



## **MAPSA STATEMENT: A TIME OF PRAYER AND REPARATION (A statement regarding the “art exhibit” at the Cultural Center of the Philippines)**

*“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of Life – for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us – what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”*

**(I John 1. 1- 3)**

These words from St. John underline the truth of the “fleshed God” – the Incarnate God. It is from these words that we express to you these sentiments as members of the Executive Council of the Manila Archdiocesan and Parochial Schools Association (MAPSA).

In the last few weeks, a much-publicized “controversy” ( a “firestorm”, it has also been called) has broken out regarding a so-called “art exhibit” entitled “Politeismo” displayed at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP).

The public exhibit included several items which Catholic Bishops and other church leaders, ordained and lay, and many of the Catholic faithful, regarded and branded as “blasphemous” or “sacrilegious” and “grossly offensive to the religious beliefs and sensibilities” of the local Catholics ( and many other Christians as well) and of the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, Archbishop of Manila, strongly condemned the “artwork” as “highly offensive and disrespectful toward God; as irresponsible, shameful, not the doing of a good man;” as showing no respect for objects considered holy by Catholics, as showing no respect for their religious beliefs, sensibilities and culture. He asked the Catholic laity especially to manifest their sense of being grievously offended and to protest this serious abuse of so-called “freedom of artistic expression”. As an association of schools in the Ecclesiastical Province of Manila, we join the Church in its stand against the “art exhibit”.

We, as Catholics who try to live out the demands of their faith, simply cannot hold that such displays in a public “art exhibit” are morally allowable and acceptable. If others who still call themselves Catholics hold that they are morally acceptable as “exercises in freedom of expression”, then they are grossly ignorant of Catholic moral teaching on blasphemy; on reverence due to sacred persons (here, Jesus Christ and the Holy Family – in the CCP exhibit); on reverence for objects held sacred in a given religious tradition;

on sins of profanation and sacrilege, and the like; on the moral imitations on “freedom of expression”. Such “Catholics” are, we said, either grossly ignorant or grossly contemptuous of Catholic faith and tradition in these matters. In displaying publicly such so-called “artworks”, they manifest themselves also as people who have no respect for the religious beliefs, convictions and sensitivities -- and even the rights -- of fellow-citizens who try to be faithful to their faith and faithful to the moral practice which duly derives from their faith.

People who work for government, which has the function and duty to respect and foster due respect for the religious and ethical convictions of its citizens, must be among the very first to honor and safeguard those convictions, as long as those are coherent with the basic law/s of the nation.

The saints considered “reverence” toward God and toward Jesus Christ, toward sacred persons and sacred objects a most basic Christian duty. The Catholic Catechisms have always taught that “to praise, reverence (--reverence!--) and serve God” is the first and most fundamental obligation in human existence. (St. Teresa of Avila even said that she would be willing to die rather than act contrary to one rule regarding the sacred rites of the Church!) – Christian teaching has always regarded blasphemy and kindred acts as among the most serious sins against the law of God.

From centuries ago, faith-derived movements like the “devotion to the Heart of Jesus” have been fostered by outstanding Catholic leaders (among them Popes) and saints, precisely and explicitly” to make reparation” to God for sins of indifference, disrespect and even contempt vis-à-vis the Faith, to “make reparation” for sins of irreverence (specially toward the Eucharist), profanation, sacrilege and desecration et.al, since these sins are directly and seriously offensive vs. the honor and worship due to God by human beings and human groups.

May we invite our schools openly express their opposition to, their conviction and protest against, the “blasphemous and sacrilegious” displays such as the “Politeismo” exhibit just held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. May we ask above all our schools, individuals and groups, to express to the government their stand that “officials” who do not have due respect for the religious and ethical convictions of fellow-citizens (i.e., convictions coherent with the basic laws of the nation should not serve in the State, specially in positions which demand sensitivity towards rights, culture, beliefs and values, of others.

May we also ask school communities to offer Masses and prayers of sincere “reparation” to God and Jesus Christ for the sins of dishonor and blasphemy committed in the name of “freedom of expression”, sins specially offensive in a country noted for its religiosity, a

nation which has Catholics forming more than 80% -- and Christians comprising nearly 90% -- of its population.

Dear fellow-Catholics, there are times when we must stand up and be counted for our Christian/Catholic faith and morality. There are times when we must affirm the rights of faith against a secularism and relativism which have become dogmas of a virtually “new religion” of many “modern-intellectuals”. There are times when we must manifest our obedience to the commandment “to honor and serve God with all our mind, heart and soul” in a truly open and public way. Do we not have such a time before as now?

The Catechetical Foundation of the Archdiocese of Manila has prepared a set of modules: one on the veneration of Sacred Images and the other on the Sin of Sacrilege. May we ask our catechists to catechize our children and the young people on the importance and significance of the Catholic practice of veneration of images so dear to us Filipinos.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

**THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL of  
The Manila Archdiocesan and Parochial Schools Association**