



SISTERS OF THE
Good Samaritan
of the Order of St Benedict

MEDIA RELEASE

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‘Organising hope’ – inspiration from noted Philippine pastoralist at Chapter Gathering of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan

Respected theologian and pastoralist Dr Estela Padilla from the Philippines is attending the Sisters of the Good Samaritan Chapter Gathering to give a keynote speech on Tuesday 25 July.

Titled, ‘Being Ecclesial Women’, Dr Padilla will focus on the challenges of the ‘signs of the times’ as reflected on by the congregation and their theological, spiritual and practical integration.

Congregational Leader Sister Patty Fawkner said Dr Padilla’s speech will contribute to the sisters’ discernment process to finalise their Statement of Direction for the next six years.

“Our hope is that with Dr Padilla’s experience working with and empowering communities in Philippine parishes, as well as her contribution as a lay theologian of high standing in the Asian Bishops Conference and Synod, she will challenge us with her deeper and broader perspectives and help us direct our focus to where there is the greatest need, where it is that the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth is sending us as gospel women .”

Dr Padilla is a Doctor of Theology with more than 40 years of pastoral experience among parishes and dioceses in the Philippines and abroad. She is the Executive Secretary of the Office for Theological Concerns of the [Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences](#) (FABC). Dr Padilla has just been appointed by Pope Francis as one of 70 ‘non-Bishop members’ to the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October.

Dr Padilla is also a founding member of the [Bukal ng Tipan](#) Pastoral Center which empowers local church communities through pastoral skills and leadership training. (*Bukal* means spring, *Tipan* means covenant).

Her work is grounded in the Basic Ecclesiastic Community (BEC) approach. *Bukal ng Tipan* works with local churches to improve their participatory and synodal approaches to pastoral planning and wholistic evangelization ministries.

Dr Padilla says that, “in the Philippines the churches really took seriously what Pope Francis wanted for the synodal processes - to visit those at the margins, not just those who are very active in church life, but also those you do not see in the church. In our work we also talk to public utility vehicle drivers, construction workers, laundry women.”

“I’m inspired by Pope Francis's message - 'let us organise hope'. For me this means we don’t just have wishes and dreams, but it involves a lot of shared work and shared purpose.”

“God does not speak in a dark room, God speaks in what is happening around us. Always start from your experience, always encounter one another in the way God speaks or what God wills – it’s a communal discernment - by listening to one another, and then acting on it.”

“I am working with a religious community in the Philippines – they work with the poorest of the poor, and their mission is to be present where there is great suffering. I really admire that, but as a pastoral worker, I feel there should be more than ‘presence’.

“Poverty is systemic, it’s not something to accept or just be ‘present’ with, but to get people out of poverty takes a lot of work. So we’re helping this community to develop skills to collaborate with other like-minded organisations, to help the poor.”

The Chapter Gathering will run from 24 July – 4 August in Sydney and will decide the Statement of Directions for 2024-2030 as well as elect the new Congregational Leader and Leadership Council.

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