

PHILIPPINES: “PEARL OF THE ORIENT”

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A Spanish Missionary Father Juan J. Delegado called Philippines “Pearl of the Orient Seas” in 1751. On 8th October I was in Philippines to attend the World Congress 2016. The theme of the Congress was “Synergy in Media: Empowering People in Facing Global Challenges.” The Congress was held at the Centre of Carmelite Missionaries in suburb of Tagaytay City about 3 hours drive from Manila, the capital city from October 9 to 12, 2016.

The Congress, as I remarked in my evaluation, was full of life with more than 200 young people – boys and girls – a good many of them university students journalism. These were also youth from St. Paul Seminary and from Foculary movement. There were half a dozen formal talks on the Congress theme and group discussions. Songs and dances made the Congress especially memorable for me. Philippines youth seemed to love dancing. They reproduced the dances of different Asian countries.

Talks on different aspects of the Congress theme were given by experts and scholars including a Salesian priest and a Jesuit priest. Perhaps the talk I liked most was given by a fellow Jesuit Fr. Nono Alfonso, Executive Director of Jesuit Communications, Inc. on Social Digital Media. He said that those who are born in the 1980s and after are digital natives and the rest of us are digital immigrant. It is the responsibility of the digital immigrants to learn the web ways and become digital citizens. “In social media everyone is a writer, editor, publisher and seller. About 86% Philippines are on social net working sites,” Fr. Alfonso said.

Fr. Alfonso said quoting Pope Francis that “Internet is a gift of God. As such internet media is neutral. It is neither good nor bad. But media can be used for good or bad. Hence it is important to observe ethics and morality in the mass media. In explaining ethical consideration in social media and its applications to social life Fr. Alfonso stressed four aspects of Privacy, Accuracy, Access and Propriety, that is, PAAP in short.

First, Privacy. In the social media we need to respect the privacy of people. What you put in the internet remains there forever. What is private may not be private in the internet.

Second, Accuracy. It is important that what we write and post in the net be accurate, reliable and truthful. Only with accuracy and truthfulness we are dependable and reliable in our social media interaction. We need to be aware of millions of fake accounts in the internet.

Third, Access. Today social media are accessible for one and all. It is important that vital informations are accessible to the public. But the fact is that often interested self-seeking parties do all they can and block the accessibility to the public.

Fourth, Propriety is important in social media as what is uploaded in the internet become public domain. We need to see that specially the images and videos which upload do not violate ethical and moral codes and principles.

“Spirituality and Media” was another very interesting talk by a Salesian priest Fr. Armand Roblea. He combined with his profound insight of the topic of spirituality and media practiced and lived in one’s work place, in childhood, adolences, midlife and later. He emphasized on the art of spirituality discernment.

Another talk which interested me was given by Mr. Michele Zanzucchi an Italian Journalist and Editor of “Citta Nuova” (New City) magazine. With one lakh circulation worldwide in 25 languages – with 37 editions speaking on Synergy in Media: Empowering People in Facing Global Challenges, the Gregorian University professor of journalism explained dialogical journalism as media for others. “Journalism goes with dialogue,” he said.

Referring to ‘Citta Nuova’ Mr. Zanzucchi said that the magazine is socially committed and engaged in building a more humane and united world. “Its articles have the perspective of universal fraternity and are translated to different languages,” the editor said.

As a resource person in the Congress I was called to speak about the Problems of Refugees in the World during the glittering ICOM Award Function interposed with music and dance. Beginning with refugees in the Old Testament of the Bible I said that Jesus’ family too was refugees as they had to flee to escape death warrant for children below 2 years of age at Bethlehem. But in our time the refugee problems have become acute and wide spread practically in that whole world. “As thinkers and writers we need to be not only well aware of the problem, but we also need to do all that we can to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees especially through highlighting their problems with love and solidarity for the suffering humanity.

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