

## **WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK 2017: AN ATMOSPHERE TO DIALOGUE HOLISTICALLY**

The World Interfaith Harmony Week has been celebrated in Davao City since 2013. Every first week of February, the Silsilah Forum Davao in partnership with of many different peace-oriented groups have been faithful in initiating different activities to celebrate world interfaith harmony. This experience continues to inspire us to be instruments of harmony. Gradually, the celebration is becoming known especially to the people who are active in the promotion of peace and harmony. The WIHW 2017 celebration is an atmosphere to dialogue holistically.

### **An experience of harmony in the midst of diversity**

It is a reality that the world is becoming more diverse. There are diversities in cultures, religions, traditions and ideologies. These differences sometimes cause conflicts and even violence. It is easy to agitate the people, especially when religion is used as a basis of conflicts between people and groups who are different. But, it is also possible to embrace harmony when differences are seen as gifts and treasures to offer to the community.

The WIHW 2017 was indeed a celebration of differences as gifts and treasures to be acknowledged. The theme of this year's celebration of a week of harmony in Davao City was: "Celebrating Harmony in the spirit of Mercy and Compassion". It reminds us that harmony is achievable only when there is mercy and reconciliation. That regardless of our differences, when all of us are ready to be compassionate and be reconciled harmony could be experienced both personally and socially.

### **Interreligious dialogue is real**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2017, the Silsilah Forum Davao, Consulate General of Indonesia and the Theology Department of Ateneo de Davao University organized the opening celebration of the World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017. There were about 210 people gathered at the Finster Auditorium of Ateneo de Davao University – to express their willingness to embrace harmony. The 210 people were coming from the different religious traditions and sectors. There were Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Indigenous and Christians. The representative of each religion shared about the meaning of the theme, "Celebrating Life in the spirit of Mercy and Compassion in their own perspective.

It is very revealing to know that all the religious traditions and cultures always emphasize harmony and good relationships with self, others, creation and God. And that if only all religions practice faithfully their religious teachings perhaps, there would not have been violence in the world today. During the sharing it was given a highlight that all of us are capable to make harmony a reality in the globe this time. We come from one creator, one humanity, one world and one God. When we are faithful to live-out the basic teachings of our religions; and when we celebrate life in the spirit of mercy and compassion; perhaps, there will be harmony and peace in the world.

The celebration of the WIHW 2017 was indeed an atmosphere to dialogue. Let us all together be an active instruments of harmony and peace regardless of our differences in culture, religions, traditions and ideologies.

In this year's celebration of the WIHW, we did experience harmony inter-religiously, inter-culturally and holistically. May we continue to sustain the experience of harmony even in the midst of violence, not just during the Harmony Week Celebration, but every minute of our life here in the Philippines and beyond.