

RED FORUM 2024



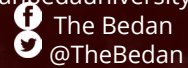


In necessariis, unitas; in opinabilibus, libertas; in omnibus caritas

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EDITOR'S NOTE

RED FORUM 2024

THE PHILIPPINES IS a force to be reckoned with. Under the international stage, the country has made a number of impressive feats in an effort to be on par with the growing advancements of the world. But beyond the glimmer lies a whole different reality.

All innovations seem futile, as in each passing year the Philippines remains to be one of the countries most vulnerable to unpredictable calamities, particularly typhoons, which are strongly intensified by the changes in our climate.

But what is tantamount to these adversaries is the lack of discourse among the community regarding climate change, along with the lack of effective initiatives by the government to address, or at the very least mitigate, the devastation brought about by the forces of nature.

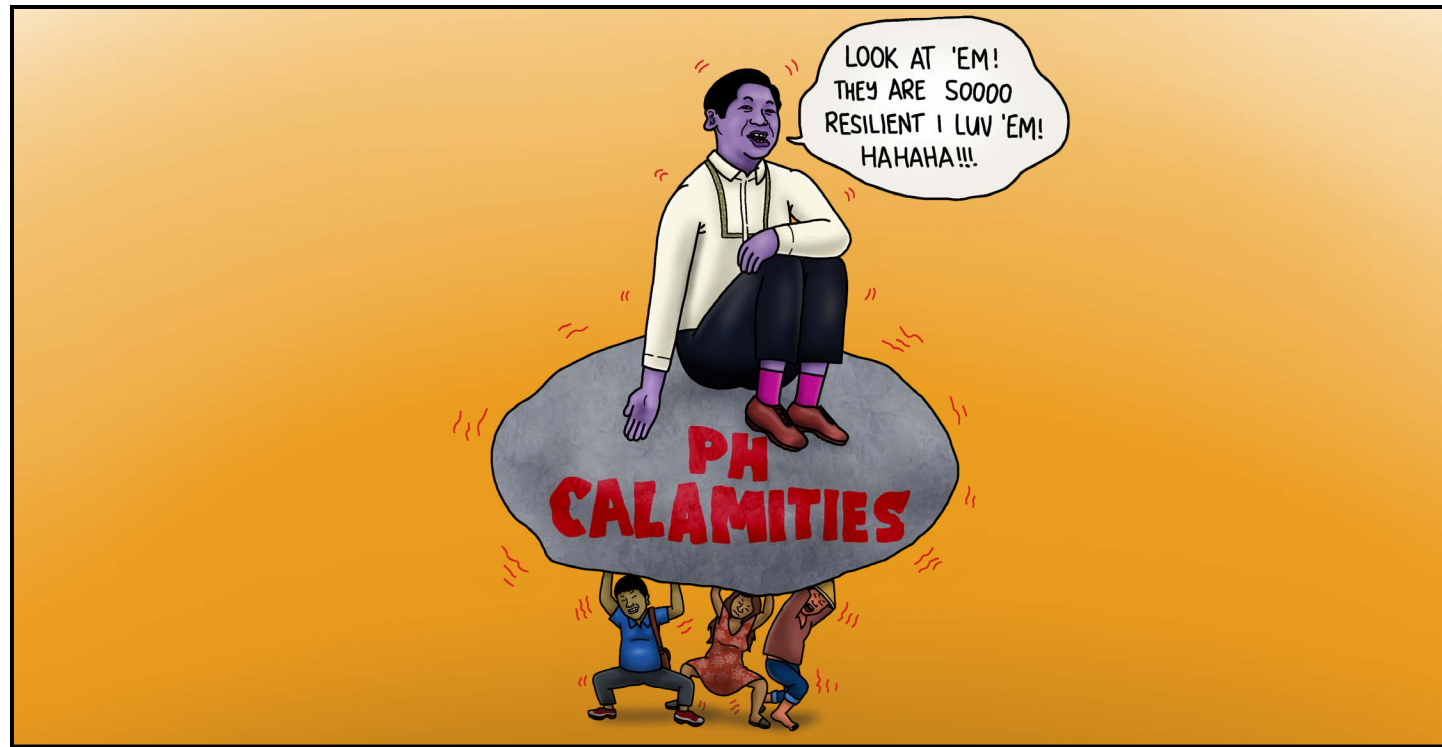
In consideration of San Beda University (SBU) being a Laudato Si' institution, this year's Red Forum will adopt a "green" focus in an effort to awaken the environmental stewardship spirit among Bedans of all creeds,

while addressing what is lacking in the community—a platform to discuss and expand our knowledge on this pressing issue of climate change. While this special issue is closely coordinated with the Bedan community, the resolve remains consistent in encouraging contributors to construct opinion pieces with open minds and critical thinking.

As you move on to the next page, we hope that the Laudato Si' spirit instilled in our University continues to resonate powerfully. The changes in our climate and the worsening condition of our environment require us, Bedans, more than ever, to find our collective voice and champion the advocacy for environmental protection. This we plead.

THE RED FORUM Special Issue is a means through which Bedans of all creeds and backgrounds can gather in our very own "town square" of sorts to discuss socio-political issues of national concern. This issue also aims to inform and engage its readers in crafting a critical analysis of the country's most pressing Issues.

ABOUT THE ISSUE



EDITORIAL

EYE OF A TYPHOON

IN THE EYE of a typhoon, the weather is quiet, with little to no rain, and even sometimes the skies are clear. Filipinos are often compared to such calmness as they are known for their resilience and strength in the face of adversity. But much like the eye of a typhoon, this tranquility is temporary—a fleeting moment before the storm resumes.

Resilience is one of the most abused words to characterize Filipinos. Inevitably, due to the geographical location of the Philippines which lies within the typhoon belt, along with its climate and geographical size, the country is prone to at least 20 storms and typhoons every year, bringing heavy casualties to human life and destruction to crops and properties.

Given these realities, one might expect the government to be well-prepared for such recurring disasters with supplies and evacuation plans ready to mitigate its unavoidable rage. However, with the simultaneous advent of typhoons in just months' time, the story remains the same: heavy casualties, demolition of private and public properties, and baseless promises from the government to cap it all off. And yet the calamity, and its dire consequences, have been concealed over the most popular narrative of all: that Filipinos are resilient.

Resiliency has often been used to praise Filipinos for their ability to recover and survive on their own. In reality, however, it's nothing but flattery. Over time, the media's continued portrayal of Filipinos as symbols of resilience has drained the word out of its meaning. Instead, it highlights the cracks in our system—one that openly submits to the harsh reality of a nation lacking sustainable solutions. Far from being a compliment, this overused narrative now feels like an insult, masking systemic failures behind a facade of

admiration.

It's intriguing, in a sense, how powerful the word resilient is. On one hand, it inspires hope and motivates people to move forward despite the adversity. But on the other hand, Filipinos have romanticized the word to the highest degree which obscures their sight from the flaws and the inadequacies of the government. Too often, resilience is misunderstood and misplaced to suggest Filipinos being accustomed to calamities at the expense of, instead, being prepared for it. As a result, when typhoons have reached the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) and bring destruction, Filipinos are left clinging to the illusion of resilience rather than facing the reality of insufficient disaster preparedness.

The back-to-back onslaught of Typhoons Kristine and Leon has affected at least 4.2 million individuals—approximately 1.3 million children—and displaced more than 300,000, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). To make matters worse, Super Typhoon Pepito has also severely affected over 850,000 individuals nationwide according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) last November 17. The uncertainties brought about by typhoons are indeed irrefutable, but for a country with a long, dark, and recurring history of typhoons, one would expect that all gaps have been addressed to mitigate its precariousness.

But amid the vulnerability faced by Filipinos nationwide, the government must lead the people out of this plight. Given the myriad of resources at their disposal, not to mention the billions of funds allocated for situations such as these, it is extremely preposterous and deeply troubling for President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to feign feeling "helpless" in the face of these calamities. His admission, reported in myNews last November 4, raises serious concerns about the government's preparedness and leadership during critical times—a not-so-unfamiliar pattern and practice that must change.

Ultimately, a collective effort must be made to bring back the significance of the word "resilience" through forging plans and enhance the current system to guarantee that the ill-effects brought by calamities would be mitigated. All institutions of society, with the government leading it, must take a more proactive step to produce stronger dwellings, permanent evacuation centers, and even emergency supplies ready for uncertainties.

But through it all, in consideration of the country's situation as prone to typhoons, we turn to the nature that we have—forest, mangroves, and even our own Sierra Madre Mountain range. Their evidently active role in shielding us from disasters must strengthen even more the resolve to advocate for their protection.



EDITORIAL CARTOON BY ROZETTI JENA DE LEON

ENOUGH

PROF. MARVIN REYES, PHD

SA UNANG SULTADA ng unang milenyo, naglabas si dating US Vice-President Al Gore ng isang dokumentaryo na pinamagatang "An Inconvenient Truth" kung saan tinalakay ang maaring kahantungan ng mundo dahil sa mga hindi makatwirang pagsira ng kalikasan. Naipalabas ito sa iba't ibang bansa at nagmistulang babala sa bawat tao na kung maaari ay maghinay-hinay sa paggamit at pagsukob sa ating nag-iisang tahanan sa buhay. Makalipas ang 8 taon, inilimbag naman ng kanyang Kabanalan Pope Francis ang encyclical letter na Laudato Si' kung saan muli tayong pinaalalahanan na tayo ay may mga tagapangalaga ng kalikasan kung kaya't ating ingatan ang pagsukob dito.

Ilan lamang sila sa mga malalaking pangalan sa kasalukuyang sibilisasyon ng tao ang nagbigay ng maalab na hudyat sa bawat isa sa atin na kailangan na nating maging ingat sa pakikitungo sa iba pang kapwa natin nilalalang sa mundong ito.

At iba na nga ang mundo ngayon. Noon, makikita mo ang distinksyon ng tag-ulan sa tag-araw. Ngayon, hindi na. May araw sa ulan, may ulan sa araw. Kapag mainit, mainit na mainit. Kapag tag-ulan, basang-basa at halos maging daan sa delubyo ng buhay ng tao. Kung noon, walang klase dahil may bagyo, ngayon, wala ring klase kasi, mainit na mainit ang singaw ng araw.

Ang pagkukumparang mga ito ay isa nang hudyat para ipapamukha sa atin ang mensahe at katotohanan na ang mundo natin ay nangnganih na nga. Mahirap mang isipin, subalit maaaring baka sa panahon ngayon, maaaring maranasan natin ang

pinakamabagsik nag anti ng kalikasan na siyang sisira hindi lamang sa ating mga kabuhayan kundi pati sa ating mga buhay.

Subalit may paraan at tamang hakbang pa naman. May pagkakataon pa at may pag-asa. Ngunit, sa gitna ng mga kahinahanuhan na ito, hindi rin natin malay kung kailan susundot ang pagpaparanas ng bagsik ng Inang Kalikasan. Maaaring sa simpleng mga pamamaraan na lamang doon tayo magsimula bagamat sa aking tingin, ay huli na ang lahat. Mga simpleng bagay lamang na makakatulong sa pagsalba pa sa kaunting pag-asa ng buhay. Nariryan ang tamang pagtapon ng basura, wastong segregasyon, maingat na pangangalaga sa kalikasan, mga hayop at ang buong ecosystem. Mag simpleng bagay pero maaaring magturo sa atin na sa mundong ito, hindi tayo ang may-ari bagkus, tayo ay nakikisilong lamang.

Maaaring sa darating na mga panahon,

“Maaaring sa darating na mga panahon, hindi lamang isang bise-presidente o Santo Papa ang magbibigay ng babala sa atin. Ang katotohanan, maaaring ang simpleng mamamayan ay maaari nang magbigay ng hudyat sa bawat isa sa atin na tayo ay nasa bingit na ng panganib.

hindi lamang isang bise-presidente o Santo Papa ang magbibigay ng babala sa atin. Ang katotohanan, maaaring ang simpleng mamamayan ay maaari nang magbigay ng hudyat sa bawat isa sa atin na tayo ay nasa bingit na ng panganib. Huwag na nating hintayin pa na ang Maylikha na ang siyang magsasabi sa atin na, "Enough na".



EDITORIAL CARTOON BY RIZIAN VENIZ BALETA

SAN BEDA AND LAUDATO SI': A PROMISE IN PERIL?

PAUL ALEXIS ARGA

LAST OCTOBER 4, 2023, San Beda University (SBU) proudly declared itself a Laudato Si' University, joining the ranks of Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) and Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan, among other schools, in responding to Pope Francis' urgent call to care for our common home.

But as a recently-minted Bedan alumnus who has been eagerly awaiting progress on this front, I am dismayed to see that the initial fervor for Laudato Si' has not translated into a lasting commitment from the whole community. The fanfare has now faded and left in its place a campus that seems largely unchanged—its promise of ecological renewal slipping into the familiar routine of unfulfilled promises.

Classrooms remain devoid of meaningful discussions on environmental ethics and ecological consciousness. Campus operations have seen little in the way of sustainable practices beyond the typical and token recycling bins and sporadic tree-planting events. Even the student body, once energized by the University's far-reaching pledge, still appears disengaged from our broader ecological mission as stewards of this planet.

This is not merely a failure of logistics. Rather, it is a failure of vision. The transformation envisioned by Laudato Si' requires more than isolated acts of environmentalism—it demands a cultural shift that permeates every aspect of

university life.

If San Beda is to honor its commitment as a Laudato Si' University, it must move beyond mere performative gestures and embrace a comprehensive strategy for ecological conversion. This begins with education. Courses across disciplines must incorporate environmental consciousness and foster in Bedans not only an understanding of ecological issues but a deep sense of moral responsibility toward the planet.

Moreover, the University stringently, and without failure nor exception in its execution, adopts sustainable practices in energy use, waste management, and campus development. Partnerships with local communities and environmental organizations can further extend the university's impact beyond its walls, making it a true catalyst for change.

Finally, the University must begin cultivating a culture of accountability, where Bedans of all creeds and backgrounds are empowered to hold the institution—and each

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other—responsible for upholding the values of Laudato Si'.

Our history is replete with examples of courage, resilience, and a commitment to the common good. The decision to become a Laudato Si' University was an extension of this legacy—a declaration that the Bedan spirit stands with those who seek to heal the Earth.

Therefore, it is time for San Beda to rise to the challenge it has set for itself and transform our campus into a beacon of ecological consciousness in the country. If any community is capable of such a transformation, it is ours. The Bedan spirit demands no less.



EDITORIAL CARTOON BY ROZETTI JENA DE LEON

THE REAL BOTTOM LINE

PAOLO VITAL

THE SUN SHINES down across the street, sizzling the pavement, and marking the start of another day. A hopeful symbol, impossible to reach but is nevertheless visible to those who would seek its light.

And yet, majestic this looming ball of radiation may be, the bustling streets, the suffocating stench of smoke, and the confluence of soot and carbon has tarnished the menagerie of paradise into a dreary purgatory, something that must be devoid of life.

It was not always this way. Believe it or not, there was a time when commerce was not engulfed by greed, when factories did not uproot our homes, and when industry had worked for the world, instead of against it.

We had all the warnings for our avarice, the myriad of animal species who were massacred by indifference; plants and trees that were uprooted, not by axes, but through the decisive strike of droughts, floods and disease. Almost as if humankind has found a way to make nature turn on itself.

Being witty and, at times, overly critical creatures, there was a time when humanity caught wind of their insouciance - a time

when they finally understood the situation they were in. And what had resumed was perhaps one of the greatest collective efforts ever achieved - the restoration of the ozone layer.

The Montreal Protocol that was adopted in 1987, aiming to phase out the harmful chemicals from both consumption and production had garnered 197 signatories in the United Nations, reaching universal approval. A herculean feat but one that we can nonetheless aim to replicate today.

We return to the present, a time when the same conundrum is befalling the fate of the Earth. The precedent for greater cooperation has been set, and yet the stakes remain higher than before, reaching a precipice of irreversibility.

We move onto a critical juncture, what is the bottomline? The answer should be simple, yet there seems to be no better way to answer than with another question: what

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After all, there is no grander quest than the pursuit of tomorrow.

does it mean to live?

It is not to merely exist, satisfying what crude and basic needs human biology demands. Saying as such would fail to satiate our demands for the pursuit of equality, liberty and happiness. To live is to have a clear vision of the world, one wherein we can bask in the glory of the sun, where our renowned resilience and persistence is not channeled towards the selfish malice of greed, but on the contrary, towards the collective upliftment of all life and the preservation of our shared future. After all, there is no grander quest than the pursuit of tomorrow.



EDITORIAL CARTOON BY RIZIAN VENIZ BALLETA

THE PRICE OF A WARMING WORLD

CASS MANAO

THE CURRENT CLIMATE The current climate crisis is a shared consequence stemming from an inequitable past. For the longest time, well-maintained nations have reaped the fruits of industrial progress, consciously extracting greenhouse gases and emissions, pushing undermined countries to the brink while an uncertain future swiftly looms.

Centuries of environmental deterioration made the global climate debt undeniably visible. Advanced countries such as the United States, Japan, and European Union have greatly contributed to such environmental decline from 1850 to 2011, and currently, China is seen as the linchpin in carbon dioxide emissions. Moreover, Big Oil and fossil fuel corporations have long contributed the most historical emissions.

While these industrial nations revel in their economic progress, the harshest consequences are borne by those residing in gullible populations; they bear the brunt of its impact. Rising sea levels, ecological drought, widespread famine, and limited resources are just some of the growing manifestations of the global distraught that tips the posing threat to human existence and expansion. The unjust disparity is a debt that has yet to be repaid. Such a call for urgency begs the question if justice can truly exist in a world

where the responsible refuse to foot the bill.

The weight of climate inequality has yet to be critically and equally scrutinized. To this day, the imbalance persists, as these high-rising industries evade accountability while the impoverished nations pay the steepest price. As Elizabeth Wathuti, a Kenyan climate activist, aptly put it, **“People who have contributed least to the climate crisis are right now suffering its worst impacts.”** Since developing countries lack resources and a foundational framework, they are left grappling with the ecological turmoil neither they created nor possess the means to effectively resolve. As such, taking efficient steps and action to rectify the amplifying damage must be made by these wealthy nations and corporations. Reparations, financial and technological support are crucial in ensuring aid for those truly struggling.

As the crumbling effect of the Earth

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The unjust disparity is a debt that has yet to be repaid.

remains visible, our commitment to change becomes a demand, now more than ever. Extinguishment and cease of damage do not happen overnight. Hence in addressing the call to environmental justice, enormously built industries should assist those most vulnerable. Generally, global cooperation and resolve can serve as a consensus for bridging the widening climate inequality gap, but a centralized path to inhabitability, preservation, and justice should be led by those with the power to steer the global helm, bearing the will to restore what they have altered.



EDITORIAL CARTOON BY RIZIAN VENIZ BALLETA

YOUR BODY, WHOSE CHOICE?

DIANNE RADEL MAGALLON

“YOUR BODY, MY choice” was a statement from far-right political activist Nick Fuentes, and a deliberate twisting of feminists’ **“my body, my choice”** narrative around the 1970s which advocates for women’s battle cry for bodily autonomy, and by extension, women’s agency.

While this statement sparked controversial debates online and amplified anti-feminist views, there are aspects to this statement that people may seem to overlook unless seen under today’s interconnected crises where narratives like this intersect with a new frontier of oppression—climate injustice.

When one suffers from natural disasters like typhoons or earthquakes, or issues like displacement, loss of livelihood, etc., the suffering of women can be interpreted as men’s suffering but make it twofold or even tenfold because of the intersectionality that plays within one’s identity. Women will always be disproportionately affected just because they’re women.

Communities destroyed by typhoons like Carina leave women in need of more assistance. Lack of home and prolonged stay in evacuation centers leave women prone to sexual attacks. Disasters also make access to pregnancy medicine and equipment almost impossible, especially for the poor and lower economic class. It’s already inaccessible given

the economic circumstances in the Philippines, more so whenever disaster strikes.

With all things said, women did not remain silent amidst the climate injustice, and yet, where did it get them? Women environmental activists Rowena Dasig and Miguela Peniero were arrested on July 12, 2023, while investigating a fossil fuel project’s impact on local communities and biodiversity. Jonila Castro and Jhed Tamano, both who opposed the Manila Bay reclamation, were accused of communist ideals and were abducted by state forces last September 2023 with their court case still ongoing. These and other similar cases are the fuel to organizations like Tanggol Bayi, an association of women’s rights defenders, in their advocacy to junk bogus terror charges vs. women activists.

In the end, the reality of women in today’s world is Nick Fuentes’ truth, where women’s lives are centered and controlled by the state, climate injustice, patriarchy, capitalism, or anything else other than themselves, but it doesn’t have to be.

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When we see, address, and bridge the gap in structural inequalities by raising women’s voices, we create pathways for more inclusive, sustainable solutions to climate challenges that affect everyone.

When we cater to the needs of the earth and look into the perspective of the vulnerable of the vulnerable, it’s a net good for everyone. When we see, address, and bridge the gap in structural inequalities by raising women’s voices, we create pathways for more inclusive, sustainable solutions to climate challenges that affect everyone.

In the words of Gustavo Gonzalez, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Philippines. **“In the context of the existential threat of climate change, the new normal we are striving towards will be sustainable only if it is centered around and driven by women and girls.”**

