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Headline: Catholics urged to join Earth Hour 'to give nature a rest'

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MANILA, Philippines—Several Catholic dioceses all over the country are joining the annual observance of Earth Hour, with bishops calling on the faithful to "give nature a little rest."

In an interview over Church-run Radyo Veritas, Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle said that Earth Hour would serve to remind us "that we are God's stewards in caring for nature."

"We will rest from using electricity so that we can give nature a little rest ... Let us show the Lord our hope, humility and care for the environment," Tagle said.

Earth Hour's observance during the Lenten Season should be a reminder of the importance of preserving the environment, said Cagayan de Oro Archbishop Antonio Ledesma.

Last year, CDO and nearby Iligan City were ravaged by killer flashfloods that have been blamed on rampant illegal logging in the area.

"This is our Lord's Gospel for all of us, that we should really be aware of protecting the integrity of creation. In celebrating Earth Hour, we should also be aware that all of us are linked together in this climate change issue and we should do our part to help by ensuring the balance of nature and restoring the integrity of creation," Ledesma said

Catholics in Palawan should use Earth Hour to meditate on the effects of the continuing exploitation of natural resources, particularly mining, said the province's bishop Pedro Arigo.

"Our problem with mining is that only the foreign and local investors and their employees are benefiting," Arigo said. "If we look at the bigger picture, (we'd see that) the benefits we get (are) not commensurate (to) the social and environmental cost. Worse, (those) who shoulder the effect on the environment are the farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and ordinary (folk)."

"Through Earth Hour, let pay attention to ecological conversion (and) on how we treat the environment, which is being over-exploited," Arigo added.

While Malolos Bishop Jose Oliveros and Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco have said that their respective dioceses will observe Earth Hour, Basilan Bishop Martin Jumoad said Catholics in the province will no longer observe the event because of the regular brownouts that they have been suffering.

"We will no longer observe [Earth Hour] since the power is always out (in our area). Our sacrifices are too much here. It's as if it's always Earth Hour," Jumoad said.

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