

Nurturing Peace in Our Schools: A Renewed Call to Form Young Peacebuilders

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Recent incidents of violence involving young people in the Philippines have deeply saddened our communities and remind us of the urgent need to strengthen a culture of peace. The tragic shooting at a school in Tacloban City in June, together with several stabbing incidents involving students in Cavite and youth in Davao, have left families, educators, and communities grieving. These disturbing events, which occurred within a short period, have heightened concerns about the safety and well-being of learners and underscore the need for a comprehensive response that addresses not only security but also the deeper causes of youth violence.

As followers of Christ, we believe that peace is more than the absence of violence. It is the fruit of justice, respect for human dignity, and relationships rooted in love and reconciliation. Schools are not only places of academic learning but also sacred spaces where young people should experience safety, belonging, and hope. When violence enters these spaces, it challenges us to renew our commitment to forming communities that nurture empathy, dialogue, forgiveness, and nonviolent ways of resolving conflict.

The Center for Peace Education (CPE), an affiliate of Pax Christi Pilipinas, remains committed to accompanying educators in this important mission. Through its teacher training programs, CPE hopes to strengthen teachers' capacities in peace education, conflict transformation, restorative practices, nonviolent communication, social and emotional learning, and trauma-informed approaches to education. By equipping educators with these competencies, the Center seeks to help schools become communities where every learner is respected, heard, and empowered to become a peacebuilder.

Teachers have a unique vocation to shape not only minds but also hearts. When educators intentionally cultivate compassion, critical thinking, and respect for diversity, they help prevent the conditions that give rise to violence. Peace education therefore becomes an essential ministry of hope, enabling young people to reject violence and embrace dialogue, solidarity, and care for one another.

In these difficult times, may we respond not with fear but with renewed faith and determination. Together, as members of Pax Christi International let us continue to accompany schools, families, and communities in building the just peace to which the Gospel calls us - one classroom, one relationship, and one young life at a time.

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