

ATENEO PHYSICS NEWS

Physics News and Features from Ateneo de Manila University

Homily of Fr. Daniel McNamara, SJ for Fr. Victor Badillo, SJ's wake mass

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<http://quirinosugonjr.blogspot.com/2014/10/photos-funeral-mass-fr-victor-badillo-sj.html>

Fr. Daniel J. McNamara, SJ giving a homily during the wake mass of Fr. Victor Badillo, SJ last 28 October 2014 at the Oratory of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University. See [Manila Observatory's Facebook page for more photos \(https://www.facebook.com/manilaobservatory/posts/963385857025064\)](https://www.facebook.com/manilaobservatory/posts/963385857025064)

Feast of Simon and Jude, Apostles and Saints

We are told that we know almost nothing of Simon and Jude, except that they were apostles- those chosen and sent by Christ- to proclaim the Good News. It is fitting that this last wake Mass of Fr. Victor be held on their feast day. Very little is known of him , for most of us. When I put the notice of his death on the bulletin board of our Jesuit residence in Davao , I was usually asked : “Who is he?”.

So let me try to give some answers to that most difficult question. I first met Fr. Vic when I was assigned to live in the Manila Observatory Community in 1966. He was then leading the Ionosphere Research group in which he was the only Jesuit and only Ph.D., the other members of the research group being lay workers. In his typical quiet way he went about his work ,24/7, maintaining the instruments which searched the upper atmosphere of our planet. This was a research project in support of the basic research that the Observatory had been doing ever since its inception some one hundred years before.

Since its founding in 1865 the Observatory had been doing basic geophysical research for the country to better understand itself as an island nation on the geographical equator, the volcanic “equator” or “ring of fire”, and the magnetic equator. The immediate impetus then had been the dangers of typhoons but soon a better understanding of earthquakes became an obvious desire. After the destruction of all the instruments and records of those first years were destroyed in World War II the Observatory came back into existence in the 1950's with the same desire to better make use of its unique position on planet earth for the sake of the country and then in the new world after WWII for the world at large . Hence the MO moved into areas not usually studied yet ,such as the influence of the sun on the atmosphere of the earth. Thus ionospheric studies became a new division for research in MO. And so Fr. Badillo returning from his Ph.D. studies in Physics in the US was assigned this work, in 1967.

This was a new area of study for the world and for Fr. Vic. But he launched into it and produced published studies in the course of time. As he often shared, this kind of quiet, persistent, pain-staking attention to detail as a lifetime commitment required deep faith in the judgment of others, his Jesuit superiors and through them in God. Only a man of faith could sustain the daily threading of the needle of analysis needed to patch together data gleaned from the stars, in his case, the star we call the sun. He was creating a tapestry portraying the embrace of the mighty Sun on our Mother earth. But he was also creating another Story , that of a boy from Taal, Batangas, and the Son that embraced him in his Jesuit vocation. His first act of faith and trust in that calling came when he answered the call by entering the Jesuit Novitiate at Novaliches in 1949. It took acts of trust ever growing more fruitful when superiors called upon him to teach but one year and then go for Doctorate studies in Physics in the US. That was 1956. Finishing those studies he went on in his Jesuit formation to study Theology at Woodstock, Md. And then Tertainship and thus now fully formed returned to the Philippines in 1967.

His quiet life as a research scientist took another turn in the 1972 when he became Director of the Observatory, a position he would hold for the next almost twenty years. With this new thread, this new color added to the tapestry, Fr. Vic was called upon to grow yet again in his faith life. These were times of transition for the Observatory and for him personally. In these years he helped the Observatory reach out to the larger community of young enthusiasts for astronomy in his helping the PAS, the Philippine Astronomical Society. He himself showed them how to make Newtonian telescopes with , literally, his own hands as he ground the mirrors patiently. As an Administrator this patience was all the more needed as the Observatory needed to redefine itself yet again in a country undergoing political and economic chaos. This redefinition, this dedication to weaving the same tapestry of a scientific appreciation of the archipelagic nature of the country was finally realized when a new Director was appointed in1992 and the focus of the research became the unique Environment of the Philippines. For Fr. Badillo this transition and new vision setting called for new energies in his life of faith. The transition of the Observatory was also a transition for himself.



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Fr. Victor Badillo, SJ

He approached me one day in the 90's sharing that blood was appearing in his stool and he needed a physical checkup. This was in December and for the rest of that month we visited the hospital three times, the first two times hearing from the doctors that no source for the bleeding was found. Finally I told Fr. Vic that this two week coming and going to the hospital had to stop and so the third time we went in I said he had to stay until they found the source. This turned out to be a rare kind of grow in the upper reaches of his stomach which is why it has not been found previously. With this discovery the life of Fr. Vic changed from that of a researcher to that of the Researched. He himself was asked if he would want to be the subject of a medical research so that a newly discovered drug that would shrink the tumor could be clinically tested. He rather told me he wanted the tumor out. Thus we prepared for the operation only to find that his heart was not strong enough to undergo the procedure. Thus a series of medical trials entered the life of Fr. Vic. First there was the heart bypass and having recuperated somewhat from that , the removal of the tumor. These procedures took months which grew into years as time and the excellent care of the Jesuit residence Health Center did not seem able to restore the energy of Fr. Vic. But I feel his faith life was still sustaining him in the midst of these trials .

Thus just as faith gives us that inner realization that we are valued by the One who has Loved us, I think Fr. Vic ,relying on the Son's strength in the last few years of his life, again entered His service in the only way now he could , using his technical skill to still serve others. Thus those of us in his address book have seen him offering now not now a new synthesis, a new picture on the tapestry of Philippine geophysics but a new vision of the church and modern society through the threads of contemporary religious and inspiring PC based news.

So the life of my fellow faithful Jesuit which scientifically began with a service of the world through a study of the tropical Sun ended with a faithful service of the brothers and sisters of the Son of man using his technical skills at the service of the Faith. Let me end with the Scripture summing up for Fr. Vic:

