

Mindanao, Philippines: Fr. Tentorio's legacy in Arakan lives.



The mission of slain Italian missionary Fr. Fausto Tentorio has remained alive in this remote town nearly a year after his death, a fellow Italian missionary who has assumed his work as parish priest here said.

In an interview, Fr. Giovanni Vettoretto of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) said all the programs of his predecessor are being implemented with the help of Fr. Peter Geremia, now the assistant parish priest (not the parish priest as earlier reported).

Geremia, also a PIME missionary, assumed Tentorio's post as coordinator of the Tribal Filipinos Apostolate of the Diocese of Kidapawan. He was the parish priest of Columbio town in Sultan Kudarat province since 1985.

Tentorio was gunned down inside the parish compound on October 17 last year while he was about to board his car.

"All the programs of Fr. Fausto, particularly the scholarship, literacy and health care for the indigenous peoples are still being implemented," he said in the local dialect.

The death of Tentorio has encouraged the people even more to continue and give value to what he had started, said Vettoretto.

But he admitted that they can still feel the pain and the absence of Tentorio, adding that the parishioners are still crying for justice.

"We, the people in Arakan our fellow priests and our Bishop can feel the absence of Pops here in Arakan. We can feel the empty space," the missionary said.

Yolanda Andagkit, a parish staff and a lumad, told MindaNews that she is among those assigned in the literacy program under the Tribal Filipino Program for Community Development Inc. (TFPCDI).

Andagkit, who was also one of at least 3,000 Lumads who have benefited from the scholarship program of Tentorio, said they always go around monitoring the 35 daycare centers, which were established by the late priest.

Stopped

Asked for comment on the progress of the case, Vettoretto said: “Personally, not just slow or very slow. It seemed that it stopped. It seems there are influential people who are interfering on the case.”

He said that whenever he went to the villages to say mass, people would ask him what has happened to the case.

“But I cannot give them any specific update,” he said.

Almost a year after Tentorio’s death, no case has been filed in court. The complaint for murder filed before the Provincial Prosecutor’s Office in Kidapawan City in February has not moved as witnesses have gone into hiding for fear of reprisal.

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