

## INTRODUCTION

The fall of Ferdinand Marcos in February 1986 marked the end of a prolonged period of strained relations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines [GRP] and the Catholic Church. The widow of the slain Senator Benigno Aquino, erstwhile nemesis of Marcos, assumed the capital office. Being a devout Catholic, Cory Aquino as President of the GRP always sought guidance, for spiritual matters as well as matters affecting her administration, from her friends in the Catholic hierarchy, especially from the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin. Generally, then, during her six years of presidency, the relation between the GRP and the Church was cordial if not favorable to the latter.

President Aquino obeyed the 1987 Constitution, which provided for a one-term presidency. She endorsed General Fidel V. Ramos [FVR], most loyal to her during the seven coup attempts of the reformist military, to the presidential candidacy. FVR emerged the

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own specific contribution to the great permanent tasks of mankind--peace, justice, development and every worthy effort aimed at promoting and defending human dignity--she does so because she is convinced that such action is related to her mission. This mission is concerned with the salvation of man: the whole human being, the individual person who fulfills his or her eternal vocation in temporal history, within a complex of communities and societies.<sup>2</sup>

In a similar vein, the Philippine Bishops have said that the Church “cannot and must not ignore the problems concerning justice, integral liberation, development and peace”. Quoting a document of the World Synod of Bishops, *Justice In the World*, they stated that “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”<sup>3</sup>

The Philippine Bishops concluded that:

In any human policy there must be room for dissent. Laws and prescriptions of the law can be unjust either in their formulation or their promulgation or their execution. Thus, not every act of conscientious objection can be outrightly ruled out. Dissent for reasons of conscience or for a higher law will always be a possibility and, hence, a problem in any society.

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<sup>2</sup> [Source]

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines [CBCP], *Current Issues that Affect Church-State Relationships*, 29.XI.1982.

The GRP and the Moro National Liberation Front [MNLF], with the participation of the Organization of Islamic Countries [OIC] ministerial committee of six, in its 8th mixed committee meeting, in Davao City on 21-23 June 1996, arrived at--among others--the following points of consensus:

1. There shall be established a Special Zone of Peace and Development in the 14 provinces and all the cities therein covered by the Tripoli Agreement. Within the next three (3) years, these areas shall be the focus of intensive peace and development efforts. Public and private investments shall be channeled to these areas to spur economic activities and uplift the conditions of the people therein.
2. There shall be established a Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development [SPCPD], composed of one (1) Chairman, one (1) Vice Chairman and three (3) Deputies, one each representing the Muslims, the Christians, and the *Lumads* (tribal cultural communities). They shall be appointed by the President upon recommendation of the MNLF and after due consultation with the various leaders and sectors in the Southern Philippines.
3. The local government units in the area including the autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao [ARMM], shall continue to exist and exercise their functions in accordance with the existing laws. (Note: This means that local

The GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement was signed in Malacañang on 2 September 1996. President Ramos orated: "Break not the peace!"

What was the reaction of the CBCP? The bishops decried the SPCPD for its being formed without consultation with the Christians in the provinces and cities affected. Sure, there were two symposia held in the Senate and in Sulo Hotel, but none in Mindanao. Individual senators flew to Mindanano to consult with the Christians affected.

The CBCP plenary assembly published an open letter an open letter on the Mindanao peace process on 8 July 1996. The bishops recommended changes on the nature, function and composition of the SPCPD, the respect of all faiths and more Christian representation in the consultative assembly. Thus, more consultations were made.

Has Misuari done his job? Facts speak more. After the signing, he was out of the country for about nine months. On February 4, 1996, Bishop Benjamin de Jesus of Jolo was assassinated; in the last quarter of 1997, Msgr. Desmond Hartford was kidnapped. Another foreign priest was abducted. Misuari could not control the disorderly situation.

## **2. The HIV-AIDS Problem**

First identified in 1981, the AIDS situation is a pandemic fast spreading to every continent. The GRP has been waging a war versus HIV-AIDS. Persons with AIDS have been closely monitored in order to stave off further spread of the killer disease. The number of reported HIV infected cases in the country since 1984 to the present is in the

*the Compassion of Jesus*. The bishops said “an encounter with people infected with HIV-AIDS should be a moment of grace--an opportunity for us to be Christ’s compassionate presence to them as well as to experience His presence in them.” The bishops continued that “our first attitude must be to serve and minister” to those suffering from AIDS. Next, the faithful should help stem the spread of the disease by collaborating with other social agencies in providing factual education about HIV-AIDS. Most of all, they needed to recognize the moral dimension of the disease, which urges them to take a sharply negative view of the condom-distribution approach to the problem. The “safe-sex” proposal, they added, “would be tantamount to condoning promiscuity and sexual permissiveness and to fostering indifference to the moral demand as long as negative social and pathological consequences can be avoided.”

For those married, the bishops reminded them of monogamous fidelity and chastity, ethical demands flowering from human love as gift and responsibility. For those not married, the same exhortation of fidelity to the same moral beliefs was given by CBCP.

In sum, the CBCP is against the facile approach of the GRP of distributing condoms for so-called “safe sex”. Rather it affirms that chastity and conjugal fidelity are the best protection against HIV-AIDS.

### **3. The Drug Problem**

Addressing a group of priests, nuns and other religious leaders during the national consultation on child protection and development in 1997, Social Welfare Secretary Lina Laigo made this alarming

drugs. CBCP president Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz disclosed that “next to Mexico, the Philippines has become the second largest exporter of marijuana and is fast becoming one of the major points for transshipping illegal drugs in Asia.” The bishops declared that “every drug bust, every arrest of a pusher or user becomes an exercise of pseudo-justice since powerful tentacles always reach out to protect the drug subculture from exposure.” The root causes that drive people to use drugs are: peer pressure, the negative quality of relationships within the family, the rigidity or laxity of home discipline, ignorance or apathy, a lack of self-esteem, the influence through mass media, and laxity of law enforcement.

#### **4. The Expanded Value Added Tax [EVAT]**

In order to rake more income into the government coffers, the GRP approved the EVAT. It gives a list of items included in the new system of tax collection. Still the system is regressive, since both rich and poor pay the same tax on articles purchased.

To this state law, the CBCP responded with a pastoral letter released on July 10, 1994, entitled *Taxation and EVAT*. The bishops admitted that the government has a right to impose and collect taxes provided these taxes are just; correspondingly, the citizen has a duty to pay taxes faithfully, honestly (cf. *Rom. 13: 6-7*). These taxes, under distributive justice, go back to the people in the form of basic services. they are “not for the selfish and capricious consumption of those in power.”

letter writers who were ignorant of the status of the Holy See under public international law. Vatican City, with only about 109 acres in area and some 1000 inhabitants mostly employees, is a State; the Pope is head of State just like President Ramos. When the Pope came, it was therefore a state visit for President Ramos and a pastoral visit for Filipino Catholics. The principle of separation of Church and State was not violated by the President.

## **6. Separation of Church and State: Charter Change, PIRMA**

Then came the hot issue of constitutional change to allow President Ramos to run for a second term. The Peoples' Initiative for Reforms, Modernization and Action [PIRMA] solicited millions of signatures needed to file a petition with the COMELEC to verify them. Earlier the highest tribunal rejected a petition saying there was no enabling law as basis thereof. The Solicitor General could not provide any sensible justification for charter change. After three attempts of PIRMA to push its agenda, the Court ruled with finality: NO. The vote was overwhelming: 13-0, with one justice unable to vote for being out of the country.

In its ruling, the Court stated that the COMELEC did not act with grave abuse of authority when it rejected PIRMA's petition to validate the signatures it gathered. The Court, however, was divided on the issue of whether Republic Act 6735, the law on people's initiative and referendum, is adequate in amending the Constitution. Eight justices voted the law is not adequate. Five justices thought there was a need for a re-examination of RA 6735.

continue the economic gains of the new tiger. Alas and alack, even before the Ramos term ended, the economy was thrown in shambles, with the peso sinking before the mighty greenback to depths hitherto unknown.

## **7. The Housing Problem**

The Ramos Administration had boasted of having provided housing units to thousands of families. Still we are faced with the grim reality of millions of squatters on public and private lands. Under the bridges, inside cemeteries and culverts, people take shelter.

In his Lenten message of 1997, Pope John Paul II called the attention of governments and of peoples to the plight of the homeless. The World Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II, held in Istanbul in June 1996 focused on the need to look for a harmony of development and economic progress with solidarity for the poor. As the Pope spoke in his Angelus address on June 16, 1996, “ensuring a suitable habitat for everyone is demanded by the respect owed to every human being...a measure of civilization and the condition for a peaceful fraternal society.”<sup>4</sup>

In their Pastoral Statement on the Homeless, dated 10 July 1997, the Catholic bishops asked the government to address the causes of homelessness, mentioning the centralization of business and livelihood opportunities in the cities. Factories and industries and even

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<sup>4</sup> [Source]

1995 - *A Challenge to the Young*, the CBCP urged the enactment of election reform bills in Congress. The body also advanced the catchy triple criteria in choosing candidates - PRO-GOD, PRO-LIFE, PRO-FAMILY. Others added: PRO-ENVIRONMENT. By April 9, 1995, barely a month before the election, CBCP sounded a clarion call to Christian participation in the elections, that is, in the light of the faith of the Gospel. To the candidates the bishops gave five precepts: to stop violence, do not cheat, do not buy votes, do not trivialize the campaign period and do not tell lies to destroy the good name of others. They also exhorted the voters to vote intelligently, not to sell their votes, to beware of candidates who overspend during elections and not to allow themselves to be cowed. Finally, the CBCP reminded the COMELEC and their deputies to work with impartiality, competence, honesty and credibility and to expose and neutralize all private armed groups.

### **9. The Problem of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)**

The administration calls the OFWs the unsung heroes or our new heroes. Between 3 to 5 million of them work in all the continents of the world. They remit into the country about \$6 billion annually. Yet, many of them have come home in caskets, or become insane, or with bodily marks of physical cruelty or unpaid of their deserved salaries. Poverty, underemployment and unemployment have driven them from their homes and families, bearing the pain of separation from loved ones.

On 21 February 1988, the CBCP issued a pastoral letter on the protection of migrant workers. Glad that our government had enacted the *Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995*, known as the

The Department of Justice [DOJ] fixed the third week of October as the National Corrections Consciousness Week [NCCW]. A National Secretariat-NCCW, composed of representatives from the DOJ, CBCP, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, was tasked to organize activities in connection with the celebration.

The government is well aware that the Catholic Church has been in the prisons ministry for a considerable time and the CBCP has institutionalized the apostolate through the Episcopal Commission on Prisoners' Welfare. Thus, the DOJ invited the CBCP to co-sponsor the celebration.

### **11. CBCP Dialogue with Malacañang**

Right after the September 21, 1997 rally at Luneta against charter change, President Ramos called for a dialogue with CBCP. The bishops could not attend due to prior commitments. Instead, CBCP subalterns attended the meeting, held at Malacañang on 2 October 1997, President Ramos chaired, while cabinet secretaries gave inputs. A week after, another dialogue with some bishops took place. Eight points were agreed upon by both sides for purposes of cooperation, including election matters.

### **12. The Problem of Catholic Missionaries: MOA with the Bureau of Immigration**

There are foreign missionaries working in the Philippines. But since there had been cases of foreign-based religious corporations

Malacañang slammed the Justices as having intruded into the economic policies of the executive department. The Budget Secretary even called for the impeachment of the nine Justices who voted to declare the law unconstitutional. For these brave Justices, R.A. 8180 was not a deregulatory measure; on the contrary, it had created a cartel of only three giant oil companies.

The CBCP backed the Supreme Court decision nullifying the law in issue as unconstitutional. Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz, CBCP President, took the cudgels for the nine justices saying, “The Supreme Court justices only did their job, why should they be impeached” The critics claimed the justices were meddling in the country’s economic affairs, but Cruz said they only acted on the issue of constitutionality: “It was clear the law did not conform with the Constitution as its intent was contrary to the perception that it would promote free enterprise and defeat business monopoly,” he added.

## **II. JUDICIARY**

### **14. The Restoration of the Death Penalty**

Death convict Leo Echegaray in his supplemental motion for reconsideration raised for the first time a very crucial ground for his defense: that Republic Act No. 7659, the law reimposing death penalty is unconstitutional. However, the Supreme Court confirmed his

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<sup>5</sup> A case in point is the practice of recruiting young girls--under the guise of applicants to religious groups--to marry foreign males whom they meet for the first time after a previous matching.

statement on the sacredness of human life, deploring the killing of Senator Ninoy Aquino, of common criminals by secret marshalls, of suspected rebels by GRP soldiers, of civilians tried in kangaroo courts by communists, of candidates for office and their supporters by opposing candidates and supporters.

On July 24, 1992, the CBCP issued a statement on the non-restoration of death penalty. The abolition of the death penalty by the 1987 Constitution, the bishops said, was a very big step towards a practical recognition of the dignity of every human being created to the image and likeness of God, and of the value of human life from its conception to its natural end. The prelates averred that this advance in the Constitution was in accordance with the 1971 Resolution of the United Nations which declared, “in order fully to guarantee the right to life, provided for in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the main objective to be pursued is *that of progressively restricting the number of offenses for which the death penalty may be imposed, with a view to the desirability of abolishing this punishment in all countries*” [emphasis added].

### **15. The Question of Psychological Incapacity: Divorce Philippine Style**

Article 36 of the Family Code of the Philippines states, “A marriage contracted by an party who, at the time of the celebration was psychologically incapacitated to comply with the essential obligations of marriage, shall likewise be void even if such incapacity becomes manifest only after its solemnization.”

annulling marriages on this ground. Usually the parties no longer appealed and so the sentences became final and executory. In the words of one lawyer this ground became the worst divorce law in the world. Where lay the culprit? The Revision Committee, constituted under the auspices of the University of the Philippines Law Center which drafted the Code, explained:

The Committee would like the judge to interpret the provisions on a case-to-case basis, guided by experience, the findings of experts and researchers in psychological discipline, and by decisions of church tribunals which, although not binding on the civil courts, may be given persuasive effect since the provision was taken from Canon Law.<sup>6</sup>

In *Santos vs. Court of Appeals*[240 SCRA 20], it was ruled that:

The use of the phrase “psychological incapacity” under Article 36 of the Code has not been meant to comprehend all such possible cases of psychoses as, likewise mentioned by some ecclesiastical authorities, extremely low intelligence, immaturity, and like circumstances XXX. Article 36 of the Family Code cannot be taken and construed independently of,

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<sup>6</sup> Mr. Justice Josue N. Bellosillo, quoting Justice Alicia V. Sempio-Diy, in *Salita vs. Hon. Magtolis*, 233 SCRA 100. Justice Jose Vitug, in his concurring opinion in *Republic of the Philippines (petitioner) vs. Court of Appeals and Rondel Olaviano Molina*, G.R. No. 108763, affirmed that much value should be given to Canon Law jurisprudence as an aid to the interpretation and construction of the statutory enactment.

give meaning and significance to the marriage. This psychologic condition must exist at the time the marriage is celebrated ....

*In fine*, the term “psychological incapacity”, to be a ground for the nullity of marriage under Article 36 of the Family Code, must be able to pass the following tests; *viz*:

*First*, the incapacity must be psychological or mental, not physical, in nature;

*Second*, the psychological incapacity must relate to the inability, not mere refusal, to understand, assume and discharge the basic marital obligations of living together, observing love, respect and fidelity and rendering mutual help and support.

*Third*, this condition must exist at the time the marriage is contracted although its overt manifestations may occur only thereafter; and

*Fourth*, the mental disorder must be grave or serious and incurable.

The Supreme Court, during its deliberation en banc of the case Republic of the Philippines petitioner, vs. Court of Appeals and Rondel Olaviano Molina, invited two *amici curiae*, Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz (Vicar Judicial at the National Appellate Matrimonial Tribunal) of the Catholic Church in the Philippines and retired Justice Ricardo C. Puno, a member of the Family Code Revision Committee. From their

3. The incapacity must be proven to be existing at the time of the celebration of the marriage. The manifestation of the illness need not be perceivable at such time, but the illness itself must be present prior to the marriage.

4. Such incapacity must also be shown to be medically or clinically permanent or incurable.

5. Such illness must be grave enough to bring about the disability of the party to assume the essential obligations of marriage.

6. The essential marital obligations must be those embraced by Articles 68 up to 71 of the Family Code as regards the husband and wife as well as Articles 220, 221 and 225 in regard to parents and their children. Such non-complied marital obligations must also be stated in the petition, proven by evidence and included in the text of the decision.

7. Interpretations given by the National Appellate Matrimonial Tribunal of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, while not controlling or decisive, should be given great respect by our courts for they have persuasive effects.

8. The trial court must order the prosecuting attorney or fiscal and the Solicitor General to appear as counsel for the State. No decision shall be handed down unless the Solicitor General issues a certification, which will be quoted in the decision, briefly stating therein his reasons for his agreement or opposition, as the case may be, to the petition. The Solicitor General, along with the prosecuting attorney, shall submit to the court such certification within fifteen (15) days from the date the

### **III. LEGISLATURE**

#### **16. Attempt to lift the Tax Exemption of Churches**

In Senate Resolution No. 706, Senator Gregorio Honasan proposed to lift the tax exemption of churches in order to augment government income for it to deliver basic services.

The CBCP Legal Office delivered a position paper opposing the Senate resolution, citing Art. VI, Section 3 of the 1987 Constitution:

Charitable institutions , churches and parsonages or convents appertenant thereto, mosques, nonprofit cemeteries, and all lands, buildings, and impediments actually directly and exclusively used for religious, charitable or educational purposes shall be exempt from taxation.

Constantine the Great gave the Church the privilege of tax exemption. The same practice was held in England and its colonies.

Under the public burden theory, religious institutions deserve to be exempt from tax because they perform many of the burdens that would otherwise devolve upon the state by taxation: schools, hospitals, orphanages, etc.

stations in any part of the country, for the alleged purpose of funding educational, health and other social services of the government. After only two short committee hearings, the bill surprisingly passed second reading. Well-meaning congressmen were alarmed at the indecent haste of the bill's approval when it was not certified as priority measure. The approval was withdrawn. Another hearing was conducted. Another second reading approval. Some scrutinizing solons noticed that the government was at a losing end regarding taxation and sharing. The second reading was again withdrawn.

CBCP pointed out that it is precisely the poor and the needy who are the victims of this type of gambling, where money bet is lowest. To make gambling the means to alleviate poverty is a classic violation of the principle that "the end does not justify the means." Moreover Sect. 1 of the bill virtually empowers the franchise grantee to have the entire country in its gambling grip. And what is the social trade-off of gambling? Worsening poverty, more crimes and a gambling mentality. Already we have the following legalized gambling; cockfighting, sweepstakes, lotto, casino. Said the bishops in their joint pastoral letter on gambling, 24 January 1993, "Today, gambling is indeed a social cancer, gradually and surely destroying a great many of our positive social and moral values."

### **18. The *Magna Carta* of Students**

House Bill No. 9935 is called the *Magna Carta* of Students. President Ramos certified House Bill no. 9935 as priority bill, but seemed not to have gotten to the specifics. The absurdity of the bill lurks in the following provisions:

- giving students not merely a say but veto power, through students referenda and fora, in the screening of faculty and drafting or revision of curricula;

- students will sit on a School Fee Board which will not only be independent of but supreme over the regular school board in deciding all matters concerning tuition.

The Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations [COCOPEA] naturally reacted against this move of Congress, demonstrating to those who may have forgotten that they dominate the educational system. There are only a little over 100 state universities and colleges all over the country, but thousands of privately owned ones. Private elementary and high schools, often academically superior to public schools and with better student discipline enforced, also run into the thousands. If these private schools are shoved out of business, the educational system in the land certainly will be paralyzed.

COCOPEA declared a one-day class suspension to dramatize their protest against the bill. One Congressman, a school owner himself, opposed the bill saying the membership of non-stockholders (the students) in the school's governing board violates Corporation Law. The Speaker of the House heeded the calls for a modified version that would accommodate the COCOPEA suggestions.

The CBCP issued a statement on 27 January 1996 rejecting the Magna Carta of Students bill and exhorted Congress to legislate a better one, "based on a true concept of freedom and right, in accord with the Spirit of God." The bishops claimed that the bill violates Article II, Section 12 of the Constitution on the natural and primary rights of

solidarity with the nation's indigenous people in their struggle to be recognized as distinct Filipinos.

These communities are found in Mindanao, Luzon, Mindoro and parts of the Visayas. The prelates deplored and condemned the "present treatment by government and big business of the indigenous peoples in their disregard of the latter's rights to their ancestral domain ." The bishops urged that "their right to autonomy and self-determination within the sovereignty of the Philippine state must be honored" and bewailed the inaction of Congress in passing an adequate legislation protecting this rights.

A study by Novel Bangsal shows that ancestral domain lands, claimed by different indigenous cultural communities in the country, continue to shrink in size. From the 16 million hectares that they had a decade ago, they can now claim only about two to five million hectares of ancestral domain land.<sup>7</sup>

Bangsal observed that for the Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People [ICC/IP], the issue of ancestral domain has been a protracted struggle. In the last century and up to the present, the ICC/IP have been losing their lands to logging concessionaires and power generating projects. Bangsal stressed that the threats to the indigenous communities have severely affected their way of life. Many of them, deprived of their natural habitat, had virtually become intruders in the concessions. The animals they hunt had fled the forests

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<sup>7</sup> Novel Bangsal, "Understanding the Ancestral Domain Debate," in [source].

## **20. Urban Housing: the *Anti-squatting Law***

Presidential Decree No. 772, penalizing squatting, has been repealed with the passage of Republic Act No. 2368 decriminalizing squatting.

P.D. No. 772 punished any person who, with the use of force, intimidation, or threat, or taking advantage of the absence or tolerance of the landowner, succeeds in occupying or possessing the property of the latter against his will for residential, commercial or any other purpose. P.D. No. 772 did not apply to pasture lands.

R.A. No. 947 punishes entering or occupying public agricultural land including public lands granted to private individuals.

With R.A. No. 2368, squatting is de-criminalized; all cases under P.D. No. 772 are to be dismissed. However, for professional squatters and squatting syndicates, R.A. 7279 still is valid--i.e., professional squatting is still sanctioned. Since squatting is no longer a crime, in a case of acquittal, dismissal for violating P.D. No. 772, the civil remedy of a complainant is to file a separate civil action for ejectment.<sup>8</sup>

## **21. The Anti-Rape Law**

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<sup>8</sup> However, ejectment cannot be ordered in a criminal case where the accused was acquitted [People vs. Castañeda Jr., 122 SCRA 871].

public offense, from a crime against chastity to a crime against person. This means that if the offended party desists from her complaint, the state will still charge the rapist. Finally, the law degenderized rape so that a man can also sue a woman or homosexual for rape.

In a pastoral statement on The World Conference on Women in Beijing, the CBCP had urged the participants “to look more closely into the dignity of women and to call on governments on issues affecting women such as poverty, illiteracy, prostitution, violence against women, and their exploitation in mass media.” The bishops called on the Philippine delegation “to fight against all forms of violence against women-- physical, psychological or moral-- including forced sterilization, forced contraception and forced abortion ....”

The passage of the Anti-Rape Law, therefore, appears at first hand as a positive step.

## **22. The Family Planning Issue: The Population Commission and Senate Bill 554**

Intent on curbing the country’s population growth, the government intensified its population program, supposedly to insure an improved quality of human life for Filipino families. President Ramos, in Executive Order No. 307 dated 28 February 1996, implemented a family planning program at the local government level. The Population Commission [POPCOM], a sub-agency of the National Economic Development Authority, was vested with para-legal authority to implement the program, despite the absence of any enabling law. This explains why the POPCOM is desperate to have Senate Bill No. 554

3. Directly willed abortion, the use of abortifacients, sterilization and contraception are wrong in themselves. The Church forbids them because they are morally wrong.
4. The Church teaches the need for responsible parenthood.
5. The Church advocates Natural Family Planning as the only morally acceptable way of practicing responsible procreation.
6. The Church rejects the contraceptive mentality.
7. The Church teaches that the decision on the number of children lies solely on the parents.
8. The Church is against any coercion exercised on couples to pressure or force them to limit or increase the number of children.
9. The Church does not forbid the advocacy of acceleration or deceleration of our population growth according to circumstances, provided this is achieved within the parameters of freedom of conscience, the responsible decision of couples and the principles of sexual and family morality.
10. The Church objects to the dissemination and use of artificial contraception. Our Church personnel cannot cooperate with such acts.
11. The Church acknowledges religious freedom of conscience. But she has the duty to announce and promote the moral law on population regulation.

The CBCP hinted in a pastoral letter dated 13 July 1993 that a subtle attack on human life is the erosion of esteem for it under the guise of good. The bishops strongly objected to actions of the government and its instrumentalities which work towards the destruction of the Filipino family. The blatant promotion of direct

individual, from conception to its natural end.

Finally, in a pastoral statement on the World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Bishops, warned that the Draft Document intended “to impose on all governments of the world a secular humanistic philosophy, which promotes contraception, abortion, and sterilization” which the Holy Father, in his Encyclical *Evangelicum Vitae*, calls the “culture of death.”