

# Zambales RTC: A Classroom with a View

By John Pesebre

*CBS-Asia helps Aetas in the mountains of Zambales have their own Bible School: The Zambales Mission Academy.*

The photo below shows the the awesome scenery that the Regional Training Center overlooks. The Zambales project is a ministerial training program made possible by the partnership of four institutions: 1) International School of Theology-Asia's Foundations for Christian Leadership, 2) CBAP, 3) Great Blessings Presbyterian Missions and 4) CBS-Asia.



The photo above shows the representatives of these four groups that form the Zambales Mission Academy Team. Prof. John Pesebre (far right), CBS-Asia Academic Officer spearheads this project.

From the elevated region of Brgy. Aglao in San Marcelino, Zambales, one can witness a telling panorama of a huge aquamarine lake surrounded by a sierra<sup>1</sup>. I heard that the sierra extends up to the coastline of Zambales. The lake meanwhile ripples to at least a 10-kilometer area. In the morning this lake glares because of the sun, while at dawn it looks like a poster of a vista hanging on a wall. Here in Brgy. Aglao this view is obstructed mainly by ipil-ipil trees and 50-year-old

acacias – actually these green trees serve as picture frames for the aquamarine display at the background. It is telling or revealing because generally for a Manilenyo like me, the forest-terrain of Brgy. Aglao is *diyaha* because of no cell phone signal and 0% wi-fi connection.

The lake is also telling because of another story. This aquamarine lake that seems to be teeming with marine wildlife was once one *barangay* teeming with community activity. When Mt. Pinatubo erupted, *lahar* buried the *barangay* so bad that none of the roofs were left vis-

ible. With the sierras serving as conduit when it rains, the buried *barangay* eventually became a brown lake, then green, then aquamarine.

Overlooking this lake is a CBS-Asia Regional Training Center (RTC). Before one reaches the RTC one has to travel almost an hour through treacherous road. Administered by the able CBAP pastor, Ronald Dela Cruz, we started the first class here on September 12 when 35 students attended the Transforming Bible Studies conducted by

<sup>1</sup>Mountain range

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ISOT/FCL professor Lito Sampan. It is CBS-Asia's 13<sup>th</sup> RTC.

This RTC is made possible by the initiative of the CBAP Botolan, Zambales pastors and by the partnership with Great Blessings Presbyterian Mission headed by Rev. Paul Cho.

Last August, Rev. Cho and CBAP Botolan Pastor Cris Dejacto visited the CBAP office with information and a proposition. Pastor Dejacto gladly informed CBAP General Director Noel Pantoja that Rev. Cho had been partnering with them for the past couple of years. One of the major accomplishments of the partnership was on chapel structures. He had helped two CBAP churches put up their own buildings, and is currently on the way to help more. Dejacto also informed the General Director that Rev. Cho constructed structures for training. He had started doing so but had difficulty maintaining it because of the scarcity of professors that would help him. The structures are three separate raw houses with complete amenities for training: classrooms, restrooms, dorm, kitchen, chapel, park, etc. Pastor Dejacto further explained that Rev. Cho was very eager to partner with CBAP.

Their proposition is CBAP can help Rev. Cho by starting an RTC there. The

General Director immediately accompanied both to the CBS-Asia Executive Director, Rev. Joya who also immediately supported the idea. He then instructed me to start the process of starting an RTC in Zambales.

The aquamarine lake reminds of a work to train pastors who are probably submerged in a lake of inadequacy to minister to their people. The number of untrained pastors in the Philippines is spread like a lake. Four out of six pastors according to Dawn 2000, are without training. That makes this ministerial/theological training an indispensable ministry. That is why CBS-Asia puts up RTCs in far-off places and in minority groups.

If you want to saddle up and gallop towards information and see pictures related to the Zambales Project, check out my blog site for this project: <http://zambalesproject.blogspot.com>.



**The Crisis: Provisions for the Pastoral Family**

Most churches in the Philippines are small (80% below 54 membership) and consequently cannot support their own pastor. Because of this, the typical Filipino pastor struggles in the upkeep of his family. Naturally, he will look after his family despite the church demands. While there are some who have difficulty with priorities, most have decided to be bivocational or leave the ministry for good.

The Zambales situation is no different. Churches are even smaller than 54. Because our ministry is in a depressed relocation area, the crisis is even higher. Some have even expressed dismay at the height of opportunism of the pastoral populace.

**Our Response:** The CBAP 2006 Biennial Conference in GCF-Ortigas served as an eye-opener for CBS-Asia. In that Conference we gathered a huge number of pastors to interact with them concerning training. Although there was tremendous plaudit for ministerial/training being carried out at a regional level, there was an equally tremendous clamor to address the issue of this crisis. One lay leader remarked during the conference about the wretched state of theological ignorance in the pastorate, but equally wretched is the poverty among them, too. This is the reason why part of the curricular program of the Zambales Project is the development of bivocational skills.

**The approach is a balanced curriculum addressing the four key programs of the training. These four key programs comprise the uniqueness of the Zambales Project:**

- theology/bible
- pastoral/ministerial
- bivocational skills
- community development.

Prof. Lito Sampan, Coordinator of ISOT-FCL is seen below teaching a class while Pastor Warlito Cruzado, CBAP Pastor is seen in the photo on the right happy over the training he's receiving.



# TRAINING AT THE SHARP-ENDS

## Grassroots-venue training for a grassroots Christianity

**D**o the math! Ten percent of the evangelical churches in the Philippines are led by pastors who have adequate ministerial/theological training. According to DAWN 2000, nowadays there are almost 60,000 evangelical churches in the country. Check out 10% of that. That's how delicate the situation is.

Moreover, many church members feel the need to help their pastor in his tasks like preaching, counseling, etc. This introduces a new set of people who need to be trained. Like what a CBAP pastor always says, "Training is not the determinant for a calling, but a called person most certainly needs training! The 'able men' of the Bible were made able by education and the truth of the Bible."

In such a short time, CBS-Asia has expanded to 13 RTCs with some located in La Union, Nueva Ecija, Naga, Zambales and countless others in the national capital region. It has partnered with the International School of Theology - Asia, the Southern

Baptist School of Theology and the Great Blessings Presbyterian Missions, not to mention the



**Passionate Professors!** (Left) Director Nicky Joya teaching a Hermeneutics course at a new RTC for FLAG-CD, North Manila. Fifty-four church leaders representing 7 churches enrolled in the class held at GCF-North. (Right) Prof. Norbert Manzano leading a group of pastors and church leaders in a New Testament Survey course at the new Taytay RTC. This new center at GCF-East ministers to churches of Pasig, Taytay, Angono, Antipolo and Binangonan.

countless non-CBAP students from circles of the Full Gospel, Pentecostal, Charismatic and other Baptist denominations. It has expanded from 2 professors to close to twenty, staff of three to a staff of six and 13 other volunteer administrators. It has gained the favor of students with high-profile occupations - CEOs, business proprietors, architects, lawyers, engineers, company & government executives, military servicemen to name a few. This list does not even include pastors & missionaries and countless others from the labor sector. It has facilitated the recruitment of new pastors from CBAP and non-CBAP churches.

In this short period of time, CBS-Asia has risk-jumped from a burning platform onto the plain of God's will for theological/ministerial education.

It is not hard to find why God anointed this effort. From the Old Testament to the New, there had been a recurring doctrine of training. In fact, the discipleship

dam that broke forth in the Great Commission, has an inescapable undercurrent of training. As one CBS-Asia faculty has said, "No wonder we are flowing through with God's provision." From the measly 750K annual budget we have less than four years ago, now we have 3.9M. God has graciously

provided the 70% of the total amount and we continue to wait as He finally meets the seminary's needs.

One particular comment is that it is just *nom de plum* for theological education by extension. Wrongfully so, it is not. It is more than that. An RTC has three elements needed for a successful learning experience for the students: (1) hands-on, (2) personal and (3) professor-practitioner training for students.

We call it hands-on because professors are actually there and facilitating the learning. This is hands-on because the minds and the hearts of the students are carefully guided by a trained faculty. The classroom activities are facilitated by a trained professor.

We call it personal because we employ an application-oriented approach to our teaching objectives. However, this practical emphasis does not mean CBS-Asia has taken in a pragmatic approach

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The new RTC in North Manila catering to churches in the FLAG-CD area was attended by more than 50 church leaders and workers. Such is the desire of many brethren for quality training that is accessible and affordable.

to training – where truth is only functional. God forbid! While it is important for the seminary to “set people free” as the end-product of training, it is the priority of CBS-Asia to teach “truth” which then will function as “setting people free.”

We call it professor-practitioner training because all of our professors have adequate pastoral experience. A great majority of our professors have been serving the Lord for the past ten years. Also, all of our professors have graduate degrees (masteral or doctorate). The professor then is a flux of academic and pastoral experience.

#### New Regional Training Centers:

- ❑ Quezon RTC meets every Friday evening (7 PM) at Sariaya Conservative Baptist Church and Saturday morning (8 AM) at Lucena Baptist Church.
- ❑ The second RTC of EastMar at GCF East in Taytay meets every Saturday morning at nine o'clock and in the afternoon at one.
- ❑ North Manila churches has another RTC catering to FLAG-CD churches at GCF-North. This meets every Tuesday at 7 PM.

## BICOL PASTORS REVVED UP FOR THE CHALLENGE

### *CBS-Asia stands behind Bicol CBAP's Vision 16 and Adopt Bicol*

Which one is it? Bicolanos have constantly argued to describe Bicol Express. Is it (1) pork fat with loads of sili and alamang or (2) sili and alamang with loads of pork fat? Either way it is a no-win situation for the health conscious. But regardless of its philosophical dilemma, people still love to fancy and to eat the wretched thing!

For CBS-Asia, ministry in Bicol is no fancy. On September 1-3 CBS-Asia Officer of Academics, John Pesebre traveled along with the CBAP General Director, Rev. Noel Pantoja, Dr. Rene Atienza and Dr. Jorge de Ramos to follow up on an interesting development. A year ago we saw a slightly jumbled pastoral council. Authorized by the denomination to start a church planting movement, a group of pastors conceived of Adopt Bicol, a church planting support ministry. The problem: no church planting movement to support. Although it is Adopt Bicol's job to pool together a group of institutions and individuals to help, his task is insignificant without a church-planting movement. This was the condition of more than a year ago.

Another problem, which seems to be more difficult is a training program. Last year when everything was still not up to the ideal in Bicol, CBS-Asia by faith started an RTC in the hope that the Bicol churches will see the power a Bible institute can give a regional council. After 4 months of training, the RTC went to a period of a 6-month hiatus. Some of us think that it was a failure.

But God has been talking with His children in Bicol so loud that as soon

as the spark of a church planting venture burned in the hearts of the pastor, they immediately saw that CBS-Asia is a very crucial partner.

And so, with the able leadership of Pastor Marvin Bayot of Canaman Christian Fellowship, the pastoral council invited CBS-Asia to present how it conceives its role in Vision 16. Prof. John Pesebre presented the whole program which the Council accepted with anticipation and excitement.

If you want to know more about the ins-and-outs and see pictures of *Adopt Bicol & Vision 16* check out the blog site <http://adoptbicol.blogspot.com>.

The slogan of Vision 16 is **“Build New Leaders Today, Plant New Churches Tomorrow.”**

The slogan encapsulates the general process: building and planting. The first stage runs from 2007 to 2008; and the second stage from 2009-2010. The work plan can be summarized with the acronym OWNS: own, wait, nurture and send.

**Own: Cast the Vision to our Churches**  
**Wait: Pray to and Trust God for Opportunities and Resources**  
**Nurture: Build and Train New Leaders**  
**Send: Commission and Send New Leaders**

