

“Rebuilding Lives, Rebuilding Communities: Ensuring a Future for Persecuted Christians”

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H.E Mr. Teodoro Lopez Locsin, Jr., Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines
TRANSCRIPT

[BEGIN FILE]

TEODORO LOCSIN, JR.:

Thank you. Good morning, excellencies. The statistics are daunting. I should say haunting. In more than a hundred countries, two hundred and forty-five million people, one in nine in the world population of six billion, suffer discrimination and outright persecution solely for the Christian faith. According to the Open Doors world watch list, in 2018, over four thousand one hundred Christians were killed for their belief across fifty countries. An average of two hundred fifty Christians are killed every month, anno domini. The question for many Christians in their places of worship is are we next? Of course, they are. They are the votive offering of the West to the oil rich East. ROI to the Magi [PH]. From Haloi [PH] in Southern Philippines to San Diego and Pittsburgh. Then from Christchurch to Sri Lanka, extremists attack places of worship to feed a craven fanaticism that revels in the slaughter of the helpless, defenceless, utterly powerless devout where they live, of course. But for economies of scale, in the places where they congregate for the consolation of religion. Analysts say the scale and deadly sophistication of extremist violence within the larger and longer plan operation of terror, the next Holocaust will be of Christians. In a world where all but one of the great powers profess to be Christian. Yet they allow Christians to be impaled on sticks, burned in cages – talk about global warming – and raped then trafficked for more of the same, all without a peep of protest from Christian countries in exchange for access to the petroleum of the perpetrators. True, the Protestant ethic is capitalist. But even the Vatican is mostly silent. Does it have that many cars? A 2019 Pew Research Center report on religious freedom confirmed that persecution is getting worse, especially for Christians, the most harassed religious group in the world and becoming more widespread. There you go. Hear anything from Wall Street? Nothing. Lombard Street, even less. While European capitals howl about the threat to Western Civilization from Muslim refugees fleeing the persecution from their demented co-religionists in the Middle East, not a word about it, let alone against the persecution of Christians. Only Orthodox Russians, having restored Christianity are doing something emphatic about protecting Christians within their borders and paying back their tormentors. And of course, ever-Catholic Hungary. According to the Pew report, Christians endured more pushback than any other religious group each year from 2007 to 2017, facing harassment in one hundred forty-three countries. Pushback is euphemism for being pushed off cliffs as they plead with the murderers to spare their children from the same fate. Nothing doing. Off the side go the kids. And why? Because we believe that the Christian is the one true faith. Yet even if you made allowance for the verity of other faiths, Christianity pre-eminently professes a clear ethic of humanity as opposed to a religious delirium that finds its finest expression in mayhem and mass murder. We say – they say the blood of martyrs waters the Christian faith. But that is not true. It is not true the Christian faith flames brighter in the fire of persecution. That is nonsense from religious living in the perfect safety of agnostic places in Europe. The real teaching of the church, as you will find in our Holy Father’s favourite book, *Lord of the World*, is that the faithful must do all they can to escape death and suffering by keeping the practice of the faith secret if necessary. The church is compassionately equivocal about saving oneself at the price of a passing apostasy. For to live in the faith, one must be alive, not dead for it. It is true faith perseveres in mortal peril. Such faith as follows refugees to what they hope are places of greater safety, but only to find themselves violated as they transit among

strangers in strange lands. Now faith is improved and distilled to its essence, except in safety and tranquillity and not on the run. For faith is prayer. Prayer requires quiet and not a raging mob of murdering fanatics. That most religions are incompatible with each other in rites and teachings should only persuade us to find compromise in mutual religious tolerance. In the realization that as all rivers flow to the sea, so all prayers go to God, by whatever names He is called in whatever language uttered from whatever book derived, a deep respect for all varieties of religious experience reveals what can unite us all. The common sense of the holy, of something more out there, up there, beyond sight and ken, that makes things down here meaningful and worthwhile. In early 2019, the Pew Center affirmed that the practice of religion makes people healthier, happier, and more engaged in their communities rather than detached from the world and indifferent to fellow men. There is hope. In 20014, the Philippines and Pakistan sponsored a General Assembly resolution in the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, under the culture of peace agenda of the United Nations. A year ago, Filipino migrants attended the first Christian Mass held in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. But it is one thing to resolve, it is another thing altogether to act in the name of religion for the sake of all religions. This panel focuses on the worst and most numerous religious victims, Christians. As it should. It is overdue. What is to be done? Modestly, we propose that even as we encourage interfaith and intercultural dialogue, we Christians belonging to Christian powers with voices in the councils of the world should draw a clear line in the sand. Yes, the sand where Christian blood is most spilled today. A line between disagreement on matters of faith and action in matters of crime. Regarding the first, we can continue disagreeing amicably. Regarding the second, we must fight. For those who cannot fight in defense of their faith and fellow faithful do not have it. Thank you.

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