

Iglesia Filipina Independiente

OBISPADO MAXIMO

Program Department

CELEBRATING 116TH PROCLAMATION ANNIVERSARY

Guide paper on the 116th IFI Proclamation Anniversary Celebration



Theme:

**TOWARDS FAITHFUL WITNESS
FIRED UP BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

[Filipino Translation:]

**TUNGO SA MATAPAT NA PAGSAKSI
PINAG-ALAB NG BANAL NA ESPIRITU**

(Taking inspiration from Acts 2: 3-4, 40-47)

RATIONALE

This August 3, 2018 the Iglesia Filipina Independiente will celebrate her 116th Proclamation Anniversary. This document aims to give guidance in the forthcoming celebration.

As we celebrate our 116th proclamation, we are challenged to give high regard to our heritage as a Church, that is founded by God in history through the nationalist struggle of the working class and the Filipino people as a whole. By this we take inspiration from our first Obispo Maximo's pronouncement, when he said: "the IFI was founded by the people of our country. This is the product of their desire for liberty, religiously, politically and socially." Thus, our historical mission - Pro Deo et Patria.

In the 1977 Constitution and Canons we find how we understand ourselves as Iglesia Filipina Independiente, that we are "*a congregation of new men, women and children educated in and liberated by the teachings of Christ, dedicated to the worship of God in spirit and in truth, nourished and sustained in the Eucharist, and commissioned to be witnesses to God's love in the world.*" Hence it is fitting that as we rejoice this historic event, we should not neglect this unique heritage of our beloved Church that compels us to give regard to the current economic, political and socio-cultural context and condition of the country which affect peoples' lives.

The Obispo Maximo , His Grace, The Most Revd Rhee M. Timbang exhorts us "*to become the team for the Lord who serves. And as a team let us work as one, let us move and think as one body, doing, being and becoming a church.*"

Thus, this document is produced to serve as guide for the diocesan celebration of IFI's proclamation anniversary. The National Program Department under the direction and guidance of the Obispo Maximo met for a consultation on the frame and content of this year's church celebration. It is hoped that this document will be used to supplement and complement to the diocesan and even parish celebrations.

COMMON OBJECTIVES

What are our common objectives in celebrating the Church's proclamation anniversary for this year 2018?

The following are our common objectives:

1. For all diocesan celebrations of the proclamation anniversary to have a sense of unification by having common expressions to augment the set activities in the context diocesan or inter-diocesan level.
2. For all the dioceses to use common expressions such as (a) Common Objectives; (b) Common Theme; (c) Common Logo; (d) Common Biblico-Theological Reflection (d)

Common Focuses on inputs in study-series as part of build-up activities; (e) Common Liturgy for the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and common creative liturgies for non-Eucharistic gatherings

3. To deepen common understanding and appreciation on the IFI's identity as a Church: Pro Deo et Patria.
4. To strengthen our response as a Witnessing Church Pro Deo et Patria, most especially in this trying times, where a growing cultures of passivity, fear and death continue to lurk in our society.

COMMON THEME

What common theme shall we use for all our celebration?

The theme for this year's IFI's proclamation anniversary celebration: "TOWARDS FAITHFUL WITNESS, FIRED UP BY THE HOLY SPIRIT." (*Taking inspiration from Acts 2: 3-4, 40-47*) with its official Filipino Translation: "**TUNGO SA MATAPAT NA PAGSAKSI, PINAG-ALAB NG BANAL NA ESPIRITU.**"

It cannot be denied that there is a creeping culture of death, fear, and passivity brought about by the relentless and heightened extra-judicial killings with the recent killings of 3 priests on top of the thousands of killings in on Duterte's WARS, the on-going illegal arrests of human rights advocates the very recent is the illegal arrest of our volunteer staffs in VIMROD, the intimating visits done by the military to our bishops who are active in their ministry in military-occupied Lumad communities.

We cannot allow this to continue. The Church must consolidate and make its prophetic voice heard more than ever. It is in these trying times that we are challenged to express our being witnesses of God's Love in the world. Hence our affirmation to respond to God's call "Towards Faithful Witness, Fired Up by the Holy Spirit."

Again, the formulation of this years' theme follows the established practice, that the whole year beginning the month of August (or to begin as as early as July this year until July of next year) which is the given period to make celebration on the Proclamation Anniversary of the Church in all levels.

As mentioned above, this year's celebration will again be focused at and done through the local churches, according to the capacity and situation of the dioceses and their units, and the theme is expected to serve as guidance and reference for the dioceses in their planning and implementation.

COMMON LOGO

What logo shall we use for all our celebration?

We shall use the picture in the cover page as our common logo for all celebrations in all our churches here and abroad. Anniversary logo may be downloaded at <http://ifi.ph/>

1. We enjoin all churches to use this in the tarpulin we will use for the celebrations.
2. We encourage each of us to use this as our FB profile picture for the whole month of August 2018.

COMMON ACTIVITIES

What common activities shall we conduct during our anniversary celebration?

The following are common activities we shall all share in celebration of our proclamation anniversary. It is best that the following activities are held during the Sunday Masses before the recessional, to ensure big number of participants.

SUGGESTED BUILD-UP ACTIVITIES

(JULY 15)

INPUT: IFI HISTORY & HERITAGE

Re-Learning our Historical Mission: Pro Deo et Patria

(Materials in PDF will be made available in IFI Resource Center

ONLINE Group (follow the link below)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/507395756327619/?ref=br_rs

(JULY 22)

INPUT: IFI FAITH & DOCTRINE

Re-Learning our Faith as an Indigenous Church belonging to the Universal Faith

(Materials in PDF will be made available in IFI Resource Center

ONLINE Group (follow the link below)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/507395756327619/?ref=br_rs

(JULY 29)

INPUT: MISSION AND MINISTRY IN THE IFI

Re-Learning our Faith manifested in action

(Materials in PDF will be made available in IFI Resource Center

ONLINE Group (follow the link below)

https://www.facebook.com/groups/507395756327619/?ref=br_rs

CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES

(AUGUST 3)

INPUT: KEYNOTE MESSAGE OF THE OBISPO MAXIMO

(Materials in PDF will be made available at our website and in IFI Resource Center ONLINE Group (follow the link below)

<http://ifi.ph/>

https://www.facebook.com/groups/507395756327619/?ref=br_rs

- (AUGUST 5) INPUT: STUDY ON THE BTR ON THEME**
(The Document is attached below)
- (AUGUST 12) PASTORAL VISIT AND DIALOGUE WITH THE STRUGGLING SECTORS IN THE SOCIETY**
- (AUGUST 19) FORUM ON THE CREEPING CULTURE OF DEATH, FEAR, AND PASSIVITY LURKING IN THE SOCIETY**
- (AUGUST 25) CULMINATION ACTIVITY – WITNESSING WEEK**
Commemorating the Birhen sa Balintawak as a Symbol of Hope and Optimism, that calls for pro-active participation to trust God and work for liberation.
(Materials in PDF will be made available in IFI Resource Center ONLINE Group (follow the link below)
https://www.facebook.com/groups/507395756327619/?ref=br_rs

COMMON HASHTAG

We also encourage you to post pictures of your activities in the social media page <https://www.facebook.com/ifinationalprogramdepartment/> using the hashtag: *#IFIproDeoEtPatria* for the information of the general membership and partners of the church both local and abroad.

More materials shall be provided in the next days.

Please contact us for feedback and inquiries at our official Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ifinationalprogramdepartment/>

May our celebration be a good news of the inauguration of God's reign here on earth where peace based on justice truly reign.

THE BIBLICO-THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE THEME:**“TOWARDS FAITHFUL WITNESS, FIRED UP BY THE HOLY SPIRIT”
(Acts 2:3-4; 40-47)**

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:4)

INTRODUCTION

Today is a special day for our beloved church, for this is the day that we are celebrating 116th Proclamation Anniversary our beloved Iglesia Filipina Independiente. Hoping as this moment of our celebration we can define now who really us being an IFI. Our Canons defines the Iglesia Filipina Independiente as “a congregation of new men (people) educated in and liberated by the teachings of Christ, rooted in the worship of God in Spirit and truth, nourished and sustained in the Eucharist, and commissioned to preach god’s love to the world.¹”As a start let us look let us look back the very history of our church who leaded its establishment.

As stated in our history before its proclamation, let us reminisce a little background about our church on how it was formed. The Iglesia Filipina Independiente was proclaimed in the beginning of the twentieth century as part of the broad nationalist struggle against Spanish colonialism and American imperialism. It traces its origin from the struggle of the Filipino clergy against racial discrimination and friar domination within the Roman Church in the 19th century, which consequently, transformed into a nationalist crusade for the absolute Filipinization of the Church in the twilight years of the 20th century.

Fr. Gregorio Aglipay who played an important role in the revolutionary war to overthrow Spanish rule and in the struggle for the Filipinization of the church. In his capacity as Military Vicar of the Revolutionary Government, he gathered Filipino priests to a special meeting on October 1898 to lay down the organizational foundation of the Filipino Church. The formal institution of the Philippine Church was however prevented by the intrusion of the United States of America in the course of the revolutionary wars against Spain.

It was during that period, when the institutional and missionary churches were cooperating with the colonial government, and patriotic Filipinos continue to sustain the struggle for national democracy in the backdrop of US colonial set up, that the Iglesia Filipina Independiente was born. A public protest spearheaded by the Union Obrera Democratica (UOD), the first labor confederation in the country, publicly proclaimed the Iglesia Filipina Independiente in August 3, 1902. Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., president of the labor confederation, nominated Fr. Aglipay as Obispo Maximo. Fr. Aglipay eventually

¹ *IFI Constitution and Canons, 1977; Millamena, Tomas A. Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the IFI as a Church, 1998.*

joined the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and headed the signatories of the Temporary Constitution in 1902.

TRANSITION

Beneath all the historical events which we are reminiscing in today's celebration, let us look at our theme "Towards faithful witness, fired up by the Holy Spirit" inspired from the Book of the Acts 2: 3-4, 40-47. On the day of Pentecost, the day God fulfilled His promise to pour out His Spirit on all flesh, fire from heaven came down (Acts 2: 1-4). The fire that rested on the disciples was not just fire to speak in tongues. Speaking in tongues is good, it has so many wonderful benefits (1 Corinthians 14:2, Jude 20, Romans 8:26), but it's just a small aspect of what can happen in our lives when the fire of the Holy Spirit comes on us.

The fire of the Holy Spirit that came down on the day of Pentecost was a fire for greatness; a fire to be great, a fire to do great things for God. Today the fire of the Holy Spirit shall come down on us and that fire will make us great. It will empower us towards faithful witness to do great things for the Kingdom of God.

MAIN THESES

If we go back to the theological foundation of our church, it is definitely rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. It only proves that our beloved church is a continuing faithful witness, fired up by the Holy Spirit in this land. God really wanted us Filipinos to have our own native and nationalistic church to be born. Through our continuing journey like our foreparents, God is guiding us to live out the very essential value of our church. Towards faithful witness, the church that stands and fights for the right of our brothers and sisters who is experiencing injustices, human rights violation, war and insurgencies, exploitation, intimidation, harassment and other forms of abuses thousands of extra-judicial killings and trump at charges to the poor and marginalized people. Our church in her sense of ministry is centered and patterned on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ who initiates peace and righteousness and taking side with the poor – Anawim. Over "*Pro Deo et Patria*" a charism it has received from the Spirit of God, and continues to set its heart to vigorously serve the people through the many challenges that confront it.²

The promise Peter shared in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2 is as valid for our us as it was for his listeners: "God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people.'" On all people. That's me AND you. But what does that mean? Peter gives us one clue when he says in his sermon, "Your sons and daughters will

² Millamena, Tomas A., D.D. *Ecumenical Journey Towards Shalom, vol II*, 2014, p.61.

prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams.” That means when the Holy Spirit is in the church, when people are using the gifts they’ve been given, nobody’s happy with standing still. Nobody wants to simply maintain the status quo or only make sure we can pay the bills and buy the communion supplies. “Your young folks will see visions, your seasoned veterans will dream dreams!” Everyone in this congregation, from the youngest to the oldest, has a role to play in the future of this church. Everyone. It’s the responsibility of all of us to dream our dreams of what this church can be, and then share those dreams with each other.

The Spirit has been poured out on us for just that purpose. That can be scary, to allow ourselves to dream God-sized dreams, to consider letting go of the controls and letting the Holy Spirit drive. But that’s the power we have been given by God, if we are courageous enough to use it. During the inaugural speech of our thirteenth Obispo Maximo on his installation he stated “all in the IFI that we become team for the Lord who serves. And as a team let us work as one, let us move and think as one body, doing, being, becoming a Church.”³

Our celebration today is like the story of Pentecost reminds us that we have the Holy Spirit, in us and around us, working with us and through us, calling us forward to do great things in the name of Christ. We each have God’s Spirit in us, helping us know right from wrong, helping us live out our faith, and giving us gifts to use for God’s glory. If we each strive to do this individually, then collectively our gifts are multiplied exponentially. We become so much greater than the sum of our parts. You have a gift. Young men and women, what visions do you have of our future? Old men and women, what dreams do you have for this church? I’ll let you decide to which group you belong. I dare you to dream about what we can do in God’s name if we all share our gifts together. How many people can we help? How many people can we serve? How many lives can we change? Go ahead. Imagine. Think for a few seconds about what this church will look like if we stay open to God’s Spirit. In the near future we’ll have the chance as a congregation to tap into the Spirit’s leading and envision God’s future for us. But why wait? Let’s start right now. Picture it. Dream it. Vision it. **Get fired up about what God is calling us to do and to be through God’s Spirit.**

As we move into the future together, it will serve us well to remember that the Holy Spirit is with us, guiding us, leading us, igniting us, not like a hologram on a Disney ride, but as a real spiritual presence in our lives. As we stay open to Spirit in our lives, not only will our lives be changed, but the lives of everyone who comes into this thriving congregation. A poet once wrote, “Sure as the sound of leaves rustling lets you know the wind is there, like the smell of smoke lets you know there’s fire, an ever-

³ Draft handbook: *Let us Work as One: A Guide for Diocesan Consultation Workshop on Worship, Education and Ministry*, IFI, 2017, p.8.

expanding circle of believers lets you know the Spirit is there.” The only thing to be afraid of is missing the opportunity to open ourselves up to God’s spirit. Let’s get fired up! Come, Holy Spirit, come.

CHALLENGE:

“We must never allow the voice of humanity within us to be silenced. It is humanity's sympathy with all creatures that first makes us truly human. The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others. It is not enough merely to exist. It's not enough to say,. But you must do something more. Seek always to do some good, somewhere. Every person has to seek in his own way to realize his true worth. You must give some time to your brothers and sisters. Even if it's a little thing, do something for those who need help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. For remember, you don't live in a world all your own. Your brothers and sisters are here too.”

Towards faithful witness, fired up by the Holy Spirit, together let us renew again our commitment, let us with gladness and with joyful in heart together we say, **SERVING GOD AND PEOPLE, PRO DEO ET PATRIA. MABUHAY! MABUHAY! MABUHAY!**

Cross References: 1 Samuel 1:14, Mark 16: 17

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