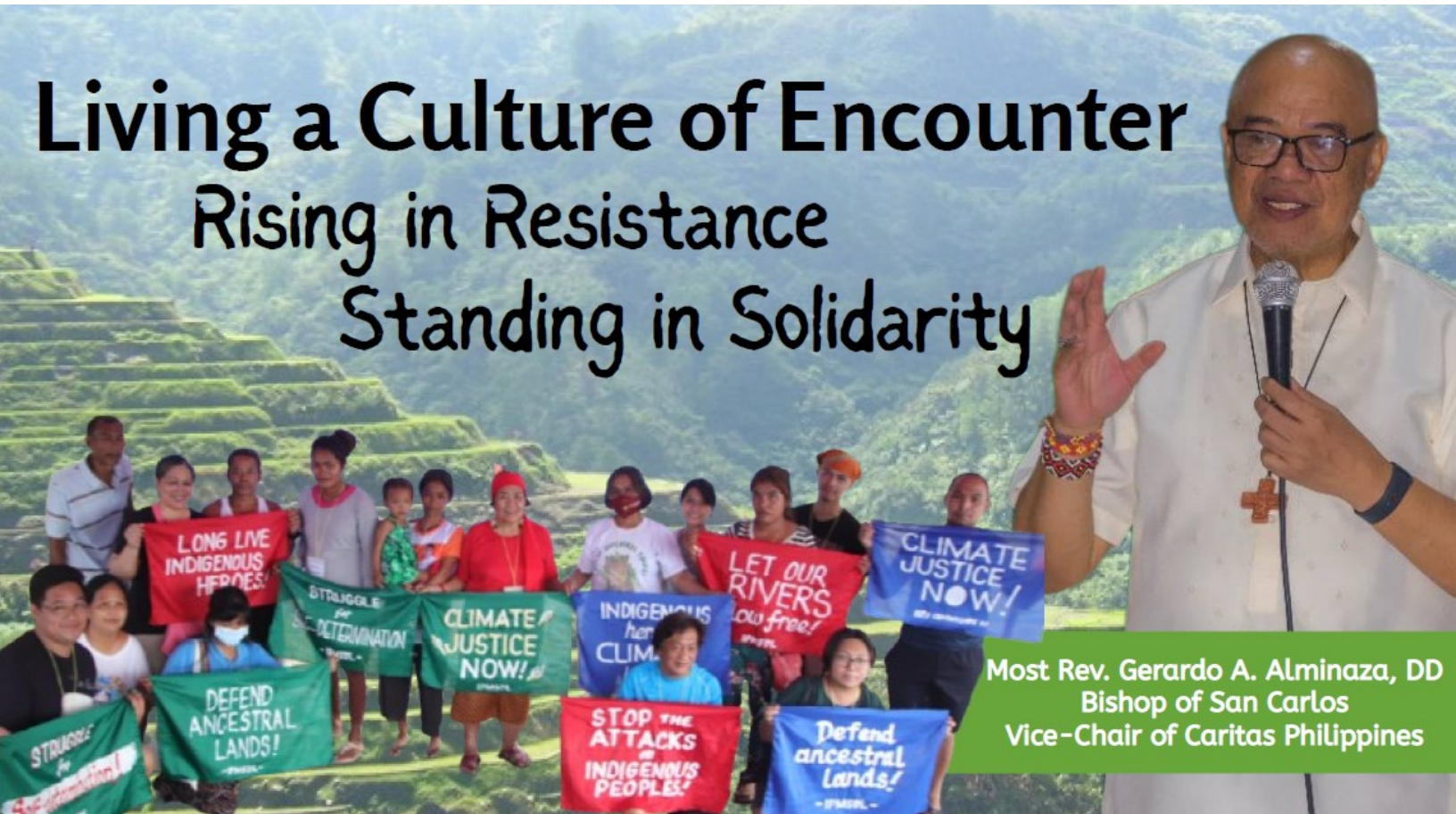


Living a Culture of Encounter: Rising in Resistance, Standing in Solidarity!

Living a Culture of Encounter Rising in Resistance Standing in Solidarity



Most Rev. Gerardo A. Alminaza, DD
Bishop of San Carlos
Vice-Chair of Caritas Philippines

Presented by:

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Bishop, Diocese of San Carlos
Vice-President Caritas Philippines

During the:

Forum on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
Organized by Katribu Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas
August 9, 2025 (Saturday) | 10:00AM to 11:30AM
Maryhill School of Theology, #62 14th Street corner Gilmore Avenue, Quezon City

Introduction

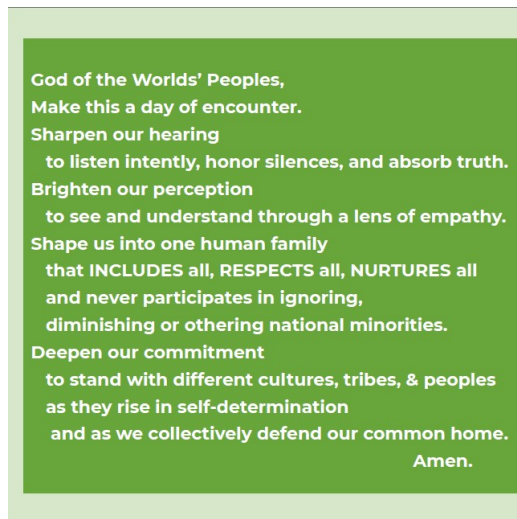
Mabuhay! Mabuhi! Manbiagtako am-in (Igorot)! Matagu-tagu taku losan (Kalinga)! Allos kow (Welcome ((not Live Long)) in Ubo Manobo)! A blessed International Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples to us all.

May I invite our IP brothers and sisters to stand. Thank you for this day! Today, we celebrate YOU! IP advocates and rights defenders, shall we join them?

Let us pray.

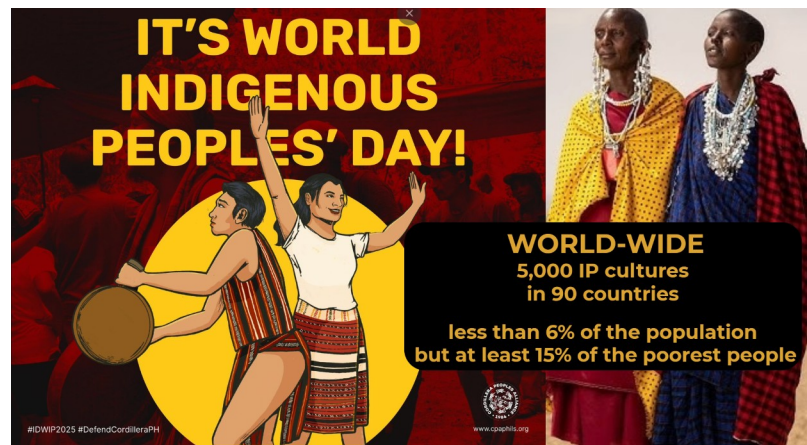
God of the Worlds' Peoples,
Make this a day of encounter.
Sharpen our hearing
 to listen intently, honor silences,
and absorb truth.
Brighten our perception
 to see and understand through a
 lens of empathy.
Shape us into one human family that
 INCLUDES all, **RESPECTS** all,
 NURTURES all
 and never participates in
 ignoring, diminishing or
 othering national minorities.
Deepen our commitment
 to stand with different cultures, tribes, and peoples
 as they rise in self-determination
 and as we collectively defend our common home.
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

You may be seated.



Encounter of Cultures

The United Nations says that there are 5,000 different Indigenous Peoples' cultures in more than 90 countries around the world. With approximately 476 million IPs worldwide, Indigenous Peoples' groups are less than 6% of the world's population, but account for at least 15% of the world's poorest people.¹



¹(Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 30) https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

This Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples is a call to RENEWAL! A challenge to do better — and to be better.

Let me begin with an idea from Pope Francis of good memory.

In his encyclical Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis encourages us that the way to **restore hope** and **bring about renewal** is through a **CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER**.

He said it this way:

“[I]t is closeness; it is the culture of encounter. Isolation, no; closeness, yes. Culture clash, no; culture of encounter, yes.”²

HOPE will be found through engaging with others.

This is surely so.

We can unite, when we understand.

And the only way we will truly understand is through REAL and LIVING interconnectedness.

HOPE comes in living TOGETHER in ENCOUNTERING one another.



Indigenous Peoples Overview

We have many cultures in the Philippines. One indicator is our many languages. According to Ethnologue, the Philippines has 175 living languages, of which only 9 are non-indigenous.³

KATRIBU, our gracious host for today, reports:

Indigenous peoples belong to **110 ethnolinguistic groups**

Estimated at **14 million people** (Note 2020 census had error in ethnic identification.)

or more than **10% of the population** are distributed across the country.

Mindanao 63%

Luzon 34%

Visayas 3%



²

³ PASTORAL LETTER ON THE PLIGHT OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (IP) COMMUNITIES ESPECIALLY THE MOLBOG AND CAGAYANEN IN PALAWAN, CBCP, 6 August 2025)

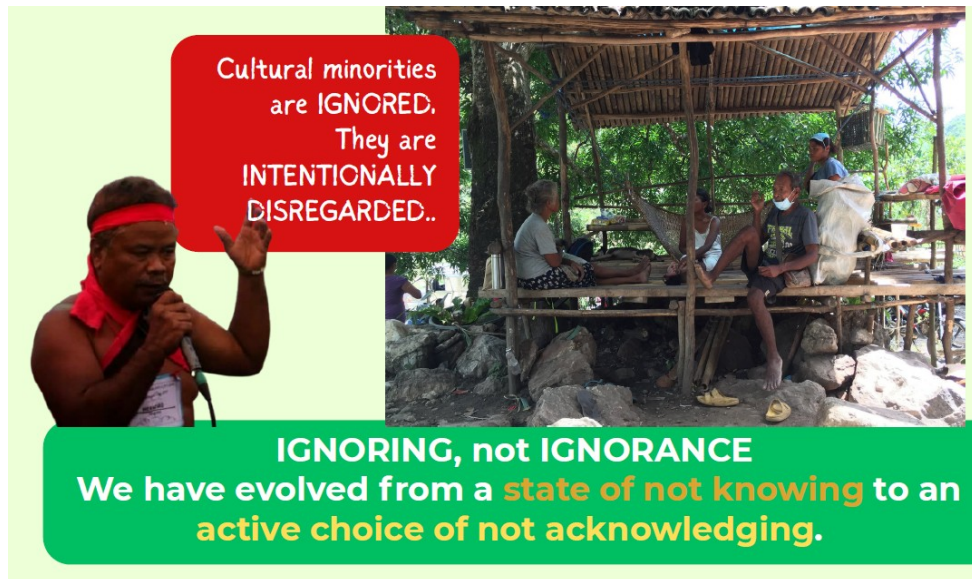
On the island of Negros, where I am from, we have at least 5 ethnic groups:
Ati. Ata. Ituman Bukidnon. Magahat Bukidnon. Carol-anon Bukidnon.

I would want to tell you that we, in Negros, have done well...
That we have ENCOUNTERED the Ati, the Ata, the Bukidnon...
That we have learned, lifted up, and celebrated their distinct cultural traditions.
**We have work to do. Too often, we only take notice when they have problems.
Worse, we notice them, when a dance is desired for a cultural festival or tourism project.**

IGNORE-ance [IGNORING not IGNORANCE]

Our problem in Negros is like most of the Philippines, or even the world. It isn't ignorance—a word with Latin roots meaning not knowing. We know IP cultures exist.

It is **IGNORE-ance**. We **IGNORE**—a word that has developed to mean that we **INTENTIONALLY DISREGARD** something or someone.
We have evolved from a state of not knowing to an active choice of not acknowledging.



In essence, our Indigenous Peoples are marginalized.
We **IGNORE** their cultures. The majority **IGNORES** cultural minorities because it benefits us... it is to our advantage, our gain, our comfort.

We **IGNORE** their suffering.
The Church has been complicit. This was included in a pastoral statement that the CBCP released just a few days ago:

"[W]e are reminded of the enduring wounds of historical injustices, particularly the disturbing land dispossession suffered by our indigenous peoples. The Church acknowledges its past complicity and seeks to redress these wrongs, guided by the call to 'pursue justice, and only justice... that you may live and inherit the land' (Dt. 16:20)."⁴

⁴ PASTORAL LETTER ON THE PLIGHT OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (IP) COMMUNITIES ESPECIALLY THE MOLBOG AND CAGAYANEN IN PALAWAN, CBCP, 6 August 2025)

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CBCP PASTORAL LETTER, 6 August 2025



Project ELIMINATION

Ruby Dunstan of the Lil'wat People in South-Western British Columbia (Canada) explains it clearly:

“All over the world, indigenous peoples have been and are being systematically destroyed in the name of development. Languages are being eradicated, family relationships are being stretched and broken, traditional values are belittled, and as a last resort, genocide is being practiced. What is by now a well-oiled and finely-tuned machine of elimination of indigenous people and thoughts has been practiced at least since the dawn of that day called Industrial Development.

*“**Why?** Because the perspectives and philosophies of indigenous peoples—our traditional rules and laws—would never allow this stripping of resources from our traditional homelands on this planet at a net cost to future generations and to life itself.”⁵*



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Ruby Dunstan of the Lil'wat People in South-Western British Columbia

5 (<https://www.ethnologue.com/country/PH/>)

Development Aggression and Plunder

This CANCEL CULTURE and DEVELOPMENT AGGRESSION and PLUNDER are so real — especially here in the Philippines.. Again, thanks to Katribu, I share an overview:

MINING

49% or 449,576.81 hectares of the total mining projects overlap with or are within ancestral domains⁶

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DAMS AND ENERGY PROJECTS

- 5 energy development priority projects of **BBM's "Build Better More"** are located within ancestral lands, covering a combined area of 143,0000 hectares.
- 101 hydropower projects are lined up or installed across the Cordillera
- Other dams projects span the country

DAMS and ENERGY PROJECTS

-5 energy development priority projects of BBM's "Build Better More" are located within ancestral lands, covering a combined area of 143,0000 hectares.

- Chico River Irrigation Pump Project
- Balog-balog Multi Purpose Project,
- Wawa Bulk Water Supply Project,
- New Centennial Water System Kaliwa Dam
- Jalaur River Multi Purpose Project II.

-101 hydropower projects are lined up or installed across the Cordillera.
-Other dams projects span the country.



AGRIBUSINESS PLANTATION

-At least 320,000 hectares of ancestral lands are controlled by giant, local and foreign corporations (mono-crops of banana, pineapple, oil palm, bioethanol, coffee and others), displacing or adversely affecting IP communities, especially in Mindanao.

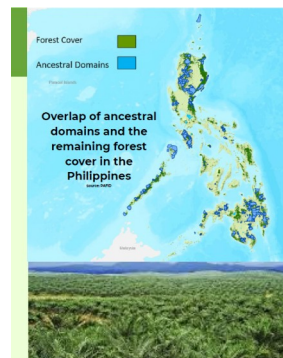
-Palm Oil Plantation agreements with foreign countries and local corporations increasing, like HAPI in Candoni, Negros.

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-DENR pushed the Sustainable Forest Land Management Agreement that disproportionately favors large corporations to manage up to 40,000 hectares.

-Palm Oil Plantation agreements with foreign countries and local corporations are increasing, like HAPI in Candoni, Negros.



TOURISM PROJECTS

Threats of land dispossession

-**Molbog** and **Cagayanen** in Maria Hangin Island, Bugsuk, Balabac, Palawan vs San Miguel Corporation luxury resort

-**Ayta** in Capas, Tarlac, Pampanga, vs Clark Dev. Corp. (CDC) & Bases Conversion Dev. Authority

-**Ati** in Boracay, Aklan vs multiple claimants

TOURISM PROJECTS

Ecotourism threatens land dispossession of IP communities

- the **Molbog in Mariahangin Island in Bugsuk, Balabac, Palawan** is fighting back against the San Miguel Corporation's development of a luxury resort within their remaining ancestral land.
- The **Ayta in Capas Tarlac, Pampanga**, Fighting against the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) and the Bases Conversion Development Authority
- the **Ati in Boracay, Aklan**, threatened with displacement due to luxury resort



⁶ PASTORAL LETTER ON THE PLIGHT OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (IP) COMMUNITIES ESPECIALLY THE MOLBOG AND CAGAYANEN IN PALAWAN, CBCP, 6 August 2025)

Rising in Resistance

The GOODNEWS is twofold:

First, not all Civil Society Organizations and Churches have been **IGNORING** our Indigenous Peoples.

In fact, many of the legal cases faced by Church and CSO leaders (the bad news) are precisely because of their **SOLIDARITY** with Indigenous Peoples.

Let me highlight just a few from the Church:

+ **UCCP Haran Center** is facing confiscation proceedings under the Terrorism Financing Law because of their extensive ministry with bakwet lumad

+ **Rural Missionaries of the Philippines** - North Mindanao Region was attacked because of their EU funded “Healing the Hurts Project” which was for Indigenous Peoples and Peasants

+ **Rev. Glofie Baluntong**, United Methodist Church had Anti-Terrorism Act charges dismissed, but is still under trial for attempted murder charges, after her mission

work with the Mangyans in Mindoro

+++++

Second, Indigenous Peoples, many in the room with us here today, are leading the **CAUSE**.

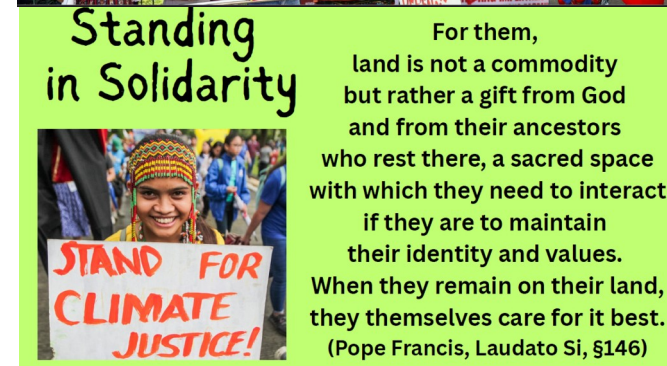
They rise not only for themselves, but for the environment.

For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best.⁷ (from Laudato Si)

Their deep **CONNECTION** and **CONVICTION** that **LAND IS LIFE** reverberates loudly, from one ethnic group to another, from the countryside to the cities, from ancestral lands to cathedrals, schools, and halls of power.

We, non-Indigenous Peoples, have fallen short in nurturing a **CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER**. But, many of our IP siblings have persevered.

⁷ Wisdom of the Elders, ed. Knudtson, Peter and Suzuki, David, p 188)



They brought their **CULTURE FORWARD IN ENCOUNTER!**

They are the ones taking the leading.

They invite us into solidarity. They summon us to the fight.

They rise in resistance and defend the lands and the environment.

They demonstrate what Pope Francis calls in Laudato Si “Intergenerational Solidarity.”⁸

Initiating encounters, Indigenous Peoples **RESTORE HOPE!** Your bring us all to renewal.



Initiating encounters with us, *YOU (pointing to Indigenous People in the room)* **restore hope.**
YOU bring us all to **renewal**.

The **Ati** in Boracay are accompanied by the Daughters of Charity.

The **Molbog** and **Cagayanen** in Bugsuk have Bp Pabillo and Bp Mesiona supporting their cause.

The **Magahat Bukidnon** in Candoni, Negros are networking with the Negrosanon Initiative for Climate and the Environment (NICE), One Negros Ecumenical Council, and others.

Militarism and Terror

Our culture of encounter will continue to be important as we face militarism together.

There are places in the Philippines, where rising in resistance is very difficult these days.

Harassment and surveillance, red-tagging operations, so-called ‘surrenderer’ programs, the control of LGUs by NTF-ELCAC: all these make defending the rights of poor communities

very difficult.

Save Our Schools in Mindanao has reported:

21 Lumad schools destroyed,
10 incidents of aerial bombing
and Lumad children criminalized.

In many far-flung communities peace initiatives are often blocked by militarization.

More than 100 political prisoners across the country are Indigenous Peoples. One IP leader and two IP advocates are among the disappeared. Many have been extra-judicially killed.

This is not just injustice—it is a spiritual wound.

Let us remember:

These are our *kapwa*—our sacred neighbors.

The government files charges of supporting terrorism left and right; yet, the communities struggling to defend the land and their rights and those who help them are the ones afraid and pushing back fear.

On Negros Island, we will continue to stand with the Magahat/Maghat farmers in Candoni against the land-grabbing of Hacienda Asia Plantation Inc. (HAPI). In fact, I am the elected Chair of the Wisdom Council of the Negrosanon Initiative for Climate and the Environment (NICE). NICE's leaders and members come from various youth groups in Negros Occidental, who gave strong support in our anti-coal campaign in San Carlos. We have written letters seeking clarification and asking for meetings with government entities on the operational structure and accountability of HAPI. We are not happy with HAPI! We will stand with our IP neighbors!

MILITARISM & TERROR

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it is a spiritual wound.**

**Let us remember:
These are our kapwa—
our sacred neighbors.**



Stand Up in Solidarity: DREAM IN HOPE

In the CBCP's National Synodal Implementation Framework it says:

**We dream of a Church where
everyone belongs, and no one is
invisible.**

We STAND IN SOLIDARITY
TOGETHER!

Our "closeness" restores HOPE.
In working TOGETHER, in including
EVERYONE, we are renewed
and will be strengthened to ACT for
JUSTICE!



**We dream of a Church
where everyone belongs,
and no one is invisible.**

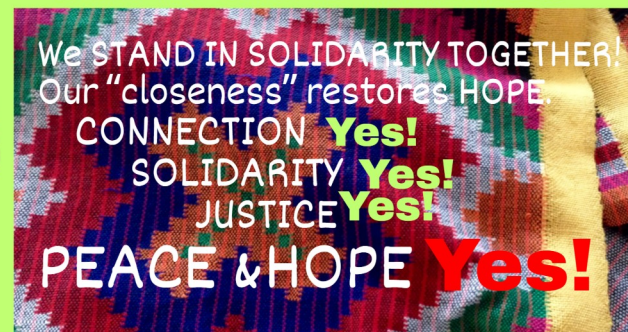
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CONNECTION **Yes!**

SOLIDARITY **Yes!**

JUSTICE **Yes!**

PEACE & HOPE Yes!



CONNECTION-YES!
SOLIDARITY-YES!
JUSTICE-YES!
HOPE- YES!

Our solidarity encounters must continue—
especially with Indigenous Peoples
and the red-tagged,
the falsely accused and detained,
the disappeared and their families,
and all who protect the environment
and defend the land for generations to come.

Hope is not a feeling. It is a discipline.
It is a muscle we build.
A seed we plant. A tree we tend.
A path we walk.
We **restore hope** by standing in solidarity.
Let's make everyone VISIBLE
Let's keep working together! Amen.

**HOPE is not a feeling.
It is a discipline.
It is a muscle we build.
A seed we plant. A tree we tend.
A path we walk.**

**Let's make
everyone
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