

# THE LEGACY OF FATHER BOBBY

By Cely Medrano

I first met Fr. Bobby in 1986 in one of the Santo Nino Prayer Group novena meetings in Astoria at Ramon and Chit Laurencio's home.. He was the spiritual adviser of our group of which I became an active member. During our regular meetings for Santo Nino especially for the fiesta of Santo Nino, he struck me as a priest with purpose strongly committed to his priestly ministry.

In January 1991 I volunteered to help Fr. Bobby, particularly in the administrative part of his work for the Filipino Pastoral Ministry. In several instances, we found ourselves working late trying to meet deadlines of journals, reports, misalettes, and other projects of the ministry.

There were late night meetings with the different organizations to discuss programs and projections of the Pastoral Ministry: San Lorenzo, Katbaloganons or house visitation with the Santo Nino Prayer Group of New York. Father Bobby was tireless in his efforts to help the Filipino community. There were times when he had to drive the volunteers home in the early morning from these different meetings, no matter how tired he was.

I had the privilege of sharing Father Bobby's effort to complete several projects simultaneously. He was a multi task person trying to effectively implement several activities in a short period. He worked hard on every program he initiated. Last year, when I was putting together the 2003 Laksambayan Journal to meet the printing deadline, Father Bobby said to me that he felt bad because he could not help me. He just had his dialysis treatment that day and he was weak from the ordeal. I told him it was OK, just take your rest and maybe you'll feel better tomorrow. I felt bad myself because I could see his disappointment of not able to do things he liked to do. He was my mentor. He never run out of new ideas that he wanted to implement, however, his health should take priority.

Father Bobby never learned to say No. When people come to him for something, no matter how busy he was, or how much it would cost in terms of time, effort, material help, he would always try to find a way to help that person. He always have time for everyone sometimes resulted ruining his schedule. He also loved to share whatever he had, including the food he was about to eat.

He was a very humble man. If he could, he'd hide from the limelight, table of honor, etc. He chose to associate and was more at home with plain, ordinary folks. He had a lot of accomplishments but I never heard him took credit for it. He would prefer a low-key approach on everything that he did. And if things didn't go as expected he would always say "Bayaan mo na lang."

Until his death, Father Bobby never complained, suffering from intense pain brought about by his sickness, iniwasan niyang mag-complain. Pag tinatanong siya, ang lagi niyang sagot ay OK lang. Although there was an incident in the hospital when his doctor asked him of any pain he

felt, he said nothing and was always gracious to his doctors and nurses in the hospital. Even to his Pastor, Fr. Joseph Cogo, CS, he would say "*I've felt better*" when asked how he feel, although you could see he was in pain.

Mahilig si Father Bobby manood ng Filipino Channel. He never missed watching the latest news in the Philippines while seated in his favorite chair. After a days work when his eyes were still good, he liked to play games in the computer. Akala mo intent at focused siya sa computer, yon pala naglalaro ng games. Tapos hahamonin niya ang ibang staff at volunteers na malaki ang kanyang score compared to the rest of us.

Father always include relevant jokes to emphasize his points in his homilies. We missed the jokes and the smile on his face.

He loved children. He said the children are the hope of the future. His eyes lighted up when ever the kids come around to greet him. He would always have something for them. He initiated programs for the Kids such the Children's Liturgy and the Easter Egg Hunting every Easter Sunday.

Father Bobby became a regular fan of line dancing when it was introduced at Our Lady of Pompei in 2001. May paborito siyang tugtog titled "Baby One More Time" ni Britney Spears. Pag tinutugtog ito ay nangunguna na siya sa dance floor para sa line dance.

He appreciated all the volunteers who spent sleepless nights keeping vigil when he was seriously ill both in the church and in the hospital. He thanked all the cooks who tried their best to provide Father Bobby with his favorite dish, sometimes fried butterfish and served hot, until he complained "*Wala na bang iba?*" He was very thankful to all the designated drivers who took him to his doctor's appointments, and did errands for him.

During his Thanksgiving Mass on his 63rd birthday celebration in February 2003, he announced his planned retirement at age 65. He planned to return to Catbalogan to serve his people there. He suddenly he realized that he served the universal church longer than his local church who were instrumental for him becoming a priest. He was looking forward to his 40th sacerdotal anniversary in 2005 to be held in his home town. He said it will be a triple celebration for the Sison Family in Samar. He told us to plan our vacation in Catbalogan for the big event.

When he got sick, my prayer was always for him to live longer (that the Lord may give him an Extension) so that he will be able to enjoy his planned retirement. But the Lord, had other plans for him. We need a director who has a direct line in heaven.

Father Bobby personified as a different person to different people. He was a friend, a confidant and spiritual director to most of us. But for all of us he was just our Father Bobby.

It was an honor and a great privilege to work with a great man and a good priest.

His legacy will live on through us, through our children in the next generation.