

REMARKS BY MONSIGNOR JAMES L.G. BENAVENTE

Friday, September 30, 2016, 10:00 a.m.

Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica, Hagåtña

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I want to express my appreciation to Archbishop Savio Hon Tai Fai and Fr. Jeffrey San Nicolas for their invitation to this morning's press conference.

Certainly, this announcement, is welcome news and I am grateful for the vindication I have received from the present administration of this archdiocese. I especially want to thank Archbishop Hon and Fr. Jeff have taken in reviewing the claims of alleged financial mismanagement that were lodged against me while I served as Rector of the Cathedral-Basilica and Director of the Catholic Cemeteries. Having been able to respond directly to these alleged financial irregularities we now know today that truth and justice have once again prevailed.

There is no mistake that this has been a long and arduous journey for me and my priesthood despite a fervent plea to not have to go down this road over two years ago. As history will be told, the lesser path was taken and it was incumbent upon me to defend the good work we've done, as well as the sacrifice of so many others over the last 20 years.

I want to acknowledge the late Sir Knight Jerry Calvo, past chairman of the parish Finance Council; the late Judge and Sir Knight Cristobal Duenas, vice chairman; and members of the Cathedral-Basilica parish Finance Council. Mr. Gerald Taitano, past president of the Cathedral-Basilica Parish Council and members of the Parish Council. Their support was unwavering and I thank them for their leadership.

I also want to acknowledge those who worked closely with me for over 20 years, especially Dr. John Rivera, the former executive director of the Archdiocesan Development Group and Mr. Joshua Perez, the former executive director of the Catholic Cemeteries. Today, is also a day of vindication for the work that was entrusted to you as we have just heard from Archbishop Hon.

To Jon Junior Calvo and Jeni Shimizu, and many former Cathedral-Basilica staff members who gave so much of their time even after my removal. Your contributions have been invaluable despite the enormity of the task that was necessary to present and defend my case.

To my brother priests, especially Fr. Mike Crisostomo, and the religious, I have no doubt that your promises of prayers have been a source spiritual strength for this journey.

To my family, who endured the same painful and arduous journey, thank you for walking with me and for being my source of support and love during this difficult time. To my mom, whose love and support for her son is without question, I only wish I could have protected her from a mother's worst nightmare.

In particular, if I can for a moment, I would like to thank the Agana parishioners, ministers, altar servers, and countless parishioners throughout our island who gave of their support and prayers over the last two years who not only prayed for me, but also stood up for me.

As I take on a new assignment, and really because I was never given the proper chance to, I would like to impart to you my eternal love for the Agana parish community that was home for me for 20 years. I bid the Cathedral-Basilica and her parishioners farewell and Si Yu'us Ma'ase.

Finally, to the people of God in our archdiocese and to those who walked with me and never abandoned me regardless of the circumstances, I would like to offer my personal appreciation for your prayers and support as well. There is no doubt that there is much work ahead of us. While I am personally grateful for the news today, it's not a time to celebrate, instead, it is now a time to once again roll up our sleeves and be on our way in continuing the critical work in restoring, reconciling and rebuilding our archdiocese.

Senseramente yan Agradesimento!