

*Message on Human Rights Day
Of the Catholic Church in Thailand*

*Treat Human Rights with Positive Attitude
and Respect for Difference*



Sunday, November 16, 2008

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Treat Human Rights with Positive Attitude and Respect for Difference

To All Christians,

It is well-known that Thai society in the recent past has learned a new political, democratic lesson. Yet, in this transitional process, Thai society is facing serious conflict of opinion, which is developing further and bringing about political crisis that might affect stability of society. In particular, the confrontation of factions with contradictory opinions results in prejudice and hatred. Verbal and physical attacks and violation are used, which widen this division as personal faction and larger society.

Looking at this conflict, we cannot deny that the key factor is that all members in society neither accept nor respect for differences in opinions, intellects and physical elements of human beings. On the contrary, they stick to their own reasons based on their emotion and feeling, motivated with arrogance, seeing that their own faction is better than the other or seeing that their own action is correct and refuse the other faction. There is division, and both factions are armed with hatred to harm one another. One faction looks at the other as enemy. This situation when human being does not love or respect fraternity, since we all are children of the same God, becomes more critical and worrisome than other violence in society.

This crisis of unity in society is the concern that the Catholic Church takes on as her mission to help heal society. A letter of Paul serves as an essential basis of reflection for Christians. Our society is like a human body. Unity of life is built by various organs of the body with different tasks. So is society. Society could exist with members exercising their capacities, intellects, opinions and interests they possess at different degrees to cooperate with and contribute to society based on the value of acceptance, respect, flexibility, compromise with the help of the grace granted by the same Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:12-13).

The Church and members of all factions who believe in God must help society as ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19-20). We have to remind society that although the current discourse and struggle for political ideology cannot find solution rapidly in the near future to fulfill the goal of being at the service to 'city' of the people, who are gathering as civil community in democratic system, which is

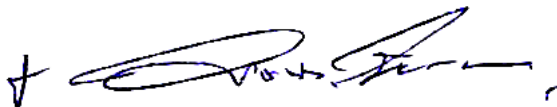
the ultimate common good, but God of reconciliation entrusts all people to exercise love as the core value to transcend all prejudices, especially the prejudice in our hearts toward individual, group or faction that we look at as other people or group just because of political reason and emotion. To know God intrinsically we have to know Him in individuals who have opinions that are different from ours.

Thus, on the occasion of the Human Rights Day dedicated by Catholic Church in Thailand to be celebrated on Sunday November 16, I cordially invite all Christians to contemplate and reflect if we all are trapped in illusion of violence, which is the contemporary phenomenon. If we still have love or do not hate our brothers and sisters who have opinions different from us, let us thank God who leads us to be firm in the love of God. On the contrary, if we have suspicion and hatred in our heart, let us accept conversion and change our way to be with God, trust Him and try to understand the sign of the time with the eye filled with love, compassion, openness, and pull down prejudice and exercise toleration to understand the truth.

Thai society is the community of love and solidarity. To bring about this community of justice and peace that all strive for, apart from the special help and grace of God, sincerity, courage, perseverance and forgiveness are the acts of witnessing that Christians cannot avoid or ignore in this time of difficulty.

Through her intercession, I implore Mary the Mother of the Prince of Peace to help us all, especially Christians, for the light to act in the way of peace to restore society that is permanently safe and peaceful.

Faithfully yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip Banchong Chaiyara', with a small cross symbol to the left.

(Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara)

Chairperson of Caritas Thailand

Justice and Peace Desk

Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand