

**Eulogy for Father Victor L. Badillo by the Astronomical League of the Philippines (ALP)**

by **Jose A. Aguilar, M.D.**

Vice-President, ALP

Good evening. I am Dr. Jett Aguilar, a medical doctor and an amateur astronomer representing the Astronomical League of the Philippines (ALP). Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to say farewell to our beloved director, our spiritual father, our mentor, and most of all, our friend.

Father Dan in his homily mentioned that Father Badillo's name seems to be unfamiliar to most people in the religious community, but I assure you that Father is quite famous in the Philippine astronomical community where he has been actively involved for the past several decades. He is also well remembered and loved by his graduate students, and I would like to share with you an account of Father given by one of his former physics graduate students who eventually became the president of a university. She told me that during her student days at the Manila Observatory, and I'm sure most of you here don't know this, Father Badillo used to be called "Victor Wood", after the famous 1970's Filipino pop idol. I have looked up pictures of Mr. Victor Wood in Google images and compared them with Father Badillo's pictures during his younger days. Indeed, Father Badillo's young image has similarities with Victor Wood, especially the nose and his characteristic wide smile. I just don't know if Father also sings like Mr. Victor Wood.

I was also with Father Badillo when he was first confined at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center where I work as a doctor. He was diagnosed then to have a rare tumor of the stomach which originated from the stomach's muscular lining. Fortunately this tumor was not malignant and was surgically resectable but Father's condition was complicated by an associated heart problem and he had to undergo a heart bypass procedure before his stomach tumor could be removed. His medical treatment became protracted and he had to be in and out of the hospital for quite a long time. What impressed me about father were his fortitude, his equanimity, and his strong faith in the face of his very difficult health problems. I can just hope that I can also have Father Badillo's strength and faith if I encounter a similar situation in my life.

I believe all of us here who has been touched by Father Badillo will all agree that Father is an easy man to love - with his ever gentle, selfless, and humble demeanor, and his readiness to extend help and assistance to anyone who asks. In the field of amateur astronomy in the Philippines, Father Badillo has been the ever reliable Beacon that has provided light and guidance. When the Astronomical League of the Philippines was founded more than 10 years ago, Father Badillo readily agreed to become one of the founding honorary directors. I would not be exaggerating if I say that Father really played a critical role for ALP to overcome its birth pains and thrive despite the challenges and difficulties. He continued to actively give his support to budding Filipino amateur astronomers from all the other different Philippine astronomical societies up to the very end when his health eventually failed him.

In 2005, because of his dedication in promoting the development of science and astronomy in the country, his former students and friends, Imelda Joson and Edwin Aguirre decided to honor him by recommending to the International Astronomical Union (IAU) that the minor planet numbered 4866 be named Asteroid Badillo. He is now one of the very few Filipinos (maybe numbering only 5 now) who has received such an honor. At about the same time, the Astronomical League of the Philippines also came up with the “**Father Victor Badillo Astronomy Service Award**”, named in honor of Father, and is very aptly given to individuals who has contributed to the betterment of astronomy in the Philippines.

Please allow me to tell you now another trivia about father. Does anyone here know that Father Badillo, who has a substantial body of work in solar physics, had never observed a total solar eclipse? Yes, not even once as he told our ALP president Mr. James Kevin Ty. Well, we do know that professional astronomers now seldom look into telescopes, but it is still surprising that Father Badillo, who had a lifelong passion for solar astronomy, had not had a chance to view a total solar eclipse, one of the most beautiful phenomena to observe in astronomy. Twice, he had the chance to observe total solar eclipses which occurred in the Philippines, one in 1988 in South Cotabato and the other one 7 years later in Tawi-Tawi in 1995. But like the proverbial unlucky eclipse chaser, he was clouded out in both occasions. The solar eclipse in General Santos City in 1988 was particularly painful because the other members of the eclipse expedition which included Philippine Astronomical Society members Imelda Joson and Edwin Aguirre, James Kevin Ty who is now the current president of ALP, and even the 81 year old Father Francis

Heyden of the Manila Observatory, were all able to observe totality from their location at the General Santos city hall. Father Badillo had the bad luck of being pulled out at the last minute together with Dr. Roman Kintanar of PAGASA upon the request of then President Cory Aquino. President Cory decided to personally observe the total solar eclipse with some cabinet members and some foreign astronomers at a place 9 kilometers away at Polomolok, South Cotabato. Unfortunately, lady luck was not with them and President Cory and her party including Father Badillo were clouded out during totality. Upon returning to Gen San where the sky was clear during totality, Father Badillo seemed to have taken it all in stride and he easily assumed his usual calm and gentle manner. However, he really could not hide his extreme disappointment and upon seeing James approached him and said – “James, you are very lucky to have observed totality!”

Even during his retirement and chronic illness, Father Badillo did not lack the company of his other family in the Philippine amateur astronomy community who would visit him regularly. Together with Father, we also rejoiced when his lifetime work was honored by the IAU with the designation of asteroid Badillo. As a Jesuit, Father Badillo had remained a true soldier of God and I would like to quote now the famous American General, Gen. George Patton when he said - **“It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived.”** Thank you again Father Badillo for sharing your wonderful life with all of us. **You are truly one with the stars now!**



**Figure 1. The Astronomical League of the Philippines visits Father Badillo at the Jesuit Residence in August 5, 2006. The author is at the back (3<sup>rd</sup>) row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left.**



Figure 2. The ALP “Fr. Victor Badillo Astronomy Service Award”

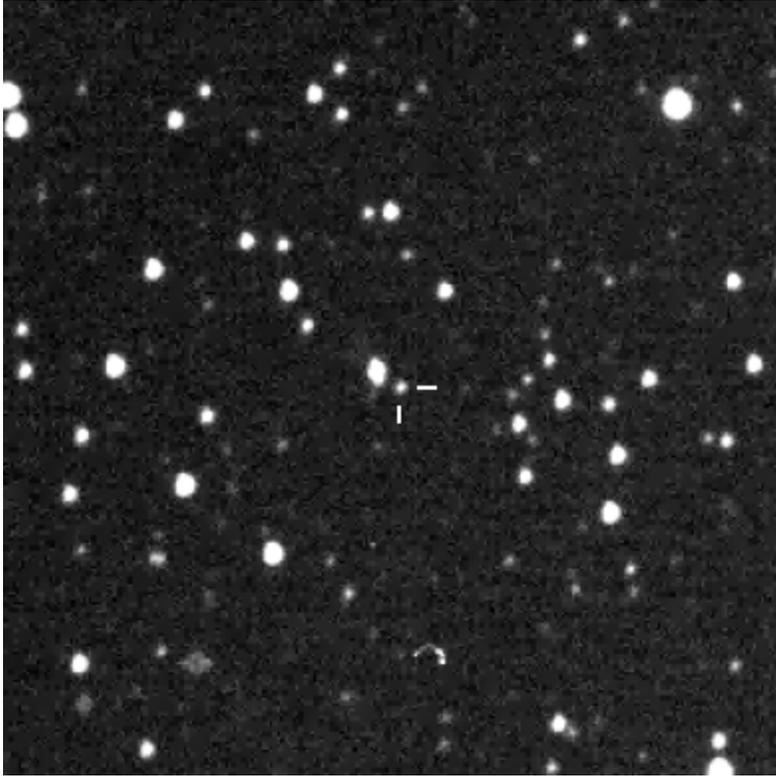


Figure 3. Image of Asteroid 4866 Badillo (Object with tick mark) taken by NEAT (Near-Earth Asteroid Tracking) survey on July 17, 2002, at 09:14:18 UT