

# Philippine church leaders say crucifixion reenactments are unnecessary

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April 6, 2012

Baguio City, Philippines (ENInews)--On Good Friday each year in some areas of the Philippines, Christians reenact the crucifixion as a sign of repentance or thanks. But Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders say the practice is unnecessary.

"Our identification with Christ should be internal...more about spiritual renewal," Cebu Archbishop Jose Palma of the Catholic Bishops Conference told the church-run Radio Veritas.

Palma issued the statement after reports said some 20 people would be nailed to the cross on Good Friday in the villages of Cutud, Santa Lucia and San Juan, all in the Pampanga province in northern Philippines, while another would be crucified in the village of Duljo-Fatima in Cebu City in central Philippines.

Ruben Enaje, a 51-year-old carpenter, has been leading real-life crucifixions on Good Friday for the past 26 years because he survived without a scratch when he accidentally fell from the third floor of a building he and other workers were constructing.

"This is my way of showing gratitude to the Lord," he told the *Business Mirror* newspaper.

Palma said the Catholic Church neither judges nor condemns the practice. "But we discourage it," he said.

Bishop Marino Inong of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines said he has no quarrel with those who crucify themselves as penitence. "But I see this is as a form of fanaticism and fatalism, which blurs the essence of real Christian faithfulness," he said.

Fr. Rex Reyes, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, said the crucifixion rite should be banned.

Instead, "we must reflect on the message of the resurrection, which is one of victory over death and the forces of death, including the wanton loss of lives as only God who gives life can take away life," said Reyes.

Bishop Moises Chungalao of the Free Believers Fellowship, a Pentecostal group, said that reenacting Christ's crucifixion is a misplaced interpretation of his admonition to take up his cross and follow him. "What he meant was self-denial of our selfish desires," he said.