

# 'Pabasa' is for meditating, not loud wailing

**M**ANILA—It's not your neighborhood karaoke, it's the *pabasa*. If you have trouble sleeping at night this Holy Week because of the "pabasa" of the "pasyon," remind the marathon singers of Christ's passion and death that it's OK not to sing so loudly.

The *pabasa* is a uniquely Filipino tradition of chanting or singing the *pasyon*, a book narrating the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Many of its practitioners do it as a personal vow or *panata* during Holy Week.

The *pabasa* is done by a group of people in a specially appointed place in the middle of the neighborhood. The chanting or singing

lasts overnight usually from the afternoon of Holy Thursday until the morning of Good Friday.

**Meditation**  
Msgr. Pedro Qutorio, media director of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), reminded the public that the *pabasa* was an opportunity for meditation, so it need not be chanted so loudly.

"The *pabasa* is meant for [people] to meditate and to reflect on the word of God. So the persons chanting it should be meditative, otherwise it loses its sense. It's like a liturgy of the Word," Qutorio said.

He said the singing was understandably done loudly because it was a communal activity. But he



**WORKERS' CALVARY** Leo Atutubo, a member of the Dusit Hotel Nikko Workers' Union, dramatizes their continuing protest by re-enacting Christ's Passion of the Cross in front of the Supreme Court in Manila last April 6.

said, like faith, it should not be imposed on others.

"It could be shared because it's communitarian, but it should

not be a forced sharing," Qutorio said. "It's a liturgical celebration within a domestic group. It cannot be imposed because we each have our own style of professing our faith."

**Wrong reasons**  
Unfortunately, some *pabasa* are done for the wrong reasons "because it's done for show."

"For instance, a politician would sponsor it, or the [practitioners] would be paid to do it. The only reason you should do it is to meditate on the Word or the Gospel," Qutorio said.

He said one should reflect while listening or chanting the verses about the life and death of Christ.

**'Pabasa' meets rap**  
The Catholic Church now

welcomes modern ways of singing the *pabasa*, like rap for the younger generation of Catholics.

"While there is no definite Catholic Church guideline, what's good about the guidelines of Vatican II is that it's open to all expressions of faith," Qutorio said.

"We should not prohibit [rap] because that's [the younger generation's] world ... as long as the meaning is there. When they read the Gospel they can meditate better on their own terms, not on the terms of their elders," he said.

"What's important is the intention, as long as there's reverence," Qutorio added. (Inquirer.net)

## Gov't eases requirement for foreign employers

*To generate employment for Filipinos*

**M**ANILA—Foreign employers getting special job generation visas are now exempted from securing permits whenever they enter and exit the country, the Bureau of Immigration said last April 6.

In a new memorandum circular, Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said the

agency has amended rules in the issuance of special visa for employment generation (SVEG) for foreign businessmen employing 10 or more Filipinos.

Libanan said SVEG holders would no longer need to secure special return certificates or exit clearances before traveling abroad, provided their names are not in the agency's hold-depart-

ure list, blacklist and watch-list.

The new circular also expanded the types of foreigners who could qualify for the SVEG, which is also an indefinite visa that government introduced to generate employment opportunities for Filipinos.

But Libanan pointed out that foreign employers exercising managerial functions—that is

those who have the power to hire, dismiss or promote employees within a company—could apply for the special visa if they endorsed by their organization.

In applying for the special visa, the applicant must certify that he or she maintains a lawful immigration status in the Philippines; is engaged in a viable and sustainable business; exercises managerial acts with authority to employ, promote and dismiss employees; and shows genuine intention to indefinitely remain in the country. (Inquirer.net)

## Bangko Sentral gets involved in microfinancing

**T**ACLOBAN CITY—In answer to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's call to mitigate the impact of the global financial meltdown on the Filipino people and with the hope of contributing in a concrete and focused way to the poverty alleviation program which is the centerpiece program of the Arroyo Administration, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is promoting a financial environment that will encourage banks to lend to the marginalized sector.

Bangko Sentral believes that by involving itself in microfinance, it is helping the poor help themselves.

In order to encourage the participation of banks in microfinance, Bangko Sentral formulated guidelines that will implement the provisions of the General Banking Law of 2000 on microfinance operations.

Bangko Sentral also partially lifted the moratorium on the issuance of licenses for opening of new thrift and rural banks and branches in order to accommodate microfinance-oriented banks.

By opening a rediscounting facility, Bangko Sentral enabled to refinance the loan portfolio of microfinance-oriented banks, as contained in circulars 282 and 324.

Furthermore, Bangko Sentral issued Circular 409 which provides the guidelines for the measurement of portfolio-at-risk and provisioning requirements for microfinance loans to ensure prudent and sound microfinance operations by banks. Circular 505 was issued by Bangko Sentral in order to provide new guidelines for branching, providing further incentives for microfinance-oriented banks and branches to expand their reach all over the country.

Aside from the policy and regulatory aspects, the Bangko Sentral has undertaken significant initiatives for training and capacity-building as well as promotions and advocacy.

The Bangko Sentral established a Microfinance Committee and a Microfinance Unit within the Bank. The Microfinance Committee recommends to the Monetary Board appropriate policies and regulations in support of microfinancing within the banking sector.

The Microfinance Unit provides technical support to the Committee and coordinates relevant activities such as briefings, exposures, trainings, workshops and other advocacy activities to promote sustainable and viable microfinance programs in the Philippines. (www.pia.gov.ph)

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## RP group searches for "unsung women heroes"

**T**acloban City—The Soroptimist International of the Philippines Region is set to launch the annual search for the "Unsung Women Heroes Awards" which aims to honor fourteen ordinary women from the grassroots and disadvantaged sectors who wholeheartedly gave their services to uplift the lives and well being of other women and girls in their communities.

The "Unsung Women Heroes Awards" is the local counterpart of "Making a Difference for Women Awards" sponsored by Soroptimist International of

Americas open to international nominations by Soroptimist clubs all over the world.

Bulacan Rep. Lorna C. Silverio, Chair of the Awards Committee, said "unlike its international counterpart, which targets the already empowered women, this local counterpart will focus on women from the barangay level who are less privileged but struggled anyway to help her community."

This is aimed at inspiring ordinary women who still have doubts that they can make a difference in this world despite their economic conditions. (www.pia.gov.ph)

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