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Church election monitor closes its vote count

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Nuns help sort out the election returns

MANILA -- The Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) is to close its parallel count of election results on May 19, with Benigno Aquino III leading the presidential race and Jejomar Binay in the lead for vice president.

The accredited poll monitoring group said it will shut down its command center at Pope Pius XII Center in Manila after receiving 90.2 percent of the votes transmitted directly from voting machines.

Just after noon on May 18, PPCRV had counted results from 68,980 of 76,475 clustered precincts and manually counted more than 50 percent of the election returns.

Aquino continued to lead with 13,841,583 votes, and vice presidential candidate Jejomar Binay was still ahead with 13,491,946 votes.

PPCRV media communications director Ana De Villa-Singson said activities at the command center will cease after 11 p.m. on May 19.

She said the group would transfer to a smaller room at Pope Pius XII Center to continue receiving data transmitted from the precinct count optical scan (PCOS) machine.

Volunteers, mostly nuns, were to have stopped their count on May 18, but a surge of election returns arrived then.

PPCRV has reported 29 discrepancies between the electronically transmitted data and the election returns.

These discrepancies were ?too minor? to conclude the polls were rigged, PPCRV chairperson Henrietta De Villa said at a press conference on May 19.

?There?s no pattern [of poll cheating]. We?ve found no systematic attempts of fraud. If there was any attempt, then they failed to pull it off,? De Villa said.

She stressed, however, that ?accusations backed by evidence must be looked into and thoroughly investigated.?

The discrepancies included candidates getting zero votes in four precincts. In a Taguig City school, one candidate even got a minus one (-1) vote.

Article from Union of Catholic Asian News: **www.ucanews.com** [1]

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