

Bikol's

ABANG MABULO

Multiplying Loaves and Fish

By Tinnah dela Rosa and
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NATION-BUILDING THROUGH POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The vision statement of the Christian Life Community of the Philippines (CLCP) explains that the CLCP is a discerning apostolic community growing in union with Christ through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Imbued with a sense of and love for the Church, we participate in Christ's mission specifically in bringing about maturity in faith and social justice with a sense of urgency and disponibility.

Throughout the 40 years of the CLCP, the community has prayerfully discerned the ways in which God was calling the community to respond to the needs of the larger Philippine society. In 1971, the CLCP articulated, through the "Zamboanga Stand," its discerned call to engagement within Philippine society and culture. One of its priorities reads:

The monopoly of political power, a damaging offshoot of our pseudo-democracy, continues to be the cause of so much injustice and violence. We will do in our power what we can as a Christian community, to help break this source of tyranny and injustice.

Throughout the years since 1971, CLCP has worked through apostolic service to live out this call. Personal career and lifestyle choices along with both individual and community apostolic actions have all been used in the effort to "break this source of tyranny and injustice." However, as we are all well aware, the effort to overcome injustice is difficult and requires time and committed action.

Sabas "Abang" Mabulo from the 1st Congressional District of Camarines Sur and a CLC member since 1978 presented himself as a possible congressional candidate to represent the members of his district. However, as CLCP, we do not believe in just taking advantage of opportunities that present themselves. We must first discern whether taking this opportunity is God's desire for us at this time.

We thus began by praying with Abang for his perceived call to run for the Congressional seat. As a community, we witnessed Abang prayerfully reflecting on God's desire for him at that time. We were familiar with the kind of people-empowering, transformational leadership Abang employed while serving as Mayor of San Fernando, and we heard God's call for him to offer this leadership as an alternative to the traditional politics that so marginalize and disempower the general population. And as we prayed with him, we

became more certain that God desired him to run for an elected post.

Confirmed in Abang's discernment and call, we moved to the second step of communal mission and sent Abang. In praying with him, we also commissioned him to go forth to fulfill God's desire for him at this time and with our full blessing and support.

As a community, we then moved to the question of how we could support Abang in his following of God's desire. As we prayed, we realized that one way to fulfill the challenge of the "Zamboanga Stand" involved identifying, discerning with, and supporting qualified and capable alternative candidates who provide hope and an additional



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prophetic voice to contest politicians who have consolidated power in the hands of the few. And here we were with just such a candidate! Of course we would have to help as much as we could.

We began by organizing teams of people to work on various aspects of the campaign. We realized early on that there was significant people support for Abang, but they needed access to resources. This was especially true as we realized the machinery we were up against since Abang's opponent was Dato Arroyo, the non-Bikolano son of the Philippine President.

We started with baby steps that could not be compared to the machinery that Arroyo enjoyed. Together we painted posters using the back of old billboards. We brainstormed,

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ROAD TO HOPE

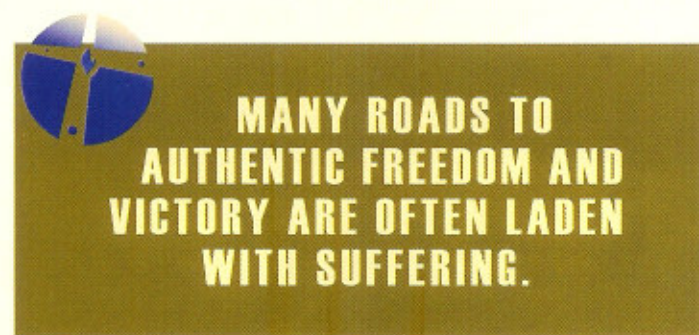
Left to right, Mayor Mabulo filing for candidacy, CLC Volunteers painting campaign materials and the blessing of campaign headquarters

prayed fervently, spent late nights in meetings, wrote reflections, letters to the editor, and press releases. Some went to Bikol to help the campaign. We participated in a peaceful march, a solidarity meal, and offered our masses for honest, orderly and peaceful elections. We begged for funds from each other, our relatives and friends (including

being more aware of the need for *cura personalis* for us to truly be a community. Together we began the process of living the grace of our 2007 National Assembly – to respond and deepen our response to the Lord Jesus Christ's command to "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). Furthermore, through Abang's candidacy and our involvement, we learned to care more passionately for our *Inang Bayan* (Motherland). This experience has truly given us a chance to be generous and to give from our poverty. Further, it has given all of us a reason to continue hoping.

This brings to mind the Gospel story of the multiplication of loaves and fish (Jn 6:1-15). From this story we can see an interesting miracle that goes beyond the multiplication of food – when we share the little we have, God makes it multiply. We reveal God's generosity by sharing what we have. This is the way of our Lord and the way we are called to live our lives as CLCers.

The entire national community, along with our CLC friends abroad, truly worked and prayed for a miracle to happen – for Abang to defy the unwritten law of politics that political influence, machinery and money is what wins votes. Although the miracle did not come in the form of an outward victory, an interior moral victory occurred. And that truly matters in this instance. This moral victory consists of raising the awareness and changing the paradigms of people without succumbing to traditional politics, vote buying and intimidation. This moral victory allows us to continue on with hope instead of being stagnant with cynicism.



CLCers in Guam, Germany and the US who in solidarity contributed prayers and funds). In whatever we did, we aimed to raise awareness that making democracy work involves challenging patronage politics by supporting alternative candidates.

Many small miracles occurred within the community. In our working together we learned to care not only for Abang and for the district he wished to represent, but also for each other as we supported each one's humble offering in the campaign. Abang's decision led the CLC toward



Success after all does not always come easy. Many roads to authentic freedom and victory are often laden with suffering. We remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was tried and crucified as a common criminal. We know that living out our faith commitment to God allows us to experience the resurrection and transformation of Easter morning. And this grounds and infuses meaning in hope.

Thus, as we reflected and evaluated our recent engagement in supporting Abang's political candidacy, we saw the real miracle of our 40th year in the CLC: as the Lord multiplied the little boy's offering, so He multiplied our meager offering and attempt to follow Him. Our Lord, who always listens to the cry of the poor, reminded us of our precious little miracles through Abang, the poor he wished to serve, and each other. The tyranny and injustice that the "Zamboanga Stand" called us to confront still exists. But our small effort in support of Abang is our fish and our loaf. We continue to strive with the trust that God will multiply our offering as we continue to confront the monopoly of political power that causes so much injustice and violence.



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MAGIS AT 40! BY JEAN NAVERA-LLORIN

The Christian Life Community of the Philippines (CLCP),

- a lay community of men and women,
- whose way of life is nurtured by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius,
- who, in union with the World Community, incarnates its General Principles on Philippine soil; accompanied in their journey by Jesuit Ecclesiastical Assistants,
- turns 40 in 2007.

In celebration of the 40th year and at our 30th General Assembly we, as members of the CLCP and the Church of the Poor, aim to deepen our response to our Lord Jesus Christ's command: "Love another as I have loved you." (Jn. 13:12)

We will express this love by building up the nation through the formation of guides, members and communities among and with the poor, grounded in and guided by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the General Principles of the CLC.

Called by Christ to partake in His mission that "you might have life and have it abundantly," (Jn 10:10) we will strive to be what we can possibly become:

*Lay men and women,
Gripped by the profoundest of longings,
Forged by the deepest of friendships,
Marked by the belief
That no mission is too formidable
nor too menial to be undertaken.
Called to be contemplatives in action,
Driven by the fire of Ignatius.*

ONE LIFE. ONE COMMUNITY. ONE WORLD

The CLC Philippines, stands bravely among 58 countries addressed by Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus as one of the lay movements within which the "vocation and mission of the Christian lay faithful express themselves in varied spiritual and apostolic forms." The CLCP leads in the creation and formation of an Asia-Pacific link among nine Asian nations.

The World CLC with its office in Rome gathers every four years for the World General Assembly to strengthen international bonds, discern apostolic mission and choose the world Leadership Community.

Each member country is represented by three delegates – an adult member, usually the Chairperson or President, one youth member chosen by the Leadership Community, and the Ecclesiastical Assistant.