



Mission Report

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HLI President, Fr. Shenan J. Boquet, and HLI Regional Director of Asia and Oceania, Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta, at the 22nd ASPAC with Fr. Nevin Attokaran, Chancellor of the Diocese of Irinjalakuda.

- * **Igniting the Spark:** Fr. Marx's Influence in the Philippines
- * **With Joyful Gratitude:** Impact of the 22nd Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life, and Family
- * **This Month's Gift to Donors:** *The Ten Commandments* by Msgr. Charles Pope

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for saying yes. Because of your prayers, faithful commitment, and partnership, our missionaries can proclaim the Gospel of Life around the world, transforming lives, families, and societies. Without this commitment and the sacrifices entailed, our global pro-life movement and its transformative influence would not be possible. Though we continue to face many obstacles, the landscape and structures would be vastly different if not for your devotion and the dedicated service of our missionaries – present and past. I was recently reminded, while on mission to the Philippines in March, of HLI's impact and how, together, we are making a difference.

Fr. Paul Marx, O.S.B., first visited the Philippines in 1972, when he warned of the imminent dangers of contraception, sterilization, abortion, and anti-life and anti-family ideologies. For many this was the first time they had heard such a message. Because of Fr. Marx's passionate witness to the Gospel of Life, many hearts and minds were transformed – awakened. "It is because of Fr. Marx," stated Congressman Lito and his wife Beng Atienza in our recent visit, "that the pro-life movement was born in the Philippines ... the reason we are so passionately involved. We and so many owe Fr. Marx so much."

Congressman Lito and Beng always express their gratitude to Fr. Marx and HLI. It was Fr. Marx, after all, who encouraged Congressman Lito to run for vice-mayor and eventually mayor of Manila, giving him \$50 each time to spark his campaigns. Lito, as a dedicated pro-lifer, faithfully integrated the pro-life message into his campaign speeches and eventually into his leadership and governance. Fr. Habiger, successor to Fr. Marx, encouraged then-Mayor Lito to run for Congress, giving him \$100 of his own money. Whether as mayor or congressman, Lito and Beng Atienza have been faithful pro-life advocates, defending the truth about life and the family. Congressman Lito,



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet
President

HLI's SPIRIT & LIFE WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER

Every Monday, HLI President Fr. Shenan J. Boquet writes on current issues that affect life and family.

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with Beng's support, shows that **one person can inspire others, especially one serving in political office where advocacy for life and the family makes a tremendous difference.**

Let me offer yet another example of how HLI influenced the Atienzas. In 1995, when serving as mayor of Manila, Mayor Lito and Beng, in witness to their pro-life conviction, opened The Home of the Angels, a crisis center for abandoned babies. The Home, to date, has served over 800 babies, all legally adopted by the Atienzas. These precious little ones are nursed back to health and baptized, with Congressman Lito and Beng listed in the civil records as the children's parents. The Home and the Atienzas work with appropriate agencies in screening prospective families that are willing to legally adopt the children, giving them a loving family and home life. Even after being adopted, the Atienzas maintain a close relationship with these children and their new families, who regularly send letters and photos. The Home is supported by the Atienzas, their children, friends, and the community.

Our recent mission to the Philippines revealed how great an impact HLI is still making and how necessary our work remains. We met and conducted programs for bishops, priests, seminarians, and religious men and women, and gave lectures to nearly 3,000 high school students. We also offered pro-life and family training seminars in two dioceses for family life coordinators. All of this happened because of Fr. Marx, HLI, and you.

Not only does the Philippines have a strong and active pro-life movement, but it also serves as a launching point for all of HLI's pro-life activities and programs throughout Asia-Oceania. **The spark initiated by Fr. Marx in 1972 has created a fire.**

However, we can see clear evidence that we cannot be complacent. During our presentation to the student body at an all-girls Catholic high school, a strong contingent of students expressed their discontent with Church teaching on issues like homosexuality, transgenderism, and gender ideology. I wish I could say this is an isolated experience, but tragically it is not. The poison of secularist Western values is beginning to seep into the Philippines, quietly eroding the fundamental truths that have shielded it from the worst aspects of Western decadence – no-fault divorce, radical sex-ed,

legalized contraception and abortion, so-called same-sex “marriage”, and on and on.

What is evident in the Philippines is a tragic desire to be like the West – embracing its ideologies, philosophies, and agendas. Though the Faith is still observable, it is threatened by the same elitism and progressivism we see in the West. Western-led NGOs and other non-profits have intentionally targeted the Philippines, seeing in this staunchly Catholic country a holdout against, and even a threat to, the triumph of progressive values. When Catholics fail to courageously live their faith, to express that faith in the public square, and to transmit that faith to the next generation, there are very real, and very grave, practical consequences.

This is why I need your continued help.

Fr. Marx's first investment and “wake up call” in the Philippines – as in other countries – produced much fruit in its wake and sparked a movement. With your continued prayers, support, and sacrifices, we will, together, strengthen this movement to counteract this new wave of secularism, not only in the Philippines, but also throughout Asia-Oceania, and around the world.

Thank you for all you do and offer in the service of life and the family. Let us continue to pray for each other and for those we serve.

Yours in Christ and Our Lady,

Fr. Shenan J. Boquet
President, Human Life International

22nd Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life, and Family

By Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta, Regional Director of Asia and Oceania, January 2020

Thanks to Human Life International's generous benefactors, it is my great joy to say that our 22nd Asia-Pacific Congress on Faith, Life, and Family (ASPAC) was another powerful example of God's amazing glory! Almost 600 people from 19 countries came to Kerala, India, with beautiful smiles on their faces and a hunger to deepen their commitment to building a Culture of Life. None of this would have been possible without your support. I am especially grateful for the gracious partnership of Bishop Pauly Kannookadan, of the hosting Diocese of Irinjalakuda, the Local Organizing Committee, HLI-India Affiliate Milagres Pereira, Dr. Finto Francis, and every other person who tirelessly worked with us for the greater glory of God and His people.

We had great hope the ASPAC would bear phenomenal fruits. As part of our commitment to seeing this hope brought to fruition, every day we celebrated Holy Mass, provided time for Eucharistic Adoration, and prayed the holy Rosary. This was also part of our commitment in anticipation of the Congress – seeking all for the glory and honor of God.

Irinjalakuda is called the “Cradle of Catholicism” in India because it was the first place in India where St. Thomas the Apostle evangelized. Still, in this modern day, we face many challenges. Catholics are a tiny minority in India, and sex-selective abortions are rampant as every year *approximately 500,000 preborn baby girls are aborted because they're female*. We have much work to do!

While most of the people who attended the Congress were Catholic, Asel Schultz from Kazakhstan surprised us with his testimony. In part, he said:



“This is my first time attending an ASPAC. I was invited by Fr. Pawel (who has been attending the ASPAC Congresses), and I have really been looking forward to this conference because I’ve never been to any pro-life conference. I just know that Human Life International is the biggest pro-life organization in the world.

I am grateful to the Lord for the people making a stand



His Eminence George Cardinal Alencherry giving his message during the Valedictory Ceremony.



Fr. Diego Ibarra, Rector of the I.V.E. Seminary, showing a picture of his family during his talk "The Joys and Blessings of Large Families."

for the value of life and, of course, the spiritual aspect of the ASPAC. All the people were believers, and even though I come from a Protestant background, never did I feel unwelcome.

I am grateful for all these brave speakers who have the courage to talk about really difficult things that are happening now all over the world, and who make a stand for the right values...

It's been an absolutely amazing experience for me as a first-timer and I'm really grateful for the organizers of this amazing event."

INDIAN CATHOLICS HELP HLI TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Each of those involved with the ASPAC had their own story to tell, and I would like to relate a couple of them to you. Pro-life OB-GYN Dr. Finto Francis has a deep history with HLI. He became unequivocally pro-life after attending an HLI Congress when he was a medical student. Later, when he became a doctor, his first condition for hospital employment was that he would never commit abortions. This is a major accomplishment for a medical doctor in India, where the Culture of Death rampantly pushes abortions and the sterilization of women. Instead,

Dr. Francis promotes the Culture of Life by encouraging large families and helping sterilized women to achieve pregnancy through recanalization. I asked him to give a presentation at the ASPAC, and it was a genius scientific treatise. **Dr. Francis' life story is beautiful proof that HLI's mission has continuing impact on the world.**

Similarly, Bishop Kannookadan's total support for the 22nd ASPAC began in December 2016, right after HLI finished the three-day La Vita Conference in Kerala. At that time, I requested that he host our 2020 Congress, and his friendship has been a blessing ever since.

Mounting and hosting an ASPAC takes two years of planning and preparation, requiring many phone calls, emails, and periodic travel to meet with the Organizing Committee. A week before the Congress, on January 11 I left my home country of the Philippines for the long journey to Kerala, where I arrived almost at midnight. I usually go a week early to the Congress to help with preparations.

The morning after my arrival, Fr. Nevin Attokaran, Chancellor of the Diocese of Irinjalakuda, and the ASPAC Local Organizing Committee co-chairs, Milagres Pereira and Dr. Francis, welcomed me.

We began everything with faith and worship, and

This year, people spoke to me especially about the impact Fr. Boquet had on them – the clarity of the content delivered in his talks, the way he expresses difficult questions, the way Father invests in people.

I believe this is how we made such progress on the practical aspects of the planning and logistics for the Congress. Every time a seemingly insurmountable difficulty arose, I rushed to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament just beside our working area and I prayed. We enjoyed the help of a faithful Intercessory Group who prayed the Creed, Rosaries, and other prayers before Him. We invoked the Holy Trinity, the Holy Family, and the saints and angels. As the Benedictine motto goes: *Ora et labora. Pray and work.* **Through those prayers and daily Masses, I believe God granted us the grace and strength to persevere through all the preparations. I am in awe of God's love and mercy!**

The evening after my arrival, Bishop Kannookadan invited me to dinner in his residence, along with priests comprising the Eparchial Curia, and members of the Organizing Committee. Bishop Kannookadan did this even though he was busy with the Holy Synod of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church.

But let me relate to you what happened just before our delightful dinner. Bishop Kannookadan sent me with Fr. Attokaran to experience a massive parish feast in the adjacent church. If I hadn't been accompanied by Fr. Attokaran, I would have been

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Speakers Wowed the Crowd

HLI carefully chose expert religious and lay leaders to give 36 talks, and here is the list of major speeches:

- “Family: The Sanctuary of Life” by His Excellency Joseph Pamplany, Auxiliary Bishop of Tellicherry (Syro-Malabar), India
- “Building a Culture of Life in the Midst of Cultural Challenges” by His Excellency Rolando Crisostomo Santos, C.M., Bishop of Alotau-Sideia, Papua New Guinea
- “The Dignity of Man: Reclaiming the Language in Culture” by Reverend Father Shenan J. Boquet, HLI President, USA
- “What Do We Mean by Life?” by Reverend Father Francesco Giordano, Director of HLI Rome Office, Italy
- “The Spiritual Battle Between the Culture of Life and the Culture of Death” by Dr. Brian Clowes, HLI Director of Education and Research, USA
- “Pregnancy Promotes Reproductive Health: Countering the Lies of Death Peddlers” by Dr. Finto Francis, India
- “From Assisted Suicide to Euthanasia: Addressing Patients’ Autonomy” by Reverend Father Jorge Randle, I.V.E., Rome, Italy
- “Pro-Family Sex Education: The Irreplaceable Role of Parents as Teachers” by Louise Kirk, coordinator of Alive to the World, United Kingdom
- “Schools of Life and Love: Testimonies of Catholic Pro-Life Families” by Mother Compassionis Schmitz, Extreme Orient Provincial Superior of the S.S.V.M. Congregation, USA
- “The Joys and Blessings of Large Families” by Reverend Father Diego Ibarra, I.V.E., Rector of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of Sheshan Formation House, Argentina (Fr. Ibarra comes from a family of 10 children, four of whom are priests, two are religious (one contemplative), and their youngest sibling now a seminarian!)
- “Understanding God’s Plan for Marriage and the Family” and “Humanization of Medicine: A Transcendent Vision of Man” by Dr. Ligaya Acosta, HLI Regional Director of Asia and Oceania

People traveled far and wide from all the states of India. Some traveled two, three, even four days by train just to attend this Congress!

crushed and lost in the crowd! Not only did faithful Catholics attend the Mass, but Hindus were there as well. With the Hindus' attraction to Blessed Mother Mary, we experience an opportune moment to connect and teach who she really is – beloved Daughter of God the Father, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, and Mother of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, True God and True Man. Mary stands in witness to the beauty of womanhood and motherhood, which helps confront a culture and people who sadly support contraception, abortion, and sex-selective abortion.

BISHOPS LED THE WAY

On January 17, Bishop Stephen Chirappanath, Apostolic Visitor of Europe for the Syro-Malabar Community, concelebrated the solemn and beautiful Opening Mass with all the bishops and priests in attendance. Bishop Chirappanath's homily was powerful, setting the tone with the Asia-Pacific Congress theme, "I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. *Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live*" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

The Grand Opening Program was spectacular. Each representative of the 19 countries – in their country's best indigenous costumes – gloriously marched up to the stage and planted their country's flag to the tune of their national anthem.

The lighting of the inaugural lamp is an Indian tradition usually performed by dignitaries. For the 22nd Asia-Pacific Congress, we chose three pro-life couples to light the lamp with their children, who became little dignitaries. We chose parents who live their faith and pro-life convictions by welcoming all the children that God gives them. One was a wife and mother of eight who, despite painful difficulties giving birth and complications from previous Caesarean-sections, she and husband remain open to life, welcoming each child as a loving gift of God. Another was a husband and wife who were pressured by physicians to abort their child with disabilities. The couple brought



Participants of HLI's 22nd ASPAC.

that lovable child into the world and brought him to the ASPAC! Finally, the third was a doctor who decided to resign from a lucrative post and instead went into private practice so he could help his wife raise their growing family.

Most Reverend Paul Anthony Mullassery, Bishop of Quilon, India, and Chairman of the Family Commission of the Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference, delivered the inspiring inaugural address.

On the second day, Bishop Rolando Crisostomo Santos, C.M., the Filipino bishop of Alotau-Sideia, Papua New Guinea, presided over Holy Mass. I have known and partnered with this humble, faithful, and brave bishop since he was the secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. We met when HLI gave a three-day pro-life training seminar for the bishops. Since then, we have worked together many times promoting the defense of faith, life, and family in Papua New Guinea, and Bishop Santos is



Fr. Boquet and Dr. Ligaya with Dr. Finto Francis, his wife Aysha, and their beautiful children.

a faithful attendee of the ASPAC Congresses.

At the Closing Ceremony, His Eminence George Cardinal Alencherry was the chief guest, where he gave an address on the preciousness of human life and the need to defend every life and the family. Cardinal Alencherry is the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly (Syro-Malabar), India.

WE ARE HUMBLLED AND GRATEFUL

On behalf of everyone at Human Life International, and all those we encountered at the 22nd ASPAC, I couldn't be more grateful or humbled by the outpouring of God's grace and love during this wonderful time together in Kerala.

Continued on next page

May 2020 Events

Please Pray for HLI's Mission Work in May:

Much of our mission travel is being affected by COVID-19.

Please pray that we can continue our international work uninterrupted!

- May 13-23: Nancy Tosi, VHI Advisor for Latin American Missions, will be on mission in Bolivia, training priests, seminarians, and laity in the Archdiocese of Sucre and the Dioceses of Tarija and Potosi.
- May 22-30: HLI President Fr. Shenan J. Boquet will be on mission in Rome.

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

Human Life International's mission to build a Culture of Life and a Civilization of Love is a mission to keep the Lord's commandment to love Him and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Everything we do in our mission is centered around this commandment to love, and *thanks to your generous contributions*, the 22nd Asia-Pacific Congress taught attendees how to save human lives here on earth so that each and every person created in the image of God may live to choose the inexplicable joy of eternal life with Him. **While we cannot yet see the full impact of the 22nd Asia-Pacific Congress, we have many reasons to believe it is already helping current generations of our human family, and generations to come.**

As is traditionally done during the Closing Ceremony, I announced the host country for HLI's next ASPAC. I was overjoyed and my heart filled with pride to say that the Philippines would host the 23rd ASPAC! Most Reverend José Palma, Archbishop of Cebu, addressed the crowd via a video message, where he expressed his joyful anticipation of the event to be hosted in his archdiocese. The Archbishop has been a faithful friend of HLI for many years. The Congress will be celebrated in conjunction with the 500th anniversary of the founding of Catholicism in the Philippines. The ASPAC is scheduled to be held November 12-14, 2021, and will be one of the concluding ceremonies of the anniversary celebrations. More details to come later!

We have countless reasons to believe that God and the world need HLI to continue our mission. We can never thank you, our donors, enough, and *with your prayerful and faithful support*, together, we can help build a Culture of Life – saving lives and souls. I am in awe of God's love and mercy! I am in awe of your love and mercy! Rest assured that your servants at Human Life International pray for your health, peace, prosperity, and happiness.

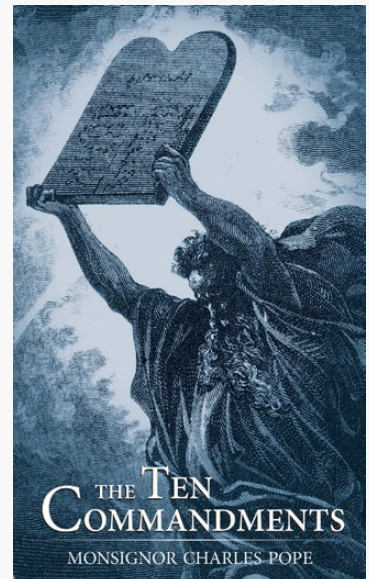
DONATE \$53 OR MORE TO HLI THIS MONTH AND GET OUR LATEST PRO-LIFE RESOURCE!

This month, when you donate \$53 or more to support HLI's life-saving mission, you'll receive the book *The Ten Commandments* by Msgr. Charles Pope.

The Ten Commandments is a powerful, in-depth investigation into the Decalogue. Msgr. Pope expertly and lovingly dives into the Ten Commandments, illuminating their eternal importance to the spiritual life while relating them to our modern day-to-day struggles. He also guides the reader through each commandment and shows how they are much more than simple dos and don'ts, but rather an outpouring of God's love for us and a guide for us to better love Him. Here Msgr. Pope examines the inner meaning of each commandment, showing how they ultimately are not burdensome restrictions, but pathways to freedom, which allow us to more fully love God.

The Ten Commandments offers both insight into the moral law of God and an opportunity for deep spiritual introspection. Also included are several examines to help you perform a prayerful examination of conscience.

Please send your gift of \$53 or more to HLI today, and we'll ship this book out to you!



The Ten Commandments is our gift to you this month when you donate \$53 or more.