

EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue of *Landas* highlights an important and lengthy statement of the Philippine bishops, issued this year, in preparation for the entrance of the Philippine Church into the third Christian Millennium. The third in a series of four "pastoral exhortations" (the previous two focusing on politics and economics, and the last to deal with spirituality), the *Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture* represents, as it were, the "heart of the matter." As the bishops themselves note, "much of the evil as well as the good" in Philippine political and economic life "stem to a large extent from our culture — the way of life distinctive of us as a people, especially the values we live by." (*Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture*, No. 2)

Recognizing both the value of the bishops' pastoral and theological analysis of the Philippine faith-culture problematic at the end of the twentieth century, and the need that their ideas be more widely known and thoroughly discussed, *Landas* presents a mini-symposium on faith and Philippine culture. The full text of the *Pastoral Exhortation* is published, accompanied by three articles by way of commentary: Bishop Francisco Claver's historical introduction to the entire series of exhortations; Joseph Roche's reflections on the relevance of the exhortation to the ongoing task of inculturating religious education; and

Daniel Huang's discussion of the challenges posed by an emerging global, postmodern culture in the Philippines. In addition, James Kroeger reviews two recent works on faith and culture; and in the *Documentation* section, along with Jaime Cardinal Sin's thoughtful homily at Loyola School of Theology, is Daniel Huang's presentation of some current theological responses to the problem of women's violated dignity — a "greatly disturbing" cultural reality singled out by the bishops for "special discernment." (*Exhortation*, No. 70.9)

Three other articles complete the contents of this issue. Jake Yap offers a helpful commentary on last year's papal statement on the theological and juridical status of Episcopal Conferences. William Abbott argues convincingly that the ideal disciples in Mark's Gospel are not the officially designated disciples, but two easily neglected "little ones"; while Jean Louis Ska's article (translated from the original French by Victor de Guzman, M.A. student at Loyola School of Theology) is an insightful interpretation of John 4, based on key Old Testament motifs. Incidentally, these last two articles, both exegetical in nature, eminently embody the commitment of *Landas* to scholarship that serves the concrete proclamation of the Gospel.