessed and experienced the gift of national and moral renewal which God empowered the Filipinos to receive.
SOME PASTORAL PRIORITIES

7. Reflecting on our contemporary context, we experienced the presence and action of God who has remained faithful to us in spite of our infidelities. We praise God's goodness, we beg for forgiveness, we hear anew God's call to renewal. We experienced God leading us toward a more participatory Church, a Church more authentically of the Poor, and a truly missionary Church helping form a more just society. For this reason we shall focus on nine pastoral priorities. Each of these priorities calls for a radical conversion of mind and heart. Their realization demands deep prayer and union with Christ, especially in the Eucharist.

A. Integral Faith Formation

We affirm that at the heart of pastoral renewal is a faith formation, rooted in prayer and the Eucharist that enables us to live more faithfully our vocation and mission as a community of Christ's disciples. In our context, our faith has to be a faith that does justice, a faith that liberates, a faith that is joyfully celebrated and effectively shared even in moments of difficulties, pressures and trying circumstances. Ours has to be a discerning faith that helps us see the dynamic action of God in our personal lives, in our communities, in the world. The *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* shall surely help us in realizing this priority.

B. Empowerment of the Laity towards Social Transformation

We shall support and strengthen the exercise of the gifts and charisms of lay people for the fulfillment of their role as co-responsible agents of renewal of society. They must be empowered to engage in greater dialogue and discernment with the clergy and religious concerning social, economic, political, and cultural issues, in order to take the leading role in the transformation of society. We shall promote an ever active role of women in the Church and in society, while keeping ourselves open to exploring possible new roles. We shall consult a wide range of women's experience in different life situations and learn from them new approaches to dialogue and cooperation.
C. Active Presence and Participation of the Poor in the Church

In order to make authentic our commitment to becoming a Church of the Poor, we must be evangelically poor. Therefore, we shall seek to liberate ourselves from mentalities, values, behaviors and lifestyles that discriminate against the materially poor. We shall listen to them and with them create conditions in which they are heard and can enjoy the blessings of God’s creation. As poor, among the poor, with the poor, we shall understand, live, celebrate and share our common faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

D. The Family as Focal Point of Evangelization

Since the family is the basic cell of the Church and Society, the Gospel has first to be shared in the family. We affirm that in the family integral faith formation of children, youth and parents must take place. We also recognize that the family is the origin of many cultural distortions that lie at the root of our problems as a people. We shall therefore commit ourselves to a more intensive evangelization of the family, so that the family might become not just object, but agent of proclaiming the Gospel.

E. Building and Strengthening of Participatory Communities that make up the Parish as a Community of Communities

We shall support the growth and strengthening of Basic Ecclesial Communities and other forms of faith-communities, such as lay associations and movements, as vehicles of renewal. We shall strive to integrate our communities into parish life and activities, and seek to develop structures of coordination and participatory decision-making.

F. Integral Renewal of the Clergy

We recognize that some of the clergy, by contrary lifestyles, have failed to promote the formation of a Community of Disciples that is a Church of the Poor. We shall therefore ensure deeper dialogue of life between the clergy and the poor, so that clerical lifestyle
may truly witness to poverty after the manner of the poor Christ. We shall seek creative ways of ongoing clergy formation in the areas of human development and spirituality, Scripture, theology, pastoral care and mission towards the formation of true servant-leaders in the spirit of PCP II.

G. Journeying with the Youth

Sociologically, the youth are the most numerous in our population and as well as some of the most active in our Church. They are also most vulnerable to the developments in our rising technological society. We shall engage in dialogue with the youth, strive to enter their world and journey with them towards Christian maturity. We shall affirm their gifts and immense capacity to pursue the Christian ideal.

H. Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue

We shall undertake our renewal efforts in fidelity to Jesus’ will for unity among believers. Rooted in Christ, we shall strive to eradicate prejudices and to grow in deeper understanding and appreciation of other ecclesial communities and religious traditions, especially the followers of Islam. We shall engage in a dialogue of life, faith, prayer and common action with them. As a way to healing, reconciliation and national unity, we shall encourage dialogue among all sectors of society.

I. Animation and Formation for Mission “ad gentes”

We shall respond to the Holy Father’s challenge that Filipinos become “the foremost missionaries for all of Asia” in the third millennium. For this purpose we shall ensure that mission animation and formation will be integral to religious formation in the family, schools and other institutes of formation.
AN APPEAL

8. These are general priorities that must be appropriated in and by local communities and made operational in concrete plans. Thus, we enjoin all communities of faith to engage in contextualized pastoral reflection, dialogue, discernment, planning and action based on these nine priorities. We repeat our invitation to all to the conversion and prayer that alone makes renewal possible.

CONCLUSION

9. *Duc in altum.* "Put out into the deep" (Lk. 5:4). These are the words that the Holy Father used to introduce his Apostolic exhortation, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, at the close of the Jubilee Year. These are words Jesus addressed to Peter. Peter caught nothing after fishing all night, yet at Jesus’ word, he put out his nets and was surprised by the miraculous catch of fish.

The challenge for us, the Church in the Philippines, is to do the same. We are called to put out into the depths of Philippine life and society, to put out into the depths of our life as Church, to put out our nets into the unknown depths of the future. Like Peter, we know the frustration of having caught nothing. But like Peter, we know that the One who directs us is the Lord who has renewed all things by his life, death and resurrection. And so we dare to begin again in the task of renewal. May Mary, star of evangelization, be with us in our journey to the new creation we so deeply desire.

For the Delegates of the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal

+ORLANDO B. QUEVEDO, OMI
Archbishop of Cotabato
President, CBCP
27 January 2001