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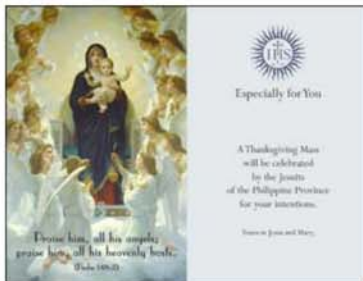
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Kape't Pandasal : Thursday

Treat yourself to another helping of today's early morning reflection from JesCom.

Catch Kape't Pandasal on ABS-CBN,
Mondays to Fridays, 4:00 a.m.

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Quiet Compassion 24/7

October 27 homily
by Fr. Peter Walpole, SJ

Sunday morning (October 26, 2014),
Fr. Victor Badillo, S.J. died after long years of kindly service.



I knew him as the Director of the Manila Observatory as he gave me space to set up what became the Environmental Research Division in the late 1980s. I lived with him in community for about 6 years in the Manila Observatory; he was never in a hurry, you could share any idea with him. He ran the Observatory out of his back pocket and little pieces of paper in his desk drawers. We were trying to get the finances clarified at one point for a new grant and there were different accounts and accounting systems operating over the years that took months to surface and rationalize, but never an irritation.

Once, I interviewed him over how he got involved in science. It was very simple for him. I think it was Pope Paul VI who had called for men to be devoted to the sciences in the modern world, and so Fr. Badillo became a priest-scientist. He worked on science during the week and then went out for masses throughout the week end, but his quiet compassion was there 24/7.

As a physicist who studied in St. Louis University, he returned to work with the ionosphere. He is better known as the father of Philippine astronomy as he encouraged so many to enjoy the wonders of the night sky. An asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter is named after him, 4866 Badillo. He had a terrific nightlife like no other Jesuit; the roof deck at the Manila Observatory was full of excitement, a slow and ponderous awe. Watching Uranus and its moons rise over the Sierra Madre in the early hours of the morning – this was the best cocktail of physics and mysticism.

He had no agenda and had many experiments on the side; the last one I remember was with orchids on the third floor. He was kind and uncomplicated in his ways, talking and inquiring about all things in a personal way. When we wanted to plant trees on the ground, he saw them as our stars that we like to watch grow, and so we had the “green alert” team, and some joined him for the night sky also. He wrote to me when the first group of children graduated from the Bendum school in the mountains of Bukidnon, far away from his experience and daily life. He saw this as like his own Sunday apostolate. He was not rigid about his duty to science. He wrote again a kind letter to me when my mother died, as he did for many others, always thoughtful.

In 2010, from his wheelchair and bedside, he started a whole new apostolate with a blogsite called *pedrocalungsod* where he shared his homilies and his prayers. He shared many international dialogues, giving the breadth of views and depth of reflection. Just look again at his last three articles on Islam. His last homily was the 25th Sunday (that is five Sundays ago). He called it the “Extravagance of God” – how God pays us a daily wage we don't deserve, a bit like tonight's Gospel. The end of his message is a humble reflection on his own living:

sufferings and prayers.

We will miss his quiet welcome and words of encouragement. From his early years in school in Batangas during the War, to long years in Manila, I am sure the Ateneo de Manila and Manila Observatory will share great memories, so still be prepared to be surprised by this quiet and caring man.

When you look at the sky tonight, find a break in the clouds and remember him.

Note:

The Communion prayer, *“Having received the sacrament of salvation, we implore your kindness, O God, for Victor your servant and Priest, that, as you made him a steward of your mysteries on earth, so you may bring him to be nourished by their truth and reality as unveiled in heaven,”* also says something beautiful for Fr. Vic as a scientist.

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