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Cardinal Tagle offers Christ's suffering and crucifixion as models of leadership

by N.J. Viehland

Pasig City — Cardinal Luis Tagle of Manila returning from Rome this weekend visited a leadership summit and urged students and young professionals to follow the example of Christ's life, suffering and crucifixion as a model of Christian leadership.

He addressed some 300 people gathered at the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) in Pasig City for the first leadership summit of Charis, a foundation that aims to develop Filipino youth as positive change agents for the Philippines. Tagle was among six speakers on the summit theme, Competent Leaders for PH (Philippines).

He told participants he arrived from Rome, dropped off his bags at his residence and came right to UA&P because it is important that the Philippines' many young people engage with church and society. The school that hosted the summit is a private non-profit institution under the spiritual direction of the Personal Prelature of Opus Dei.

According to the government's 2010 census, half of the country's total household population of 92 million is younger than 23 years old. More than 33 percent or 30.7 million people are under the age of 15.

"Please, as young people, gifted as you are, share what you have now or youth will pass," the cardinal urged. He cited "gifts of youth" they could share with church and society — idealism, energy and adventurism.

He said that to be a leader in the mold of Jesus, one must serve a mission, rather than one's ambition.

"This commitment to the One who sent Him was translated in the life and death of Christ as service of

mission," Tagle said. "This mission is what gave Christ passion and enabled him to endure all the opposition, even death on the cross."

He also reminded participants that true leadership happens only in humility because it requires full submission to God's will.

"It is not an ascent to greatness, but a descent to greatness. The greatest among you should be the last, the greatest should be a servant of all, serving even the enemies, serving even those who are planning to rob you of your position," Tagle said.

He cited Jesus' act of washing the feet of his disciples, including those of Judas who betrayed him.

Humility also demands that leaders wait and let God's plan unfold.

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"Let us not equate waiting with inaction or indifference. This is waiting that is active, what we call expectant waiting. You give space for the movement of Jesus in your lives," Tagle explained. "Waiting is important in servanthood and leadership because a person who waits listens constantly. The capacity to listen to people and to events, to listen to the voice of God and the promptings of the spirit, comes with waiting."

He called it "humble abandonment of myself to the One who has a better plan for my life" a better story to tell."

[N.J. Viehland is *NCR*'s correspondent in Asia.]

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