



# Mission Report

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- \* **The Amazing Story of Dr. Ligaya Acosta**
- \* **HLI Mission to the Philippines**
- \* **HLI's Asia-Pacific Congress**
- \* **This Month's Gift to Donors: 20-Pack of a Very Special Christmas Card**

Left: Fr. Boquet and Dr. Ligaya Acosta with Senate President of the Philippines, Vicente Sotto, and Gerry Padilla of the Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL).

Dear Friends in Christ,

“If not for HLI and the faithful and generous support of our benefactors,” said Emil Hagamu, HLI Regional Director of English-Speaking Africa, “our pro-life and family programs and activities would be drastically hindered, and lives and families would become victims of the Culture of Death.” Emil made this statement during our recent biennial strategy meeting and retreat with our international leaders held in September at San Damiano Retreat House in White Post, Virginia.

Emil’s sentiments summarized the heartfelt gratitude of our international pro-life and family missionaries, who understand firsthand the tremendous importance of our mission. **Your dedication to this mission and the support and personal sacrifices you make on its behalf are making a powerful difference, impacting lives and families around the world.** In many cases, HLI is the only pro-life and family apostolate vigorously working in a given country or region, cultivating a Culture of Life, and dismantling the anti-life agenda and population control networks.

Though most of our benefactors will never have the opportunity to personally travel into our mission territories, you are, through our international missionaries, vicariously serving and defending life and the family. **Your love, care, and generosity are manifested in the witness and actions of those you support in the mission field.**

During our meeting and retreat, I asked our global team to share some impact stories. I would like to share one of them with you, hoping you will see how, together, we are making a difference. This story is about the Most Reverend José Saul Grisales, Bishop of the Diocese of Ipiales, Colombia.

I first met Bishop Grisales in Sonson-Rionegro, Colombia, in 2016. At the time, he was Fr. Grisales—rector of the cathedral in Sonson-Rionegro and regional vicar—and was participating in HLI’s REDESSVIDA congress. He had previously heard Nancy Tosi, one of our most active Latin American missionaries, give a few lectures during our sponsored conferences.



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President

Over, please

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**Your dedication to this mission and the support and personal sacrifices you make on its behalf are making a powerful difference, impacting lives and families around the world.**

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HLI Regional Director of English-Speaking Africa, Emil Hagamu, gives a presentation at the 2019 strategy meeting in Virginia.

It was during this REDESSVIDA that Fr. Grisales first introduced himself to Nancy, expressing how impressed he was with the message and with the pro-life and family information he had received in the congress, **which had over 700 seminarians and priests in attendance.** He decided he would take HLI's online training course, which provides valuable pro-life formation, with his parishioners. So, in 2017, Fr. Grisales and over 250 parishioners completed the online course and received their Certificates of Completion.

During a follow-up mission to Sonson-Rionegro in February 2018, Nancy learned that Fr. Grisales had been nominated as Bishop of the Diocese of Ipiales. The newly appointed bishop called Fr. Nelson Patiño, who had helped coordinate various HLI missions in the Diocese of Sonson-Rionegro and who was a graduate of the online course, asking Fr. Patiño to connect him with Nancy. As luck would have it, Nancy, on mission in Colombia, was actually in the car with Fr. Patiño, who handed her the phone. Bishop Grisales asked Nancy to make plans to travel to Ipiales to help him teach his new flock about the pro-life mission. Shortly afterward, Nancy traveled to Ipiales to meet with Bishop Grisales and his vicars, **who decided that all parish priests and four laity from every parish would take HLI's online course.** In total, over 400 people took the course.

This is not the end of story. Bishop Grisales also required all of his seminarians studying in Pasto Seminary to take the course. With Nancy's assistance, they finished it in four months. In follow-up meetings with Bishop Grisales and his vicars in 2018, it was decided that a regional REDESSVIDA

congress would be held in Ipiales from October 16-21, 2019.

But this is still not the end of the story! Because your generosity makes our commitment to promoting the Culture of Life in Latin America possible, Nancy returned to Ipiales two more times in 2018 to prepare for the 2019 congress. During these missions, she met with Bishop Orlando Olave Villanoba of the Diocese of Tumaco and Bishop Julio Enrique Bolaños of the Diocese of Pasto to discuss their support and participation in the upcoming congress; they gave their full support.

**Because of you and your commitment, HLI is impacting lives—the lives of seminarians, priests, laity, and bishops.** The seeds planted in 2016 have yielded wondrous fruit. The congress occurring later this month, which I will participate in, is but another part of the story—one I look forward to sharing with you soon.

Meanwhile, please continue to pray for those we serve and for the fruitfulness of our programs and activities. I am truly grateful for your support!

Yours in Christ and Our Lady,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Father Boquet".

Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President, Human Life International



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## THE STORY OF AN HLI REGIONAL DIRECTOR

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**DR. LIGAYA ACOSTA** has been the regional director of Asia and Oceania at Human Life International for 14 years. However, she was not always so dedicated to the pro-life movement. Dr. Acosta once worked for the State Department of Health in the Philippines and vigorously supported measures such as contraception and abortion. With a doctorate in management and bachelor degrees in law and social work, she was well qualified for her high government post.

Her life changed one day when her boss asked her to research Natural Family Planning (NFP) for her work. No one at the department was familiar with NFP, since it was generally practiced only by a few Catholics. Dr. Acosta was tasked with researching NFP. Dr. Acosta had no desire to do the training. She had little time, and though she was Catholic, her faith had not yet deepened to the point where she understood the full truth that is Christ in the Church. However, **she attended the training and was shocked with the way it changed her entire perception of the pro-life movement.** “It was there that I realized that, contrary to what we have been telling the people, contraceptives are never safe. Contraceptives really kill and cause a lot of horrible side effects,” she said.

This new knowledge was foreign to what she had been taught during her long years of work in the State Department of Health. They, after all, were supposed to be the experts. After completing the training and pursuing extensive research into scientific studies on contraception, Dr. Acosta approached her boss with a thick stack of materials. She intended on showing her superiors what she had learned, and she wanted to make a personal recom-



mendation that the State Department stop advocating contraception. She was horrified by their response. “I was wrong. My boss told me, ‘Keep quiet. **Remember you are a government employee and if you say these things, it will destroy the program. Keep your morality to yourself.**’”

She tried to return to her job, but could not forget the information she had learned regarding the dangers of



Dr. Ligaya Acosta with Taiwanese school children in Taichung City.



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**“For more than 28 years of my life I was on the other side. I was a very loyal member of the Department of Health in the Philippines, an avid promoter of contraceptives and a firm believer in population control.”**

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abortion and contraception. She was confronted with more and more testimonials from health workers—including qualified nurses and doctors—that brought further issues to her attention. Not only did the scientific studies show the dangers of contraception, but she could see the pitiful results in suffering hospital patients. Countless women were subjected to daily pain and failing health, and the health workers themselves were forced to struggle with the frustrating inability to ease their patients’ pain. Dr. Acosta realized the health workers were also victims of abortifacient drugs and sterilization, as they were forced to witness the traumatic side effects these caused.

She knew that she could not continue to stand by and do nothing. To verify the authenticity of what she had begun to learn, she conducted extensive research for a year. “The more I read, the more I cried,” she said. Instead of helping people, she realized that she had contributed great harm. **So, on February 14, 2005, Dr. Acosta gave up her job and immediately became a staunch pro-life advocate and activist.**

After her amazing conversion (which she attributes in part to the reference materials that HLI provided her), she felt God testing her. Not only did she lose her large income and her job security, but her husband also had job difficulties at the same time. However, she felt in serving God that she

had finally “found the pearl of great price.”

“In the past, Human Life International was my mortal enemy! When I converted, I had to ask a lot of forgiveness from the Lord. Now I need to work overtime to make reparation,” Dr. Acosta stated. In 2007, HLI approached her and gave her a job that increased her knowledge and ability to give many victims of the Culture of Death the healing help they needed. She was overjoyed to learn that she did not have to stand alone in the pro-life fight. She threw herself into her work, which quickly grew to an international mission, and she has worked tirelessly ever since.

Today, Dr. Acosta makes regular missions throughout the Asia/Oceania regions, giving talks and seminars, fostering pro-life affiliates, speaking with Church and civil leaders, and forming close connections with lay communities. This year alone she has gone on mission to Japan, Taiwan, India, and within her home country, the Philippines. One of her main duties is planning the Asian Pacific Congress on Life, Faith, and Family (ASPAC)—the largest pro-life conference in Asia. She is currently busy putting the final touches on the up-coming event, the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASPAC, which will be held in Kerala, India in January.



Dr. Ligaya Acosta speaking in Zhongli City, Taiwan.

# MISSION TO THE PHILIPPINES

By Dr. Ligaya Acosta, Regional Director of HLI Asia and Oceania,  
June 2019

A special mission to the Philippines conducted June 13-24, 2019—the 13<sup>th</sup> for HLI President, Fr. Shenan J. Boquet—was primarily a result of the invitation of the Archdiocese of Manila, headed by His Eminence, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle. Fr. Boquet spoke at the first men’s conference, which he helped organize with the archdiocese. At the same time, Fr. Boquet was also invited by the Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL), which was celebrating the anniversary of its founding.

During our visit, we had many meetings with vital members serving in political office and active in the pro-life movement in the Philippines, including figures such as the Senate President, Senator Vicente Sotto III, and Senator Cynthia Villar, the most popular senator in the May 2019 elections. We also met with key members of the Church, such as Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop of Manila; Bishop Broderick Pabillo, Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, who currently heads the Episcopal Commission on the Laity of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP); and Bishop Pablo David of the Diocese of Caloocan, Vice President of the CBCP.

## MEN’S CONFERENCE

Fr. Boquet was one of the main speakers at the men’s conference, which was led by Fr. Jason Laguerta of the Office on the Promotion of New Evangelization of the Archdiocese of Manila. The same event was co-organized by Fr. Jun Sescon, Minister for the Evangelization of Young Professionals, and Fr. Enrico Emmanuel Ayo, Dean of the Theology Department of the San Carlos Seminary in Manila, who is also the executive secretary of the CBCP



Commission on Family and Life.

The conference was held June 14-16 at the Mary Mother of Hope Chapel in Makati City, the business capital of the Philippines. Around 200 men, mostly young professionals and seminarians, attended.

Fr. Boquet gave two presentations: “What Does It Mean to Be a Christian Man?” and “Man’s Spiritual Growth.” He also delivered the homily in the closing Mass, which over 500 people attended.

Fr. Boquet emphasized to the conference attendees that to be a Christian man is to know who he is and to realize that God made him with a design and created him for a purpose. **Each man, he said, is spectacularly made, irreplaceable, and destined for greatness.** Thus, he exhorted everyone there to be a man of God and to live according to how God wants us to live—which is to be holy and virtuous. He warned against living an illusion and conforming to worldly standards of masculinity, which he compared to the serpent’s seduction of Adam and Eve. He challenged everyone to know who God is, to pray daily—especially the Rosary—and to foster devotion to the Holy Mass. He also encouraged



Dr. Ligaya and Fr. Boquet with Bishop Broderick Pabillo and Maribel Descallar of CFC-FFL.



attendees to go to confession minimally once a month, pray with Sacred Scripture and to build fraternity with others, for we all belong to one family—the Church. He ended by saying, “The Father is calling you by name. What is your answer?”

### MEETING WITH SENATORS

Knowing that legislation is a crucial battlefield, on June 21 we met with Senator Vicente Sotto III, who is a great ally of the pro-life movement in the Philippines and who has spoken in several HLI-sponsored conferences. He kindly received us in his office despite the fact that Congress was still in recess during that time, and he vowed to promote and defend life and family in the Senate.


Senator Sotto stated that population control is not needed in the Philippines. He believes, as we do, that people are a nation’s greatest resource. He scoffed at the claims that there is an “unmet need” for contraceptives and succinctly pointed out: “In my countless visits to villages around the country, I’m not asked to provide contraceptives; I’m asked to provide basketballs.”

With joy and pride, Senator Sotto spoke of how blessed he was to have been raised in a God-fearing and loving family with parents who witnessed—in both word

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**10253**



and action—faith, marriage, and family, values he now practices within his own family. The senator believes that faith, religion, morality, and family values are not



Fr. Boquet concelebrating Mass with Bishop Broderick Pabillo at the Founding Anniversary Celebration of CFC-FFL.

in opposition to public service but on the contrary are desperately needed. He emphasized the necessity of defending core values rooted in faith and the family—the building blocks of culture and society.

We also met with Senator Cynthia Villar, who welcomed us warmly at her business residence a day after the men’s conference. She kindly briefed us on the current happenings in the Senate. She assured us of her strong support for pro-life legislation and asked us to reach out to her with advice on legislations regarding life and family.

### **MEETING WITH BISHOPS OF THE PHILIPPINES**

On June 18, we had a dinner meeting with Bishop Broderick Pabillo, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Manila, who is also the Chair of the Episcopal Commission on the Laity of the Catholic



**Meeting with Vicente Sotto, Senate President of the Philippines.**

Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

Bishop Pabillo suggested that Fr. Boquet give a pro-life orientation seminar for bishops, especially as there are now many newly appointed

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bishops. He also asked for HLI materials that they could share with various lay groups. In addition, we discussed a possible pro-life training for lay groups.

On June 19, we motored to the Diocese of Caloocan for a courtesy meeting with Bishop Pablo David, who is currently also the vice president of the CBCP. Bishop David has gained fame in his fight for human rights and against “extra-judicial killings,” which has also earned him the ire of the president of the Republic of the Philippines. Bishop David also shared with us his experience of meeting Pope Francis during their recent *Ad Limina* visit in the Vatican.

On June 20, Fr. Boquet was invited to an exclusive birthday lunch with Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle and the clergy of the archdiocese. Fr. Boquet also concelebrated at the birthday Mass with His Eminence. After the

birthday celebration with Cardinal Tagle, Fr. Boquet gave a talk to all seminarians of San Carlos Seminary, on invitation of Fr. Rico. His talk was so well received that Fr. Rico actually asked Fr. Boquet to consider joining the seminary faculty.

### **SESSIONS WITH CFC-FFL**

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On June 22, Fr. Boquet gave a very well received talk to around 1,000 leaders and members of CFC-FFL at their Families on Mission conference. The next day, we set off early for the CFC-FFL Founding Anniversary Celebration held in the city of Antipolo, where Fr. Boquet concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Broderick Pabillo, spiritual director of CFC-FFL. Father also gave another talk after Communion, before the final blessing. **The event was attended by an estimated 5,000 members.**

## **GOT STOCK?**

With the rise in stock values, donating your

## **APPRECIATED STOCK**

to Human Life International rather than a cash gift may allow you to provide a larger gift with transformative impact and at the same time give you a larger tax deduction. If you have held your stock for over one year, you may take a charitable deduction for the Fair Market Value of the stock on the day of the gift. By donating your stock directly, you will also avoid paying capital gains tax on the increase of the stock’s value. This assumes you are taking itemized deductions. The same benefits also apply to bonds and mutual funds.

Please contact Stan Kuta at HLI’s Development Office ([skuta@hli.org](mailto:skuta@hli.org) or phone at 540-622-5272) and your broker to discuss the process.

*This information does not constitute and is not intended to be a substitute for specific individualized tax, legal, or investment planning advice from a qualified tax advisor, CPA, financial planner, or investment manager.*



## OTHER MEETINGS

During the trip, we also met with Dr. Rene Josef Bullecer, the director of HLI-Philippines, with whom we discussed challenges in, and plans and programs for the Philippines. With the reopening of Congress, we expect once again the refiling of death bills, notably on the legalization of divorce and the “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression Equality Bill” (SOGIE) also known as the “Anti-Discrimination Bill”—another subtle way of paving the legalization of same-sex unions. **These bills have been filed and refiled in previous congresses, which thankfully never passed.** But just like the devil that never sleeps, we know the death peddlers will continue pushing for the passage of these bills, however long it takes. Fr. Boquet counseled Dr. Bullecer to never let his guard down and to continue to fight such dangerous legislation whenever it rears its head.

We took the opportunity to meet with Sally Lee, former Mayor of Sorsogon City. Sally, who is also a former governor, has been a great ally of HLI, and after her attendance in an ASPAC, she declared her city a Pro-Life City. Though she was not re-elected, Sally is still very active in her pro-life and family advocacies



Fr. Boquet speaking at a Men's Conference in Mary Mother of Hope Chapel.

and has been offered many distinguished positions in non-government organizations.

**With all our hearts, we thank the generous benefactors of Human Life International, without whose support missions like this mission to the Philippines would not have been possible.** Please know that we always keep you and your family in our prayers and in our Mass intentions each day.

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## HLI Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life, and Family (ASPAC)

Human Life International's Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life, and Family (ASPAC) is the largest gathering of pro-life leaders in Asia and Oceania. Held every other year since 1994, this congress is an invaluable tool in touching hearts and minds. It is held in a different country each time to benefit those who cannot travel far, as well as strengthening the pro-life and family movement in the host country. This congress is organized by HLI Regional Director of Asia and Oceania, Dr. Ligaya Acosta.

### WHY ASIA AND OCEANIA?

By hosting ASPAC in Asia and Oceania, we provide local pro-life formation and support to countries that have no pro-life organizations of their own. Many resources and

groups provide a wealth of pro-life information to the citizens of the United States; however, this is not necessarily the case in other countries around the world where **pro-life groups are often either oppressed or banned altogether.** HLI, as a U.S.-based Catholic apostolate, shares its experience of the pro-life movement in the U.S. by fostering affiliates in our 100-country network and conveying pro-life formation to the laity, seminarians, and priests we reach. This system has had a tremendous impact in many ways upon the global pro-life movement, as can be seen in the burgeoning number of marches for life that continue to grow nation by nation.

### WHAT IS ASPAC?

**ASPAC is a training ground for pro-life leaders to**



Dr. Ligaya Acosta at the 21st ASPAC.

**be able to efficiently and effectively defend life and the family in their respective countries.** As a forum for pro-life leaders from around the world, it serves as a unique gathering to share and inspire one another. Today, we increasingly face challenges in the mission for the promotion and defense of faith, life, and family. ASPAC, through its outreach, lectures, presentations, breakout sessions, and a diverse group of attendees, is uniquely placed to answer these challenges.

### **WHAT IS UNIQUE TO ASPAC?**

The congress has been graced by papal nuncios, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, clergy, religious, civil leaders, prominent lay leaders in the international pro-life movement, and officials from the Vatican since it began in Bangalore, India in 1994.

Along with focusing on pressing issues confronting the region in the fight for life and the family, ASPAC also focuses on prayer and on living our Catholic faith. Integral to the event and offered daily are the Rosary, Holy Mass, and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

**The congress also attracts people of other faiths, not**

## **November 2019 Events**

### **Please Pray for HLI's Mission Work in November:**

- October 22-November 7: HLI Latin American Advisor Nancy Tosi returns to Bolivia for her third mission. There she will join Elisa Lanza, the General Coordinator of ANE Provida Bolivia, to give a talk to priests, seminarians, and students.
- October 24-November 2: Dr. Brian Clowes will join Emil Hagamu, HLI Regional Director for English-Speaking Africa for a mission to Zambia.
- October 30-November 12: HLI President Fr. Shenan J. Boquet will be on a mission to Hawaii.
- November 8-November 10: HLI Delegate of International Missions, Raymond de Souza will be on a mission to Pachuca, Mexico, then to Cristo Rey, Mexico November 15-17.
- November 29-December 1: Raymond proceeds on a mission to Costa Rica.
- November 14-December 7: Nancy Tosi goes on her third mission to Venezuela to join Fr. Geronimo Sifontes, Roxaida Lopez, and Johan Ojedain for the graduation of 800 volunteers from the HLI course taught by Nancy. Also, they will deliver training lectures to priests, seminarians, health professionals, and lay leaders.
- November 14-16: Fr. Boquet will be the keynote speaker at the LifeWorks Ohio banquet in Cleveland, Ohio.

**Watch for details of these events in future issues of HLI's *Mission Report*.**



only from Asia and Oceania, but from other parts of the world, who are united in the defense of life and the family.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO ASSIST ASPAC?

From working with our leadership to choose the location and the speakers, to her collaboration with the local Church, Dr. Acosta works hard throughout the year to make each ASPAC special and beneficial to as many people as possible. The pro-life movement in these areas urgently requires formation, support, and training. We always welcome donations earmarked for ASPAC participants who might not otherwise have the means to attend without a sponsor. **Sponsoring a pro-life warrior by sending even a small amount is all it takes to help a struggling priest or seminarian, receive the training that will undoubtedly bless his community 100 times over.** But even if you cannot support HLI with funds, please always keep our mission in your prayers. We thank our generous donors for their support, which helps make critical conferences like this possible. It is an honor to campaign for Christ, or as Dr. Acosta says, to bear witness to the “pearl of great price.”

## Where Has ASPAC Been Held?

Cebu, Philippines (1991 and 2001)  
Bangalore, India (1994 and 2004)  
Manila, Philippines (1995, 1996, and 2010)  
Singapore (1997 and 2003)  
Taegu, South Korea (1998)  
Mumbai, India (2000)  
Hong Kong, China (2002)  
Bali, Indonesia (2005)  
Bangkok, Thailand (2007 and 2017)  
Goa, India (2008)  
Miri, Malaysia (2009)  
Astana, Kazakhstan (2011)  
Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia (2013)  
Taiwan (2015)  
Bangkok, Thailand (2017)  
The 22<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life, and Family will take place in Kerala, India.



Entrance of bishops at HLI's 17th ASPAC in the Philippines.

*May the blessings of the Christ Child and the love of the Holy Family be yours and may you be filled with holy joy this Christmas season and throughout the coming year.*

This is the inscription inside a very special Christmas card that I would like to send you.

Our director of HLI Poland, Ewa Kowalewska, is also a very accomplished iconographer. Ewa wrote the Black Madonna icon for the Ocean to Ocean Pilgrimage that HLI held first across Europe, then across North America. She also wrote *Familia Vitae*, **which is the image on the Christmas cards I want to send you.**

If you are familiar with iconography, the colors are just as important as the figures. Here is what Ewa wrote describing *Familia Vitae*:

The Virgin Mary, pregnant, is shown as being conscious of her motherhood, which was given to her through the power of the Holy Spirit. The red of her gown symbolizes love, the blue of her dress the presence of God's Son, and the whiteness of her veil, chastity.

St. Joseph reaches out with his left arm to protect and defend Mary and the Son, reminding us of a man's role as father and husband. His right arm is raised in a gesture of praise, fully aware that all persons are a gift from God. The dark green and blue clothing expresses hope and confidence in God's Providence.

The Child Jesus, still in His Mother's womb, raises His little hands in a gesture of blessing. His crossed tiny feet indicate the prenatal age of the Child. These feet are a recognizable pro-life symbol for people throughout the world.

Together, the hands of Mary and St. Joseph form a triangle, reflecting the selfless love of the Trinity shared in the love and life of the family. The golden-green background encircling the Holy Family also symbolizes the presence of God in the Holy Trinity. In particular, yellow gold symbolizes God the Father. Blue represents the Son, and green (the effect of mixing yellow and blue), the Holy Spirit.

Gazing upon *Familia Vitae*, we are invited to open our minds and hearts to a greater understanding of the value of human life and the essential dignity of the family through the mystery of the Holy Family.

Just for you, we have reproduced *Familia Vitae* in a beautiful card that you can send to your friends and family this coming Christmas season. **For your gift of \$53 to HLI's missionary educational apostolate, I will send to you a pack of 20 cards.**

Your prayers and gifts are essential to help us reach tens of thousands every year with our education programs—programs to train lay leaders, teachers, medical professionals, priests, seminarians, and others on the truth of life and family as taught by the Catholic Church. Christ commands us to preach the Gospel to all nations. **Let HLI be your hands and feet with your gift today of \$53 or more.**

Yours in Christ and Our Lady,



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President, Human Life International



**This month, when you donate \$53 or more to support HLI's life-saving mission, you'll receive a 20-pack of this Christmas card.**