

Part of the military and police forces tasked to secure Pope Francis when he visits Philippines on January 15 to 19 are non-catholic soldiers. And they are proud and happy having been chosen as part of the close in security teams for the Pontiff.

Among them is Capt. Erwin Dumaghan, 35, a Protestant, and a member of the 8th Philippine Contingent to the Golan Heights which was supposed to relieve the 7th PCGH which was ordered withdrawn due to intensifying conflict in the area.

"Religion will not be a barrier in our service as part of the security detail of the Pope," Dumaghan, who has been in the service for 11 years, told the state-run Philippine News Agency (PNA).

1st Lt. Bahnarin Camsa, 33, a Muslim from Cotabato City in Mindanao, said he believes that religion will not be a problem among soldiers given the job to guard against any threat to the leader of the Roman Catholics.

"It is an honor just the same to be part of the Pope's security. I just hope that Pope Francis will inspire all Filipinos to join us in the path to peace," Camsa told PNA.

Camsa was assigned twice as security detail of President Benigno S. Aquino III during his visit to Masbate City and Zamboanga City.

Dumaghan and Camsa were also assigned to the contingent that secured the Feast of the Black Nazarene last Jan. 9.

In that religious event, crowd control was top priority.

As the ranking spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church, many people, especially the

devout, look to Pope Francis for spiritual guidance and inspiration.

Another member of Pope Francis' security contingent, Major Rodelio Villamor, 34, a native of Dagupan City, Pangasinan, said the Pontiff's visit is huge blessing for the country.

"This is a huge blessing for us as Catholics. It is an honor to be part of our Holy Father's security," he told PNA.

Villamor was recently assigned to provide security for the Feast of the Black Nazarene last Jan. 9.

From Quirino Grandstand at the Rizal Park to Quiapo Church, he witnessed the dangers that came with controlling millions of people gathering in an event.

Villamor also said that the Pope's visit has its own challenges.

"The security of Pope Francis is very challenging, but this will be a fulfilling experience as a Catholic, to know that our Holy Father recognizes his followers in the Philippines," Villamor, a devout Catholic and father of two, said.

Organizers of the visit have estimated that about six million people are coming to see Pope Francis.