

Vincentian Priests and Brothers
CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
Philippine Province

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CONFRERES OF THE PHILIPPINE PROVINCE

SUBJECT: WHERE WE STAND IN THE WAR ON DRUGS

Dear Confreres,

May the grace of God be with us always!

We are now at the peak of the Lenten Season.

With yesterday/s Palm Sunday celebrations, our people devoutly thronged closer into the events of Christ passion and death that take more of their time, talent and energy than the glorious celebration of Christ's resurrection. The cenaculo, the reenactments of Christ's passion and crucifixion, the penitentes, the droves of people doing the via crucis or making the visita iglesia. the barkadas joining in to do the Pasión, the siete palabras and many many more are images that make up the Holy Week of our traditions. Those who are smart take the opportunity to bring in the issues of suffering that affect us as a nation.

During our retreat last January, we discerned on the recent events in our country and we decided as a Province to do something about it. From the many suggestions that you gave, let me outline three concrete responses that the Provincial Council has decided that we should focus on together.

1. **CONDEMN THE KILLINGS.** Following the pronouncement of our Bishops, we denounce the rampant killings in this administration's "war on drugs". Whether it be 4000 or 8000 persons killed is irrelevant. Our bishops remind us, "The life of *every person* comes from God. It is he who gives it, and it is he alone who can take it back." To be quiet in front of evil is to consent to it and to be accomplice to what is going on.

2. **TAKE CARE OF THE VICTIMS.** In all our pastoral areas, we take care of the victims and their families, as St. Vincent always wanted us to do. We collaborate with all ongoing efforts by government and civic organizations to help the victims of drug addiction find healing and hopeful life again. We also take care of the widows, mothers and orphans left by the "tokhang" operations in our places of ministry. We seek them out because, most often, they have been stigmatized and ostracized by their neighbors. We commend the efforts done by Project SOW [<http://www.svst.edu.ph/project-sow.html>] of the Ina ng Lupang Pangako Parish as they take care

of this most vulnerable sector in Philippine society today. We can replicate this in your own localities where there are victims.

3. **PROJECT 400.** For our long-term engagement, we initiate Project 400 which is being spearheaded by the Social Ministry. This Project includes 1) housing for the homeless especially the families of victims of the war on drugs; and 2) free education for children of the said victims.

In this 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian charism, we ask for the grace to seek out the most vulnerable that our oppressive society has neglected. In all that we do, we express to them our hospitality and welcome in the way that Vincent de Paul spoke four centuries ago: “J’aime de votre peine” (Your pain pains me).

Your brother in Christ,



FR. VENERANDO D. AGNER, C.M.
Provincial Visitor