Surviving Reming
THE AQ STORIES
What’s left isn’t over

Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord
Lord hear my voice
O let your ears be attentive
To the sound of my pleading.

—DE PROFUNDIS

We wanted to procure body bags...

Just this morning (Sunday, December 3), our security guards discovered the decomposing body of a girl, 12-13 years old. She was submerged in the mud deposited along Gate 1 of our University by the rampaging flood waters of Yawa River. The usually tame waters of Yawa surged from its banks into our campus.

The young girl was unrecognizable with the thick mud that plastered her face, her entire body. She could have been the sister of the dead boy, 7-8 years old, we also found the other day (Saturday, December 2) about twenty meters from where she pitifully lay. We, strong and alive by the grace of the Lord, who crowded around those lifeless and nameless dead children, couldn’t suppress the lumps in our throats, the heavy tugs at our hearts strings.

When the dead children were turned over to the authorities and the anxiety ebbed, an eerie stillness engulfed the campus.

Two in a Row

We were still struggling from the destruction which typhoon “Milenyo” left just a little over two months ago when “Reming” ruthlessly decimated whatever “Milenyo” spared.

“Reming” brutally pounded Albay with 265 kph sustained winds for over five hours without let up, without slackening. It ripped off the roofs of almost all our buildings. It smashed most of the glass panels it could find. It tore off whatever structure that got in its way including the leaves which were starting to grow on the trees in the campus. “Reming” seemed to have a distaste for anything green, including grasses.

“Reming” flushed a great amount of rain water that rose to about five to six feet in some parts of the campus. Except for the elevated AQ Dome and the Fra Angelico Building, everything in the campus was inundated.

As the wind and the water were not enough, so much earth that lay on the shoulders of Mount Mayon brought about by the fire that it has been spewing since July 2006 was loosened and hastily discharged down the barrancos… down to the unsuspecting villagers and city dwellers (with the AQ Rawis Campus unspared), carrying with it whatever got on its way, including boulders the size of jeepneys, including the lifeless and nameless children deposited in our campus. Including some of our own people.

We have no confirmation yet as to how many of our people were also lost. This morning (Monday, December 4) the bodies of five of our students were being recovered from the Yawa River claimed during the typhoon. We are looking at the fate of the others for as days pass the toll seems to rise.

A Ray of Hope

It rained hard last night (Saturday, December 2) I could not hold my anxiety from gnawing at me. But the rain and anxiety failed to blow away the messages of concern I received through my cell phone. Dr. Javier Galvan from Spain, Sr. Loida Lim, O.P from Taiwan, Fr. Joel Tabora, S.J. from Naga, Edwin Faigmane from Laos, so did Frs. Nantes our Father-Provincial and Fr. Arceo, the Rector Magnificus of UST, my friends and my relatives
Reming Batters AQ

Leo Martin B. Ganace

Barely eight weeks when AQ began rehabilitation after typhoon “Milenyo,” the University again faces even more massive restoration efforts as supertyphoon “Reming” (international code name “Durian”) and mudflows from Mt. Mayon wrought heavy devastation to the University, November 30.

The strongest typhoon in living memory ever to hit Albay caused avalanches of volcanic debris down the slopes of Mt. Mayon that buried villages in its vicinity, killing over a thousand people. “Reming” also damaged about 90 percent of buildings in the province, according to Albay Governor Fernando Gonzalez in media interviews.

“I estimate the damage to Aquinas University to be about 70 to 80 percent,” said Center for Campus Infrastructure and Development (CCID) Director Arch. Ernesto D. Tianco, UAP.

An initial estimate from the CCID submitted to OIC-Vice-Rector for Administration Engr. Virgilio S. Perdigon, Jr. places the damage to campus infrastructure to be at P37.43 million. Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, O.P., Rector and President, said total losses could well reach P90 million.

“Damages to and destruction of laboratories, equipment, facilities, books and other University properties excluding yet lost man hours and emotional and psychological impacts can easily collect that conservative total,” he said.

Physical Devastation

Strong gusts of up to 265 kph destroyed about 60 percent of roofing in the Rawis Campus, damaging hundreds of computer units, office furniture, and drenching thousands of office and student records.

Among the hardest hit buildings were the Science High School building, where up to P6.5 million worth of property was damaged and the St. Thomas Building with losses amounting to P5.6 million. Thousands of current and non-current student files are also in danger of being lost as the Registrar’s Office and the adjacent records room sustained heavy damage from water and mud.

But University Registrar Leticia R. Roque said they are now drying files damaged by the typhoon. “We will be reconstructing these files after the drying process,” she said.

Information Technology (IT) laboratories in both high school and college also sustained heavy damage. MIS-ITC Head Alvin Perez said his office is now undertaking the rehabilitation of damaged computers.

“The checking of damaged computers depends on the availability of electric power. It would take only about a week to fix computers with the electric power on, but without it, rehabilitation could take about a month,” he said.

The Rawis Campus remained without power four weeks after the typhoon.

Classes Relocated

Due to the heavy damage sustained by many offices and classrooms in the Rawis Campus, AQ administrators decided to relocate all of the Aquinas University Integrated High School (AQUI) classes and offices to the Professional Schools in downtown Legazpi City.

AQUI is comprised of the Science High School, Special Program in the Arts, and the General Curriculum.

Night classes of the College of Business Administration have also been relocated and rescheduled at the Professional Schools, according to the OIC-Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs (OVRAA), Dr. Pedro B. Bernaldez.

Classes in other departments remain in the Rawis Campus. Night classes have been reset for Saturdays and Sundays.

Despite the devastation, College of Law classes at the Professional Schools resumed on December 11 and Graduate School classes on December 18.

Prelim Exams Canceled

The OVRAA said classes will be extended by two weeks to make up for lost contact hours.

Preliminary exams originally slated December 18 to 20 were cancelled, according to Dr. Bernaldez. “We’ll use the three days for make-up classes,” he said.

He said that midterm examinations have now been scheduled in the first week of February. Final exams have been reset in the first week of April.

The solemn investiture have also been rescheduled in the last week of April.

Admin Offices Relocated

Some 13 offices in the Rawis Campus have also been relocated to five buildings in the University while rehabilitation is ongoing.

Eight offices were relocated to the Fra Angelico Building, two at the Professional Schools and one each at the Sirungan, Daragang Magayon Hall and the AQ Chapel.

Full rehabilitation of the University could take about three months, according to AQ officials.
communicated their prayers and sympathies with the willingness to help in whatever way. Indeed we will be grateful for whatever help that will be extended to us and to our suffering communities.

I went around the campus early the next day to see what the rain did. I saw that the mud in some parts of the road was washed away. I saw a beautiful morning and I took some pictures of it. I saw our battered AQ Chapel with Mount Mayon at the background casting a clear impressive reflection on the flooded basketball court. I shot that too. I saw the bright sun shine. And I saw its brightness go through the unroofed St. Dominic Building – to the books in the library which lay exposed to the mercy of the rain.

**Tasks to Do**

It is difficult to estimate the damages and destruction left by “Reming.” It is hard to factor the physical costs against the social impact. We cannot provide exact figures because as we gain access into the rooms of our buildings the costs pile up. We cannot quantify the sorrow of our people who lost their loved ones especially our very own students who might have drowned in the flood waters or were swept away by the rampaging mudflows and lahars.

We cannot now mobilize all our personnel the way we did right after “Milenyo” because they too have their own losses and damages to attend to. They must be given the understanding and the opportunity to rise from the wreckage; to procure food, water, medicines, roofs above their heads, dry beds to rest their rain-soaked and weary bones. In fact, we will try to extend to them whatever assistance we can. That is our priority.

So is the systematic clearing of the buildings and the road network in the campus; the isolation of the science and chemistry laboratories; the recovery of our hard copies of data in different offices, and digital data in rain and mud soaked computers, if still possible.

It may take some time to clear the football field and other areas in the campus for the effort will require heavy equipment and machineries. We pray that as we embark in this task there will be no more bodies, no more dead children to discover underneath the tons of debris washed up in these places.

Faced with these constraints, we are initially suspending classes in the secondary and tertiary levels until the last day of December 2006. This will give our students the needed time to help in rebuilding their houses.

Meanwhile, we will set up a Relief and Rehab Operation Center to be able to efficiently respond to the needs of our people and our suffering communities.

We will set up an Information Center to guide us in decision making as well as to provide us with data on the damages inflicted on our University, and likewise help us track the situation of our people. We will mobilize groups to serve in the affected communities for trauma management and community counseling. In our small way, we will start a little soup kitchen for the hungry. Yes, we will intensify our Anduyog Movement by infusing it with the spirit of Patarabang-tabang (damayan and bayanihan).

Most of our buildings are still products of the designs, materials and financial capabilities of the times when they were erected, the best for those times though – founded on the undying and very noble hopes and dreams of my predecessors. We will not allow those hopes and dreams to be measured by the vagaries of the earth, wind, water, and fire. Our spirit has survived and will survive these elements. Those hopes and dreams will live on with our unyielding determination in our minds and in our hearts. They will live on forever in our very soul.

**AQ is in the Heart and Soul**

Our University shall stand and rise and even soar beyond its edifices to rest and grow in the hearts of the people and in the soul of the communities. Did not Rev. Fr. Ramon Salinas, O.P., first Rector and President, envision Aquinas University as a “community university,” a “borderless university,” a “New Jerusalem”? Our university is in the heart and in the soul.

In the morning of December 4, 2006, a number of our people came and brought their stories and once again laughter filled our place. From Taiwan I received a text message, “Help is on the way...” At three o’clock in the afternoon, I met for the first time after the storm our lay administrators and in the middle of our meeting a group from the Universidad de Santa Isabel–Naga led by Sr. Asuncion “Siony” Evidente, D.C., came to express their solidarity with us. They were followed by a convoy of four vehicles of food, water, and medicine organized by our brothers Jeffrey, Stephen, and Ziggy of Caleruega, Batangas, and Sto. Domingo, Quezon City. And what a beautiful night we’ve got. Though our generator failed to start yet the moon shone so bright with a little rain to cool us.

December 5, 2006, Fr. Joseph Raquid, O.P. blessed the place where the continuing retrieval of the four bodies of our students is taking place while a couple from our community counseling team reached out to their beleaguered and bereaved parents. We dispatched a team in our University ambulance to go around the affected communities to seek for our students and personnel and they brought home ten sacks of rice courtesy of Sr. Bernie Bernas, O.S.B. of St. Agnes’ Academy. I met with our key hospital administrators for an update of our emergency measures. Then I was able to talk to the mother of one of our student assistants from Camarines Sur. She had been worried for days because she has not heard from her daughter. We have accounted for her daughter and brought them together where they tearfully and happily hugged each other. Before lunch I was able to address a big number of student volunteers who responded to our call through DZGB radio. I told them, “In and for the memory of the Aquinians who died in this tragedy, we dedicate our humble service.” I could utter no more words lest tears would fall in the midst of our grief and all I could say is, “thank you very much for coming.”

We have been through with “Milenyo” and “Reming,” and even a volcanic eruption that likes to linger like a bad cold. But what’s left isn’t over because we still have each other. And there we shall begin. Besides, the smile has not escaped our lips. We will not allow the wind to take that smile from us.

Albay will always be beautiful because there are people who still care. And most of all God cares.

Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, O.P.
Rector and President
December 6, 2006
Snapshots: Reming’s Wrath

REMING’S TRAIL OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION:
AN AQ CHRONOLOGY

November 28, Tuesday
9:00 am
The Disaster Management Team (DMT) meets at the Media Center Hall to discuss measures related to the impending typhoon.

November 29, Wednesday
7:00 am
The University suspends High School classes as typhoon signal number 2 is hoisted over Albay. Offices begin safekeeping measures as directed in the Disaster Management Guidelines. Offices carry on with their work.

9:00 am-12:00 pm
DMT Vice-chair Jesus Barizo instructs offices to follow DMT guidelines in preparation for the typhoon.

3:30 pm
Security Officer Barizo conducts a security briefing with the detachment commander in securing lives and University properties.

4:00 pm
Undergraduate classes and classes at the PS and office work suspended as signal number 3 is raised.

November 30, Thursday
Power supply to the University was cut off as typhoon “Reming” enters Albay.

December 1, Friday
6:00 am
Fr. Mon, accompanied by other Dominican Fathers, surveys the devastation in and outside the University.

8:00 am
A change in the tour of duty of the security guards was implemented. Additional guards were employed during the nighttime to protect school properties from possible looters entering open areas.

6:30 am-7:00 am
DMT Chair and OIC Vice-Rector for Administration Engr. Virgilio Perdigon, Jr. inspects damages in the University.

December 2, Saturday
8:00 am
Clearing operations by the CCID, MDM, security personnel and
employees begin in different parts of the University, including access roads from Gate 2 to the Convent and Gate 2 to the CCID, at the instruction of Engr. Perdigon. Canteen personnel were allowed to check on the damages on their stores.

9:00 am
Engr. Perdigon, Mr. Barizo, and Father Mon brief MDM crew on the clearing process. Fr. Mon leads a prayer and addresses the workers briefly before work commences.

The DMT sets up a makeshift headquarters at the back of the Daragang Magayon Hall to initiate rehabilitation and implement post-typhoon measures.

The University posts security personnel at the AQ Dome and AQUI to deter unscrupulous persons from entering open spaces.

10:00 am
MDM crew shoveling mud discovers the body of a boy, 7-8 years old, near the damaged covered walk by the pedestrian gate. Mr. Barizo calls the police to report the incident. Fr. Mars blesses the body. Police arrives to gather details and the body was sent to Nuestra Señora de Salvacion.

An AQ relief center was activated with headquarters at the Fra Angelico Building.

11:45 am
A tsunami scare causes clearing workers to temporarily flee the University premises.

December 3, Sunday
8:00 am
MDM crew begin clearing operations in the offices of the Rector and President, Vice-Rector for Administration, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, and the Makusog Hall.

9:00 am
Clearing crew finds a second body, this time of a girl, 12-13 years old, near the powerhouse. Fr. Mars blesses the body. Police arrives to gather details and the body was sent to Nuestra Señora de Salvacion.

An AQ relief center was activated with headquarters at the Fra Angelico Building.

11:45 am
A tsunami scare causes clearing workers to temporarily flee the University premises.

December 4, Monday
8:00 am
Employees were allowed to enter the University for the initial clearing and salvaging operations in offices.

The Relief Center dispatches its first batch of relief goods to Camalig.

2:00 pm
Engr. Perdigon issues a radio advisory calling on available employees and student assistants to help in the clean-up operations.

Emergency crews set up perimeter lights around the University.

3:00 pm
AQ administrators meet for the first time after the typhoon at the AQ Chapel.

9:00 pm
Engr. Perdigon appeals for volunteerism among AQ students through a radio broadcast. Students, Aquinians and outsiders, start to pour in at the Relief Center to register as Anduyog AQ volunteers.

December 5, Tuesday
8:00 am
Clearing operations continue.

5:00 pm
Engr. Perdigon appeals through radio for volunteers for the University’s Relief and Rehabilitation Operations Center.

December 6, Wednesday
Fr. Mon releases the AQ statement on the disaster.

Engr. Perdigon makes another appeal through radio for Nursing students to report to the AQ Hospital.

Clean-up of offices at the St. Dominic Building begins. It was followed by clean-up in the Nursing, Education, High School and St. Pius buildings.
December 7, Thursday
8:00 am
MIS-ITC personnel set up wireless fidelity internet room at the back of the AQ Chapel for easier and effective communication in the relief operation.

December 8, Friday
10:00 am
The Dominican Fathers celebrate Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception at the AQ Chapel. Fr. Senen Ecleo, O.P. announces after the Mass that the second half of employees' pay for December will be given December 21.

3:00 pm
The University releases the 13th month pay of its employees at the Professional Schools.

December 9, Saturday
Fr. Alfred Fernandez and Fr. Mars Saria led a group of guidance counselors who attended a half day lecture and workshop on Crisis and Trauma Management at Ateneo de Naga University.

11:00 pm
Aquinas University offers to lend its Internet facilities to PAGASA weather forecaster Terry Agu to facilitate forecast of typhoon “Seniang” as PAGASA remained without power. The offer was made possible through a link-up with radio station DZGB.

December 10, Sunday
8:00 pm
Radio reports of damaged dikes near the AQ, which could threaten AQ personnel as typhoon “Seniang” approaches.

Fr. Mon instructs volunteers at the Relief Center and other employees who are staying in the University to move to safer grounds as a precaution. However, security personnel and the Dominican Fathers remain in the Campus.

December 11, Monday
Engr. Perdigon broadcasts on radio station DZGB assuring the public that AQ suffered no damage due to typhoon “Seniang.” Classes in the College of Law resume.

December 12, Tuesday
During an administrators’ meeting, it was agreed that classes were to resume January 3.

Engr. Perdigon conducts an ocular inspection of the AQ perimeter and lists down damages on classrooms and other University properties.

December 16, Saturday
The University issues an invitation for contractors to bid for the rehabilitation of the University.

December 18, Monday
Rainfall causes minor flooding in some parts of the University due to mud which clogged canals.

11:00 am
AQ conducts stress debriefing for its administrators.

1:00 pm
Fr. Mon and the Dominican Fathers celebrate Mass at the Daragang Magayon Hall after the stress debriefing.

Classes in the Graduate School resume.

December 19, Tuesday
3:00 pm
AQ volunteers conducted stress debriefing in Tagas Evacuation Center.

December 20, Wednesday
2:00 pm
AQ volunteers conducted stress debriefing in Busay Elementary School Evacuation Center.

December 21, Thursday
9:00 am
The University, through the Student Development Services with the assistance of Ateneo de Naga University, conducts a stress debriefing.
for its employees at the Daragang Magayon Hall and other venues inside the Campus.

**1:30 pm**
The University celebrates the Holy Eucharist at the AQ Chapel instead of the traditional Christmas party.

**3:00 pm**
Employees’ salaries for the second half of December are released at the Professional Schools.

**December 22, Friday**
5:00 pm
During a relief operation in Polangui, Aquinian volunteers and personnel extend assistance to one-year old child, Junel Bombase. The AQ team brings the convulsing child to a local clinic. He was subsequently transferred to the AQ Hospital through an AQ vehicle.

**December 23, Saturday**
The University holds a Christmas party for MDM personnel in appreciation of their efforts for the University.

December 26, Tuesday
8:00 am
Clean-up operation resumes in the University after a brief Christmas break. Post-Christmas clean-up lasts until the morning of December 31.

December 28, Thursday
8:00 am
The University releases its employees' share of the tuition fee increase at the Professional Schools.

January 3, Wednesday
8:00 am
Classes at the Rawis Campus resume.

January 4, Thursday
8:00 am
Student Development Services starts relocation of office to the Daragang Magayon Hall.

January 6, Saturday
The University commissions a payloader to clear debris in the area near the St. Thomas Building and powerhouse to the side of the football field.

January 8, Monday
The CCID starts concreting project of walkway from Gate 1 to the St. Thomas Building.

---

### Bicol’s Top 10 Strongest Typhoons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typhoon Name (International Name)</th>
<th>Date of Occurrence</th>
<th>Speed (kph)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sening (Joan)</td>
<td>October 11-15, 1970</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reming* (Durian)</td>
<td>November 28 - December 1, 2006</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rosing (Angela)</td>
<td>October 30 - November 4, 1995</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Loleng (Babs)</td>
<td>October 15-20, 1998</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Saling (Dot)</td>
<td>October 10-20, 1985</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Herming (Betty)</td>
<td>August 7-14, 1987</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Yayang (Vera)</td>
<td>November 4-7, 1979</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Milenyo (Xangsane)</td>
<td>September 25-28, 2006</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reports that “Reming’s” gustiness was only 225 kph from 4:00 am to 4:00 pm. Various media outlets reported gustiness of 265 kph.

---

Before (inset) and after satellite photos of Barangay Binitayan, Daraga (top right) and Barangay Lidong, Sto. Domingo (bottom right), show the extent of lahar flow (grey black areas) in the two areas.

All we knew was that the typhoon will be strong. We had no inkling that torrents of mud, boulders and sand from Mt. Mayon would wipe out our house like tenpins struck over by mammoth marble balls.

Having lived in barangay Padang for nearly 30 years, I have witnessed and survived many typhoons in the safety and comfort of our home. Torrents of water during typhoons usually flushed through a river near our house. So we expected nothing unusual that day.

Like what we did during previous typhoons, all doors and windows were closed. We had no idea what was happening outside. By 12:00 noon, water outside had risen considerably but still it was not a cause for alarm.

But at around 2:00 p.m., brown water started to seep into our kitchen. I could sense that there was flooding outside. The floodwater rose steadily, which by now carried sand. My father and I decided to clamber up to our ceiling. But we figured that it would not be safe to stay there, so we went down, waded out of the house and climbed the roof.

We could see from our location that the floodwater carried boulders and sand. It rose to heights of about ten feet and even higher than our house’s rooftop. It was rushing towards the houses — and our house! The sight was unnerving, the sound was very horrifying.

Trapped by flood and soaking wet, we struggled to transfer to a neighbor’s house where we felt it would be safer.

We were wrong.

Only minutes after we transferred, our neighbor’s house was swept away, including all the nine people inside. Strong torrents of rock, sand and water slammed me down, waded out of the house and climbed the roof.

There was nothing I could do except embrace a mango branch tightly. There was no one to help us. I just clung to the tree ever tighter and closed my eyes and prayed that the tree would hold out.

When the floodwater ebbed, it seemed that only the three males and I who climbed the mango tree survived.

Then, nothing.

I started to shiver from the cold. But as I uncontrollably shook, it dawned on me that we may not be safe if we would just sit there. I decided to climb a mango tree near the slab. Barely seconds after I climbed the tree, I watched helplessly as the people huddled in the slab were swept away by the flood. I heard desperate cries for help . . . I saw flailing limbs . . . I saw heads bobbing up and down . . . then I saw more boulders, more sand, more water.

Then, nothing.

I decided to go back to our house only to find it completely gone, erased, if I may call it. Not even the floor was spared!

I have witnessed and survived many typhoons in the safety and comfort of our home. Torrents of water during typhoons usually flushed through a river near our house. So we expected nothing unusual that day.

As I look back, I realize that the tragedy has changed me in many ways. I no longer yearn for material things and my strong faith in God has become stronger. I have taken the step to recovery with the help of my relatives and friends, including Aquinas University which took the effort to locate and take me to the hospital.

But I know that the road to complete recovery is a long process, but in God’s time I will be healed.

The tree would hold out.
What went wrong?

Most Albayanos were conscious of one thing on November 29—the province was bracing for a very strong typhoon expected to hit Bicol in decades. Government disaster management teams hastily evacuated inhabitants who were at risk. Other residents safeguarded their houses and belongings, and stockpiled food that would last them through the storm. But little did they know that another disaster—one that they had neither expected nor prepared for—awaited them.

As the 265 kph fury of super typhoon “Reming” bore down on the province in the morning of November 30, millions of tons of volcanic debris from Mt. Mayon was also being flushed down its slopes and buried villages along its path, killing hundreds of inhabitants. Many more remain missing over a month after. But what could have caused the November 30 tragedy?

A National Aeronautics Administration (NASA) report on “Reming” offers a possible answer.

An analysis from the Multi-satellite Precipitation Analysis (MPA), which is based in part on the measurements of the Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission (TRMM) satellite, have shown that the Bikol Region observed average rainfall totals exceeding 200 millimeters (8 inches) from November 24 to December 1.

The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reported that typhoon “Reming” dumped about 466 millimeters (about 18 inches) of rain at the height of the typhoon—the highest volume of rainfall ever recorded in 40 years.

Although the winds were strong, NASA said it was the heavy rainfall that triggered the disaster in Albay.

“The eruption earlier in the year left the steep slopes covered with a large amount of volcanic ash. It was this combination of ash and the torrential rains from “Durian” (“Reming”) that led to the massive mudslides that buried entire villages in the region,” according to the NASA website.

### 2006 Most Damaging Typhoons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dead</th>
<th>Injured</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Affected Families</th>
<th>Displaced Families</th>
<th>Total Damage*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milenyo</strong></td>
<td>213</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>318,264</td>
<td>318,264</td>
<td>P 6.61 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Xangsane)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4,142,951 persons in 24 provinces)</td>
<td>(1,565,875 persons)</td>
<td>($ 133.2 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 25-28, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reming</strong></td>
<td>734</td>
<td>2,360</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>679,647</td>
<td>258,962</td>
<td>P 5.45 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Durian)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3,405,111 persons in 14 provinces)</td>
<td>(1,339,810 persons)</td>
<td>($ 109 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 28-December 1, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paeng</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>79,895</td>
<td>19,249</td>
<td>P 1.25 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Camaro)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(364,733 persons in 12 provinces)</td>
<td>(85,185 persons)</td>
<td>($ 25 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 27, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seniang</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>181,344</td>
<td>69,019</td>
<td>P 4.44 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Uno)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(880,663 persons in 17 provinces)</td>
<td>(344,942 persons)</td>
<td>($ 903,000.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 6-9, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total Damage to Agriculture and Infrastructure

Sources: NDCC, abs-cbnnews.com

### Tracking a Supertyphoon:

**November 28**

10:00 am PAGASA Bulletin
Tropical storm “Reming” moves West North West at 26 kph (coordinates 11.4ºN, 134.0ºE).

4:00 pm PAGASA Bulletin
By this time, tropical storm “Reming” moves West North West at 26 kph (coordinates 12.0ºN, 132.7ºE) with maximum sustained winds at 105 kph, gustiness of 135 kph and Public Storm Warning Signal (PSWS) #1 in the Province of Catanduanes.

10:00 pm PAGASA Bulletin
Tropical Storm (TS) Warning (coordinates 12.3ºN, 131.0ºE) 110 kph, gustiness of 140 kph West North West at 22 kph.
PSWS #2 raised over Catanduanes, PSWS #1 in Albay and the Camarines Provinces.

**November 29**

4:00 am PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates 12.7ºN, 129.7ºE) 120 kph, gustiness of 140 kph West North West at 02 kph.
PSWS #3 over Catanduanes, PSWS #2 over Albay, Camarines Provinces. PSWS #1 over Sorsogon.

10:00 am PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates 13.2ºN, 128.2ºE) 150 kph, gustiness of 185 kph West North West at 26 kph.
PSWS #3 over Catanduanes, PSWS #2 over Albay, Camarines Provinces. PSWS #1 over Sorsogon.

4:00 pm PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates 13.2ºN, 126.9ºE) 190 kph, gustiness of 225 kph West North West at 24 kph.
PSWS #4 over Catanduanes, PSWS #3 in Sorsogon, PSWS #2 in Masbate.

11:00 am PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates: 13.4ºN, 124.3ºE) 190 kph, gustiness of 225 West at 15kph.
PSWS #4 over Catanduanes, Albay, Camarines Provinces, PSWS #3 over Sorsogon, PSWS #2 over Masbate.

4:00 pm PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates 13.4ºN, 123.9ºE) 190 kph, gustiness of 225 West at 15 kph.
PSWS #4 over Catanduanes, Albay, Camarines Provinces, PSWS #3 over Sorsogon, PSWS #2 over Masbate.

10:00 pm PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates 13.4ºN, 126.9ºE) 195 kph, gustiness of 230 kph West North West at 17 kph.
PSWS #4 in Catanduanes, Albay, Camarines Provinces. PSWS #3 over Sorsogon, Burias Island, PSWS #2 in Masbate.

**November 30**

4:00 am PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates 13.5ºN, 125.0ºE) 190 kph gustiness of 225 kph West North West at 17 kph.
PSWS #4 in Catanduanes, Albay, Camarines Provinces. PSWS #3 over Sorsogon, Burias Island, PSWS #2 in Masbate.

10:00 am PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates: 13.6ºN, 119.9ºE) 150 kph, gustiness of 185 kph West at 19 kph.
PSWS #4 over Catanduanes, Albay, Camarines Provinces, PSWS #3 in Sorsogon, PSWS #2 in Masbate.

December 1

5:00 am PAGASA Bulletin
Typhoon Warning (coordinates: 13.5ºN, 120.9ºE) 150 kph, gustiness of 185 kph West at 19 kph.
PSWS #4 over Catanduanes, Albay, Camarines Provinces, PSWS #2 in Masbate.
ALBAY PROVINCE FINAL DAMAGE REPORT

Typhoon Reming

I. Casualties

DEAD: 604
Identified: 432
Not identified: 172

MISSING: 419
INJURED: 1,465

II. Damaged Houses

Totally Damaged: 112,074
Substantially Destroyed: 99,986

III. Affected Population

Number of Cities: 3
Number of Municipalities: 15
Number of Barangays: 667
Number of Families: 203,498
Number of Persons: 1,053,950

IV. Damage to Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>SUB-TOTAL</th>
<th>GRAND TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>2,602</td>
<td>93,473,452</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>20,427,874</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>24,574,920</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>44,997,200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit Trees</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>39,144,140</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Crops</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>61,611,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>5,912,924</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root Crops</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>12,024,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>1,963</td>
<td>163,817,745</td>
<td>366,701,929</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize/ Pablano</td>
<td>750</td>
<td></td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abaca</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,140,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL COST OF DAMAGE: PhP 3,230,435,702

V. Damage to Livestock and Poultry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES</th>
<th>HEADS</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>SUB-TOTAL</th>
<th>GRAND TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1,242,000</td>
<td>1,242,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carabao</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>2,466,000</td>
<td>2,466,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>4,016</td>
<td>10,843,250</td>
<td>10,843,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat/Sheep</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1,110,500</td>
<td>1,110,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>76,139</td>
<td>5,012,240</td>
<td>5,012,240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goose/Duck</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>20,668,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albay Parks &amp; Wildlife</td>
<td>86,608</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL COST OF DAMAGE: PhP 207,547,018

VI. Damage to Municipal Fishery

PhP 15,099,069

VII. Damage to Aquaculture

PhP 1,382,000

VIII. Damage to Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES</th>
<th>COST (PHP)</th>
<th>SUB-TOTAL (PHP)</th>
<th>GRAND TOTAL (PHP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City/Municipal Infrastructures</td>
<td></td>
<td>534,409,266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVS Report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial Insemination Center</td>
<td>44,310</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albay Dairy Plant-Camalig</td>
<td>399,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPP Training Center-PVS</td>
<td>176,300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Water Conservation</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Hospitals</td>
<td>94,900,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Engineering Report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Roads</td>
<td>90,800,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Bridges</td>
<td>59,300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Buildings</td>
<td>48,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Parks &amp; Grounds</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dikes</td>
<td>46,060,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fences</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>248,660,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversion Dam, Swip</td>
<td>47,270,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIA Irrigation System (CIS/CIP)</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicol University Infrastructure</td>
<td>198,800,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legaspi City District Schools</td>
<td>59,458,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education-Albay Division</td>
<td>639,782,365</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL COST OF DAMAGE: PhP 3,230,435,702

Source: PDCC

ARCH. RINO FERNANDEZ
After recovering from the initial shock, the AQ community began responding to the injury, dislocation, and loss of human lives in nearby and distant barangays.

Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, O.P., Rector and President, organized the AQ Anduyog Relief and Rehabilitation Operation Center based at the ground floor of the Fra Angelico Building two days after “Reming” left a trail of death and destruction in the hardest-hit Albay.

By Monday, December 4, 2006, “Tabang sa Tugang,” (literally help for brother, later shortened to TaSaTû), rolled out of the devastated campus of the University using a Toyota Hi-Ace ambulance laden with relief goods—items collected from AQ personnel and students originally intended by the AQ Christmas Cheers program for street children and the elderly. This first relief mission brought them to Camalig all the way to Polangui.

The days following, relief goods from various sources started pouring in.

Good Samaritans

Individuals and institutions coursed their aid to victims of “Reming” through the AQ Anduyog “Tabang sa Tugang.” They sent in rice, bread, milk, noodles, canned goods, medicines and vitamins, blankets, bottled water, clothes, slippers, toothbrushes, water containers, plates, candles, and cash.

Soon after the first relief trip of “Tabang sa Tugang,” the Dominican Family in Caleruega brought food, clothing, and medicines.

The next day, Sr. Bernie Bernas, OSB of the St. Agnes’ Academy gave ten bags of rice at 25 kg. each.

December 7, the University of North Eastern Philippines (UNEPI) of Iriga City brought water for the evacuees and bread for the Anduyog volunteers.

On the feast day of the Immaculate Conception, the University of Sto. Tomas (UST) brought 127 boxes of assorted relief items, 320 pieces of bottled drinking water at 500 milliliters and 101 bottles of drinking water at 5 liters each; 26 sacks of rice; canned goods packed in 20 boxes, one sack, five bags, and 10,263 lins of assorted food stuffs; noodles packed in 21 boxes, two sacks, six-pack bags, and 5,045 unpacked packets; assorted goods in three boxes and six bags; one box toiletries; clothes in 16 boxes, two sacks, and six bags; three small boxes of candles; cookies and biscuits in three boxes, and 42 unpacked packets; milk, coffee, sugar, and juices in two boxes; medicines in one box and three bags; jelly ace in nine containers; ten (10) pieces Oishi; and six boxes of juices.

The same day, St. Scholastica’s College of Manila and the Benedictine Community delivered bags of goods containing water, clothing, toiletries, slippers, rice, noodles, bread, and canned goods, and bread for the volunteers.

December 9, Ateneo de Naga University, Ateneo de Manila University, and Ugnayan at Tulung para sa Maralitang Familia, Inc. (UGAT) provided assistance and training to selected AQ personnel in trauma counseling.

December 12, Social Security System Region V employees gave 28 sacks of rice and canned goods procured with funds collected for their Christmas party, while the AQ Science High School Student Council President gave a box of meat loaf.

Two days later, the Dominican Province and Union Bank provided 597 sacks of rice, eight boxes and 54 bags of clothing, nine boxes of bottled water, 61 boxes of noodles, 18 boxes of biscuits, 18 boxes of assorted canned goods, 31 boxes of sardines, six sacks of assorted canned goods, eight boxes of coffee, four bags of chocolate drink, a box of milk, and 100 pieces of empty plastic water containers. They also gave four boxes of Cefaclor, two boxes of paracetamol syrup, a box of laboratory cups, and a box of multivitamins.

December 17, AdNU brought 15 sacks of rice at 50 kg. each. Two days later, December 19, the Knights of Columbus of Daet and Daet Elementary School, Camarines Norte donated 151 packs of goods, 30 sacks of clothing, a sack of assorted goods, ten (10) pieces plates, and five pairs of shoes. Ma’am Tess of Liceo de Masbate gave a pack of dried squids.

December 21, Bahay Domíniko and Union Bank sent 16 boxes of cup noodles and 9.5 boxes of sardines.

The next day, Alert and Concerned Employees for Better SSS (ACCESS) delivered 20 sacks of rice, 21 bags of used clothing, 200 gallons mineral water, 200 pieces of tarpaulin, 200 blankets, four boxes candles, and 200 pieces lighters. AQ Anduyog then sent the ACCESS donations in bulk to the Sta. Florentina Parish of Rapu-Rapu for repackaging and distribution in the island town.

The same day, St. Agnes’ Academy gave 56 boxes of bottled drinking water and two packs of chizzy bits. December 23, Toshiba Information Equipment Philippines, Inc., through the AQFI, donated 260 cavans of rice in 12 kg. packs. Jojie Chua of AQ Science High School donated 15 sacks of rice and a number of boxes of noodles, milk, and coffee.

A day after Christmas, Letran Calamba brought a box of toiletries, and one a half sacks of noodles, four boxes of assorted canned goods, a box of sardines, six boxes noodles, a box and a bag of assorted biscuits, a bag and two boxes used clothing, a box of cup noodles, a box of assorted food items, a box of packed gifts for children, a box of packed rice (1 kg. pack), a box of biscuits, and seven boxes and two bags of assorted medicines with a box of tissue paper, cotton, and gauze pads.

December 28, Siena College of Taytay, Rizal donated 66 packs of assorted goods, three bags of brand new...
January 2, 2007, the St. Scholastica Priory in Manila through Sr. Bobsy Magdaraog, OSB, gave seven boxes of assorted items. The next day, Mercy Saria, sister of Fr. Mars, brought medical kits and assorted items. Siena College and St. Martin Foundation, Inc., gave ten (10) sacks of rice, 24 pieces pails, canned goods, used clothing, and other assorted goods.

Representatives from UST joined in the distribution of relief goods in the barangays of Alcala and Kilicaco in Daraga.

January 13, Siena Sisters of St. James Academy of Malabon also brought relief goods: 80 bags of goods, four boxes of noodles, three bags of toiletries. Same day, Prof. Ramon Manjares also gave assorted goods.

Sen. Pia Cayetano dropped by one early evening in December and gave medicines.

Joyce Llana and Edith Llana gave assorted goods and used clothing. Mrs. Bersabe brought canned goods, bread, water, blankets, used clothing, candles, matches, and anti-mosquito coils.

**Cash Donations**

Aside from relief goods, good Samaritans couriered their cash donations through Aquinas University Anduyog AQ. Anduyog AQ received P619,791, P200,000 of which came from second collections of Santo Domingo Church, P300,000 from the UST Hospital, and P100,000 from Mr. Hilario Murillo Jr. through Fr. Edgardo Alaurin, O.P.


The Bicol Association of Catholic Schools (BACS) of which Fr. Mon is president received P300,000 from the Catholic Educational Association of Philippines (CEAP). The fund was distributed as follows: P50,000 each to the Catholic Educational Association of Legazpi (CEAL), Sorosogon (CEAS), Daet (CEAD), and Caceres and Libmanan (CEACAL), the Masbate Catholic Educational Association (MACEA), and the Diocese of Catanduanes.

Fr. Mon also received P50,000 from Fr. Popoy Vergara, OSA, of the CEAP Region VI. Fr. Mon gave the amount to CEAL.

UST donated P81,000; Aquinas University Hospital gave P20,000; while UST CSC Batch 2000 pooled P3,400 via ATM. Dr. Marlene M. Dulatre of PhilHealth Region I gave P10,000. Kaeeta Bataa of AQ CAS contributed P500. Ted Alcantara and Jason Martinez gave P8,500 and Liceo de Masbate P10,000 through Ma’am Tess. Jonathan Erfe of the Pamantasang ng Lungsod ng Maynila contributed P1,000 and Joyce Llana, an Associate Administration professor at UST and sister of Dean Leo Llana, offered P2,000.

Cash donations in US dollars include $1,574 from Sr. Loida and her friends, students, and teachers of the Dominican International School of Taiwan, $100 from Mrs. Nellie L. Eustaquio through Ms. Rona Padilla, and $600 from the Filipino Community of Virginia, USA, through Mrs. Thelma Llana Le Marble.

Total cash donations amount to P1,134,191.00 and US$2,274.00 as of January 27, 2007.

**More Than 31,000 Reached**

As of January 16, 2007, the Relief and Rehabilitation Operation Center has reached out to more than thirty thousand households in various municipalities of Albay.

Some 21,087 packs of relief goods were distributed. The Medical Team treated wounds and dispensed medicines to some 2,363 typhoon victims. Some 615 persons won prizes from fun games. Lugaw, gourmet coffee with biscuits or bread fed 2,101. The water refilling station served 5,544 persons. Two sessions of critical incidence and stress debriefing in two evacuation centers (Tagas and Busay evacuation centers in Daraga, Albay) benefited 1,55 survivors.

Residents of Barangay Mabinit were surprised when some of them found bills from P500 to P1,000 inserted in the pockets of the used clothing from UST distributed to them.

**TaSaTû Volunteers**

Directly under the Office of the Rector and President, the Center has 14 almost fulltime AQ staff volunteers, more than 30 student volunteers, and a number of on-

Call volunteers. We also had about a dozen non-AQ volunteers including five from Kabalikat Civicom. From time to time members of MEM Jr. maintenance crew also joined. Front line offices are the Center for Extension Services, the Student Development Services, and the AQ NSTP. The personnel of the Office of the Secretary-General extended their help to the Center through documentation, data gathering, and designing posters and other materials, and compiling the terminal report. The High School library, the Center for Culture and Arts, the Campus Ministry, the AQ Foundation, Inc., and the College of Arts and Sciences have lent one or two personnel to the Center until today.

During his visit January 27, 2007, the Father Provincial, Rev. Fr. Edmund C. Nantes, O.P. joined in the feeding program held at Renilisan, Lakandula, and Barriada.

A Filipino-Australian, Edna Aldana, performed a counselling activity at Padang in Legazpi City and San Isidro, Sto. Domingo, Albay and helped in the distribution of lugaw, wound dressing, and distribution of relief goods at Lakandula, Legazpi City. On January 28, 2007, she also counselled typhoon victims at Cullat and Busay, Daraga, Albay.
Feeding the hungry, healing the sick—TaSaTû in action

(Clockwise, from top left) A boy sits in front of the AQ bus during a relief operation of the University in Taysan, Legazpi City; AQ Relief and Rehabilitation coordinator Jojo Samar briefs volunteers before an operation at the Relief and Rehabilitation Center in Fra Angelico Building; Volunteers hand carry relief goods to a remote area in Danao, Polangui; Anduyog AQ student volunteers give out free lugaw in Rawis, Legazpi City, December 10, 2006, as part of its feeding program; A boy receives wound dressing from a Nursing volunteer during a relief operation; AQ Rector and President Fr. Mendez, O.P. receives a box of goods from a donor as volunteers (background) unload relief goods from a vehicle.
Reflections of a TaSaTû Volunteer

Faceless Nameless . . . Like Them

When supertyphoon “Reming” struck the region, it left our place cooler and darker, literally and figuratively. I could not immediately adjust to the darkness. I couldn’t clearly see what came before us. When I was able to adjust, I saw sorrow sweeping the land. I tried my hardest to avert my eyes, but I simply couldn’t. I became noisy.

Then I heard on the radio a call for volunteers to do something for a relief center our school put up. Out of curiosity, I braved the mud-covered streets strewn with service poles and cables of all sorts. I was directed to report to the Fra Angelico Building. There I found a group of students I have never met before; strangers, I was disposed to say.

The first night that I had to sleep in the Center was simply agonizing. There were no lights, no beddings, not even a mat. And the food! Since that night and until the end of my volunteer work (with some days as exception) we survived on over-cooked rice and “karnenas.” “Karnenas” stands for “kame” (actually corned beef, carne norte, that is) and “sardinas” (canned sardines). If there is any better definition for agony, then this must be it, I thought. But when I saw what other people in the communities were going through when we went to Camalig up to the poblacion of Polangui in the company of Sir Jude, Sir Abe, Dean Chie Muñoz, Kuya Leo, and Kuya Kaloi, I felt ashamed. At least I had food to eat, there is no other color. Mine is white, CAS’. I felt like a different specie. I felt like OP (out of place, dude!) I then started asking what a Political Science student is doing here. I do not know how to dress wounds. In fact, I could not bear the sight of wounds. But I got attracted to the glow of people waiting for us. It has become a common scene in our relief operations. As relief distribution was finished, I saw a woman picking up spilled grains that would not even fill a cup. I thought that she must be in dire need that even if these were dirty, she still picked them up . . . grain by tiny bit of grain.

Saving a Child

After Cotmon, we proceeded to Danao, one of the farthest among the barangays, nestled at the slopes of Mt. Malinao. There we found a child whose life was in peril. Because it was already getting dark and we haven’t been to the last barangay yet, an argument ensued between us. We had to make a decision: Whether to help the family of the child who does not have money to go there. But I guess It will only be a dream. We barely have enough money for food; we don’t have anything left for education.

It was like cold water splashed on my face. I have repeatedly asked myself what a Political Science student is doing in a relief operation and I had the answer. To personally witness the depressing condition of our country. And, it made me love the very institution that I used to dislike. I’ve always asked why I am not studying in Manila when I passed the requirements needed to be there. TaSaTû became the first satisfying answer. I assure myself I was thought less of Aquinas University and there’s this man in front of me telling me that I am part of an institution that creates dreams across the region.

I never thought that this will happen but TaSaTû did change my perspectives, as it changed lives of different people who we’ve helped. And those people who we’ve helped may not have known our names, and perhaps they never will. They may forget our faces and the date and time we went to them. But they will never forget that at one time in their lives, there were people who reached out their hands to help ease their hardships. This must be a treasured memory of events that happened . . . unscripted.

*The writer is a second year Political Science student. He was a very active TaSaTû volunteer who also doubled as video documenter. - Ed
A Tree of Our Lives

The plan for our institutional celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior by our Commission on Culture was almost perfect. In fact, on December 4 we were about to switch on the traditional lighting of the University’s Christmas Tree which was uniquely conceived this time. It would be a “tree” made of steel frames supposed to be decorated with remnants of “Milenyo.” But “Reming” came and slammed a sofa from one of our canteens onto the steel frames. It was awesome how nature would play with our plans.

I am reminded of the lines from the book of Ecclesiastes (3:1-4):

There is an appointed time for everything,
and there is a time for every event under heaven—
A time for giving birth and a time for dying,
A time for planting and a time for uprooting,
A time for killing and a time for healing,
A time for tearing down and a time for building,
A time for weeping and a time for laughing,
A time for mourning and a time for dancing.

On that day instead, our campus was gripped with grief and gloom as we received the information that eight of our students perished in the floods. We were stunned by reports that the residences of both our students and personnel were either damaged or destroyed by “Reming” or swept away by rampaging lahars if not buried breast-deep in mud. We staggered at the sight of how wrecked our campus is. Our shoulders sagged as we heard the moans and saw the communities around us writhe in agony.

“Reming” claimed many lives, altered many more, shattered a lot of dreams that can never be re-assembled into wholes just like the glass panels it smashed into smithereens.

It will take time, perhaps a very long time, to heal the wounds, to cheer up the grieving, to calm the frightened. Our Christmas Tree will be lighted some other Christmas—for now, we will use its light to face up to the seemingly unbearable darkness in the wake of “Reming.”

But in the face of all these, we never, for a moment, entertained an iota of doubt that the celebration of Christmas be cast aside.

The wounds, the grief, the trauma, the enormous losses give us more reason to celebrate Christmas even more fervently. Our celebration is not so much as to escape or forget agony but to be grateful for the gift of life that has been preserved, for the flame of hope that has not been snuffed out, for the spirit that has not been wounded, for the smile that has not been surrendered to adversity.

Aquinians will celebrate Christmas shorn of its flashy embellishments but richer and more distinct in its spiritual essence; joyously with a fresh promise of renewal and growth.

“Reming” has made many of us more human in our vulnerability but more enduring in our compassion, more resilient in our determination to find and live the reason and purpose amidst all these. As we cared for the stricken, gave water to the thirsty, food for the hungry, clothed the naked, provided warmth for the forlorn and the derelic, we discovered Christ in many ways. “Reming” after all has not deprived us of the reason and the occasion to celebrate Christmas. It has given us the chances to experience glimpses of genuine fulfillment.

The eye of our camera cannot capture the twinkles of hope and joy in the eyes of those who needed most as we reached out to them even if we too have our own gripping needs. They can only be revealed to the heart purified by the very agony which before we only wished to forget. But what a great joy indeed as our untiring people would do the chores and return with the wonderful stories of their experiences in the communities. We have found so much strength in the very stories of our people and the very wonder of themselves. Perhaps God wanted a tree of our lives. Oh, what a living Christmas Tree indeed we’ve got. Yes, what a Christmas Tree we certainly are.

Let us therefore celebrate Christmas as we discover Christ in our hearts and in everyone’s heart. Truly, this is one distinct Christmas when we can passionately exalt the birth of our Lord as we find Him in Buhatan and Alimsog, in San Isidro, in Padang, in Sangandaan, Malobago, Cullat, Busay, Camalig, Travesia, Maipon, Rapu-Rapu . . . in our lost, unlisted, and forgotten neighbors.

God must have messed up with our plans only to surprise us with greater opportunity to earnestly burn and shine with a life of truth and of love out of gratitude this Christmas. A happy Christmas to one and all.

Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, O.P.
Rector and President
December 18, 2006
Coping Well

Leo Martin B. Ganace

A Philippine flag proudly waves on top of the battered St. Dominic Building as MDM crew work feverishly on the mucky quad below under the heat of the sun to remove flood-damaged remnants of typhoon “Reming.”

From the temporary offices and the Relief and Rehabilitation Operation Center at the Fra Angelico Building, the incessant sound of hammers pounding on roofs can be heard as workers nearby replace ones damaged by the typhoon.

Near the mud and debris covered soccer field, a payloader scoops heaps from the road to make it passable.

Employees and student assistants in offices dry files in hopes of salvaging whatever they can.

This is now the daily picture in AQ, where only a few weeks ago supertyphoon “Reming” made it an uninhabitable wasteland.

“It’s time to rebuild,” says a smiling worker to a staring passerby.

Indeed, rebuilding and rehabilitating are what the school has been doing after being devastated by a string of typhoons that hit the region over the past few months. Considering the extent of the damage done by “Reming,” work has been fast.

Working Fast

“The remaining days of January is sufficient to achieve 95 percent of completion, the others can just be scheduled in February and March,” said the OIC of the Office of the Vice-Rector for Administration Engr. Virgilio S. Perdigon, Jr.

“Our priority is the rehabilitation of classrooms so that classes can be held, and of offices so that operations can be normalized,” he added.

Aside from the damaged buildings, Engr. Virgilio S. Perdigon, Jr. said that efforts are also being made to rescue damaged documents and files in different offices.

Thousands of files have been soaked when rainwater poured from damaged roofs and floodwaters breached many buildings in the University.

Recovering Documents

“We have recovered many documents that were condemned by other departments but we are taking a second look because we believe they are still recoverable,” Perdigon added.

MIS-ITC Head Alvin Perez said his office is now rehabilitating computers damaged by the typhoon.

“Work on damaged computers depends on the availability of electric power. It would take only about a week to fix computers with the electric power on, but without it, rehabilitation could take a month,” he said.

Ready for Business

On the other hand, University Registrar Leticia R. Roque said she is confident they can rescue almost all current and non-current documents of students and graduates.

“We are doing extensive restoration work on thousands of files that have been soaked,” she said.

Despite the heavy damage, their office will be open for business on January 3.

“And entire rehabilitation of the University could take more than three months,” Engr. Perdigon said, but big improvements can now be seen.

“In the coming month we can cope with the situation better than in December,” he added.

Giving Relief to Others

Despite suffering from losses due to “Reming,” the University has not forgotten Albayanos.

To help Albay residents affected by the typhoon, the University activated the Relief and Rehabilitation Operation Center at the Fra Angelico Building in December, a few days after the typhoon. Relief donations poured in from around the country and even abroad.

The Center’s team of over 30 volunteers, mostly AQ Nursing students, distribute goods to relief centers and residents and provide free food and medical treatment.

“It’s our way of helping the other people affected by the typhoon,” said Anduyog AQ volunteer Alvin Borras, who lost most of their belongings to the typhoon. Their house in Bonot, Legazpi City remains submerged in hardened mud. When not doing volunteer work, Alvin is home shoveling mud.

Aside from distributing relief goods, they also play games with children in some evacuation centers that they visit, giving them prizes of food and blankets.

“It’s a way of getting their minds off the devastation, if only for a while,” said NSTP staff and volunteer Rico Manallo.

With the reopening of classes, relief work for volunteers came to a temporary halt.

“I will miss working here,” said one volunteer, “but I sure am happy to return to my newly roofed classroom,” she added.
Gratitude,
The Promise Within Us

Time has its seasons of glee and seasons of grief strewn into moments of which some merely come to pass while others linger to haunt.

Year 2006 had not been short of joyful moments to treasure. It has its own dose of weariness to last a long while. We Aquinians—individually and collectively—had our own joyful stories to share, our sad tales to tell. For one, the series of adversities that visited us left many physically fatigued, mentally tired, and emotionally frayed. Yet we remained spiritually unbroken, even in the face of the destruction and the desolation that super typhoon “Reming” wrought.

We may not have totally shaken off the impact of the losses, the pain, the grief “Reming” left. Still, gratitude is an option for us during this tough and trying moments. As Bro. David Saeindi-Rast, OSB wrote, “Times that challenge us physically, emotionally, and spiritually may make it almost impossible to feel grateful. Yet we can decide to live gratefully, courageously open to life and its fullness. By living the gratefulness we don’t feel, we begin to feel the gratefulness we live.”

Amidst the bewilderment as we gathered our wits, amidst the doubts as we struggled to stand up, others—persons and institutions—came for us bearing gifts of solidarity and warmth that kindled the faith in us. Hence, believing in each other and in God’s mercy we know that we still have much to hope for and so much love to live and to give.

The recent sad experiences we went through were close encounters with God’s beneficence. They stirred us to give whatever is left with us to those who are in most need. And even in our nothingness, we shared our own selves, the warmth of our humble presence and our very being and there discovered genuine joy.

The undying Aquinian spirit rises from the ruins as we reach out to embrace the people we were meant to serve with the very promise in us, gratitude. Thankful, our spirit gives us the power and the zeal to face up to whatever tomorrow may bring. It nurtures our gratitude to mature as an attitude of grace deeply rooted within us, an experience words cannot totally express. We have risen above the mud as we mustered the strength that does not depend on the pillars of our buildings in our campus which after all can easily succumb to the fury of the elements but by God’s grace in the very hearts of our people.

The lessons of 2006 should make us more determined to face up to the challenges of 2007; and ever grateful to find in them the nobility of rebirth and transformation. Perchance to understand the significance of our mascot: The Phoenix, And then shall we rise and soar even higher at the instance of the unwavering spirit living within us.

I remember the day after “Reming,” we found one of our corridor signs, “SILENCE Classes Going On,” somewhere in the national road going to Pag-asas, Rawis. Could hope be the meaning of our silence then? Sure enough our classes went on quietly somehow with our volunteers in the forefront as our “Tabang sa Tugang” [Anduyog AQ Relief and Rehab Operation] reached not just around Daraga and Legazpi, Sto. Domingo, Camalig, Guinobatan, Oas, Ligao, but even to some remote barangays of Polangui, Tiwi, and as far as Pio Duran, Manito, and Rapu-Rapu. Thus, bringing our little light of hope and making a difference along the way.

We have conceived of CARE HELP which means Comprehensive Aquinian Reconstruction Engagement: A Resettlement with an integrated Health, Education and Livelihood Programs. For our Abaca Industry Rehabilitation Communities as well as those of our Integrated Coconut Industry we have already designed measures and alternatives for maintaining our development initiatives and interventions. We will also maintain our projects in Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, and in Sorsogon as well.

Today, January 3, 2007 we formally open our classes in the Old and Main Campuses after a month. Our students will be returning with all their stories and tales for which we are all eager to listen. We will also conduct our continuing de-briefing and creative therapies to address our traumas. Most of our academic endeavors will now be geared towards Albay’s recovery and revitalization.

We can always begin again with our spirit renewed by our experiences of God’s mercy. We continue to dream of and pursue great and big dreams for our people and our communities living in the borders of dangers and disasters which we cannot allow to rob us of the joy of living. For God wants us to be truly happy.

We welcome the promise of the New Year, the reality that has begun to unfold within us as we pray Mary’s simple and humble prayer, “Let it happen.”

Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro C. Mendez, O.P.
Rector and President
January 3, 2007
Due to the heavy damage sustained by the University in terms of classrooms, laboratories, and library facilities, classes in the secondary and tertiary levels were slated to resume January 3, 2007.

The Aquinas University Integrated High School (AQUI) was relocated from the Rawis Campus to the Professional Schools campus. AQUI faculty members reported on January 2, 2007 to help in the preparation of the new site.

The College of Law and the Graduate School of the Professional Schools resumed classes December 11 and 18, 2006, respectively. The Professional Schools campus in the Port District sustained less damage compared to the Main Campus in Rawis.

In over two weeks since “Reming” left a trail of death and destruction, November 30, 2006, mounds of mud and debris and fallen and leaning utility poles constricted traffic along Peñaranda Street and Peñaranda Extension with traffic grinding to a snail’s pace from the junction of Lakandula and Peñaranda all the way to Pag-asa, Rawis. What used to be a two-to five-minute ride to Rawis took more than half an hour, with the road being dusty when it is hot, and slimy when it rained.

The last time AQ students had contact with their teachers was in the afternoon of November 29, 2006 when the Secretary-General Raffi Banzuela announced over the PA system that classes are suspended as the weather bureau hoisted typhoon signal number 3 over Catanduanes and Albay. Until then, Albay was still reeling from the damage “Milenyo” brought barely two months before.

But “Reming” proved to be worse than “Milenyo.” Weather forecasters, promptly raising the signal to four, predicted that Catanduanes would be directly hit—it turned out that Albay would suffer the brunt of the supertyphoon. Mr. Banzuela would call it “bagyong ogis,” so named because of the driving rain that reduced visibility to just a few meters, a whiteout. Ogis means white.

The supertyphoon’s aftermath was still evident in the University campus in Rawis even weeks later—GI sheets rolled like mats, the football field strewn with snapped branches, uprooted trees, and driftwood the flashflood left behind when the otherwise placid Yawa River burst its banks.

Relocation and Rescheduling of Classes
The AQUI, comprised of the Science High School, the Special Program in the Arts, and the General Curriculum, was relocated to the Professional Schools campus in the Port District after “Reming” ripped off the roofs of the high school buildings in Rawis Campus. Classrooms, laboratories, and other plant facilities need rebuilding. The 50 brand new office stations and LCD monitors and five servers installed just before the PAASCU accreditation in September survived “Milenyo” but “Reming” rendered them unserviceable at present; the MIS technicians had to wash the units free of mud, hoping that when they are cleaned and dried they would still work.

The relocation of the remaining classes of the General Curriculum high school was completed in the first semester of the academic year 2006-2007. Now it is the Science High School, founded in 1976 as Science Oriented High School, which has to hold classes not in Rawis but where the General Curriculum high school had left behind.

Business Administration classes formerly scheduled 5:30 p.m. onwards in the Main Campus were transferred to the Professional Schools campus.

OVRAAA adjusts academic skeds

Simon Listana

Schools campus in the Port District after “Reming” ripped off the roofs of the high school buildings in Rawis Campus. Classrooms, laboratories, and other plant facilities need rebuilding. The 50 brand new office stations and LCD monitors and five servers installed just before the PAASCU accreditation in September survived “Milenyo” but “Reming” rendered them unserviceable at present; the MIS technicians had to wash the units free of mud, hoping that when they are cleaned and dried they would still work.

The relocation of the remaining classes of the General Curriculum high school was completed in the first semester of the academic year 2006-2007. Now it is the Science High School, founded in 1976 as Science Oriented High School, which has to hold classes not in Rawis but where the General Curriculum high school had left behind.

Business Administration classes formerly scheduled 5:30 p.m. onwards in the Main Campus were transferred to the Professional Schools campus.

Due to power outage and damaged rooms in Rawis, classes had to be relocated. Classes held in A103 were relocated to A1006; those in A107 to A1007; A108 to A1008; A128a to A1011; and A128b to A1013.

Dr. Pedro B. Bernaldez, officer-in-charge of the Office of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, said that due to power outage, classes scheduled 5:30 p.m. onwards had to be moved to Saturdays and Sundays.

Term Examinations and Graduation
The preliminary term examinations scheduled December 18 to 20, 2006 were cancelled. Dr. Bernaldez said that the three days could instead be used to conduct make up classes.

He gave tentative schedules for midterm and final exams and graduation exercises: Midterm examinations, first week of February; Final exams, first week of April; and the solemn investiture to be held in the last week of April. He added that classes will be extended two weeks to make up for lost contact hours in December.
“Reming” slammed us with a lot of things to seriously worry about. These would include questions on what the future holds for Bikolanos, particularly Albayanos, who lost their little treasures accumulated through a lifetime of hard work. Those who teetered on the brink of death but who fortunately pulled through yet lost loved ones, may have second thoughts on life’s meaning and purpose.

For a while, those burdens we were able to deal with and carry with some help from kindred souls, with the sudden rush of Christian love for neighbor. So that even victims themselves helped victims. It is at times like this when humanity overflows with humanitarianism.

But the novelty of it all gradually diminishes as life starts to become “normal,” when the victims successfully shrug off the shock and start to move on, be their independent selves again and face up to real time once more.

“Reming” had so much downside to it and some upside too, as the businessmen and economists would have it.

The upsides would be the lessons learned and the determination to pull through the challenges.

The Father Rector and President, Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, O.P. in his New Year’s message wrote about living “… in the borders of dangers and disasters.”

Should we escape or should we square off with it?

**The Beauty of Creation, Harmony with Nature**

Since when did life ever become danger-free or disaster exempt? Dangers lurk in many corners, disasters are triggered by the elements or are created by man’s foibles and follies, abuse, greed, and mortal shortsightedness. Nevertheless, God’s creations have always been beautiful.

“Reming” did not obliterate that beauty, scarred it somehow, yes. We have seen that in the “before and after” satellite maps taken by the National Aeronautical Space Administration (NASA). That should open our eyes wide, and logically, to the need to harmonize with nature.

**ORAGON: Dealing with Nature**

The AQ Community is a staunch advocate for the preservation of and care for the environment. After “Reming,” Fr. Mon formalized this advocacy into a program which recognizes Albay’s natural bounties and proposes what to do with them.

**Oragon** used to be a foul word fit only for use by kanto boys. In 1989, Mons. Honesto Moraleda launched a multi-sectoral program, Bungkaras na Bikol, Oragon Ka Baga.

Since then oragon was accepted into mainstream Albay Bikol.

For the AQ Community, ORAGON stands for Optimum Reconstruction of Albay’s Gracious and Opulent Nature.

In sum, ORAGON will be a long range community program that would plan out the development and use of Albay’s environment concomitant with available and trainable Albayano human resource.

It will also undertake visioning activities to project a viable and sustainable development of both the land, the people, and their indigenous resources. One such visioning activity would be the project “Legazpi City: Vision 2030,” an architectural city planning project which will challenge architects and city planners to propose a design for Legazpi City in the year 2030.

**ORAGON will be jointly worked on by the Colleges of Architecture and Fine Arts, Engineering, the Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, and the AQ Foundation, Inc. (AQFI) under the stewardship of the Office of the Rector and President. Participation of local government units, non-govern-
mental organizations, and community residents will be encouraged on per project basis.

ORAGON will take the initiative in proposing projects helpful to the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental development of Albay.

TaSaTû, Institutionalizing Disaster Mitigation Management

Albayanos are not strangers to dangers and disasters that the elements would pose at any time. Mt. Mayon can be restless at any time and spew fire, let loose the enormous sand, stones, and boulders, and other volcanic debris sitting on its shoulders. Typhoons would lash at Albay many times in a year packing varying wind forces, pouring out so much water the vegetation cannot survive, the ground may not be able to hold out, the rivers cannot contain.

Typhoons are getting fiercer these days. No thanks to man-induced climatic changes. This is aggravated by man-made dangers caused by, for instance, the open-pit mining operations in Rapu-Rapu, by the levelling of mountain ranges in Camalig and Guinobatan to extract lime to feed the insatiable cement factory in Camalig, the irrational alteration of topography.

Albay is disaster prone, so the experts say. So we see.

Given this context and Aquinas University of Legazpi’s history in relief and rehabilitation efforts coupled with its track record for involvement in regional development, the University is in a position to establish a center for disaster mitigation management. The center will enable AUL to intensify its disaster mitigation management. The center will enable AUL to intensify its involvement in disaster management as well as develop models that can help response, relief, and rehabilitation efforts become more efficient, effective, and comprehensive.

The Anduyog AQ Movement, which has been at the forefront of recent relief and rehabilitation operations of the University, has provided a matrix for the establishment of Tabang sa Tugang (TaSaTû).

TaSaTû is anchored in the AQ Community Service Training Program (CSTP). It is now in the process of implementing a continuing program on disaster preparedness, emergency response, and relief and rehabilitation involving not only AQ administrators, personnel, and students but also organizations and residents in its service communities.

Modestly, TaSaTû’s operation after “Reming” ably complimented the government’s relief efforts. It was able to reach out to unserved and underserved communities.

The AQ Relief and Rehabilitation Center understands that the communities receiving sufficient relief assistance are those that are in evacuation centers. Those who stayed out of the centers are usually ignored because public and relief attention are focused on evacuation centers.

TaSaTû would then see to it that underserved communities will be the necessary beneficiaries of the University’s relief operations guided by its vision and mission. A consequence of TaSaTû will be the sustained and intensified involvement of the University in regional development.

A month after “Reming,” TaSaTû proved that it can launch efficient, effective, comprehensive, and wide-ranging relief operations.

CARE HELP: Focus on AQ

A big majority of AQ employees and personnel are themselves Albayanos. When disasters strike the province, they too are victimized.

The “AQ Relief and Rehabilitation Program” formulated by the AQFI rightly understands that, “To sustain and intensify the University’s services to the communities, its employees and personnel must first be released from the burden of their immediate needs after sustaining damages to their properties as well as emotional trauma and stress. Personnel cannot work without homes and could not perform their jobs well while under emotional and physiological distress caused by (typhoon-related concerns).”

Therefore, the University counts its employees, personnel, student assistants, and other partner personnel in its relief and rehabilitation programs which could immediately include early release of salaries, implementing a loan program proceeds from which will be helpful towards house reconstruction or repairs.

Fr. Mon, however, forwarded a more far reaching program, CARE HELP, which is spelled out to be the Comprehensive Aquinian Reconstruction Engagement: A resettlement with integrated Health, Education, and Livelihood Programs, . . . our very own AQ Village.

CARE HELP would be a model for resettlement provided with housing facilities, learning facilities, basic services, and a livelihood component.

“Reming” dealt extensive damages to the University’s infrastructure and facilities. This bared the need to come up with structures that can withstand future typhoons of the same or stronger intensity. The campus has to be planned in a manner that can conveniently mitigate or greatly lessen the effects of calamities especially floods and lahar.

The “AQ Sirangan Concept” envisions the revision of the physical arrangement and utilization of buildings in the campus. First floors’ ceilings have to be elevated. First floors have to be utilized as lounges and classrooms and second or third floors as laboratories and offices. One storey buildings with low ceilings will have to be replaced by three-floor buildings. The materials for roofs, walls, and dividers will have to be well selected to withstand 300 kph winds and flooding.

“Drainage and perimeter structures have to be improved to provide a buffer against floods and mudflows. Rip-rap for perimeter canals will have to be redesigned, strengthened, and extended. Electrical and communication facilities have to be secured and ensured to be working even during disasters to sustain University operations,” the concept explains.

Albayanos live in the borders of dangers and disasters. But who does not? This, however, should not diminish the joy of living. God has given us the capabilities to sort out the beautiful in these gifts of nature which can turn avry: as nature itself so wills or as man himself, by his fits of irrationality and stubbornness, invites danger and disaster into his home, into his community.

The environment still remains to be one of the Bikolanos’ biggest assets. TaSaTû, CARE HELP, and ORAGON recognize it.
AQFI Introduces BioSand Water Filters for ‘Reming’ Victims, Rural Poor

Felix Ador and Page Weil

The trail of death and destruction caused by the supertyphoon “Reming” and its resultant flash floods hugged the national and international headlines and primetime TV news for several days. Most of the relief operations, however, were focused in the urban areas.

The City of Manila donated two water purifiers which the Legazpi City LGU installed permanently in the City Hall and at the new public market. Businessman Lucio Tan donated one purifier, now installed at the vacant downtown market site.

The municipality of Daraga also received a purifier from Canada and this was placed in the Ninoy Aquino Park covered court.

In the meantime, rural folks had to make do with boiling water fetched from open wells, hand pumps, and springs.

Because of “Reming,” the BioSand filter initiative, to be funded by the Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF), has been fast tracked for execution by AQ Foundation, Inc. (AQFI) and the Center for Extension Services (CES), two entities which are also behind the Provincial Water Resource Management Project (PWRMP).

Due to the aid imbalance in favor of urban areas, the PEF narrowed down the BioSand Water Filters for the Rural Poor to Malinao, Jovellar, and Rapu-Rapu. These municipalities have small populations, but the supertyphoon also hit them hard. Besides, the relief going to these towns is low compared to the rest of Albay.

In 2004, a study conducted by the provincial sanitary engineer, Alain B. Mape, showed that Rapu-Rapu, Jovellar, and Malinao are three of the six municipalities with the highest percentage of water sources being contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria.

What a BioSand Filter is. The BioSand filter works like the slow sand water filters used for centuries. Water does not need to flow through the BioSand filter all the time. It can be fabricated anywhere because it is built using available materials—it is simply a concrete container, with layers of sand and gravel inside it, which remove dirt, bacteria, viruses and parasites and other impurities from the water.

How It Works. Water is poured into the top of the filter as needed. A diffuser plate placed just above the sand bed absorbs the shock of the falling water so that the sand is not disturbed. Going slowly through the sand bed, the water then passes through several layers of gravel and collects in a pipe at the bottom of the filter. It is then pushed up through plastic piping encased in the concrete, and out of the filter, for the user to collect.

Four processes remove pathogens and other contaminants in this filter. (1) In predation, microbes eat bacteria and other pathogens found in the water. (2) By natural death, pathogens die because there is not enough food and oxygen to sustain them all. (3) Through absorption, viruses become attached to the sand grains; once attached, they are metabolized by the cells or are inactivated by antiviral chemicals produced by the organisms in the filter. Some organic compounds are also adsorbed to the sand and thus removed from the water. (4) By mechanical trapping, sediments, cysts, and worms are removed from the liquid by becoming caught in the spaces between the sand grains. The filter can also remove some inorganic compounds and metals from the water when these are precipitated into solid form.

Easy to Use and Maintain. Operating the filter is very simple: remove the lid, pour a bucket of water into the filter, and immediately collect the treated water in a container. The filter can produce up to 200 liters per day of filtered water.

Design features make BioSand filter easy to use; e.g., the water needs to be filtered only as required; the concrete BioSand filter has no moving parts, the concrete container is small, but extremely stable, therefore, it can be placed anywhere in the home most convenient to the user. Also, the copper piping is encased in concrete and is not easily damaged.

Between uses, a layer of water about 5.0 cm deep is kept above the sand all the time. This layer of water is shallow enough that oxygen can diffuse through the whole layer, giving the biological layer enough oxygen to develop. It typically takes one to two weeks to develop to maturity in a new filter. The filter removes more than 90% of bacteria and 95-98% of e-coli, i.e., the quantity of bacteria left in the filtered water is often below the infectious dose, but it is recommended for people with infants or the elderly that they use disinfection after filtering the water.

Continued use of the filter causes the pore openings between the sand grains to become clogged with debris; the flow rate of water through the filter decreases. To clean the filter, one must agitate the surface of the sand, thereby suspending captured material in the standing layer of water. The dirty water can then simply be removed using a small container; repeat the process as many times as necessary to regain the desired flow rate.

Cost. The cost of a BioSand filter varies from P1,200 to P1,500 depending on the cost of materials and skilled labor in the region where the filters are made. As consumables are not required for successful filter operation, the operating costs are negligible.

Advantages. BioSand filter removes over 90% bacteria, 100% parasites; removes turbidity, some iron, manganese; quality of water improves with time; costs range from P1,200-P1,500; high flow rate (60 liters/hour); no on-going costs, with no replaceable parts; durable and robust, could last long; fabricated from local materials; opportunity for local businesses; water tastes and looks good; easy to maintain.

Limitations. The whole contraption, being made of cement, sand, and gravel, is heavy; biological layer takes one to two weeks to develop to maturity; high turbidity (>100 NTU) will cause filter to clog and require more maintenance; requires that the filter be used periodically on a regular basis; cannot remove color or dissolved compounds.
AQ has taken the step to healing the wounds left by supertyphoon “Reming” with a series of stress debriefing sessions for its students, personnel and administrators.

Fr. Alfred Fernandez and Fr. Mars Saria led a group of guidance counselors who attended a half-day lecture and workshop on Crisis and Trauma Management held at the Ateneo de Naga University (ADNU), December 9, 2006.

A stress debriefing session for AQ administrators was conducted December 18. It was facilitated by ADNU Center for Psychological Services. A similar session was held December 21 for AQ personnel and Anduyog AQ volunteers.

“The debriefing sessions were aimed at the recovery from and healing of the trauma (of Aquinians) after ‘Reming’,” said AQ Guidance Counselor Lucy Escaran.

“We are not only after rehabilitating buildings; we are also concerned with the psychological well being of our people,” she added.

Outside the Campus, AQ volunteers facilitated two sessions of critical incidence and stress debriefing in two evacuation centers, December 19, in Tagas, and December 20, in Busay, Daraga. The sessions benefited 155 survivors.

Similar sessions were also facilitated by faculty members for students after the reopening of classes this January.

On January 18, Dr. Julia Byers also conducted “Expressive Arts Therapy” at the Daragang Magayon Hall.

Byers is a professor and the Division Director of Expressive Arts Therapies at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the United States.

“The expressive use of art modalities are experienced to develop safety, trust, personal expression and engagement to reduce fatigue, burn-out, and vicarious traumas caused by calamities like this,” she said.

Some 117 students from different colleges and some AQ faculty in the University attended the activity.

The arts debriefing came after a two-day workshop on Expressive Therapies and Mental Health Counseling attended by AQ Guidance Counselors, Psychology and Theology faculty members conducted by Dr. Byers in Naga City, January 15-17, 2007.
The Phoenix rises

The unforgiving wind and deadly floodwater of “Reming” brought AQ to its knees. In the days after the devastating typhoon, it looked more like an uninhabitable wasteland—with its caved-in roofs, mud and rainwater soaked classrooms and offices, and damaged infrastructure. Many people doubted if the University could recover fully from the disaster.

But in only about three months, AQ has undeniably sprung back to life. Roads have been cleared of debris and mud to hasten the rehabilitation process. Damaged roofs have been replaced with new and stronger ones, classrooms have been cleared of mud and electric power has been restored. The harrowing landscape has been erased. Light has replaced gloom—as seen in these pictures.
The Phoenix rises

FR. MARS, O.P.
LEO MARTIN GANACE

Access Road 6 days after Reming
Access Road 2 months later
St. Thomas Building's Roof 6 days after Reming
St. Thomas Building's Roof 2 1/2 months later

St. Plus V Hall 6 days after Reming
St. Plus V Hall 2 1/2 months later
APPOINTMENTS
Mr. Reynaldo B. Bobadilla
Property Manager, effective January 8, 2007

Mr. Vicente B. Peralta
Assistant Dean, College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences
Effective November 3, 2006

REGULAR TEACHING STAFF
Marilyn N. Longasa
College of Nursing, effective February 3, 2007

TRANSFERRED
Dionneyln. A. Sallena, Non-Academic Personnel
From the Center for Continuing Education to the Registrar’s Office
Effective February 5, 2007

DIRECTORY OF RELOCATED OFFICES
(as of January 29, 2007)

SIRUNGAN
Accounting Office

FRA ANGELICO BUILDING
GROUND FLOOR
AQ Relief and Rehabilitation Operation Center
Office of the Dean, CAFA

FRA ANGELICO BUILDING
SECOND FLOOR
Office of the Rector and President
Office of the Secretary-General
Office of the Vice-Rector for Administration
Office of Testing and Measurement Standards
HRMO Monitoring and Evaluation

DARAGANG MAGAYON HALL
Student Development Services

AQ CHAPEL
Theology Department

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS
AQUI (Science High School/ Special Program in the Arts/ General Curriculum)
Center for Extension Services (CES)

REVISED ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES 2007
(Remaining aftermath)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MID-TERM EXAMINATIONS</th>
<th>February 6-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of forms for the Midterm grades and Application for Graduation</td>
<td>February 12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Grade Day</td>
<td>February 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last day of dropping</td>
<td>March 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of University Clearance and form for the Final Grades</td>
<td>March 12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL EXAMINATION: graduating students</td>
<td>March 19-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Final Grades and University Clearance to the Registrar’s Office including RLE cases (Nursing)</td>
<td>March 23-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of Final List of Graduating and Honor students and application for PD 907</td>
<td>March 26-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL EXAMINATION: Undergraduate</td>
<td>March 29-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking of OTR, Diploma, etc. by College Secretaries</td>
<td>April 10-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of Graduation Program/Rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS and five Colleges</td>
<td>April 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>April 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOLEMN INVESTITURE
| PS and five Colleges | April 21 |
| Nursing | April 28 |

AUCAT examinations
February 17 and 24, Every Saturday of March Weekdays of April and May (except Saturdays and Sundays)

SUMMER 2007
| Enrollment | April 10-17 |
| First day of classes | April 18 |
| Summer classes | April 18-May 25 |
| Mid-term Examination | May 8 |
| Final Examination | May 25 |

ENROLLMENT
1st Semester, SY 2007-2008
| Freshmen | May 7-31 |
| CAS, Education, CAFA, BA and Engineering | |
| 2nd year | May 21-22 |
| 3rd year | May 23-24 |
| 4th year/5th year | May 25-26 |
| Nursing | |
| 2nd year | May 28-29 |
| 3rd year | May 30-31 |
| 4th year | June 1-2 (a.m. only) |
| Transferees/Returnees | May 30-31 and June 1 |
AQ tops ‘07 Architecture Board Exam

Aquinas University of Legazpi graduate Mikael Jay B. Bonto topped this year’s Licensure Examination for Architecture held in January 19-21 in Manila, garnering a rating of 82.80 percent.

Bonto, a 26-year old resident of San Lorenzo, Tabaco City, graduated from the University in 2004. He initially took up Bachelor of Science in Fine Arts, majoring in Advertising before shifting to Bachelor of Science in Architecture in June 1999. He took a two-year apprenticeship before taking the examination for the first time last January.

He becomes the first graduate of the AQ College of Architecture and Fine Arts to top the licensure examination. The College has produced placers in the past Architecture Board examination.

Other AQ graduates who passed this year’s examination are Jesson B. Catorce, 25 (Batch 2004), Jim S. Desaluna, 25 (Batch 2003), Edelmira E. Baclao, 25 (Batch 2003) and Marijane B. Bellen (Batch 1991).

Some 370 out of 735 examinees passed the exams, according to results from the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) posted on its website.

Oath taking for the board passers has been set in Manila on March 17, 2007.

LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS FOR TEACHERS (LET)
August 27, 2006

Bachelor of Secondary Education
Aboga, Leila Y. - 6th Placer, Regional Level
De la Torre, Cecilia L.
Huelva, Jesha Ros S.
Mariscotes, Ma. Grandiosa L.
Martinez, Roel C.
Monreal, Cristina C. - 8th Placer, Regional Level
Paulino, Glenda A.
Reamico, Cleus B.
Tejada, Mark Glen L.
Teves, Lylivic A.

Bachelor of Elementary Education
Arias, Jazmin A.
Armero, Janice R.
Bamba, Agnes M.
Barua, Christine M.
Borras, Lenny A.
Espera, Pamela F.
Mira, Meah E.
Opriada, Honeyylene B.
Sanorjo, Mark Laurence B.
Seagatan, Roxanne Claudette N.
Sevillano, Angeli A.
Sumalde, Arlene T.
Zamudio, Maria Belen S.

LIBRARY SCIENCE LICENSURE PASSERS
November 27-28, 2006

Bermas, Rodolfo L.
Calleja, Catherine H.
Logronio, Aurora A.
Mapa, Deliah M.

CIVIL ENGINEERS EXAMINATION PASSERS
November 19, 2006

Batch 2006
Engr. Gary R. Galvez
Engr. Amy C. Magdahong
Engr. Ryan F. Mirafuentes

Batch 2005
Engr. Rodel A. Vargas

Batch 2004
Engr. Celso C. Claveron, Jr.

ELECTRONICS & COMMUNICATIONS
ENGINEERING EXAMINATION PASSER
November 2, 2006
Engr. Ralph Joji Razo Periña

NURSING LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS
December 1-2, 2006

Batch 2006
Abelinde, Jennifer A.
Alba, Jennifer E.
Aldea, Jeanelyn B.
Almonte, Jason B.
Almosara, Rosalyn R.
Angeles, Rhjani L.
Apuli, Celeste T.
Asuzano, Antonette B.
Baligemino, Theresa Fatima G.
Banfares, Vic L.
Bernarte, Jerelyn B.
Borromeo, May B.
Caindec, Maria Laurice A.
Calderon, Ryan M.
Canonce, Ruscel Antonette P.
Celio, Myra D.
Conde, Muriel Ann P.
Corral, Rita D.
De Paula, Lauren Rose B.
Dimabayao, Erica B.
Duana, Cheryl H.
Eco, Jose Antonio A.
Escasinas, John Reynald D.
Escasinas, Zaira N.
Estavillo, Sheena B.
Estavillo, Sheila B.
Estolonio, Edgar G.
Frago, Mary Catherine G.
Fremista, Paz O.
Garganta, Marijule D.
Goyena, Jude O.
Hayagan, Kristian G.
Icaonapo, Jr. Joventino D.
Lachica, Arrianne Eve D.
Lachica, Rhizi Angelle A.
Lianko, Francis C.
Llagas, Sarah May V.
Llanera, Cherry Lynn M.
Lopez, Grace F.
Loria, Emil G.
Magdamit, Karen B.
Miraran, Anna Rae M.
Murillo, Maria Deniza C.
Nicomedes, Hope Raymar S.
Nieva, Francis Ryan N.
Nieva, Michael Edward N.
Nimo, Charmaine M.
Nopia, Ila Cyril O.
Ojeda, Giselle Aizza B.
ombao, Myla A.
Oroño, Maria Valerie M.
Osuman, Shane R.
oximina, Arlene D.
Padre, Wally M.
Palmones, Ma. Kristine C.
Peralta, Amy L.
Perea, Marianne Angeela V.
Presto, Rhet R.
Prieto, Mary Gale C.
Rebuariano, Jr. Melbin G.
Rifon, Hilda R.
Rivera, Gian Carlo V.
Rodriguez, Catherine A.
Sapaula, Mary Jhn L.
Streit, Ryan H.
Tan, Florence Sandra C.
Uztarez, Ma. Bedilla L.
Yu, Michelle M.

Batch 2005
Chua, Carmela E.

ARCHITECTURE LICENSURE EXAMINATION
January 19-21, 2007

Batch 2004
Mikael Jay B. Bonto - National Top Notcher
Jesson B. Catorce

Batch 2003
Edelmira E. Baclao
Jim S. Desaluna

Batch 1991
Marijane B. Bellen

Note: List of passers still incomplete. The College of Nursing has yet to trace other passers due to missing or damaged student files because of typhoon “Reming.” The College is still requesting a copy of the complete list of passers from the PRC.
Typhoon Milenyo ravages AQ

Leo Martin B. Ganace

The Aquinas University of Legazpi faces massive rebuilding after typhoon “Milenyo” caused heavy damage to the University’s Rawis Campus. Also heavily damaged was the Aquinas University Hospital. The AUL Professional Schools in downtown Legazpi incurred damages from rain and flood waters. Rehabilitation could take months, at a high cost, officials here said.

Roughly seventy percent of the AUL Rawis Campus was damaged due to the typhoon. The actual damage in pesos could run into millions, according to Vice-Rector for Administration Officer-in-Charge Engr. Virgilio S. Perdigon, Jr.

“Almost all buildings in the campus were damaged,” he said.

School officials have yet to release official estimates of the damage.

Typhoon Milenyo’s 178 to 210 kph winds brought devastation to much of the Bikol Region, Southern Luzon and the National Capital Region September 27, leaving thousands of people homeless and without access to power and clean water. It also left most schools here to remain closed for days after extensive flooding, damage to buildings and property.

Massive Damage

The extensive damage at the Rawis Campus prompted school authorities to suspend classes for six days.

Emergency teams struggled to clear debris and uprooted trees that clogged most of the school roads a day after the typhoon amidst knee-deep flood water in most areas.

Perdigon estimates the damage to the University’s trees and vegetation to be at seventy percent.

Initial reports from different departments and the Center for Campus Infrastructure Development (CCID) suggest that all edifices sustained damage with numerous reports of collapsed ceilings, smashed glass windows, smashed doors and blown off roofing, among others.

Among the hardest hit were the AQ Dome, Daragang Magayon Hall, the College of Arts and Sciences Office (CAS) and the High School Building.

The AQ Dome’s roof vent system was ripped off, causing rain water to seep down to the offices in the vicinity. The said 27-meter long and 6-meter wide steel and galvanized iron sheet structure was air borne northward and deposited about 25 meters away from the AQ Dome. Two bays of skylight and sports equipment of the Department of Physical Education Sports and Fitness were also damaged. An eight-meter wide standby Internet parabolic antenna at the nearby football field was blown off its base.

At the Daragang Magayon Hall, all three glass doors were knocked off. The adjoining CAS office’s partition was brought down by the strong winds. The CAS office has now been relocated.

Strong winds also destroyed large parts of the High School building roofing. Rain water leaked down to rooms and offices in that area, damaging files and school property. A newly renovated covered walk was totally stripped of its roof.

“I would not be surprised if rehabilitation would cost us millions,” said Perdigon.

Clean-up

The CCID estimates that rehabilitation of the Rawis Campus could take as long as eight weeks.

Perdigon said that the University is now in the first phase of rehabilitation.

“We have now cleared the roads so that emergency cases could be attended to,” he said.

He also added that the school has now energized to hasten the rehabilitation process.

“Our next step is to fix the damage in school buildings and laboratories,” he said.

But the Professional Schools was left relatively with minor damages due to strong downpour and flood water.

“Generally, there is no major damage in the Old MDM personnel clear a road of fallen trees a day after typhoon Milenyo.
Campus,” said Interim Site Administrator Romulo Antivola.

Although documents were damaged by water and some parts of the building were under water which rose up to two and a half inches for two days, he said there was no need to extend classes.

Electricity in some parts of the school has been restored as of October 5. Regular class schedules have also resumed on that date, he added.

**Delayed opening**

Due to typhoon damage, the opening of the Aquinas University Hospital’s (AUH) new building could be delayed, according to AUH Administrator Dr. Joselito B. Rustia, M.D.

Much of the new building’s infrastructure was damaged by the typhoon, including about 50% of the windows. Some areas were also flooded.

“Hindi pa nga nagagamit, hindi pa natutungtungan, eh, for rehabilitation na kaagad yung new building. We would have to delay the opening of the hospital,” he said.

The new five-storey hospital building’s construction was began in October 2004. It is yet to be completed as of October this year.

Rustia laid out plans for the rehabilitation of the hospital.

“We will have to assess the damage first before we can go on with the completion, restoration and additional works,” he added.

But unlike other hospitals in the area, the AUH did not cease operations during the typhoon.

“We had 150% occupancy after the typhoon. We had to refer some patients to other hospitals,” he said.

The AUH has a 40-bed capacity to date.
Dancing with the Winds

Typhoon “Milenyo” came not without warning, thus, most of us were somehow prepared for it. But hardly did we have any inkling of the brute force it would unleash as it cut across its path—sweeping away, swiping down, breaking structures so puny for its fury said to be none-the-worse in over a decade to visit Bikol.

The day after “Milenyo,” we found our campus in a state of devastation. Structures of steel were ripped off as if they were toys made of tin. It twisted, twirled, felled, uprooted trees which were landmarks of our COOL NEAT HOME; threshed and thrashed wood and glass and metal doors and windows; ripped, tore roofs and ceilings. It is too grim to recount the ravages it wrought. But we thank God that no limb was harmed, no life was lost among us, especially those who were in the campus as “Milenyo” rampaged.

Our campus might have been devastated but we are grateful it never became desolate for early the next day our people started to come one after another, momentarily leaving their equally, if not more devastated, homes and neighborhoods, to help wash the muck and clear the debris which “Milenyo” left. In two days, much of the spoilage was gathered; some of the damages were repaired. But so much still remains to be done. Even then we are undaunted.

The devastation does not dampen our spirit. We do not even damn the winds for God is always with us and the spirits of the founding fathers of this institution guide us on how best to deal with the challenges. We will continue doing what we must from the heat of our hearts and not from the coldness of the ruins. We will not be lost in the wind; rather, we will be in the eye of the winds for there we will have a clear view of our cherished gratitude for this life that is strongly founded on love and truth ever under the grace and gracefulness of our merciful God; there we will be able to strengthen the spirit that makes us distinctively Aquinians.

There, too, we must learn to dance with the winds for they can teach us gracefulness, rhythm, perfection, and discipline. They, too, possess the wisdom and the virtue that we seek in cultural transformation through transformative education and our mission of community service and holistic care.

The COOL NEAT HOME is within us. It is in our heart, the Aquinian Heart. Now we no longer need the signage to remind us because we have come to know ourselves better. Yes, we are Aquinians still gracious and grateful for all times. We will never allow the ravages of the storm to vanquish us because we are heirs to the spirit of our founding fathers whose gratitude gave us a legacy of a life of truth and of love that moves us to continue witnessing and living for it.

In our heart is the eye of the storm in its stillness and power, gentleness and strength that can build and destroy. Let us harness our creativity with generosity rather than greed, with perseverance rather than impulsiveness, with gracefulness rather than fury. For, indeed, as we dance with the winds we remember the song from the play “Goodbye Mr. Chips” that goes, “... and the question I shall ask only I can answer, was I brave and strong and true? Did I fill the world with love my whole life through?” Isn’t this cool? Isn’t this neat? It is Aquinas, our heart and home. It is Us.

Rev. Fr. Ramon Carlo G. Mendez, O.P.
Rector and President
The raging floodwaters brought by “Reming” caught up with them and snuffed out their young lives.

Let us pray for the eternal repose of the souls of our AQ students and alumni who perished during that fateful day, November 30, 2006.

**SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL**

**MISS AIDA E. BONGON**, 79, died of old age in her home in Tabaco City on February 7, 2007. She began her long career as an educator at the Legazpi College in 1966, teaching English at the College of Arts and Sciences, and later on, at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1993. Though retired, she continued to work as a part-time teacher in the University until 2000.

**MISS LEONCIA B. ZARAGOZA**, 91, died of old age in her home in Oas, Albay on January 11, 2007. During her time in AUI, she served as principal of the Aquinas University Elementary School and later on taught Social Studies and Health at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1994.

**COLLEGE OF NURSING**

**MISS AIDA E. BONGON**, 79, died of old age in her home in Tabaco City on February 7, 2007. She began her long career as an educator at the Legazpi College in 1966, teaching English at the College of Arts and Sciences, and later on, at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1993. Though retired, she continued to work as a part-time teacher in the University until 2000.

**MISS LEONCIA B. ZARAGOZA**, 91, died of old age in her home in Oas, Albay on January 11, 2007. During her time in AUI, she served as principal of the Aquinas University Elementary School and later on taught Social Studies and Health at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1994.

**AQ ALUMNI (verified and confirmed)**

**LEIZI E. DISONO**, October 27, 1956—November 30, 2006. She began her long career as an educator at the Legazpi College in 1966, teaching English at the College of Arts and Sciences, and later on, at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1993. Though retired, she continued to work as a part-time teacher in the University until 2000.

**MISS LEONCIA B. ZARAGOZA**, 91, died of old age in her home in Oas, Albay on January 11, 2007. During her time in AUI, she served as principal of the Aquinas University Elementary School and later on taught Social Studies and Health at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1994.

**AIEVEGal R. Reglos**, April 18, 1956—November 30, 2006. She began her long career as an educator at the Legazpi College in 1966, teaching English at the College of Arts and Sciences, and later on, at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1993. Though retired, she continued to work as a part-time teacher in the University until 2000.

**MISS LEONCIA B. ZARAGOZA**, 91, died of old age in her home in Oas, Albay on January 11, 2007. During her time in AUI, she served as principal of the Aquinas University Elementary School and later on taught Social Studies and Health at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1994.

**MAyA B. BUENSAliDA**, BSBA, 2006. She began her long career as an educator at the Legazpi College in 1966, teaching English at the College of Arts and Sciences, and later on, at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1993. Though retired, she continued to work as a part-time teacher in the University until 2000.

**MISS LEONCIA B. ZARAGOZA**, 91, died of old age in her home in Oas, Albay on January 11, 2007. During her time in AUI, she served as principal of the Aquinas University Elementary School and later on taught Social Studies and Health at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1994.

**L AnI A. AMADOS**, BSBA, 2006. She began her long career as an educator at the Legazpi College in 1966, teaching English at the College of Arts and Sciences, and later on, at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1993. Though retired, she continued to work as a part-time teacher in the University until 2000.

**MISS LEONCIA B. ZARAGOZA**, 91, died of old age in her home in Oas, Albay on January 11, 2007. During her time in AUI, she served as principal of the Aquinas University Elementary School and later on taught Social Studies and Health at the Aquinas University Science Oriented High School until her retirement in 1994.

Let us pray that no other Aquinian became a fatality.

Let us also pray for our kaimanwa who perished during the catastrophe and those who are still missing.

“...and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

PSALM 23:6
It was a chilly morning, that dawn of Thursday, November, 1987. One shivered, not so much for the cold, as for the sight of wreckage everywhere --- uprooted and torn trees, huge electric posts across highways, shattered walls, roofs stripped of their metal sheets. One quivered, no so much because the sun still refused to shine, but because the death toll kept on mounting, with personal terror accounts of the previous night.

The day began as another ordinary morning, with kitchen chores and reporting to places of work. News about a typhoon was by no means more interesting than speculations that rebel soldiers of the August 28 coup attempt were either being captured or giving surrender feelers. Public attention was also [focused] more on the coming local elections, than on Signal No. 2 which, except for the suspension of classes in the elementary and High School was never taken seriously after Herming struck in August. No typhoon could be stronger than Herming, not even this new one named Sisang.

Typhoon Herming carried 220 kph center winds, and hit Legazpi with only 140 kph. Sisang was not only weaker with 165 kph, but threatened Samar, not Bikol. Even broadcasters, at least that day morning, paid more attention to PAGASA Legazpi’s lack of telephone service arising from its failure to pay Mayon Telephone Company (MATELCO) a few thousand pesos. One announcer’s comment was meant more as an argument for strands of copper wire than as a foreboding of death and destruction.

10:00 a.m. The news said that the leader of the rebel soldiers was expected to surrender. The weather report from PAGASA Quezon City said Sisang packed 185 kph winds, headed for the northwest. Virac, Catanduanes was a possible hit. The typhoon’s movement increased from 15 kph to 20 kph. In Legazpi City, along the slopes of Mt. Mayon, everything was fine except for the rains. As yet, there was scarcely a gust of wind.

4:00 p.m. A report from PAGASA Legazpi, personally obtained by a local radio station manager said that Sisang was 200 kilometers directly east of Legazpi. Virac was certain to be hit; a sad double whammy for an earlier sad event in which Congressman Moises Tapia died with several others in a plane crash that month. Typhoon Signal No. 3 is raised.

7:00 p.m. The wind began to catch our attention. Still, gusts are normal in typhoon battered Bikol. Here and there, hammers could be heard—some last minute minor patches on roofs and walls to prevent rainwater from seeping in. Indeed, during a typhoon, the rain is almost horizontal and penetrating, it could pass through the tiniest hole and slimmest crack on roofs and walls.

8:00 p.m. Sisang hits Legazpi. The gusts were similar to Herming’s at her peak. At 8:30, there were no more gusts, just one continuous and deafening torrent of wind, rain and debris from the north, as if determined to blow forever. This peak monstrosity would blow for over an hour — long and strong enough to smash concrete walls and snap 9-inch diameter electric posts. During a dark and violent night, one loses awareness of events beyond one’s yard, except for bits of news from distant radio stations. Even in one’s own home, one perceives what is happening, not so much by sight, as by sound. No one sees which part of one’s house is falling in such a moment of extreme terror. Everyone is alone in the rage of a dark storm.

8:45 p.m. The noise is so intense and the wind so forceful, my ears feel the pressure as if on a plane at take off. Sisang’s howl silenced everything else. We never heard a huge coconut tree, some seven meters east of our house, snap and fall southward. A little past

9:00 p.m., ten million bulls are rampaging from the north! We are helpless, isolated victims of a stampede! It felt like the last of our nights. The Kingdom had come! Every family, every home suffered, but suffered alone — the worst way to suffer from a common scourge. Every neighbor was lost in the pandemonium, in the roar of wind, rain, flying GL sheets, branches and everything. But, by the grace of God, everything held.

9:10 p.m. Sisang was madder. We stayed tuned to the broadcast of “Our Father who art in Heaven...” and “Hail Mary full of Grace...” believed to be the voice of Msgr. Lucio Quitamba from the St. Gregory the Great Cathedral. “The fourth glorious mystery...” Our house shook as if there was an earthquake. “O, Mary conceived without sin, pray for us...” An ocean is pouring upon us.

9:15 p.m. The rosary is over, but not quite Sisang. By then, we realized that the broadcast was the voice of Cardinal Sin, and we were actually tuned to Radio Veritas in Quezon City. The rampage had gone on for over an hour already. The transparent sheet upon our kitchen roof was flapping, but holding. Father had to force a heavy old door panel over it amidst the fury of the wind and rain. As we would learn later, our neighbors were also waging their own near-helpless and lonesome “pockets of resistance” in stubborn, if futile, defiance of an invader that was in its final phases of conquest.

As Radio Veritas faded, we tried to spot other stations. One in Cebu — or was it Bacolod? — was reporting that even in a town in Bacolod? — was reporting that even in the Visayas, Sisang was delivering her ugly blows. Parts of Leyte and Samar had no more electric power.

Back here in Bikol, Sisang raged on. At Cabangan, Legazpi City, a sanitary inspector from another town passed the night in a friend’s house. It proved to be a fatal mistake. An electric post pinned the house, killing him and his friend’s son. It took hours to remove their bodies in the morning. In Bacacay, a town on the east coast of Albay, north of Legazpi City, evacuees in the parish church were saved from the collapse of the church roof when rising waters and snakes drove them to the altar area. Everywhere, houses were either blown away or smashed by trees and electric posts. People were actually getting killed in their homes or in evacuation centers. In Rapu-Rapu, an island town east of Legazpi, the public market was left with only its floor. The wind, the tide and the earthquake ransacked the graveyard. The old dead mingled with the new dead.

All other stories, however, pale in comparison with those from Sorsogon. Every story I hear from people in that province is worse than the previous. Of the events so far recounted, I have not the words with which to capture the trauma that continues to grip the victims who somehow managed to survive.

In Sorsogon, the sea rose in gigantic waves, splashed upon the coastal towns, hundreds, and left thousands homeless. Witnesses say that barrios were wiped out almost entirely. As the waves rose, people held on to power lines; as the waves receded, they dangled as human chains, with the one on top bearing the full weight of those below. Others crowded around the coconut trees like ants clinging for dear life against the seaward pull of the tide. Yet, it was not only the water they had to resist. They had to fight the cold and outsmart the darkness in a surrounding suddenly turned totally strange. As lightning flashed, people scrambled to the next higher ground aided by the few seconds of light.

Heartbreaking was the fate of a family who left their home to take refuge in a nearby college building only to be smashed away when its wall collapsed. Their house remained intact, but they all perished. Many never had a hint of the last time they would ever see their family, relatives or friends. As the waves rushed back to the sea, a newly wed couple was parted. Only the bride remained, the groom was lost to the sea.

Typhoon Sisang is said to be one of the fiercest typhoons to hit Bikol. Here, the writer recounts what Sisang did perhaps to allow us to compare it with Reming and for us to learn some lessons from both Sisang and Reming. - Ed.
forever. Not only lives, but also dreams were lost. A man about to leave for the Middle East to work, lost all his travel and employment papers. With pulp and ink went his aspirations.

9:45 p.m. The wind and rain begin to subside, more rapidly than when they started. The calm that followed was not relief, however. Almost everyone knew what it meant: we were in the eye of Sisang! From Malilipot, Albay to Barcelona, Sorsogon, the eye of Sisang hovered like an eagle without quails to destroy its prey in a short while. Legazpi City was the dead center of that eye.

At about 10:45 p.m. wind and rain begin from the opposite direction and immediately assume the same peak ferocity as before the peak of the calm. What Sisang caused to kneel with wind from the north, she further crushed with those from the south. How many victims more Sisang claimed was a morbid question. We all waited for her to subside. By one in the morning, she had weakened to only about half her peak strength. By two, many had the respite of sleep before Sisang finally left.

At the break of dawn, there was no need for words to picture the damage. Someone said that if you stood upon the hill where Daraga parish church was transferred after the ruin of the Cagsawa Church in 1814, you would feel like crying over the devastation. Electric lines dangled like vines. Neon signs and billboard blown out. No phones, no telegrams, no mails, no water from the taps.

Reports about the damage came in trickles. Reporters had to walk, for no vehicle could traverse the barricaded roads. Two dead in Legazpi, 23 in Albay, 95 in Sorsogon, 250 in the whole Bicol region. Then 300. Then 600. the following Sunday, the Voice of America would mention in its evening news that over three thousand had died in Bicol.

Incidents were recounted. A family of 12 shared two plates. They were lucky to have food. A man given noodles ate them raw right in front of members of Operation Tulong. He had not eaten since the typhoon struck. Another man lost his family of six. When handed a blanket, he thought his baby was in it. A woman held the weaves for her grandson in the yard for there was no house left. At Aquinas University, the classes were suspended until December 9 because of the damages. The National Power Corporation and the Albay Electric Cooperative II estimated that power could not be restored after three or four months.

The next Sunday afternoon, there was a thick fog. It was very cold. But colder still were the nights of December and January that awaited the homeless, most of whom are farmers, fishermen, and urban poor. Whatever the circumstance, the poor are always the loser. In good weather, they are the slum dwellers, beggars, tenants in haciendas, workers in sweatshops, vendors on sidewalks. In bad weather, their dwellings are the first to fall. In the day, they have to bear the sun. At night, the cold. They toil for food, they beg for coffins.

Many a storm will always have shanties to crush, for the wielders of wealth allow the poor, no matter how much they sweat, just enough to build their shanties. Through the eye of Sisang, we see stark social reality.

In the gravest sufferings, ironies emerge. As one shopping complex advertised its food center serving spaghetti, siopao, sotanghon, and mami, another firm advertised Christmas decor. Thousans of families had no roof and walls with which to fend off the cold of Yuletide. No house to decorate. No cards to decorate for Christmas.

1987 was a gruesome year for Bikol. It began with the biting cold cold of January to February. It met the drought of March to June. It saw a fiercer insurgency war. Offensives by Scout Rangers yielded civilian casualties. An errant son led rebel soldiers and succeeded only in ousting a Bikolano secretary. Some say the CIA sent here satanic cults. Formalin ruined the fish business. The oil price hike is still severely felt. Land reform remains a dream. A Congressman died in a plane crash. Politicians are too busy with their election. Will the coming years be better? Perhaps Mt. Mayon will not erupt.

It is Christmas time again, but there are no lanterns, no cards, no scent of apples, no lechon. Save for the cold, it’s like July. Still, some of our people wear a smile. Or maybe two. They gaze at the sea and remember dear ones held in its bosom. And silence is the best way to endure pain.

Thank You for your Understanding & Cooperation

These are times that test the true grit and steadfastness of our Aquinian Spirit. Since Day 1 after “Reming” we have shown determination to face squarely the challenges of the disaster. In fact, already much has been accomplished in a limited time and under daunting circumstances. Everyone has contributed to bring our devastated campus back to normalcy. The Aquinian Spirit has remained unbroken. It has even soared over adversity.

I take note of how so many Aquinians have nurtured an attitude of grace: of being grateful for God’s graces despite the pain inflicted by “Reming.” We see this in our student-volunteers who, even if they themselves are victims, have worked round-the-clock to bring relief and comfort to the less fortunate and the least served people throughout all of Albay, especially in places not able to be reached by others who are doing relief work. We see this in our personnel who immediately went to their work stations even if they still had repair and cleaning work to do in their own equally devastated homes. Our teachers went to their faculty rooms to help clean them and save records. The MDM ground crew has been performing a yeoman’s task, resting only during the holidays. Our administrators are always at hand to see to it that our services are conveniently accessible.

Thus, we have so many reasons to be grateful for the attitude of grace everyone has exhibited even to the extent of sacrificing personal time which under normal circumstances would be devoted to family interest, as for example when classes were scheduled on Sunday in order to continue the education mission of our University.

The president of our employees union stated that holding classes on a Sunday is “… a kind of obligation. We are not compelled to report on a Sunday. Our faculty members, in consultation with their students, were given the opportunity to look for schedules on weekdays and Saturdays. Holding classes on a Sunday is a last recourse which we are willing to do.”

Our students, through the president of the Supreme Student Council, say that having Sunday classes means additional expense. “Many of us students have to go home to our hometowns on Sundays to be with our families, to wash clothes, and to get our weekly allowances. Attending classes on a Sunday deprives us of this opportunity. Nevertheless, we try to understand the situation. We know it is a response to an exigency which will not last for a very long time. The shorter it gets, the better for everyone,” she said.

These responses from the above sectors of our University make the challenges posed by rehabilitation easier to bear, easier to carry out. And for all these, I am most grateful.

Dios mabalos saindo gabos.

Rev. Fr. Ramontelarao G. Mendez, O.P.
Rector and President
January 18, 2007
Thank you for entrusting to us your goods and donations. Your gifts filled our hands, your trust moved our hearts, and your kindness inspired us to give our very selves so we can bring them to the hearts of our people. And we made it by adding our love on your gifts... The Aquinas University Tabang sa Tugang (Our Anduyog AQ Relief and Rehabilitation Operation) assures you that we have not only delivered your goods but conveyed your goodwill.

In Catomag, a barangay in the mountain ranges of Guinobatan, our volunteers had to carry the relief goods on their backs because our bus could no longer go uphill, then an old man came forward and announced at the megaphone: Malaki ang pasasalamat dahil sa layo at hirap naming abutin kami ay inyong narating. (Great is our gratitude because no matter how far and how difficult it is to reach us still you came.) In Danao, an upland barangay of Polangui, 17 kilometers from the poblacion, our volunteers brought to our hospital a one year old boy as they argued with each other and eventually agreed that even if it was fast getting dark, they could not leave behind a life that was in danger. “An oras yaon sana, an buhay puwedeng mawara,” they reasoned. (Time goes along but life can slip away.) Also in the upland barangay Balaba of Polangui, the residents were profuse with thanks for the aid shared with them. One resident said, “Oragon an Aquinas maski sa bolod iabot pa.” (Aquinas is so intrepid; it reaches us even if we are in the mountains.) In the west coast town of Pio Duran, as our relief team entered, people along the way were clapping their hands and they gave us their smiles which they never surrendered to adversity.

As the amount of our relief inventory diminishes, the number of people we have reached increases as well as that of the areas we covered. When we summed up the reports for a month of our operation, we were surprised and happy to know that we were able to deliver the relief goods to more than 25,000 households and reached out to a grand total of 31,865 individuals with our feeding program (with games for children, hot snacks, potable water refilling), medical mission, and community stress debriefing. We have not yet included the number of people served by our Nursing students...
and clinical instructors at the different evacuation centers and the initiatives of some of our student leaders. The number could be more but we could never say it’s finished for there are still more waiting for us and it would take some time before our full recovery. Thus, we would still need your assistance especially now that we are entering into the comprehensive rehabilitation program. With your kindest assistance, our relief operations covered 118 out of 720 barangays in the three cities and 12 municipalities of Albay, except Malilipot, Jovellar, and Libon. We’ve dared because we cared. We’ve gone there because we’re needed; we’ve got more to give because you shared. We will go on because we will always remember. And so shall we be remembered.

In the spirit of thanksgiving and renewed hope, the Aquinas University of Legazpi has continued its institutional and community reconstruction efforts. Though still without a roof, our main building displays our national flag at its top to mark the resumption of classes last January 3, 2007. Having cleared and secured enough classrooms at the Main Campus and by maximizing the Old Campus and using a modified programming, we started classes as scheduled. In a month we will be able to finish the roofing of the Main Building and the St. Pius Building and we have designed alternative measures for our laboratory and library facilities while they are in the process of rehabilitation. We are also pursuing our CARE HELP, which is the Comprehensive Aquinian Reconstruction Engagement envisioning our very own AQ Village which is a resettlement with integrated Health, Education, and Livelihood Programs. We have mobilized the different academic departments to focus our instruction, research, and extension towards the speedy rehabilitation of our communities in the Bikol Region particularly in Albay. To ritualize our gratitude and to sustain the hope of our people, the Aquinas University Center for Culture and Arts has slated “Ranga,” a stage production designed to bring comfort to our people in the different evacuation and relocation areas. Our Religious Affairs Office has initiated a series of “Perdon” processions in the main campus to remember and pray for the eternal repose of those who died in the disaster and for our discernment and appreciation of the will of God in our community. With the help from Ateneo de Naga we were able to undergo a series of debriefing training and creative therapy sessions which we also conducted to other communities. For worst cases the University of Santo Tomas Psychological Trauma Center has assured to assist us.

As we continue to pick up the pieces in the rebuilding of our lives and the reconstruction of our communities, we remember your kindness that constantly prompts us to pray, “Dios Mabalos” which literally means God returns. It is the Bikol expression of gratitude denoting God’s presence and blessings to all of you who helped us in so many ways.

These are the words written in the hearts of our people and in the very soul of our community. There is nothing much that we can do with our hands right now except to pick up what we can handle, carry what we pick up, and to do, as much as we can, even small and relatively insignificant things. However, these very small things have much impact and inspire others to wonder how and why and in the end that they may do likewise themselves. And God knows as well as we do that behind this miracle is your love. Yes, because you continue to care and help us. Dios Mabalos! Dios Mabalos! ■

Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, O.P.
Rector and President
There is nothing much that we can do with our hands right now except to pick up what we can handle, carry what we pick up, and to do, as much as we can, even small and relatively insignificant things. However these very small things have much impact and inspire others to wonder how and why and in the end that they may do likewise themselves.

Dios Mabala! Dios Mabala!
Rev. Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, O.P.
Rector and President