

■ By **Roel A. Andag**

**I**MAGES of Rome's grandeur flooded my mind when Sr. Rosanne, my boss at the Caritas Philippines, informed me that my officemate Carlito and I will be going with her to Rome. The three of us were participants to the First World Congress of Ecclesial Organizations Working for Justice and Peace that was to be held in the Ancient City on 27-30 October 2004. I applied for my Schengen visa with alacrity, excited over the thought of seeing Europe for the first time.

# WISH UPON A POPE

Winter was approaching and so the air was nippy when we arrived at the Da Vinci International Airport. We billeted ourselves at the Colegio Pontificio Filippino, a dormitory for Filipino priests pursuing higher studies in the city.

Every day for three days in a row, we get up at 5:00 a.m., brave the freezing shower bathe while still half-asleep. One hour later, we would start walking to the venue, Ergife Palace Hotel, to catch the early morning mass.

The multilingual sessions are always on time. Watching and listening to interpreters skillfully translating speeches into Italian, Spanish, English and French inside their booths is a delight.

Rafaele Cardinal Martino, congress organizer and chair of Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, announced on day-two that Secretary of State Angelo Cardinal Sodano had secured a papal audience for us. Hearing the news, the plenary erupted in applause. It was to be an unscheduled activity for the next day and so the program schedule was adjusted.

On the night before the papal audience, I was excited over the thought of meeting Pope John Paul II for the first time. I mentally rehearsed over and over again what I would say when the Pope finally turns my way and traces a sign of the cross on my forehead. For this opportune moment, I settled on three wishes and ranked them well: a prestigious international job, a PhD scholarship abroad, and papal benedictions for my family.

I woke up and took a bath earlier than usual. After dressing up, I gamely walked, unmindful of the biting air, to the venue with Sr. Rosanne and Carlito. Participants donning colorful native costumes strolled in the hotel lobby. Cardinals with wide crimson belts and skullcaps added up to the spectacle. An Orthodox bishop outstood in his vestment.

Luca and Teresa,

Cardinal Martino's assistants, herded us into several buses. The Philippine delegation rode the lead vehicle. Tight security at the Vatican gate stopped the convoy. At that moment, thoughts of terrorist threats at the Vatican flashed in my mind. "Autonomous country," Sr. Rosanne reminded me. I nodded in agreement. We were final-

ly ushered in after Luca explained to the sentinel that the Pope was expecting us.

After Secours Catholique's Michel Roy fixed my tie, I jostled my way to lead the crowd earlier estimated at 300. "I have to be near the Pope," I thought. I negotiated two flights of stairs as if in a trance. I was just three steps away from the topmost landing leading to

## More than a bishop of Rome

■ By Luis Gorgonio

POPE John Paul II had captivated both the Christian and the non-Christian worlds not because he is a Christian or a Catholic or a Pope. His virtues of peace, love, and forgiveness made him a "catholic"—a truly universal figure representing the best side of humanity.

Despite his being a Catholic pontiff, he is a man that cannot be defined by his religious affiliation—he has a character that is more catholic than the dogma of the Catholic Church that he led for decades.

Progressive theologians say that the Catholic Church is not a universal church as the word "catholic" suggests because it is a *local church* in Rome, invoking universality and arrogating upon herself the same.

True. In fact, the pope, by jurisdiction, is only the head of the church in Rome. Yet, by tradition the Roman Church calls the shots over other local churches (Catholic dioceses) all over the world. Well, the intricacy of the politics of the Catholic Church is one story. Pope

John Paul II is another, and perhaps the best part of the story of the Catholic Faith across the ages.

When news about his deteriorating health broke out, many peoples across religious and political divides expressed anxiety and fear, and wished and prayed that the good man would recover from illness.

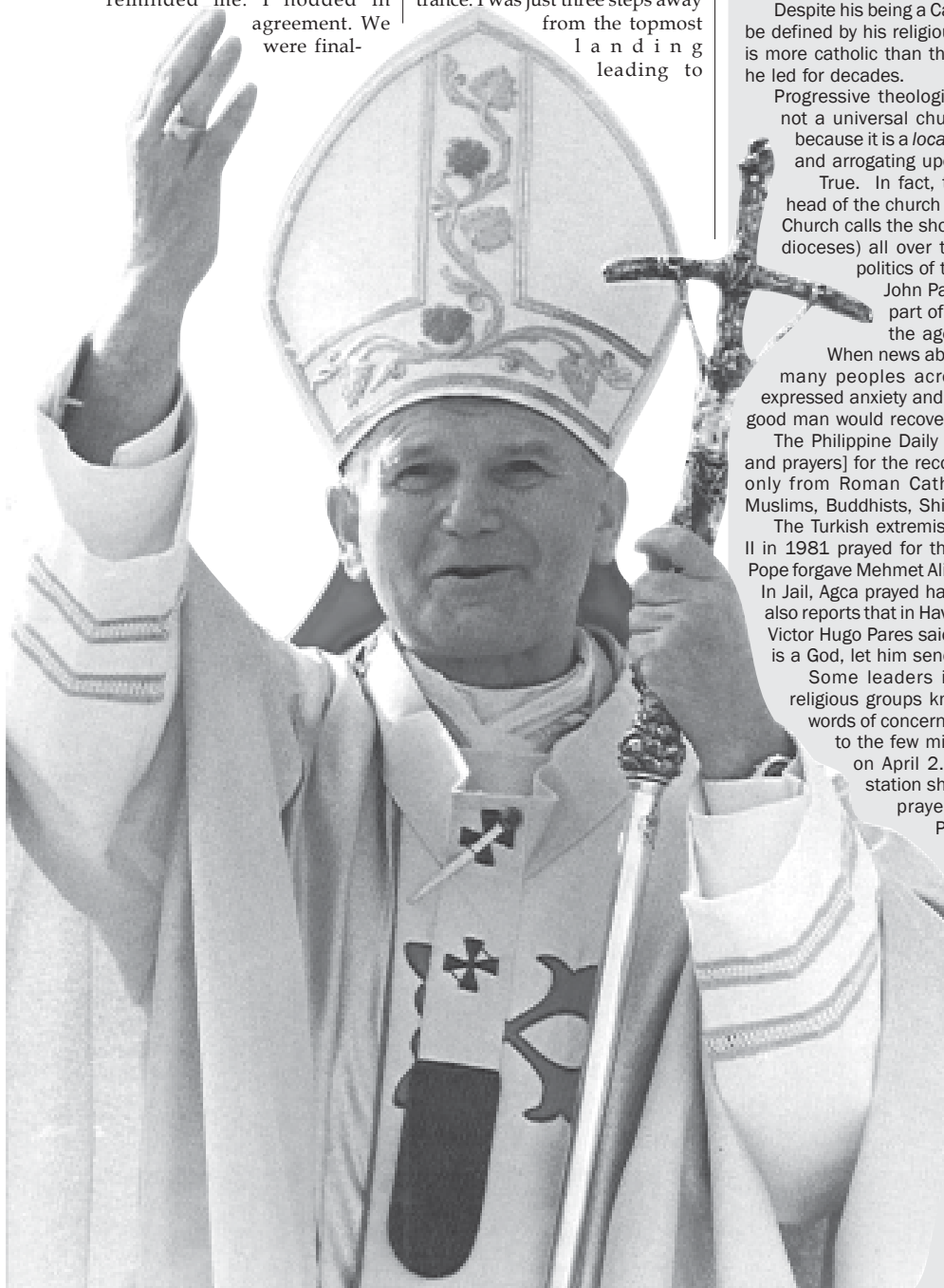
The Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) reports: [The concerns and prayers] for the recovery of Pope John Paul II poured not only from Roman Catholics but from Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Shintoists and atheists.

The Turkish extremist who tried to assassinate John Paul II in 1981 prayed for the man he called his "brother". The Pope forgave Mehmet Ali Agca after the assassination attempt. In Jail, Agca prayed hard for the recovery of John Paul. PDI also reports that in Havana, Cuba, self-confessed communist Victor Hugo Pares said: "I don't believe in God. But if there is a God, let him send us a pope as good as this one."

Some leaders in China, Russia, Cuba, and other religious groups known to be hostile to Christians sent words of concern and prayers for John Paul as he clung to the few minutes of his life in a Vatican hospital on April 2. Days before his death, a local TV station showed Filipino Muslims and Christians prayed together in a gymnasium for the Pope.

That John Paul II drew the world together in one fervent moment in united prayer was not because he heads the Catholic Church. It is his person—his being a man of peace, love and forgiveness felt by those whose lives he had touched through his words, deeds and his loving presence.

The character that Pope John Paul II possessed makes all the difference. Throughout his life, he had shown to the world that peace, love, and forgiveness are the things that really matter—not religious affiliation, not dogma, and not the religious "truths" we are ready to kill and die for.



the Clementine Hall when Luca, perched near the door leading to the hall, shouted: "Cardinales e consultares!" I don't know any Italian but it sounded like I wouldn't get near His Holiness after all. I was dismayed. But my disappointment melted away as we entered Clementine Hall—frescoes bathed in warm light carried me away. I sat near the aisle admiring the frescoed walls and ceiling. I transferred when Sr. Rosanne prodded me to join her at the other side, three seats from the aisle. The 30-minute wait was spent in taking pictures on snappy Swiss guards assembled in front and of those escorting foreign dignitaries passing through the hall. "We are at a Vatican crossroads with a medieval army controlling traffic," a fellow delegate joked.

We were surprised when four close-in aides suddenly wheeled in Pope John Paul II from behind us. Gasps, standing ovation, picture-taking tussle ensued. Cardinal Martino introduced the group to the Pope. Punctured by labored breathing, the Holy Father read his brief message in slurred Italian. I thought he talked about the importance of applying the *Church Social Teachings* on our work. But checking out later on the Vatican website ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)) for an official English translation of the message, I realized that the Pope urged us "to live in society as a witness to Christ the Savior and open ourselves to the horizons of charity."

Luca really meant it. Only cardinals and consultants to the Pontifical Council could go near the Pope. I sensed the difficulty his ailment was causing him. Blessing each of them with his right hand, he steadied his face with his left. He would straighten his back from time to time. His face seemed devoid of emotion but his eyes alertly flickered.

Having blessed the *cardinales e consultares* individually, and the audience commonly, his aides whisked him out of the hall, again, passing through the aisle. Awed by the Pope's

radiance, I elbowed aside Sr. Rosanne and Carlito just so I could touch him. I briefly squeezed his left forearm while uttering a totally unrehearsed wish "Get well, get well." I forgot all the personal wishes I rehearsed the night before. I snatched my camera from my pocket to capture him waving his hand before retreating to his quarters adjoining the hall.

Back in the hotel, in a workshop on the identity of church organizations, Bishop Christopher Toohey of Australia exclaimed: "We just met a sick old man who might as well be in a retirement home but who keeps on with his task of evangelization. Now we are asking ourselves our identity!" The theme of the congress was "Announcing the Gospel of Justice and Peace".

The following day, the official photographer displayed in the hotel lobby the pictures he took during the papal audience. I was lunging at the Pope, with Sr. Rosanne and Carlito partly covering me. The best spot for photos was the aisle seat I vacated, later on occupied by a Vietnamese priest.

The weather was cold but I felt warm inside. We left Rome after a pleasurable exhausting marathon tour on the first day of winter.

Tears streamed down my cheeks when Sr. Rosanne sent me a text message at five in the morning of 3 April 2005, informing me of the death of Pope John Paul II. "Transcended into immortality," I thought. I attended the 4 p.m. mass at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Tayuman, Manila. A picture of the Pope hugging a child, probably taken during one of his two visits to the Philippines, was prominently mounted in the altar. I cried once more when we sang the Our Father.

At the office the following Monday, I was riveted at CNN's footage of the Pope lying in the Clementine Hall. I recounted the day I met Pope John Paul II in the same hall—the day his selflessness crushed my selfishness. *Grazie, Santo Padre.* ■

## Alamin ang inyong mga KARAPATAN

### Ano ang dapat gawin kapag hahalungkat in inspeksyunin ang inyong bahay o opisina ng mga pulis o iba pang awtoridad?

- Karapatan mong huwag pahintulutan ang inspeksyon kung walang valid na **search warrant** mula sa isang huwes.
- Karapatan mong pigilin ang pagkuha ng mga bagay na hindi nakasaad sa warrant.
- Ang isang warrant ay valid kung:
  - a. pirmado ng huwes
  - b. nagsasaad ng isang sala (offense) lamang
  - c. naglalarawan ng eksaktong lokasyon at address ng lugar na iinspeksyunin
  - d. nakalista ang mga bagay o gamit na dapat kunin
  - e. ginamit ito sa loob ng sampung (10) araw mula sa paglabas nito

- Itanong sa mga pulis ang mga pangalan, ranggo (rank), opisina o yunit na kinabibilangan nila. Kunin din ang pangalan ng nakatataas na opisyal.
- Samahan ang mga pulis sa kanilang pag-iinspeksyon para maiwasan ang "pagtatanim" ng ebidensya o pagkuha ng mga bagay na hindi kasama sa warrant.
- Pwede lang isagawa ang paghahalungkat sa harap ng nakatira o may-ari o sinumang miyembro ng pamilya. Kung walang tao sa bahay o opisina, dapat kumuha ng dalawang testigong nakatira sa komunidad bago makapagsagawa ng inspeksyon.
- Kailangang magbigay ng resibo ang mga pulis kung may kukunin sa iyong tirahan. Siguraduhing may pirma ng pulis at ng isang kapit-bahay ang resibo.

### Ano ang dapat gawin kung kayo ay inaaresto?

- ➔ Manatiling kalmado.
- ➔ Kumuha ng testigo o saksi sa pag-aresto (kamag-anak, kaibigan)
- ➔ Kunin ang pangalan, posisyon, at pangalan ng opisina ng mga taong nang-aaresto.
- ➔ Humingi ng kopya ng "warrant" at suriin itong mabuti. Dapat nakasaad sa "warrant" ang partikular na pagsasalawanan o pangalan ng taong aarestuhin. Dapat nakalagay din dito ang ibinibintang na krimen sa taong huhulihin.
- ➔ Kapag may depekto sa 'warrant', ipaalam ang iyong protesta sa mapayapang paraan (huwag gumamit ng dahas).
- ➔ Itanong kung saan ka dadalhin. Humingi ng pahintulot na makapagsama ng kamag-anak, kaibigan o kahit na sinong taong testigo sa pag-aresto.
- ➔ Humingi ng pahintulot na makatawag ng abogado. Kapag ito ay ipinagbawal, ipag-utos sa kamag-anak, kaibigan o iba pang testigong tumawag sa abogado.
- ➔ Huwag na huwag lumaban o pumalag kapag ikaw ay inaaresto. Kung kinakailangan, ipaalam ang iyong protesta sa pagka-aresto at hindi mo isinusuko ang kahit alin sa iyong mga karapatan, ngunit ikaw ay kusang sumasama upang maiwasan ang dahas.
- ➔ Huwag kang sasama kapag ayaw ibigay ng mga pulis ang kanilang mga pangalan. Huwag pumayag na lagyan ka ng piring sa mata.