

STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION

REGARDING THE HEALING MINISTRY OF FR. FERNANDO SUAREZ

Companions of the Cross – February 6, 2008

We have received several questions about the healing ministry of Fr. Fernando Suarez, CC. Several news agencies have recently run articles about his ministry. In order to address the questions and concerns that have been raised, we would like to make the following clarifications:

- 1) Fr. Fernando Suarez is a member of the Companions of the Cross. He is a priest in good standing with priestly faculties from the Archdiocese of Ottawa. He has been assigned by the Companions of the Cross to work for *Mary, Mother of the Poor*, a charitable organization based in the Philippines which is dedicated to serving the poor. Fr. Fernando often preaches missions and celebrates Masses followed by prayers for healing.
- 2) The Companions of the Cross have a deep love and respect for the authority of the Catholic Church. We endeavor to minister in complete obedience to the Church's teaching and in union with the local bishops in all matters. As a community, "we are determined to think with the Church and to be loyal to the Magisterium" (*Constitutions and Rules of the Companions of the Cross*, C25).
- 3) Recently two bishops have noted that Masses with prayers for healing were conducted in their dioceses without their approval. We deeply regret this. It is always our intention to act with the blessing and explicit approval of the local Bishop. In these cases, there was an unfortunate miscommunication. It was understood that the local organizers of these events had already secured the necessary permission. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Letters of apology have been sent to both bishops.

To insure that this never happens again, a policy has been established whereby the local Bishop's written permission must be received by *Mary, Mother of the Poor* prior to the confirmation and publication of any future events. This policy, already in effect in North America, takes effect immediately in the Philippines and elsewhere.

- 4) Fr. Fernando Suarez, and all priests of the Companions of the Cross, are careful to comply with the Church's *Instruction on Prayers for Healing* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2000.

In keeping with this instruction, we make every attempt to ensure that "anything resembling hysteria, artificiality, theatricality or sensationalism" does not take place (cf. *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, Disciplinary Norms, art 5, sec 3).

- 5) In accord with the teaching of the Church, we believe that "[p]rayer for the restoration of health is... part of the Church's experience in every age, including our own." (*Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, Introduction). We delight that the Lord continues

to bring consolation to the sick and suffering through prayers for healing. However, we leave it entirely to the competent authorities to confirm or deny claims of miraculous healing. It is the local Bishop, in consultation with medical experts, who makes such a determination.

- 6) *Mary, Mother of the Poor* often distributes religious articles, such as rosaries handmade by the poor, at their events. This is a concrete manner through which the poor contribute to the work of the apostolate. Donations are accepted for these articles with the permission of local pastors and event organizers.

While we encourage true devotion to our Lady, especially through the prayer of the rosary, we caution the faithful against any superstitious claims made about these or any religious articles. When blessed by the Church, God can indeed use such articles as an instrument of healing in our lives, but these graces come solely from Christ through the blessing of the Church and our faith in the Lord.

We apologize for any misunderstandings and hope that this explanation provides clarity to those with concerns. It is our fervent desire to serve the good of the Church and regret anything that would bring disunity or confusion to God's people. Above all we desire to facilitate a deeper knowledge and love of the Lord in the fullness of truth taught by His Holy Catholic Church.

For Further Reference

Instruction on Prayers for Healing, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2000
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20001123_istruzione_en.html

Catechism of the Catholic Church, par 1500-1510, especially 1506.

Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2001. See Sacramentals, par 272-273.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html