



MISSION PEACE & JUSTICE

MPJ Monthly Newsletter "Hope in Action"

Volume 2, Issue 4

In this issue:

- By Jeffrey Roxas
My Heart is Ready, O God; My Heart is Ready!
- By Dcn. Nam Doan
Senate Bill 360: Why Not?



From Our Team :

- Kamil Ziolkowski (Lead), Theology III*
- Dcn. Manuel Del Rio, Theology IV*
- Sergio Hidalgo, Theology III*
- Roberto Villablanca, Theology II*
- Jeffrey Roxas, Theology I*
- Joseph Cruz, Pre-Theology II*

Dear SJS Community,
I hope you all had a beautiful and blessed Christmas celebration, gathering with your families, friends, and all your loved ones. May we let Christ be born in our hearts every day of our lives.

Huge thanks to all the seminarians who opened their hearts and donated their time and financial means to those who are not blessed with material things through the Archdiocesan Adopt-A-Family Program. Our Seminary was able to make beautiful gifts to 5 low-income families in the Los Angeles area.

The staff from the Our Lady of the Angeles Cathedral picked up all the donations on December 10th.

Special thanks to the MPJ Class Representatives for coordinating the Program in your respective classes.

Thank you all for your active responses to the

activities that the MPJ team has prepared over last semester: Clothing Drive, Blood Drive, Adopt-A-Family, and our monthly Newsletter. SJS Community has made a difference in the hundreds of lives in Fall

Semester 2019. Stay tuned for more fun and more mission in the upcoming 2020!

From the entire MPJ team at Saint John's - have a blessed new year of the Lord 2020. Let us stay open for all we can do for those less fortunate around us.

"May the best of your today's be the worst of your tomorrows, and may the road less paved be

the road that you follow."

Maligayang bagong Taon!
¡Feliz año nuevo!

새해 복 많이 받으세요!

Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku!

Kamil Ziolkowski



My Heart is Ready, O God; My Heart is Ready!

By Jeffrey Roxas

Have we ever exclaimed with joy to the Lord in this manner? We hear these words as we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, but does it ring true in our own life? The Advent Season is about preparing a place for the Lord to dwell in our hearts. We take this time to reflect on the things that prevent us from fully experiencing the joy that comes at Christ's birth. It might just be our tendency to do all that we desire rather than to increase our charity for the Lord and our neighbor. What must we do to enact our MISSION in the world, the PEACE of Christ that is yet to be shared, and the JUSTICE that every human being deserves? This is a question we must ask ourselves so that we may be ready and prepared to say YES to Jesus the moment he knocks at the door of our heart on Christmas Day.



What are the inward and outward signs of faith and expressions of charity that will make known the presence of God in our world today? Our society talks about this particular time

as being a season of giving, but we know that Jesus' love and mercy are boundless. Just how much time do we spend observing the people around us? Are we aware of their needs? Is our first instinct to express charity? After all, St. Thomas Aquinas' definition of love is "...to will the good of the other."

In St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he says, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Cor. 16:14). Charity is the highest virtue, yet it seems to be the most difficult to acquire. Think about it. If we do not learn to love our neighbor, how can we have the capacity to love the Lord genuinely? Furthermore, do we acknowledge the presence of Christ in the essence of every human being? In the Encyclical Letter of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, he says, "Acknowledgment of the living God is one path towards love, and the 'yes' of our will to his will unites our intellect, will, and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love" (DCE, 17). Our awareness of God's presence in the people we encounter every day can be, for us, a high starting point from which our ability to love will grow. By making room to enjoy even in the smallest ways, we are paving a path for Christ to enter our hearts, especially as we await his coming. I pray that the Lord may enlighten our hearts and our minds during this Advent and Christmas Season so that we may come to him with faith and confidence like a little child, saying, "My Heart is Ready, O God; My Heart is Ready!" (Ps. 57:7)



MISSION PEACE & JUSTICE

MPJ Monthly Newsletter "Hope in Action"

Volume 2, Issue 4

Senate Bill 360: Why Not?

By Dcn. Nam Doan

Recently, among the fast-moving pace of the weekly news cycle, one issue had garnered much attention here in California and beyond. *Senate Bill 360* is an attempt by the legislature of the State of California to require the disclosing of things heard in confession on the part of the priest—precisely, those things that pertain to the abuse of children from other priests. The argument given is that it is for the protection of children. While the Church, of course, wants to protect innocent children, I respond that the bill seeks to solve a problem that is in no way as widespread as it is made out to be, it is a violation of religious freedom. It would change the very nature of the sacrament of confession.



On the argument that children would be better protected, Archbishop Jose Gomez wrote in his article titled "Confession is sacred" in the *Angelus*: "SB 360's sponsor makes a sweeping claim that 'the clergy-penitent privilege has been abused on a large scale, resulting in the unreported and systemic abuse of thousands of children across multiple denominations and faiths.' That is simply not true. Hearings on the bill have not presented a single case — in California or anywhere else— where this kind of crime could have been prevented if a priest had disclosed information he had heard in confession. Why is no one asking the bill's sponsor to provide evidence for his accusations against the Church?" Moreover, such a claim is no more than a political trap intending to serve a single purpose of violation of the right of the Church in exercising her freedom of religious worship.



The bill is a violation of the freedom of religion, which is fundamental in the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." (First Amendment) Here, the

Constitution guaranteed in clear terms the free exercise of religion in the public sphere. From the Vatican, the Apostolic Penitentiary in its document published on June 21, 2019, with the approval of the Pope states clearly: "Any political action or legislative initiative aimed at "breaching" the inviolability of the sacramental seal would constitute an unacceptable offense against *libertas Ecclesiae*, which does not receive its legitimacy from individual States, but from God; it would also constitute a violation of religious freedom, legally fundamental to all other freedoms, including the freedom of conscience of individual citizens, both penitents and confessors." (Apostolic Penitentiary)

The absolute confidentiality of the sacramental seal itself belongs to the nature of the sacramental act. In other words, the sacrament of confession as it is instituted by Jesus Christ has, at its nature, the action of the Divine. The Apostolic Penitentiary continued: "The inviolable secrecy of Con-



fession comes directly from the revealed divine right...it is as if the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation contained the very essence of Christianity and of the Church." (Apostolic Penitentiary) The mercy of the Divine's action is revealed toward the person of faith. The person of faith is healed through the act of faith of both him and the person of the priest. In this double aspect of the confessional, the Divine presence is made known. "The sacramental conversation will remain within the secrecy of the confessional, between one's conscience that opens to grace, and God, with the necessary mediation of the priest." (Pope Francis) Lastly, the absolute secrecy of the confessional is codified in the Code of Canon Law. Specifically, in this canon: Can. 983 §1. "The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore, it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason." In short, with these very clear terms, the Church affirms that the seal of the sacrament of confession truly belongs to the sacrament itself.