

DAKATEO GATHERING IN CEBU

A HOMILY BY ARCHBISHOP ALBERTO S. UY, D.D.

Isaiah 9:1–6 • Matthew 5:1–12

The theme of our gathering: “Pagbubukang Liwayway–Banagbanag: Rethinking Theology Amidst Violence” – is not simply poetic. It is prophetic. It is what our country is aching for today.

We gather in Cebu at a time when people are tired: tired of corruption, tired of political hatred, tired of disasters, tired of ecological wounds, tired of violence—both loud and silent.

And into this reality, we dare to do theology, not as an academic exercise, but as an act of hope.

1. Isaiah: Light Does Not Wait for Darkness to End

In our first reading, Isaiah speaks of dawn—but notice where it happens. The light rises not in Jerusalem, not in the holy city, not in the safe center of faith. It rises in Zebulun and Naphtali—the borderlands, the forgotten provinces, the places crushed by invasion. Kung asa ang labing mangitngit—didto misiga ang kahayag.

This is not just biblical history; it is our Filipino story:

- In communities hit by floods and typhoons
- In fisherfolk displaced by reclamation
- In families torn by drugs, suicide, and poverty
- In barangays divided by politics

- In forests and mountains scarred by mining

The dawning begins there, in the margins where people cry, “Ginoo, asa man ka?”

Isaiah tells us clearly: God enters first where the wounds are deepest. And so must theology.

Theology that hides in classrooms or conferences is not theology. Real theology happens when the Word meets wounds. Ang tinuod nga teolohiya mahitabo kung ang Kahayag mosinag sa lugar nga mangitngit, ug kung ang Pulong makahunad sa mga dapit nga dunay mga samad.

2. The Beatitudes: Jesus Forms Fighters for Peace

In the gospel, Jesus climbs the mountain. And instead of giving a lecture, He gives a spiritual revolution: the Beatitudes. Let us remember: Jesus spoke these words under Roman occupation—a world of political extremism, social violence, religious manipulation, and deep economic inequality. Does it sound familiar?

And yet Jesus does not teach fear or aggression. He forms a new kind of human being— one who resists violence without becoming violent. He says:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit— the humble who refuse arrogance.
- Blessed are the meek— those who do not allow hatred to reshape their hearts.
- Blessed are the peacemakers— those who make peace by building justice, not silence.
- Blessed are the merciful— those who choose compassion over cancellation.

- Blessed are the persecuted— those who do the right thing even when it's dangerous.

The Beatitudes are not for the fainthearted. They are not inspirational quotes. They are weapons of light. To live the Beatitudes today is to resist:

- fake news with truth,
- corruption with integrity,
- political idolatry with conscience,
- environmental destruction with stewardship,
- cynicism with hope.

The Beatitudes are Jesus' manual for theologians who choose to love a violent world.

3. Banagbanag Today: What Theology Must Become

Here in Cebu, we see many forms of violence:

- floods worsened by environmental abuse
- wounds caused by corruption
- the loneliness and depression are silently killing our youth
- families and friends divided by politics
- communities displaced by greed

In times like this, theology cannot be neutral or sanitized. Theology must get its hands dirty. Theology must learn to kneel beside the wounded. Theology must help people breathe again.

To rethink theology amidst violence is to become:

- theologians who smell like the sheep,
- priests who preach from the heart of Christ,
- lay scholars who defend the voiceless,
- religious who bring healing, not fear,
- Church leaders who stand with integrity and courage.

Let us ask ourselves:

Does my theology comfort the broken? Does it disturb the comfortable? Does it reveal Jesus—or just my ideas? Does it promote peace—or protect my biases? Does it lead to compassion—or competition?

If theology does not lead people to Christ, then there is no Pagbubukang Liwayway, there is no Banag-banag— it is only electric light coming from a projector.

4. Our Mission: Be the Bearers of the Dawn

My dear DAKATEO family, you are not called to be theorists of the dawn. You are called to be bearers of the dawn.

- When we teach—let light enter the minds of our students.
- When we preach— let hope rise in the hearts of our people.
- When we research— let truth challenge systems that harm the poor.
- When we write—let mercy shape our words.
- When we lead—let integrity be our light.
- When we encounter broken people— let compassion be our strength.

In a time of so much noise, the world does not need louder theologians. It needs braver, kinder, more Christ-like theologians.

CLOSING: LET THE DAWNING BEGIN IN US

Isaiah promises a light. Jesus forms a people of light. And today, that light is entrusted to us. May our theology be a dawn that:

- heals wounds,
- confronts injustice,
- protects creation,
- uplifts the poor,
- restores peace,
- and brings Christ's heart to the people.

When Typhoon Tino roared into Cebu with violent winds and unforgiving floods, people ran for higher ground. But Jayboy, a young teenager, ran the other way.

As muddy waters swallowed their barangay, Jayboy heard desperate screams—cries of fear, cries of people about to drown. There were no rescuers yet. No rubber boats. No adults dared to brave the current.

So Jayboy made a decision that would change dozens of lives. He tied an old rope around his waist, grabbed a battered tire, whispered a quick prayer, and jumped into the freezing, raging water. Wave after wave slammed against him. Debris rushed past. The current pulled him under again and again. But Jayboy kept going—one terrified breath at a time.

That night, he did not save just one life. He saved nearly 50—the elderly who could no longer walk, the sick who were bedridden, a pregnant woman trapped inside her home, and little children clinging to rooftops. Each rescue could have been his last. Yet he kept returning to the water.

DAKATEO GATHERING IN CEBU
A HOMILY BY ARCHBISHOP ALBERTO S. UY, D.D.

When people later asked him where he found such courage, Jayboy lowered his head and answered softly: “Di ko ganahan mutan-aw nga naay mahimong biktima kung pwede ra man ko motabang.” (I couldn’t bear to watch someone die when I could do something to help.)

That night, in the darkest hours of Typhoon Tino, a teenager became dawn. Jayboy’s courage lit up the floodwaters like a lamp in the storm— a reminder that hope often rises from the young, the ordinary, the unseen. This is theology in action.

Jayboy’s heroism reminds us: The dawn begins not when everything is fixed, but when someone decides to light a small flame.

Alberto S. Uy
Archbishop of Tagbilaran
<http://abetuy.blogspot.com/>