



# Diocese of Chalan Kanoa

Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas

P.O. Box 745

Saipan, CM 96950

May 6, 1985

Mr. Herman T. Guerrero  
916 Bernard Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Guerrero,

Congratulations on your recent election to serve as a delegate for the Constitutional Convention. I am happy for you and wish you the best as you serve in this important role.

A concern I would like to bring to your attention is the issue of abortion. As you know, it has always been the position of the Church that abortion is wrong. It is the willful taking of human life. Under civil law, when the object of such behavior is an adult, the behavior is considered a serious felony. When the object of the same act is an infant waiting to be born, it is considered only a medical procedure. The result is the same, the murder of a human being.

We may think this is some distant problem but it is not. Abortions are being performed in the Commonwealth. The constitution may be an appropriate place to address this concern. I am not a lawyer and therefore will not offer specific wordings. However, an amendment that extends the right to life to the unborn may be effective. Given the trend of U.S. Courts in the past decade, an amendment to the effect that the constitution does not provide a right to abortion, similar to the Hatch amendment that was recently before the U.S. Congress may also be of value. However it is done, we must do something to prevent an increase in the use of abortion in the CNMI. I ask you as a delegate to consider how this can best be done through the medium of the convention and to act as is appropriate. This is a life and death issue, of highest priority. Please address it in the convention.

Two other concerns that everyone speaks of are economic development and social development. One miracle cure for our economic ills that is brought up regularly is casino gambling. As I have stated many times, casino gambling would bring only problems to the Commonwealth. In itself, gambling is not immoral. If certain conditions are met, gambling is a morally neutral activity. Casino gambling however, is integrally related to a range of other activities that are not neutral, such as prostitution and organized crime. If Atlantic City is to be used as an example, casino gambling has had little positive economic impact on that community. Money stays in the hotels and leaves

to corporate headquarters elsewhere, rarely finding its way into the cash registers of local businessmen. It is the local businessmen who must pay the bulk of the taxes to support the police however, with little help from the gambling industry. While leaving the issue of less pernicious forms of gambling open for further discussion, it may be appropriate to consider an amendment prohibiting the introduction of casino gambling in the Commonwealth.

It is not my place to give you a laundry list of amendments I would like to see in the constitution. However, it is my duty to remind you of the moral teachings of the Church and to urge you to work toward building a truly Christian community in the Commonwealth. From this perspective I have offered my statements on abortion and gambling. Beyond this, I ask you to take a close look at all of the issues discussed in the convention and brought to you by your friends and neighbors. Judge the morality of these issues. Meditate on how these issues will bring us closer or further away from the realization of Christ's Kingdom in the Marianas. Then act in the best interests of the people of these islands.

You and the other delegates will be in my prayers.

Your servant in Christ,

  
+Tomas A. Camacho  
Bishop of Chalan Kanoa

TAC/lmb