

## **SAC Puerto Princesa launches Orientation on Social Action, Alay Kapwa and Year of the Poor**

The Social Action Office of Puerto Princesa organized a Basic Orientation Seminar on Social Action, Alay Kapwa and the Year of the Poor, on November 12, 2014 at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral Parish, for Clergy and Lay leaders of the Vicariate, in preparation for the Vicariate's intensification of Social Action Works in the Year of the Poor (November 2014 to October 2015).

Thirty-five clergy and at least 70 lay leaders and civil society partners attended in the morning and afternoon, respectively, as representatives of the CBCP National Secretariat for Social Action Justice and Peace (CBCP-NASSA) gave a Basic Orientation on Social Action Works (BOSSAW) and the Spirituality of Alay Kapwa (AK) - the national Lenten Campaign program of the Philippine Catholic Church which will celebrate its 40th year of service with the poor in the country.

These 2 topics are the mainstay of all annual national launching of AK at the beginning of Lent every year, as well as the "initiation" to Social Action for new personnel of NASSA and the Social Action Network (Social Action Centers' Directors and personnel) in 85 Arch/ dioceses.

In the BOSSAW workshop, it was revealed that while a majority of lay leaders have been serving the Vicariate through ministries in Parishes, many of them are not much aware of the work of "Social Action" or may not know that they are doing social action works already. The main highlights of the BOSSAW was therefore more on awareness on social dimension of the work of the Church, through works of mercy, works of development and works of justice, through different forms of action which directly help the poor and needy, or through social services and in other cases, becoming involved in awareness raising on the root causes of the issues and lobbying of concerns of the Poor to the relevant authorities in the government as well as through pushing for pro-poor policies. All these works are imperative to all Christians as it is stated in the Catholic Social Teaching (CST).

Alay Kapwa and its history and purpose was also highlighted to the participants, particularly its theological basis and as an Evangelization-Action Program of the whole Church with an education and action component. There is an emphasis that it is an Evangelization program, particularly reflection of Gospel readings and Church teaching and their meaning and relevance in the issues and concerns in the society. At the same time, it urges concrete Action of sharing time, talent and treasure in response to the Christian duties reflected in the education component. This is where the Lenten sacrifice is translated into donation for the Poor every year, upon reflection of various issues that need support. Part of the total collection of each Diocese remains with the Dioceses and are designated for the immediate relief in case of natural disasters, while part of it are for social service and advocacy work of the Social Action Centers. A small percentage will be sent to CBCP-NASSA as solidarity fund for immediate disaster relief of any Arch/ dioceses directly hit by natural and man-made disasters and cannot wait until more relief arrives from other sources. As AK celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> year with the Poor, the logo was also presented with its explanation. NASSA will launch a friend/fund-raising project - "40-4-d-Poor" intended to benefit 40 poor rural communities through empowerment of women in self-help group (SHeG) approach.

The context, rationale and national, activities of the Year of the Poor (YOP) was then presented to situate the clergy and lay participants and to help prepare them for planning in the Year of the Poor. Year of the Poor is the third year of the nine-year era of New Evangelization in preparation for the celebration of 500 years of arrival of the Catholic faith in our country in 1521. Each year 2012 to 2021 has been designated a “priority” for the Church, beginning with Year of Faith, followed by the Year of the Laity. Year of the Poor will start after the conclusion of Year of the Laity on the Feast of Christ the King on 23 November 2014.

After the orientation, Fr. Jasper Lahan, Director of the Social Action Center, announced that he will be visiting different parishes in the Vicariate to follow up their social action ministries as well as encourage them to support the activities and plans related to Alay Kapwa and the Year of the Poor.



Morning session was spent with the clergy of Vicariate of Puerto Princesa at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral Parish.

More than 70 lay ministers and leaders from the Vicariate of Puerto Princesa attended the session in the afternoon.

