

Il Viaggio Continua... *(The Journey Continues...)*



**CONTINUING THE
QUEST FOR JUSTICE
FOR FR. POPS & ALL
VICTIMS OF
EXTRAJUDICIAL
KILLINGS**

Justice



Father Fausto "Pops" Tentorio, PiME was killed on October 17, 2011 inside the Arakan Parish compound.

Many of us, his friends and fellow workers, remember the shock of the news of his murder, like lightning that struck our hearts... We remember the tears, the storm of anger, the funeral with thousands of mourners, then the gentle rain of acceptance... The all familiar Pops was gone, but a new Pops appeared like a rainbow in the sky...

We discovered his last Will, "If I die, remember what God expects of us: to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." Then he added in the local language "Your dreams are my dreams, your struggles are my struggles. You and I are one in building up the Kingdom of God"...

We remember the dreams and the struggles, and we are challenged by Pops to continue our efforts in building communities where justice and peace prevail, where sharing and caring make us experience God's kingdom on earth.

Now, approaching the 3rd anniversary of his death, these are the updates on the case of Fr. Fausto and on the ongoing struggles to pursue justice and peace in the communities where we continue to implement and expand his programs.

POPS' CASE

- Immediately after the killing of Fr. Fausto, Pres. Aquino ordered a special task force called, "Task Force Fausto", to undertake a thorough investigation which would solve the case as soon as possible.
- On February 2012 the Task force Fausto filed charges at

the Provincial Prosecutors' Office against Jimmy and Robert Ato and Jose and Dimas Sampulna. However their key witnesses against the Sampulna retracted their accusations. The task force failed to investigate other suspects connected with the military and some politicians.

- April 23, 2012, our Private Prosecutors, headed by Atty. Andolana, filed the testimonies of other witnesses accusing the Ato brothers and a group of "Bagani", a paramilitary group headed by Jan Corbala, alias "Kumander Iring". These witnesses received many threats, they went into hiding and were admitted to the Witness Protection Program with their families: almost 3 years living like prisoners in a safe house, while the accused are free and are openly protected by a prominent politician.
- Since April 2012 the case was stuck at the Provincial Prosecutors Office for months, and then it was turned over to the Department of Justice (DOJ) in Manila.
- On July 5, 2012 the secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Jesse M. Robredo sent an update to the Italian Ambassador with the conclusion that the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) pointed to influential people involved in the exploitation of natural resources as the "the most probable suspects/brains behind the crime." Secretary Robredo promised to pursue these leads, but he died soon in a plane crash.
- On November 8-9, 2012 the Human Rights Committee of Congress held a public hearing in Davao exposing the inaction of DOJ on the Tentorio case and several other cases of Extra Judicial Killings (EJK) in Mindanao, mostly tribal leaders who would not

consent to mining or other projects of exploitation of natural resources in their ancestral territories.

- On May 2013 the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), headed by Loreta An P. Rosales, conducted a public inquiry on the Tentorio case. For 3 days many suspects and informers were summoned including the previous investigators and military officers and some politicians. But we were not given reports on the findings and recommendations of this inquiry.
- Then the DOJ informed us that Pres. Aquino had issued the Administrative order NO. 35 on November 22, 2012 tasking the Inter Agency Committee (IAC) and the Special Investigating Team for Unsolved cases (SITU) to undertake a new investigation of the Tentorio case and other similar cases. DOJ secretary Leila M. De Lima and undersecretary Francisco Baraan called this new team of investigators a "Superbody" mandated to solve these cases very quickly, we were told that the Tentorio case would be the first high profile case to be solved by this Superbody.
- On November 7, 2013 we submitted to the SITU a list of persons to be summoned.
- On January 17, 2014 our Bishop Romulo T. Dela Cruz sent a letter to Sec. De Lima strongly requesting again for some movement in the investigation of the Tentorio case.
- The DOJ secretary replied on Feb. 4 with a Memorandum ordering the SITU to submit their findings within 30 days.
- The SITU met several times and advised us to send a request to Sec. Leila De Lima to order the NBI to produce the mystery person called "Loloy", who was

identified as an NBI asset who instructed some witnesses to give false testimonies. Since he is connected with the NBI he should cooperate with the new investigation, otherwise we will suspect that very high level NBI officials may be protecting him.

After almost 3 years and ample use of public funds, we are asking again "What are the results of the in depth investigations?" "Why can't the case move on?" As Bishop Dela Cruz asked in his letter, "Is someone blocking or diverting again the investigation? How can we trust that justice is possible under the present administration?"

The case of Fr. Tulio Favali, PIME, a companion of Fr. Fausto, who was killed in 1985 in Tulunan during the Martial Law of Pres. Marcos, was solved at the time of Pres. Cory Aquino. The killers were jailed for 23 years, then their most notorious leader Norberto Manero Jr., alias Kumander Bukay, asked forgiveness at the grave of Favali and returned to quiet life in his community, and this brought peace to the area of Tulunan. Why can't the same happen for Fr. Fausto now? This can bring peace to Arakan also.

SEEKING JUSTICE AND PEACE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

While pursuing justice in the court of law and of public opinion for Pops, an even greater challenge is to pursue justice and peace in Arakan and in all areas where we continue to implement and expand Pops' programs.

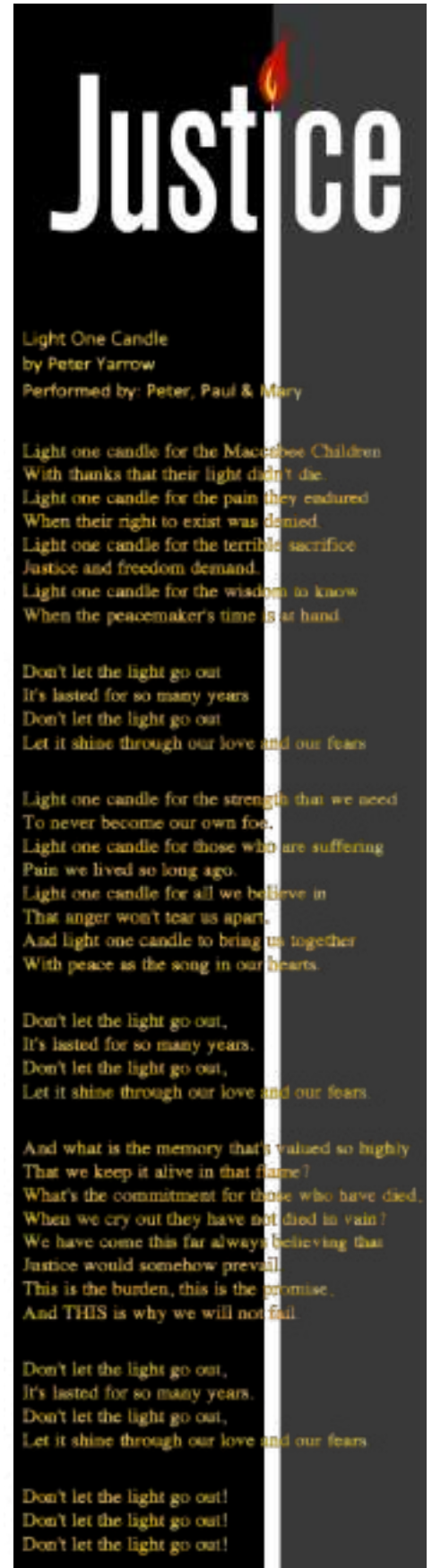
In Arakan 3 days after the killing of Pops, a farmer, Ramon Batoy, was also killed. He was a member of the local farmers' organization and he was preparing to come down to Arakan parish to join the vigil at Pops' body. Suddenly his house was raided by the militaries and he was killed and automatically accused of being a rebel. Then his family and the whole

community evacuated. Ramon was buried quickly because of fear, while Fr. Pops' funeral was attended by an estimated 15 thousand people, mostly Tribals and Farmers from the mountains. It was the greatest demonstration for justice and peace in this province. The crowd shouted their call for justice for Pops and for Ramon, and for many other victims like them.

Then in Arakan a series of dialogues followed trying to lessen the fear in many communities. Then gradually our teams, who continue to implement Pops' programs, visited the most critical areas, particularly for the graduations of the Day Care classes during the months of March and April 2012. Many people were surprised that we could still continue most activities as if Pops were still alive.

On June 6, a major dialogue was held at the Arakan Municipal gym. The Mayor invited the Barangay or village leaders, and also the police and the military, and our organizations, to attend. A movement called SOWING THE SEEDS OF PEACE presented the Basic Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws. All were challenged to respect the rights of civilians, even though armed groups are still active in the area. The main result of this dialogue was the formation of the Municipal Peace and Justice Consultative Body. Municipal and Church leaders and representatives of sectoral organizations, along with the heads of the police and military in the area, gather regularly to discuss complaints and issues affecting justice and peace and good governance. This consultative body is functioning now for almost 2 years now.

However lately in 2014 the journey toward peace was disturbed when the military occupied all villages as an occupation army. They said that they are promoting a program called Peace



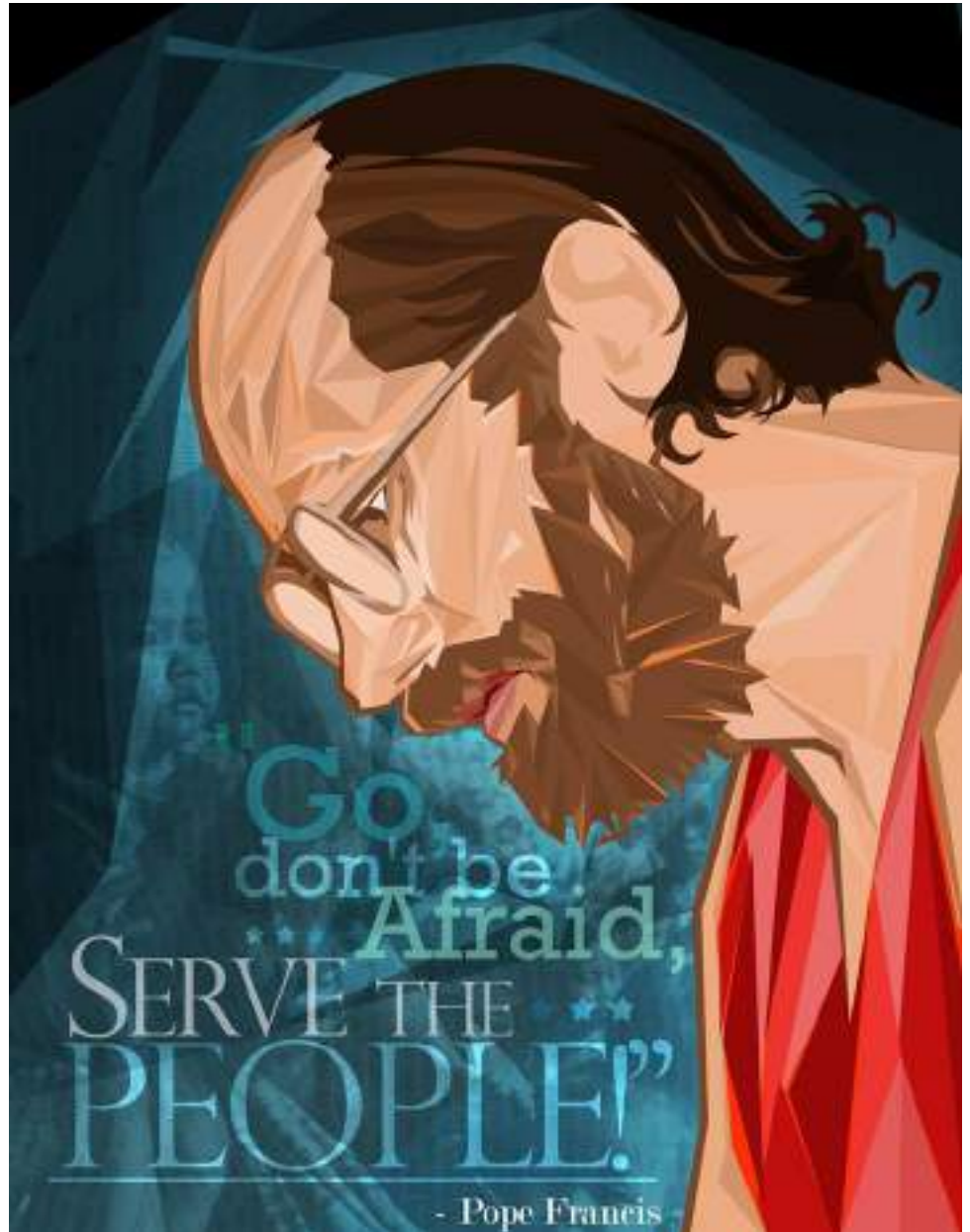
and Development Outreach Program (PDOP). They promise support for development and at the same time they spread fear because they accuse many civilians, particularly leaders of our organizations, of being supporters of the rebel movement. Those accused complained to the civilian authorities, first through rallies and then through legal affidavits which were filed at the Provincial Government Office. After hearings, the Provincial Government assured the civilians that they are preparing an ordinance specifying how the militaries should avoid violating the rights of the civilians, and should not stay in public or private buildings inside the communities.

Similar efforts were made in other areas. Particularly in Talaingod, where Pops in his last years expanded a network of schools among the most abandoned tribal communities, last March 2014, military operations caused displacement of several communities, over a thousand, mostly women and children, walked for days until they reached Davao City. During the long trek, 2 babies were born at the road side and survived, while another baby died on the way. Finally by the end of April, the evacuees were allowed to return to their villages after the military were ordered by the civilian authorities to pull out of the area.

The journey towards Justice and Peace continues along with Pops' programs. We experience moments of fear and frustrations, but also moments of renewed hope and expectations for a better tomorrow.

As we approach the Third Anniversary of Pops' Death, we thank God who has given us the courage and endurance to continue Pops' mission in spite of many obstacles and threats. We believe that God is sustaining us by sharing with us the spirit of Pops and all other Martyrs.

We thank all who journey with us in our communities seeking God's



Kingdom of Justice and Peace which Pops was dreaming of in his Last Will.

We thank all who contributed financial support as well as encouragement and prayers.

We thank all the Volunteers who joined us in our efforts, from Witnesses to Lawyers, Doctors and Nurses, and those who share their time and talent, while sharing also the joy of serving the people. Pope Francis calls this the joy of the

Gospel. Many have accepted his challenge "GO, DO NOT BE AFRAID AND SERVE...THE PEOPLE!!!" STP!

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