



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
LINGAYEN-DAGUPAN

May 19, 2024
Pentecost Sunday

ALD Circular 2024-13
RE: Fixed Rates for the Sacraments and Sacramentals

Reverend Fathers:

I write on a matter of grave concern. Having to bring this up, even if only to remind, brings me much sadness. SADNESS indeed!

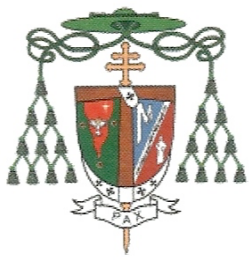
Please read with diligence and prayerfulness.

SYSTEM OF CHURCH SUPPORT

1. Since 2013, the Archdiocese of Lingayen Dagupan has abolished the *arancel* system of imposing fixed fees from the parishioners for the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals. This decision was not mine alone, but a consensus recommendation of the presbyterium, which I then enacted into law. The Second Synod of Lingayen Dagupan in 2017, "*Communio as Gift and Mission*," reaffirmed this as the pastoral spirituality of our particular Church. *Pananabangan* is our vision and life as a Church, a vision we all share and uphold.
2. The way we manage our temporal blessings from God is one of the signs of our *Pananabangan* spirituality. Indeed, only God can read hearts and judge consciences, but our budget and finance system is a visible manifestation of the integrity, honesty, and truthfulness that *Pananabangan* demands from us.
3. The people of God deserve the blessings of God and the ministry of the ordained not out of justice from the monetary offerings they give, but out of pastoral charity. God's graces and our priestly ministry are free and beyond payment. The system of Church support must be given from the spirit of *communio in charity* of shepherds and sheep. It should not be out of table of rates for services and rituals.
4. Although the PCP II recommended tithing as a means of Church temporal support, the CBCP upgraded it to the level of stewardship to include time and talents and not only material treasures. In this archdiocese, we went a step higher and farther by calling our system of Church support *Pananabangan*, which is translated as *Communio*. We support not from obligation but from love – the generous, abundant love we have experienced from God.

THE SIGNS OF HOPE

1. All parishes, chaplaincies, and pastoral stations have accepted in principle the *Pananabangan* system of Church support, including the adoption of the Parish Information Management System (PIMS), which has integrated *Pananabangan* and removed the "stole fees" among its account references. We know the archdiocesan law on this matter.
2. The parish pastoral councils have a member directly supervising the parish's *Pananabangan* Stewardship Program. This program, though not yet fully implemented in all parishes, is a testament to our collective efforts and a sign of



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
LINGAYEN-DAGUPAN

hope. The parish *Pananabangan* Stewardship Team's existence is a sign of our commitment to this cause and our progress in its implementation.

3. The November *Pananabangan* Month is observed by declaring the *Credo* of Stewardship at every Mass, holding seminars, and calling for *Pananabangan* Mass collections, which are remitted to the Chancery every December.

THE SLIDING BACK

1. The majority of our parishes are observant and faithful to the *Pananabangan* system of Church support. However, in a few parishes, the following practices are slowly creeping back. It is our collective responsibility to address these practices, to nip them and stop them lest they spread and influence others, undermining our efforts and the spirit of *Pananabangan*.
 - a. If the parish secretary or catechist is asked about rates for baptism, confirmation, or wedding, they indicate or imply a minimum rate of "donation" from each of the sponsors. THIS MUST STOP.
 - b. If the parish secretary or staff is asked about the "cost" of a Mass intention, a minimum amount is said or insinuated. THIS MUST STOP.
 - c. If a couple preparing for matrimony asking about the "donation" they must make for their wedding gets a reply from the parish staff about a minimum amount or makes the number of sponsors as the basis for the "donation," sometimes even in the thousands of pesos, this is grossly wrong. THIS MUST STOP.
 - d. Even worse, insinuating extra pay for the rolling out of the wedding carpet, the added wedding floral arrangements, or the wider opening of the church doors for the wedding entourage smacks of commercialism. THIS MUST STOP.
 - e. It is inconsiderate for the parish staff to collect from the bereaved families fixed offerings for the funeral Masses or votive Masses for the souls of the faithful departed. THIS MUST STOP.
 - f. Inasmuch as the Catholic faithful are free to choose the church venue to celebrate their wedding and baptism, it leaves an ugly taste to collect fines from couples or parents who will have their weddings or baptisms celebrated elsewhere. THIS MUST STOP.
2. The *Pasimbalo* seminars have been proven helpful for adult catechesis and pastoral formation. There is an observable slackening of *Pasimbalo* seminars in parishes, which can also result in the slackening of the practice of Church support.

MOVING FORWARD

1. It is not just essential, but a duty for the parish priests to re-instruct the parish secretaries and cashiers (our front liners) and warn them against declaring or insinuating fixed rates for the sacraments and sacramentals. After duly reminding the staff, it is not just a sign of sound management, but a crucial step to monitor them randomly and ask parishioners how the parish secretaries conduct their tasks.



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
LINGAYEN-DAGUPAN

2. Inasmuch as the abolition of fixed rates pertains only to the sacraments and sacramentals, it is considered lawful to collect the EXACT fees from the parishioners for the dues to be paid to the government for the registration of marriages and for the issuance of parish certificates, which must be pegged at PhP50 per certificate.
3. The parish receipt system must not indicate any donations related to the sacraments, such as “donation for baptism” or “donation for wedding” and the like. All offerings are entered in the parish accounting system as *Pananabangan*, which is item 4109 for voluntary offerings or 4109A for the *Pananabangan* envelopes. This falls under the Pastoral Fund.
4. In case the donation is a Mass offering, it enters the accounting system as item 4202, which is “donation without intention.” This donation falls under the Parish Fund.
5. Pre-baptismal, pre-confirmation, and pre-Cana seminars are suitable venues for catechism and may include the *Pananabangan* principles so as to impart to our faithful the spirit of stewardship. Vicars Forane need ensure that these matters are discussed, understood, and implemented in the respective vicariates. The seminary system and our Catholic schools must ensure that pastoral formation programs include conferences and lectures on *Pananabangan*. Our future priests and the young should imbibe the culture of stewardship and the spirituality of *communio*. Lay empowerment is lay formation. The Archdiocesan *Pananabangan* Team will offer vicariate *Pasimbalo* seminars to arrest this dampening of the *Pananabangan* spirit.

WE ARE SPIRITUAL LEADERS

The drive to be successful has ruined many vocations. The fire to be more powerful has robbed many priests of the joy of service. The fear of lacking money has destroyed many brother priests.

The parish does not derive its stability from money. Surplus money does not always translate to growth in holiness. Money in the sacraments can numb us against the poverty in the barangays. Easy and unregulated access to money in the parish accounts can make us feel we have the right to the privileges of the wealthy or give us an illusion of vain accomplishments.

The Church is people. The parish treasure is people formed unto Christ by their pastors who teach by words and inspire by example. If we give the people Christ, they will repay us with loving support abundantly materially, spiritually, and even emotionally.

The problem is not money. The problem is faith and faithfulness. The need is not for more money but a metanoia of mindset.

Sincerely yours,

+SOCRATES B. VILLEGAS

Archbishop of Lingayen Dagupan