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Featuring Mario Rojas
and Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta

Dear HLI friends and supporters,

Working in the pro-life movement often reveals surprising and even inspiring reactions from those whom God sends to us for training. One such reaction is when the eyes and heart of an individual are opened after hearing the Gospel of Life. In this month's issue of *Mission Report*, HLI's Regional Coordinator for Asia, Dr. Acosta Ligaya relates how several individuals from her audience experienced a true conversion of heart upon hearing her message.



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet,
President

But first, Mario Rojas, HLI's Regional Coordinator for Spanish-Speaking Nations, reports from Nicaragua, a nation which has shown pro-life valor by banning all abortions in 2006. As expected, this makes them all the more targeted by the culture of death—and all the more needful of HLI's assistance.

MISSIONARY TRIP TO NICARAGUA—Reported by Mario Rojas, August 2011.

In October 2006, Nicaragua's legislature banned all abortions, eliminating exceptions for rape and when the life of the mother is threatened. The vote was interesting and revealed how Nicaraguans feel about abortion. It passed unopposed, 52 to 0, with 9 absences and 29 representatives not showing up to vote. The measure was approved by the former president, Enrique Bolaños.

By banning all abortions, Nicaragua became a target of international organizations and developed nations who promote sexual and reproductive health (which includes therapeutic abortion) as women rights. As a result, it is very common to hear accusations against the current government of Nicaragua for not promoting changes in favor of the rights for women. One of the latest examples occurred this past July, when Amnesty International demanded that therapeutic abortion be permitted when the life of a woman is in danger and also when there has been a rape.

HLI MISSION TRIP

In order to help the pro-life and pro-family movement in Nicaragua, HLI decided to send Fr. Juan Carlos Chavez, Director of the Latin American Network of Priests and Seminarians for Life (REDESSVIDA) and Mario Rojas, Latin American Director of Coordination of *Vida Humana Internacional* (the Hispanic division of HLI). **The idea was to speak in as many locations as possible about the Gospel of Life and denounce the different aspects of the culture of death.** At every seminary we visited, we discussed the culture of death at length, and we especially treated the question of how so-called “safe sex” leads to the wide use of contraception, which then leads to unwanted pregnancy and abortion.

Nicaragua was the 19th country visited by our Latin American Network of Priests and Seminarians for Life since its inception in August 2009.

Our local affiliate in Nicaragua (ANPROVIDA), led by Dr Rafael Cabrera and his group of volunteers, organized lectures in the cities of Chinandega, Leon, Esteli and Managua; reaching priests, seminarians, contemplative nuns, pro-life and pro-family groups, students from universities and high school, as well as parishioners.



BACKGROUND

The current population of Nicaragua is about 5.7 million, and the main religions are: Roman Catholic 58.5%, Evangelical 21.6%, Jehovah’s Witness 1.6%, other Christian 1.6%. Fifteen percent claim no religion at all. Nicaragua’s fertility rate is 2.12 children per family.

LECTURES IN CHINANDEGA AND LEON

With the blessing of Monsignor Bosco Vivas Robelo, Bishop of the Diocese of Leon (which includes the cities of Chinandega and Leon) an agenda was organized with the active support of Fr. Efrain Tijerino, Vicar of the Pastoral for the Family of the Diocese of Leon; Fr. Victor Morales, head of communications of the Diocese of Leon; and a local pro-life group (Fundacion Don de la Vida).



Mario Rojas speaking to around 500 parishioners of San Blas Parish.

In Chinandega, lectures were given to 15 diocesan priests, 10 contemplative nuns of Saint Claire Monastery, 150 high school students, 5 teachers of Catholic schools, and at least 500 parishioners of San Blas Parish.

At the end of the lecture, Fr. Victor Morales said, **“The lecture ‘Consequences of Sex before and outside Marriage,’ was very timely, calling attention to the threats against life and faith.”**

In Leon, we gave an interview to *Magnificat* Catholic Radio. We spoke to about 1,000 high school and university students and 10 teachers, including Brother Manuel Estrada, President of Lasalle Technical University. We also gave a lecture to about 500 parishioners after a pro-life Mass at La Merced parish, where several pregnant women received special blessings.

One highlight of the visit to Leon was the lecture given to the students. After the lecture, Brother Manuel Estrada, President of La Salle Technical University, said, **“Thank you, Mario, for the well presented lecture. It was presented brilliantly, with enough clarity for all present to understand. I believe most of the students were receptive to the message.”**

Another highlight of the visit to Leon was a lecture given to 17 priests of the Diocese of Leon. Most of the priests were quite receptive to the information provided about population control, the threats of the culture of death, and REDESSVIDA services. At the end of the lecture, Fr. Julio Reyes, Pastor of Santa Rosa de Lima Parish resolved to open a pastoral for life in his parish.

LECTURES IN THE CITIES OF ESTELI AND MANAGUA

In Esteli, we gave an interview at San Jose Catholic TV, in which we discussed the consequences of population control and demographic winter. Next, we gave a lecture on post abortion syndrome to about 300 parishioners after a pro-life Mass at the Cathedral.

In Managua, we were interviewed by a very popular television program.

We gave a lecture to 62 seminarians and 3 priests at the Managua Diocesan Seminary of



Mario Rojas explains the contagious process of STD to students.



Partial view of lecture to High School and University students.



Mario speaking to seminarians at Lady of Fatima Inter-Diocesan Seminary.

La Purisima and another to about 112 seminarians and 3 teacher priests including the Dean of the inter-Diocesan seminary of Fatima.

CONCLUSION

This mission trip to Nicaragua was a great success. We were able to give our two-hour presentation on the threats of the culture of death to 32 diocesan priests. And at least one of these priests spoke out about his resolve to open a Pastoral for Life in his parish.

Our efforts to bring the Gospel of Life to Nicaragua would not have been possible without the generous support of benefactors like you. Thank you so much, and may the Lord bring you good health and joy in your daily activity.

MISSIONARY TRIP TO POLAND—Reported by Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta, August-September 2011.

My trip to Poland was an unexpected mission and gift from the Lord. Since I read the *Diary of St. Faustina* years back, I have had the secret longing to be able to trace her footsteps and visit the Shrine of Divine Mercy, where it actually happened. Tracing the steps of Blessed John Paul II was an added bonus!

Sometime last year, the Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL), an international association of lay faithful founded by a Filipino and started in the Philippines, asked me if I could speak at their European conference to be held in Warsaw. I actually did not take it seriously, because Europe is not part of HLI's mission field for which I am responsible. But God always has a way of fulfilling the desires of His poor servants.



Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta speaking at the Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life European Conference, Warsaw, Poland, August 2011.

THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

The European conference was a very special event. Most of the participants were Filipinos whose families have settled in Old Europe. This must have been why they wanted another Filipino to speak about pro-life issues! Some 800 participants from all over Europe came. The countries represented included Italy, Iceland, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, Slovakia, Israel, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Poland, and many others. This was not your typical European audience, however, as most of the attendees were Filipinos! Seeing Filipinos carry the flags of the different countries of Europe on stage was a truly memorable



Some 800 participants from all over Europe came to the CFC-FFL Conference.

image! With the demography of Europe well below replacement level, Filipinos, whom Dr. Brian Clowes of HLI calls “the yeast of the faith,” are having more children than native Europeans. And as we know, the future belongs to those who are faithful to God’s laws.

It was amazing hearing their stories. Many of them were from nursing and various other professions, and **they told me how they are able to evangelize through their work.** One ICU nurse from Germany told me how she regularly sings religious songs and prays over her patients every time she visits them. She added that when one of the comatose patients regained consciousness,

he began looking for the nurse who had always sang and prayed over him! Today, this previously non-Catholic patient and his family are devout Catholics. Another Filipino working as a nanny in Italy told me she would teach the child how to pray each day, which also led to the eventual conversion of the family!

THE MOVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I was given one hour and 45 minutes for my talk, which titled, “*Culture Wars: Sleeping with the Enemy.*” During this time, I shared my conversion story and discussed the history and myth of overpopulation, the evils of contraception and abortion, and the culture of death and its peddlers. **Using HLI’s global map on the state of abortion laws, I showed how pervasive the culture of death is in Europe!** As usual, I had to do a lot of praying and fasting for my talk, especially considering the dire situation in Europe. I had a sleepless night before my talk, begging the Lord and the intercession of Our Lady and all the angels and saints in heaven for a most powerful anointing. With God’s amazing grace, my talk received a standing ovation. With my weak body and lack of sleep, plus my anxiety over the talk that I would give on my first mission in Europe, I knew it was only by the power of the

Holy Spirit that people were touched.

My talk earned for me many bars of chocolates and more invitations to speak in the many countries of Europe. Also, I was able to arrange a mission to Israel in the Middle East through a Filipino priest present at the conference. **This conference showed me once again how people hunger for the goodness of God and of the beauty of life, marriage, and the family**, which godless peddlers of the culture of death are pervasively seeking to destroy.

In the hour of adoration that followed the conference, loud cries could be heard. I was to find out why in the days that followed, as many participants sought some private time with me. While Filipinos have indeed become the yeast of the faith, many have unconsciously been swallowed by the deception of the culture of death! One lady who spoke to me told me of her long-kept secret: she had been promiscuous and had aborted five babies! I also discovered that many employees in U.N. agencies in Europe are Filipinos who are also active in the charismatic community. Many came and hugged me after my talk, while at the same time sharing their guilt feelings. In my talk, I mentioned the




Ligaya discusses the history and myth of overpopulation, the evils of contraception and abortion, and the culture of death and its peddlers.

United Nations and its agencies as the main death peddlers! And in the counseling sessions throughout my stay, I preached on God's Divine Mercy and how He can make our crimson red heart as white as snow through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

SHRINE OF DIVINE MERCY

After the conference, I was able to trace the steps of St. Faustina and visit the shrine of



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Divine Mercy, as well as the Holy places that were so close to the heart of Blessed John Paul II. Our first stop was the shrine of the Miraculous Image of Our Lady of Czestochowa, whose amazing story strengthened my resolve to continue with HLI's mission no matter how formidable our enemies might be. Looking at the scar in her face inflicted by an enemy of the Church—which we were told could never be erased despite attempts at restoration—I realized all the more that our Blessed Mother will shield and fight for us if we call on her! Like many of the pilgrims, I proceeded up the stairs to the altar on my knees, as I earnestly begged Our Lady to bless the mission of HLI and especially to save the Philippines from the most diabolical reproductive health bill.

From Czestochowa, we drove to Krakow and finally visited the Shrine of Divine Mercy. We were fortunate enough to hear a touching talk by a nun from Sr. Faustina's congregation. One of the things she shared was a story of the time Sr. Faustina was being stoned by people and thus had to run to the chapel. She found herself right behind the tabernacle, and she thanked God for her enemies, without whom she would not have been as close to the Lord! I realized then how thankful I should be that the death peddlers and their many deceptions have put me in this mission where I often see God's amazing goodness and mercy. My prayer for them, though, is that God should open the blindness in their eyes so they too can feel God's amazing glory. After all, all of us are called to go back to our Maker.

Early the next day, we came back for Mass at the small chapel where the first class relic of St. Faustina is—just below the image of Divine Mercy. Together with a fellow pilgrim, I practically ran to the chapel, which is behind the huge convent. As the saying goes, the early bird catches the worm. It was not a worm though that I caught, but the greatest opportunity of



Ligaya visiting the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Krakow, Poland.



The convent where St. Faustina once lived in Krakow, Poland.



Ligaya poses in front of the chapel of St. Faustina where she prayed for HLI's mission and its supporters.

venerating the relic for a long time and getting a chance to beg St. Faustina's intercession and for blessings and mercy for the mission of Human Life International, all of its pro-life missionaries around the world, staff and personnel, and most especially the many benefactors, who make the mission possible. I prayed for mercy for Asia, Oceania, and the world, and in a very special way, for my country, the Philippines, to be spared from the reproductive health bill. Finally, I prayed for the conversion of our pro-RH president, legislators, individuals and groups.

After the Mass, we drive to Wadowice, the little town where Blessed John Paul II was born and stayed till he turned 18. We toured and prayed in the beautiful church of his childhood and passed by the apartment where he lived, which was very near the Cathedral. Since it was under restoration, we could not get in; but we looked from outside. Then I understood why the beloved Pope became so holy: from childhood, he was literally always close to Jesus!

As I travelled back to my own country again, I had a long time to pray and reflect on my latest experience and to thank the Lord for using me and HLI as His instruments for bringing the Gospel of Life to the nations and for fulfilling another long-time desire of my heart. May God be glorified in everything we do.

Dear friends, I thank you again for your prayers and support for HLI and all those around the globe so desperately in need of our help. Your continued support for this work makes you true missionaries for life!

God bless you always!



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet
President

P.S.— Christmas is right around the corner, and I'm sure that many of you have children to buy gifts for, whether it be for grandkids, your own kids or friends' kids. It is always tough to find the perfect kid's gift, especially one that builds up a child's spirituality. Well, HLI has the perfect answer for you! **In return for your gift of \$49 or more, I will send you a pack of Seton Holy Trader cards (set 5).** These cards are great fun for kids! Not only can the cards be traded and played with among friends, they tell the stories of different Saints. Children have fun playing with the cards while being educated about the Catholic Faith! If you wish to purchase more cards, you can receive a 20% discount during the Christmas season on all of Holy Traders sets by visiting www.hli.org/store. Don't miss out on this great deal and help bring a child closer to Christ!



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