



## THE ARCHDIOCESE OF AGANA

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### **Carmelites:**

## **A Gift of God that Inspires**

**Message by Archbishop Savio Hon Tai Fai, SDB**

We all were saddened by the news that the Carmelite Sisters were to leave the Island. It was absolutely a very difficult move both for them and for the faithful on Guam. The Archdiocese has been so privileged to have them among us ever since 1966. With their dedication to contemplation and prayer, the Carmelite community has become a power station for Church activities.

To the beloved Carmelite Sisters, I have to apologize and to admit certain damages of the "toxic environment" they experienced. In the month of July, eight seminarians were asked by their bishops to return to their dioceses from the RMS. Before their departure, I met them one by one and started to better realize the complexity of the issues which gave rise to the so-called "toxic environment".

The Sisters did not only assist the Archdiocese spiritually but also materially. We are now in a position to express our heartfelt gratitude publicly to you and your community, for it was through your effort that we received two million dollars to settle our big loan from the bank for the purchase of the Yona seminary property in view of the formation of future priests.

We appreciate the clarification made by Mother Dawn Marie this week regarding the genuine intent of the benefactor, which was unfortunately twisted by some people. The Sisters tried hard to tolerate it and to remain silent as much as possible. I personally knew of their suffering because as a Secretary working in the Holy See I was able to read those correspondences mentioned by the Mother Prioress and I respect their willingness to suffer in silence. However, silence in this case did not suffice, because things were getting worse to a point that the reputation of their community was at stake. I am glad that before her departure this week Mother Dawn Marie was able to reveal the truth in a limpid way.

I wanted to say more to you, Dear Carmelite Sisters, that day in and day out, you spend your life just to stay close to God. Like a font from which springs limpid water and freshness, so is your contemplative life from which radiates fragrance of Christ and marvel of grace. "I sleep but my heart is awake" (Songs 5:21). While we are sleeping in the world, you stay awake for us before the Lord. In contemplation you stay heart to heart with Christ, but all the time you are shoulder to shoulder with us. Dear Sisters, to us, you are a gift of God that inspires.

We priests are particularly thankful to the Carmelite Sisters for their special dedication to pray for us. All the more in the current situation we need their prayer. The allegations of child sex abuse by the clergy contribute somehow to the toxic environment. We priests while being together as one presbyterate body first and foremost need purification so that we may strive to protect the young and to show love to those wounded by some of the clergy. In the Church, child sex abuse is a terrible, grave matter. All of us, including the clergy, suffer from such a disheartening environment, but we still have people and prayer.

At the Vigil of the feast of Christ the King and the closing of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, let us remember that the Church is in need of the wise virgins to welcome the coming of the King Bridegroom in the heavenly banquet. That is why we need to ask the Lord to send us more vocations. We miss the Carmelite Sisters very much. In the future, we earnestly welcome and pray for the relocation of their community back to Guam, if God wills it. Let us be one in Christ.

God bless you all.

Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, SDB  
Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples  
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