

***A Scoop and Exclusive Coverage by the MabuhayRadio.com***

The Philippine Bible Society of the Philippines was historically a Protestant entity. Today it has become an interfaith body. It has elected a Catholic bishop as its president and he is in town to ask for help in providing five-million Bibles to the poor Filipino Christians in a span of five years. The Most Rev. Arturo M. Bastes, SVD, is the new president of the Philippine Bible Society (PBS). He is spending this weekend in Los Angeles, California, to make an appeal to Filipino-American Christians and friends of the Philippines to help the PBS meet its goal.

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The Most Reverend Bastes is currently the bishop of the Diocese of Sorsogon in the Bicol Region of the Philippines. He is undertaking not a mere trip to the United States but a mission to get assistance in spreading the Good News to the impoverished Christians in the Philippines, especially in the far-flung barrios. Millions of poor Christians in the Filipino homeland cannot afford to buy a Bible, as many of them barely earn the equivalent of one American dollar per day. The PBS prints a "generic" version of the Bible, "Good News for the Modern Man," in several Filipino languages. Each copy sells for 150-pesos or \$3.00. The program, which this writer has dubbed – for want of a better name – the "Bibles-for-the-Barrios" (B4B), will actually ask the recipient to contribute one-third of the cost. The PBS hopes to raise the balance from well-meaning Christians all over the world, especially Overseas Filipinos.

Written by Bobby Reyes

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Bishop Bastes was the guest of honor in a simple reception held last night at a restaurant in China Town of Los Angeles. He met a motley crowd of Bicolano-American leaders who belong to the United Bicolandia-Los Angeles (UBLA) and the Sorsogon Province Association of Southern California. He said that he has been to New York City, Washington, DC and Chicago, where he met with American prelates, lay leaders and some Filipino-American community leaders.

Over dinner, Bishop Bastes related to the hosts and other friends of the UBLA the purposes of his mission. It was an informal and impromptu gathering that ended with a brainstorming session of how the participants would be able to rally the Filipino-American community of Southern California in helping the PBS meet its target. Ms. Zeny Sabocor, the UBLA president, and Atty. Victor Martires, the chairman of the UBLA Council of Leaders, led the crowd in welcoming Bishop Bastes. Present also were former UBLA Presidents Emma Sabido, Serry Sabocor and Butch San Jose, Ateneo de Naga Alumni Association President Albert Serrano and other Bicolnon leaders.

Bishop Bastes hails from the Province of Romblon. He served before as the bishop of the Diocese of Bohol. He was transferred in 2002 to the Diocese of Sorsogon, which ministers to some 600,000 Catholics out of a provincial population of 800,000.

Editor's Note: Please see an "Unsolicited Advice" column titled, "Mending Fences," where this author narrates in a First-Person style his differences with the Catholic Church of the Philippines and the Common Ground that he has proposed to Bishop Bastes.

On Sunday, March 8, 2009, Bishop Bastes will officiate at the 9:30 a.m. mass at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church (IHMC), Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles. He is the guest of the Rev. Fr. Rodel Balagtas, the first-ever Filipino parish priest of the IHMC and spiritual adviser of the UBLA. The good bishop will leave on Sunday evening via the Philippines Airlines for Manila.

Additional information about Bishop Bastes' mission is available from Ms. Emma Sabido at (323) 258-0503 and/or Atty. Martires at (310) 618-0837 or by e-mail at [vemarti@aol.com](mailto:vemarti@aol.com).

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(To be continued . . .)

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