

Manila mercy meeting an 'opportunity for healing'

Philippine bishop hopes upcoming international gathering will help persuade Duterte to end drug related killings Manila mercy meeting an 'opportunity for healing'



A global meeting on mercy, to be held in Manila later this month, is an "opportunity for healing" amid drug-related killings in the country, a Philippine Church official said.

"It will be a healing for us, an opening that there is still hope for those whom we consider the least, the lost, and the last," said Bishop Ruperto Santos, coordinator of the World Apostolic Congress on Mercy.

The event, which will be held from Jan. 16 to 20, will bring together some 4,000 devotees of Divine Mercy from around the world.

Father Prospero Tenorio, secretary-general of the event, said Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has been invited to the gathering but is yet to confirm his attendance.

The priest said he hopes Duterte will attend the gathering because it will be an opportunity for the

church and the government to work together.

"This is a good opportunity. There is always room for conversion, room for the church and the government to work together," said Father Tenorio.

"We've already coordinated with the police for peace and order and we are hoping that with the help of the government, everything will be in order," said Father Tenorio.

Bishop Santos expressed hope that the international gathering "will be fruitful and there would be a blessing for all of us in spite of what we have experienced."

"Mercy is connected with life," said the prelate of Balanga, where the last day of the gathering will be held.

He said the message of the event is "always to love life, to live life, and to defend life."

"Life must be promoted, life must be preserved, and life must be respected. It will be a message of life because mercy is life," said Bishop Santos.

"We've always said that to kill is not only wrong but immoral as well," he added.

Introduced by the Vatican in 2008, the first ever World Apostolic Congress on Mercy was held in Rome at the time of the third death anniversary of Saint John Paul II.

At least 3,000 delegates have already registered for the gathering. International participants will come from at least 40 countries, said the event's organizers.

Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, archbishop of Lyon, France, will deliver a message from Pope Francis at the event.

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