

## Priest to cross country on foot for peace

'Biking priest' Father Amado Picardal, a Redemptorist priest plans to set off tomorrow to cross the Philippines on foot to promote peace in the country, especially in Mindanao.

Father Amado Picardal, 56, has already cycled right round the country for "peace and life" but he feels this was not enough sacrifice to generate sympathy for his cause.

This time he is set to take a "journey of a lifetime" by running and walking across the Philippines.

He said the trip will run from Davao City in the south to Aparri in Cagayan, the northern tip of the country.



The Filipino missionary is taking little more than his optimism on the 2,000 km journey to promote peace and the protection of the sanctity of life.

He expects to be away from home for 58 days and plans to cover at least 42 km per day of walking and running.

"This will symbolize my life as a continuing journey and pilgrimage for life and peace," Father Picardal said. "I will even do fasting and will only eat at night. I'm very serious about this advocacy."

He said it will be a "walking or running prayer of appeal" for the success of the peace process between the government and the communist-led National Democratic Front and with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

"Also, these threats to life [that] are ongoing, like mining and logging, the extrajudicial killings, the reproductive health bill ... my appeal is to stop these," he said.

Running across the country is not new in the Philippines. Father Picardal will be following in the footsteps of four runners: Cesar Guarin (1980), Father Robert Reyes (1996, 97 and 98), and Jay Roxas and Mat Macabe (2005).

But what makes Father Picardal unique is that he is older and will do it alone, without any companion, support vehicle or crew, carrying what he needs in his backpack.

“I will also mix running and walking, which I believe will be more relaxing and sustainable for me,” he said.

“I will follow a different path, especially in the last leg when I will trek across the Cordillera mountain range,” Father Picardal said.

He is confident he will enjoy the experience. “I’m used to this. For me it’s the journey and hopefully it will inspire people.”

Sean Salvador - UCA News