

## OBITUARY

### RENATO A. OCAMPO, S.J. (1946-1995)

Fr. Renato A. Ocampo, S.J., was the third Jesuit to become President of the Philippine Sociological Society, Inc., after the late Fr. Frank X. Lynch and Fr. Antonio J. Ledesma.

Better known as Rene to friends and colleagues, Fr. Ocampo spent part of his college years at the University of the Philippines where his calling for the priesthood was nurtured through his involvement with the UP Student Catholic Action. He entered the Loyola House of Studies in 1964 and obtained a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy five years later. He was ordained to the priesthood on 16 March 1974.

His deep interest in social issues and analysis led him to continue studying: he finished a Master of Arts degree in Sociology and another in Theology at the Ateneo de Manila University in 1975, and an M.Sc. (Econ.) in Social Planning at the University College of Swansea at Wales in 1979. He later obtained his Ph.D. in Sociology from Xavier University in 1987. He took on several challenging assignments for the Philippine Province of the Society

of Jesus, serving in the following capacities: Prefect of Discipline, San Jose Seminary, Q.C. from 1967-71; Assistant Director of Arvisu House, Q.C., from 1973-79; Assistant Director, Mindanao Development Center (1979-83); House Consultor of the Ateneo de Davao from 1980-83 and of the Loyola House of Studies (LHS) from 1983-87; and LHS Rector from 1987 to 1989. He became the Provincial Superior for the Philippine Jesuit Province in 1989. He was elected President of the Philippine Sociological Society in 1988-1991. A serious kidney ailment, which was shortly to take his life away, forced him to give up his post as Jesuit Provincial in 1992. But though weakened by his ailment, he continued to serve as Director of the Institute of Social Order and Chaplain of the Jesuit Volunteer Program until his death on Easter Sunday, 16 April 1995.

Many remember Fr. Rene for his seriousness and deep commitment in effecting processes of change to enable marginalized groups and sectors to transcend conditions of bondage and build their own communities. He pursued his

vision of social transformation not in the tradition of a conventional social scientist. Neither did he pursue his vision solely by spending time in the missions and attending to people's spiritual needs. And he was also not one who simply thought that change would come with the satisfaction of people's material wants. Though an intellectual, he was no snob, and as a priest, he did not proselytize nor moralize. Even as a Jesuit Provincial, one saw a simple great man, and not his rank.

Fr. Ocampo was a priest, social scientist, activist, and nationalist and he brought all these aspects of himself to bear on his work and activities. Integrating his social science, scholastic and spiritual training, he immersed himself with farmers, workers, market vendors, lepers and the urban poor. Working with people's organizations and NGOs, he trained many in the use of participatory research methods and actively assisted in developing training and educational materials for expanding consciousness-raising and organizing work among the poor. He guided retreats, recollections and reflections to nurture people's inner strength and courage to overcome difficulties and to direct and improve their lives. The Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines, which have emerged as the building blocks for social change, gained much from Fr. Ocampo's life and work.

As he sought to integrate his social science and spiritual training in his social development endeavors, Fr. Ocampo recognized the difficulties, tensions and conflicts encountered in pursuing social transformation processes. In a homily he had prepared for Fr. Ocampo, Fr. John Carroll, S.J., a fellow Jesuit and sociologist

quotes a passage that Fr. Ocampo himself wrote for NGO development workers at a seminar on "Christian Spirituality for Agents of Social Transformation" in 1991:

"It is the simple faith, lively sense of hope, and the gentle love of our people which continue to draw those who commit themselves to assist them in their struggle. What we have heard today are testimonies of a few of those who seek to participate in the struggle of people. Theirs is a way of being with and for the people, a spirituality of committing their lives to helping others become what they seek to be.

Unfortunately, too, Christian spirituality has little to offer in terms of modes of prayer more attuned to such an active style of life and work. More premium is usually given to obtaining peace and quiet, which does not really jibe with the reality of tensions inherent in this type of involvement. Still wanting is genuine spirituality as the means by which one can live one's own commitments in the face of day-to-day demands. In time the thrust of inculturation within the Church will hopefully lead to better possibilities of embodying our faith in certain forms of prayer more attuned to the realities of day-to-day life."

It is fitting that with this Special Issue on Philippine NGOs which were close to Fr. Rene's heart, the Philippine Sociological Society and the Philippine Sociological Review pay tribute to a friend and colleague of deep humanity and faith.