

## **THE 18<sup>th</sup> ADFAP CONVENTION IN SURIGAO**

by Atty. Aurora A. Santiago, Diocese of Kalookan

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Pension Plan Committee sponsored the 18th ADFAP (Arch/Diocesan Financial Administrators of the Philippines) Convention at Hotel Tavern, Borromeo Street, Surigao City, Surigao del Norte, Diocese of Surigao from June 20 to 24, 2016. It was attended by 6 bishops, 70 priests, 8 religious sisters, and 56 lay persons from all over the country.

The Convention theme: "Arch/Diocesan Financial Administration and the Sacramental Brotherhood Lifestyle of Diocesan Priests in the Philippines." The theme was very timely. Bishop Patricio Buzon of the Diocese of Bacolod stated during his talk, "we are still smarting from the scathing remarks of the presumptive President about the Catholic Church, particularly when he refers to it as the most hypocritical Institution in the world. We know that when he talks of the Church, he primarily refers to its leaders, namely us bishops and priests."

The daily sessions started with Morning Praise and ended with Evening Prayer and Mass.

Day 1 was the Recollection led Bishop Guillermo Afable of the Diocese of Digos. He talked about *Misericordiae Vultus* in the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. The Father sent his only Son into the world to reveal his love for us. We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord's words: "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). There is a need to ask for God's mercy for the wrong the faithful has committed and for failure to right a wrong. Thus the need for the sacrament of penance and praying for God's mercy for the offense committed against him. Priests must be good confessors and must embrace the penitent.

Bishop Afable presided the Holy Eucharist with Bishop Buzon and Bishop Jesse Mercado of the Diocese of Parañaque as Concelebrants.

On Day 2, Bishop Patricio Buzon talked about "Towards Sacramental Brotherhood Lifestyle of Filipino Diocesan Priests." The good bishop stated that "People judge us by the way we live, by our lifestyle. What they see is what they get. How do people perceive their priests? How do we perceive ourselves as priests?"

He stated that in the First National Congress of the Clergy held on July 5-9, 2004, the clergy came up with 5 "Most Appropriate Qualities of Earthen Vessels", namely: (1) openness and sensitivity to the ways of God in one's life; (2) pastoral charity among members of the Presbyterium; (3) humility and courage to reach out to brother priests in difficulty; (4) love for truth and truthfulness; (5) openness to be helped from outside, seeking the proper intervention and assistance from others.

Bishop Buzon described that by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood, the priests are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood which manifests itself in mutual aid, spiritual as well as material, pastoral as well as personal, in their meetings and communion of life, of labor and charity. In practice, sacramental brotherhood means helping one another and sharing their own blessings; trying to know and understand each other, to accept each other's individuality. Priests are dependent on one another because they have been entrusted with Christ's own ministerial concern for human salvation.

Atty. Ma. Liza Rosario, Legal Counsel of the Archdiocese of Manila, discussed whether or not a diocese must establish a foundation as a donee institution. She commented that creating one involves lots of project studies and monitoring work to do.

Bishop Antonieto Cabajog of the Diocese of Surigao presided the Holy Eucharist at Surigao Cathedral - San Nicolas de Tolentino – a Pilgrim Church; Archbishop John Du of the Archdiocese of Palo, Bishop Buzon and Bishop Mercado concelebrated. Thank you very much Bishop Cabajog for your hospitality, welcoming us at the airport and hosting dinner and socials.

Day 3 started with the Holy Eucharist presided by Bishop Jesse and concelebrated by Archbishop Du and Bishop Buzon. After breakfast, the delegates had "Dialogues in the Beach", to learn to appreciate and protect the environment pursuant to Pope Francis' *Laudatu Si*. The delegates had a 2-hour ferry boat ride through Surigao Strait going to

Sohoton Cove in Bucas Grande Island in Siargao. Sohoton Cove is accessible only during low tide; we had to pass through a very narrow opening, big enough to fit the boat with passengers. One can really appreciate the serene beauty of this place, its rock formations, the flora and fauna, stalactites and stalagmites, live corals all kinds of fish, the clear water, and lime stones which are really out of this world. Our lunch - different seafoods and lechon at Hidden Island.

On Day 4, Msgr. Priscillo Iral of the Diocese of Surigao talked about human relationship training and the 8 stages of psychosocial development of a person as applied to Christian vocation and priesthood – trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity and integrity. Setting of boundaries, adjustments and ability to loosen up the boundary in order to allow persons, places, things, behaviour or experience in.

Due to previously scheduled meeting the following day in our Diocese of Kalookan, we had to cut short our participation in the Convention.

Looking forward to ADFAP Convention next year, June 19-23 with host Diocese of Legazpi.