EDITOR’S PREFACE

This issue of Landas is almost exclusively dedicated to biblical studies. In recognition, however, of the conviction that the Bible is the book of the Church and must, therefore, ultimately have the community of believers as its requisite hermeneutical sitzt im leben if it is to be read, understood and used correctly, we decided to open this issue with Ma. Lucia Natividad’s essay. Natividad, whose field of expertise is religious education, attempts to highlight the connection between Bible and Church by examining the use of Scripture in Catechism of the Catholic Church. She enumerates and evaluates various critical appraisals by scholars of this use and presents a cogent defense of it. Her approach is one that brings out the “performative character” of the role that the Bible plays in the contemporary life of the Church, a role that is rightly put into sharp relief by ecclesial concerns related to catechesis and religious education.

In the area of Old Testament scholarship, the Belgian Jean Louis Ska puts biblical studies in the service of these concerns by bringing to the fore the relationship between masters and slaves, creation and liberation, faith and freedom, through a profound literary analysis of Exodus 14. Given the contemporary context of Philippine society, Ska succeeds in enabling Exodus 14 to continue to resound with its
hopeful message of faith and liberation founded on a Creator God who acts and journeys with God’s people through history. Bernardita Danzon’s contribution has the significant merit of, among other things, presenting a rather complex image of a woman that, in some respects, resonates with contemporary concerns to liberate women from purely passive roles in family and household. And Victor Salanga’s essay shifts the focus from married to religious life by examining the sense in which the Old Testament notion of בְּרִית as “covenant” and as “oath” may be understood as providing a biblical foundation for religious vows.

Moving into the area of the New Testament scholarship, the present issue of Landas offers two articles. The first is by the American scholar John Pilch. His contribution attempts to situate the theme of holiness—paradigmatically represented in a powerful way by the Gospel portrait of Jesus as a holy person—within Filipino culture through the mediation of the anthropological category of “shamanism.” The value of Pilch’s rather impressionistic article is that it opens new avenues of research for Filipino biblical scholars, one that in fact is long overdue in this country. The Philippine Church, if she is to effectively assist women and men today to respond to God’s call to holiness, cannot afford to ignore the cultural and anthropological bases of Filipino understanding of self and community.

The second article is by Herbert Schneider; it offers an answer to the question: has God ordained the subordination of wives to husbands? His carefully weighed answer—which is arrived at through a judicious examination of the pertinent passages in Colossians, Ephesians and 1 Peter—provides a New Testament image of Christian marriage that dovetails in some ways with Danzon’s concern to offer a description of woman as she appears in Proverbs 31:10-31. He highlights the interrelatedness between family and community and ends his essay by exhorting couples to live their married life “in the power of the Holy Spirit, in humility and self-forgetfulness, with a readiness to forgive, and begin all over again to love, serve, and allow themselves to be loved and cared for by their marriage partner.”

Landas, through its “Notes and Comments” section, wishes to
promote conversation and dialogue between and among scholars. John Schumacher, eminent historian and professor emeritus of Church history at Loyola School of Theology, takes issue with the historical data used by Rafael Dy-Liacco in an article published in *Landas* 16:2 ("When the Truth Hurts: Finding Hope for the Philippines from the Underside of History"). Without passing judgment on the theological merit of Dy-Liacco’s article, he prefaces his critique of it by appealing to the need for theologians to be more careful and critical in their use of what passes for history.

Mr. Dy-Liacco offers not only an appreciative response to Schumacher’s critique but also a concise defense of his overall theological perspective. This perspective he links to the imperative of developing a Filipino theology of liberation through an attempt to listen to “the voices of those who do not count, the utterly defeated whose lives never figure in the stories of the victors.” This exchange between Schumacher and Dy-Liacco should stimulate scholars of different academic fields to engage in much needed interdisciplinary dialogue and discussion.

Finally, in our “Documentation” section, we offer to our readers one bishop’s attempt to articulate for his diocese the general concern to promote Christian marriage and family life, particularly as this touches on the issue of family planning and responsible parenthood. The recently concluded 4th World Meeting of Families, held here in Manila, provides a fitting backdrop to the collaborative effort between Bishop Antonio Ledesma and his flock, the local Church of the Prelature of Ipil, to arrive at a balanced, reasonable and Gospel-based program of natural family planning that is both faithful to the teachings of the Church and creative in its response to the life-defining challenges now facing Catholic couples and families.

*Tolle, lege!*

**Antonio F.B. de Castro, S.J.**

Guest Editor