

Testimony of a Judge who granted to two youth "out-on-pass" from prison to join the ACAY team to see the Pope, and the testimony of one of those prisoners.

Made up mainly of the ACAY youth and team, we wanted to open wide the doors to others involved in our mission to occupy the 100 seats generously offered us by the local church. Two judges came with us and six youth from prison with a special out-on-pass allowing them out for the day (five boys and one girl); a great adventure for them and for us a decision to trust. It was not in vain.

To see the Vicar of Christ! Pope Francis preaches about love, and he embodies all the virtues that come with it : faith, hope, compassion, mercy, generosity, and goodness. This is the reason why I, as a judge, granted special permission to two youth under my judicial care, to join the ACAY group to see the Pope.

Both of the youth being minors, they were being detained in special centers for minors and taking part in the program ACAY runs in that center. My fear that they would escape evaporated when they assured me that they would not break the law. I challenged them not to break the trust that they were being given on this occasion.

The law for minors (A.M. No 02-1-18-SC) grants me permission to allow them a day out, just as it allows me to grant them permission to go home to their families for a few days during Christmas or for specific family circumstances. This measure was a way for me to promote the best interests of the youth, with a view to their reintegration into society.

I knew that an occasion such as the Pope's visit was an opportunity for them to reaffirm their faith and commitment to continue in their rehabilitation program. At the same time, it gives them hope and inspiration towards becoming mature adults, seeking peace and responsibility. I hope this time has helped them towards a positive reintegration in society.

Judge Angelina Sale

Dear Judge,

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to accompany the ACAY members on the Pope's visit even though I am a Muslim. As soon as I left the ACAY Mission office to go to Luneta Park, I immediately felt an immense joy as this was the first time I was going to live such an experience.

There were so many people! We were surrounded by people on all sides but I remained calm and kept moving forward. When we arrived at our seats, I could no longer contain my joy because I did not realize we had such a good seats! We waited for the Pope for nine hours. It began to rain and I was so cold, but I never lost my sense of joy.

At that moment, Judge, I realized how much I have changed, and how much more stable I have become. I accepted the difficulties of the situation because I wanted to see the Pope. Once he arrived, all the difficulties of the day disappeared. I had brought along the Rosaries from my center for the Pope to bless. But at the bottom of my heart, I was bringing also my family, the youth from my center, and all those whom I hold dear.

Letter from M.
(Imprisoned for drug trafficking)



NEWSFLASH!

For many years, Sister Sophie has heard this refrain while on tour and attending conferences in France "Your story, the story of your mission and of your youth, are a symbol of hope which we all could use in France today. You should write a book!". Finally, it has been done!

It has not been easy to find the time but this book has been written, despite the obstacles, in parts during trips in Europe or the Philippines, in a car, on a plane, in a train. This corresponds well to the nature of the mission, as indicated by the title of the work:

"Defier le chaos: Mon combat contre le misere des jeunes" " Defying chaos: my fight against the suffering of the youth"

Take note:

The book will be published on the 9th of April 2015 with 'Presses de la Renaissance' and will be available in all French bookshops. We will keep you up to date regarding the events and the dedications that will be held when the book comes out – between April 7 – 26.

JAN 2015

ACAY newsletter

Une seconde chance pour la jeunesse en difficulté

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EDITOR

Mabuhay ang Santo Papa!

**Papa Francisco mahal ng Filipino!
Mabuhay Santo Padre!**



It is not without emotion that I write these few lines while our Philippine Islands have been immersed in the joy of the Pope's presence here this past week. Exuberant and colorful jubilation abounded, as worries and problems were cast aside, and everyone was enthralled by his every action, gesture and word at each event.

As soon as he was getting off the plane, the Pope was in the presence of millions of Filipinos, as they lined up on his route, watching and hoping for a smile, a look, a gesture, a moment of closeness with him. Our Mission was not left out as we received the gift of being seated very close to him in the two ceremonies we participated in: the meeting with families in which one of our girls from the School of Life read one of the readings, and then during the final Mass for the feast of Santa Niño. I invite you to journey with me through these days filled with light. Though his visit ended in a downpour of rain, our hearts were burning with joy.

For me, the Santo Nino mass will remain a moment of vivid and profound emotion, since twenty years earlier, almost to the day, I was in the same place during the World Youth Day with Pope John Paul II. It was on the occasion of that event that I received my calling to found a Mission in the Philippines. Twenty years later, after seventeen years of Mission in service to the youth at risk, I watched my flock of a 100 people present, and I was jubilant and I gave thanks. I have spoken about these 17 years in a book that will be coming out in April, "Defier le Chaos".

The Mission continues!

**Sister Sophie of Jesus
Missionary of Mary**



Thank you to ORECA company for printing all the news letter of ACAY

16 January 2015: Meeting of the Holy Father with the Families!

Light blue t-shirts on their backs, scarves in hand, plastic bags.... All 35 youth, staff, volunteers and sisters of the ACAY Mission were ready at 5:00 am, to join a queue which would last more than five hours, to get to the 15,000 seats in the MOA Arena auditorium where the meeting between the Pope and the families was happening.

Our Bishop had the kindness to reserve 35 seats for us for this event, as well as 100 seats for the last mass with the Pope which will coincide with the feast of Santo Nino. Rona, accompanied by two other young girls from the School of Life coming from the village of Santa Cruz in Tacloban, had the honor of reading the prayer in Waray, dialect of Leyte, during the ceremony. Sister Edith and Sister Sophie were by their side, a representation of familial presence, for youth in difficulty in the Philippines. The presence of the Pope was a consoling balm for everyone here.



17 January 2015: The Holy Father in Tacloban!

It was a Saturday. I was relieved to watch my daughter go to sleep so that I would have the chance to watch the Pope's trip to Tacloban on television. The first image was of this immense crowd of yellow rain coats, waiting nervously for the Pope's plane to land. The newscaster on television was still uncertain whether the Pope's plane would be able to land, as the unceasing rain and violent winds of a tropical storm were beating down on Tacloban, the ground zero of typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. The threat was real, the Pope would have to shorten his visit so that the plane could return. And suddenly, the two lights of the plane appeared in the sky. My tears were falling at the same time as those gathered there, tears of joy but also of sorrow. The Pope was coming to comfort by his simple presence those who were once again being maltreated by the weather. He was coming to be with them, to share their anguish, their pain, united with them even in raincoats! And to console them with his words as a shepherd and a father.

Yvonne

"I am with you, a little late, it is true, but I am here.. The Lord has the capacity to cry with us, to walk with us in the most difficult moments in our lives. He never abandons us..... All that I can do is to keep the silence and walk with you with a silent heart."

Pope Francis

The impact of the Holy Father in the heart of the village of Santa Cruz...

The mothers of Santa Cruz gathered around Sister Edith and Karen for a time of sharing. Their emotions ran high as they talked about the Pope's visit:

"What I understood from the Pope's visit above all else, was that God is here, he will never forget us, that we are loved by God and that he guides us."

"I am so grateful that the Pope came even though we were in the middle of a typhoon and it was dangerous to come. It was overwhelming for me to have seen him here."

"He reminded us the importance of brotherhood and sisterhood, not just among ourselves, but with the whole world."

"For me, I experienced love in my heart for people that I did not love."



18th January 2015: The Santo Nino Mass

If the 16th of January can be described as a marathon, what can we say about this morning of the 18th of January! It was a day of a crossing of the Red Sea! The human mass of 6 million was comparable to the great waters already at 4 in the morning! It took literally hours of being compressed to finally get to our seats that had been reserved for us: in the front rows, opposite the Pope and to the right of the President of the Philippines! It was an indescribable gift and great privilege for each one of the 100 ACAY mission group. The magnitude of it left each one of us equally speechless.



This last Mass from the Holy Father coincided with one of the national religious feast days, that of the Santo Nino. The Philippine islands are consecrated to the Child Jesus. In 1521, a little statue of the Child Jesus was offered by Magellan to Queen Juana on the day of her baptism. This statue has been miraculously protected for centuries from the destruction of fires, bombs, wars and earthquakes. The entire crowd was jubilantly dancing the "Sinulog", the dance in honor of the Child Jesus. This is a mass that none among us is ready to forget, as much for its beauty, as for the joy experienced under the torrential downpour.

"Pope Francis, we love you!" was chanted and screamed in unison by millions of Filipinos even before the arrival of the Pope at Luneta Park. This short and simple phrase was perfectly suited to our dear Pope, simple, humble and yet strong, sincere and righteous to the core.

I was one of the six million people. As part of the ACAY group, I had received this invitation which allowed me to experience the Eucharist with the Holy Father and to witness a historical event. Despite the hours of waiting, standing under the rain and the cold, the ambiance was electric. All were happy, smiling, singing, dancing. No, it was not a rock star who was arriving to meet his fans. What Pope Francis was bringing with him was so much more than his simple presence. He had brought hope to the Philippines and to the Filipino people. He had chosen to go to the poorest and those who had suffered most in life. He was here not only for those who had the most need for hope, but also for those like our dear Sisters who have dedicated their life to others. This involvement in the ACAY Mission and in the Catholic church has been a blessing for our family.

Alexandra, Maia, Olivia, Ara and Hubert d'Aboville

When I heard that the Pope was to visit the Philippines, I did not pay too much attention. I could see the excitement of everyone around me, but I could not understand why. He is a man like any other, why such infatuation? What was his role in the church? Then the day arrived and we were all gathered around the television waiting for him to step off the plane. There was a long period of waiting but we could see his face through the window. He was smiling. I started to scream! All of a sudden my heart was heavy with emotion. His smile, his smile was beatific, peaceful, filled with hope. I could no longer recognize myself, my tears were streaming. The Pope had arrived in our home.

Arlene



"Dear Filipinos, you are called to be outstanding missionaries in Asia!"