Overseas Filipino Workers and Catholic Charismatic Communities:
Partners in Evangelization

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Migration has been and will always be part of the human story. However, in recent times, cases of forced migrations have increased, with migrants sometimes becoming victims of injustice and the heightened intensity of the conflicts brought about by migration. These and other pressing issues of migration continue to challenge the Church to reflect and come up with a Theology of Migration, something that has been an ongoing reflection. In fact, the phenomenon of migration is one of the six issues "which in recent decades have challenged the Church and require an adequate response if they are to become places for the witness of Christians who are called to transform them with the proclamation of the Gospel," as stated in the *Lineamenta* for the Synod of Bishops on "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith."

Data show that the Philippines is one of the countries that has the most number of migrants abroad and that poverty is the usual reason why many Filipinos risk leaving family and homeland in the hope of finding greener pastures. Like many migrants, Overseas Filipino Workers are not spared from conflicts and injustice, yet they courageously persevere. They are often the face of love that is willing to sacrifice for the beloved, of joy amidst suffering, of hope and faith in God, especially in those parts of Asia where freedom of religion is unrecognized. This realization inspired the idea that Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have the potential to

be evangelizers in Asia. This inspiration, further kindled by the theme of the Synod of Bishops, "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith," which Pope Benedict XVI announced during the culmination of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, started the quest of this paper. This paper aims to discover how the OFWs can transform their experience of migration into a religious experience that can inspire them to serve the Church.

For this inner transformation to happen, the OFWs need the pastoral care of the Church. The Church, however, acknowledges the vacuum resulting from a lack of pastors. "The harvest is plenty, but laborers are few," it appears. This paper explores how Catholic Charismatic Communities can help fill this vacuum. It begins with an overview of the Church's renewed zeal for Evangelization in Asia through which the phenomenon of migration and the Church's response to this "sign of the times" may be viewed. The next two sections discuss the gifts and challenges of the Overseas Filipino Workers and the Catholic Charismatic Communities, respectively. Finally, it concludes with an analysis of how the gifts and challenges of OFWs and Charismatic Communities complement one another and make this partnership for mission possible. This section also includes some recommendations. Thus, this paper hopes to inspire Overseas Filipino Workers and Catholic Charismatic Communities to discover their gifts and use them and to exhort them to allow God to transform the challenges they are facing so that they can respond more generously to the urgent call for a new evangelization.

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Evangelization in Asia

In adopting the theme, "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith," the recent Synod of Bishops renews the Church's consciousness of its important mandate to bring the Good News to the ends of the earth. When speaking of evangelization, Asia comes to mind easily, for it was in Asia that Christianity was born, and yet Christianity remains a minority in this region. In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI expressed his desire for Asia:

> I pray ... that this Continent, in which the great events of salvation history took place, may encounter anew the living Lord, the Word made flesh, in the context of its rich variety of cultures. Truly, Asia is a Continent of deep spirituality and mysticism, closely attuned to the mystery of God, and for this reason, it constitutes fertile ground where the Word of God can be sown and bring forth a rich harvest.[1]

The religious dimension, however, is not the only focus of the Church's mission in Asia. The Church has also seen the needs of the growing number of migrants in this region. Therefore, the mission of the Church in Asia may be viewed like two sides of a coin. On one hand, there is the care and protection of the migrants, and on the other, the sharing of the Gospel, especially to those who have not heard it.

In April 1974, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) held its First Plenary Assembly with

1 Benedict XVI, Letter to Cardinal Paul Poupard on the Occasion of the Pan-Asiatic Meeting of Members and Consultors of the Pontifical Council for Culture and Presidents of The National Episcopal Commissions for Culture, 15 November, 2006, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20061115_pan-asiatic-meeting_en.html (accessed 27 November 2012).

the theme: "Evangelization and Modern Day Asia." The final statement of the bishops was a reiteration of the urgent call to evangelize Asia:

> It is our belief that only in and through Christ and His Gospel, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit ... that our peoples will finally find the full meaning we all seek. ... It is because of this that the preaching of Jesus Christ and His Gospel to our peoples in Asia becomes a task which today assumes urgency, a necessity and magnitude unmatched in the history of our Faith.[2]

Twenty-five years later, Asia has undergone many transformations and modernization, and Pope John Paul II wrote his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA). The document pointed out the different realities confronting the peoples in Asia that the Church needs to pay attention to if it were to evangelize them. One of these realities is migration. Recognizing the "multiple philosophical, theological and pastoral challenges" facing the Church and "[h]er task ... made more difficult by the fact of her being a minority," the Church's gaze upon Asia remains steadfast:

> Whatever the circumstances, the Church in Asia finds herself among peoples who display an intense yearning for God. The Church knows that this yearning can only be fully satisfied by Jesus Christ, the Good News of God for all the nations. The Synod Fathers were very keen that this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation should focus attention on this yearning and encourage the Church in Asia to proclaim with vigor in word and deed that Jesus Christ is the Saviour.[3]

2 FABC, Evangelization in Modern Day Asia: The First Plenary Assembly, 22-27 April 1974, Statements and Recommendations, 3d rev. ed. (Hong Kong/Manila: Office of the Secretary-General, 1981).

3 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia,* 6 November, 1999, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/

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Today, almost forty years since the FABC's First Plenary Assembly and, more than a decade after EA, their words still resound and call for a response. The Church remains a minority in Asia. With sixty percent of the world's total population living in Asia, the Catholic population is only three percent, or about 126 million, which is less than one percent of the 4.5 percent of the total world population of Christians.[4]

Meanwhile, migration, too, continues to be "a major social phenomenon, exposing millions of people to situations which are difficult economically, culturally and morally." [5] Moreover, the number of migrants has increased tremendously over the years, and its effects have become alarming. In all of these, the Church is aware that the "intense yearning for God" of the people in Asia remains largely unsatisfied. It is through this lens that the phenomenon of migration will be viewed. What are migrants going through that the Church is so concerned?

The Phenomenon of Migration

There have been many theories explaining the phenomenon of migration, but "no single particular theory is able to comprehensively explain its complex, many-sided character."[6] Migration can be categorized as internal or external, that is,

documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia_en.html (accessed 27 November 2012), no. 9.

4 Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA), "A Glimpse at Dialogue in Asia: 30th Anniversary First Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA)," *FABC Paper* 131 (2010): 3, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20Paper%20131.pdf (accessed 28 February 2012).

5 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no.7.

6 Victorino A. Cueto, C.Ss.R. "Out of Place: Exilic Existence in a HyperGlobalized World," in *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia*, ed. Fabio Baggio, C.S. and Agnes M. Brazal (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007), 3.

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movement within the country, from the rural to urban centers, or from one country to another; legal or illegal; temporary or permanent. The movement affects the sending countries, as well as the receiving countries, economically, socio-culturally, politically, etc. Migration has been and will always be part of the human story, but what concerns the Church are the cases of forced migrations that continue to escalate and the many stories of injustice and oppression that migrants experience. The pressing issues of migration continue to challenge the Church to reflect and develop a Theology of Migration, which has been an ongoing reflection.

First of all, migrants find themselves strangers in their new environment. Some who are lucky find welcome and are hence able to adjust and adapt easily. Many migrants, however, because they are considered foreigners and sometimes intruders, experience hostility and injustice — fraud, physical and verbal abuse, discrimination, maltreatment, and other forms of human rights violation. On top of this, there is the psycho-emotional stress of existential displacement that plagues them. According to Fr. Victorino Cueto, C.Ss.R, immigrants live in "in-between worlds" or "in the borders." Their existence is described as "an unstable identity where conflicting traditions—linguistic, social, religious, and ideological — are negotiated in order to deal with the joys and pains of living ... ."[7]

The stress experienced by migrants may be described as part of what is called "cross-cultural dynamics." The theory looks at cultures as systems. A system is a set of interrelated parts that form a complex whole. It operates in an expected way, and so when one part is missing or is not functioning

7 Ibid.

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as expected, the whole system is affected. An example of a system is the human body. When one part is ailing, the whole body feels it; and when it needs healing, other parts are necessary to bring about the healing (e.g., taking medicine for headache). Applying this framework to culture, we see the different components of culture — nationality, language, religion, family, geographic location, etc. — as a system operative in every person. When either one of these components is threatened or challenged by change, the whole "system," the whole person, in this case, goes through a discombobulating experience. This is called "cross-cultural adjustment."[8]

For migrants, the experience of cross-cultural adjustment is radical. They are uprooted from everything familiar— surroundings, language, relationships, etc. The "familiar" gives one a sense of security and stability, and even identity. Therefore, being in a different place, with different peoples, language, and culture, may threaten one's sense of identity. In this sense, migrants are in a particularly precarious situation. Aggravating factors are the threats of unjust working conditions and domestic troubles in the foreign country. These are the reasons why pastoral care for migrants has become a major concern of the Church.

When one is thrust into the unfamiliar, the immediate reaction is to look for the familiar, any semblance of "home," namely, fellow migrants with whom they can speak the same language, a restaurant where they can eat their native dishes, and for Catholics, a church. In a research conducted among migrants in London, most respondents expressed that "the Church was essential in helping them address isolation,

8 Judette Gallares, R.C., "Cross-Cultural Dynamics," (Lecture Notes, Quezon City, 2010), 2.

acting as a refuge and a 'harbor of hope and worship.'" One of the priests who was interviewed said: "The Church is a focal point for migrants to meet each other for the first time. Eucharist brings them together."[9] This holds true not only in London but elsewhere where there are migrant Catholics. In some parts of Asia, however, the celebration of the Eucharist is not easily accessible; in some States, it is even prohibited. This is the context of many Catholic migrants in Asian states where freedom of religion is unrecognized. How can the Church minister to these migrants?

The Church and Migrants

In ministering to migrants, the Church finds itself going beyond caring for the people's spiritual concerns. They get involved in their struggle for human rights in collaboration with the government and other non-government agencies. Sometimes, too, the Church needs to provide these migrants with their basic needs – shelter, food, education. In *Exsul Familia,* the "first official document of the Holy See that delineates the pastoral care of migrants globally and systematically,"[10] it was clearly stated that "the Church has to look after migrants with special care and unremitting aid."[11] Furthermore, in *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi,* the Church believes that when one cares for a migrant, one cares for Christ: "In migrants, the Church has always contemplated the image of Christ who said, 'I was a stranger, and you made me welcome' (Mt 25:35)."[12] Perhaps this is the most compelling

9 Thomas Norton, "Faithful but Vulnerable," *Tablet* 261 (2007): 6-7.
10 Antoney George Pattaparambil, "Full Participation of Catholic Migrants," in *New Evangelization and Migration*, ed. Antoney George Pattaparambil (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corp., 2012), 190.
11 Ibid., 186, quoting Pius XII, *Exsul Familia*, no. 3.
12 Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi,* 1 May 2004, Vatican

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declaration of the Church for the pastoral care of migrants, resulting in the Church's response to the need of migrants.

Exsul Familia was written in 1952. The context then was the migration flow after World War II, which ended a few years earlier. Since then, migration patterns and motivations have changed, the volume has significantly increased, and so have the problems and complications over the years. *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi,* written in 2004, recognized that the challenge of migration has become complex, saying, "[t]he challenge ... is not an easy one because many different spheres are involved: economics, sociology, politics, health, culture, and security."[13] Recommendations for the bishops and parish priests for the care of migrants are provided in the Code of Canon Law. Canon 568 states explicitly: "As far as possible, chaplains are to be appointed for those who, because of their condition of life, are not able to avail themselves of the ordinary care of parish priests, as for example, migrants, exiles, fugitives, nomads and seafarers."[14] Many dioceses and parishes have creatively responded to the challenge and have truly attended to the care of migrants. However, the Church also cannot deny that there is still much to be done.

In *New Evangelization and Migration,* Fr. Antoney Pattaparambil wrote, "Migrants are deprived of the maternal care of the Church through lack of pastors who know their situation, their family, and their personal problems."[15] This "lack of pastors" may be viewed either as a result of the

Archive, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20040514_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi_en.html. (accessed 24 September 2013), no. 12.

13 *Erga Migrantes*, no. 3.

14 *The Code of Canon Law* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983), par. 568.

15 Pattaparambil, *New Evangelization and Migration*, 187.

decline in vocations to the priesthood, or of the inadequacy of formation to produce priests who are capable and committed to pastoral work, particularly with migrants. Either way, there is a perceived vacuum in the ministry of pastoral care for migrants. In other words, "the harvest is great, and the workers are few." Aggravating this apparent vacuum created by a lack of pastors, many states in Asia where there is a large concentration of migrants do not allow freedom of religion. Thus, the risk of being apprehended is high for priests and missionaries to go in and out of the said countries, much more if they stay. How will the Church sustain and nourish the faith of these displaced and oftentimes "spiritually-hungry" communities?

This paper proposes that in this vacuum, there is a place for Catholic Charismatic Communities. More specifically, these Catholic Charismatic Communities can collaborate and create communities among Overseas Filipino Workers. Singling out Overseas Filipino Workers may sound too exclusive. However, this can be viewed as a strategy since every goal needs one or several alternatives for that matter. The next two sections discuss the gifts, needs, and challenges of Overseas Filipino Workers and Catholic Charismatic Communities, respectively. This paper aims to show how their gifts and challenges complement each other providentially and how they can be effective partners in evangelization.

Faith Challenges for Overseas Filipino Workers

The term Overseas Filipino Worker or OFW is defined in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 and amended in Republic Act no. 10022 as follows:

> (ii) Overseas Filipino Workers or Migrant Workers – refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged, or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a citizen or onboard a vessel navigating the foreign seas other than a government ship used for military or non-commercial purposes, or on an installation located offshore or on the high seas. A "person to be engaged in a remunerated activity" refers to an applicant worker who has been promised or assured employment overseas.

The broader term, Overseas Filipinos or OFs is used to include "other Filipino nationals and their dependents abroad … regardless of legal status."[16]

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration estimates the number of Filipinos overseas at almost 8.6 million worldwide in 2009.[17] By 2011, the number has increased to 10.5 million.[18] In Asia alone, the number of overseas Filipinos is estimated at 3.5 million in 2009[19] and 4.3 million in 2011.[20]

Since this paper proposes that OFWs can be made partners with the Church in evangelization in Asia, this paper will limit itself to documented OFWs with legal status for simplicity of data. Besides, legal impediments may get in the way of missionary activity. However, this does not mean "illegal" migrants will be excluded in eventual evangelization

16 Country Migration Report of the Philippines 2013 / Implemented by the Scalabrini Migration Center with the International Organization for Migration; In partnership with the Government of the Philippines (Makati, Philippines, International Organization for Migration: 2013).

17 Commission on Filipinos Overseas, "Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos As of December 2009" http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/Stock%20Estmate%202009.pdf (accessed 28 February 2012).

18 Country Migration Report, Table 14, 55.

19 Commission on Filipinos Overseas, "Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos," December 2009, http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/Stock%20Estmate%202009.pdf (accessed 28 February 2012).

20 Country Migration Report, Table 14, 55.

and community-building. For as Pope John Paul II said, "a migrant's irregular legal status cannot allow him/her to lose his/her dignity, since he/she is endowed with inalienable rights, which can neither be violated nor ignored."[21]

The 2009 Survey on Overseas Filipinos shows that from April to September alone, OFWs were estimated at 1.9 million, 79.3 percent of them are in Asia. [22]

> The bulk of Filipino overseas employment has always been directed towards countries in the Middle East, in particular the Gulf countries. The share of countries in the Middle East decreased in the 1990s, when East Asian destinations, in particular Taiwan Province of China, became attractive because of higher salaries. ... The list of top destination countries is always dominated by Saudi Arabia (24.4% in 2012) followed by United Arab Emirates (18.8%); Singapore (10.2%); Hong Kong, China (7.9%); and Qatar (7.8%). Seventy percent of all OFWs go to these five countries.[23]

In all these five nations, Christians are a minority. Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are Islamic states that suppress freedom of religion. Hence, there are no parish churches where Catholic OFWs can worship openly. Missionary priests are sent to these countries, but they need to conceal their identity as Catholic clergy. To complete the disguise, they even have to take on regular jobs like everyone else. Some OFWs share how they would secretly celebrate the Eucharist in private homes, often in the guise of a birthday

21 John Paul II, *Undocumented Migrants: Message for World Migration Day 1996*, 25 July 1995, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/migration/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_25071995_undocumented_migrants_en.html (accessed 18 March 2013).

22 Ibid.

23 Country Migration Report, 65.

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party. They would even have a birthday cake ready so that in case the police came to inspect, they would have something to show them. Some OFWs, who have no access to these gatherings, find themselves in Iglesia ni Kristo or other non-Catholic communities. They share about the constant anxiety they experience over keeping their Bible and other religious symbols, which are also prohibited by the government in these countries.

In Qatar, Hong Kong, and Singapore, where there is freedom of religion, the work culture and environment in these countries sometimes make it difficult for OFWs to exercise this freedom. For instance, the lack of provision for rest days or days off from work, especially on Sundays and special feasts like Christmas and Holy Week, prevent them from joining the liturgies during important celebrations.

These are real difficulties that Catholic OFWs experience, and there are more. This does not even include the physical and sexual abuse and the unfair labor practices they encounter. Yet, they hold on to their faith. They continue to support one another. All these struggles not only show how people turn to their faith in times of need but also, how deeply embedded faith is in their psyche. Recently, it was on the news that the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Msgr. Paul Tighe, said that a huge number of Pope Francis's followers on Twitter are OFWs from the Middle East and Gulf states. [24]

The Philippines has remained predominantly Catholic amidst its non-Christian neighbors. This reality has been

24 Camille Diola, "Bulk of Pope's Twitter Followers are OFWs," *Philstar.com*, November 22, 2013, http://www.philstar.com/news-feature/2013/11/22/1259618/bulk-popes-twitter-followers-are-ofws (accessed 30 December 2013).

considered as both a grace and a responsibility. Thus, wherever they find themselves, Filipino Catholics must always remind themselves of this, especially when they are in neighboring countries. However, it is also part of this reality that many Filipino Catholics become nominal Catholics, or nominal Christians for that matter. One was born into the faith and not as a matter of choice. Being a Catholic was commonplace and, therefore, often taken for granted. In other words, the evangelizer needs to be evangelized or re-evangelized. While OFWs continue to find creative ways and means to express how important faith is to them and their stories of courage and fortitude in keeping the faith continue to inspire, the undeniable need to minister to these migrant communities' spiritual needs is also pressing. Taken from another perspective, it can be said that this need of migrants can transform their experience into a witness to their faith. For Filipinos whose faith in the Transcendent is deeply embedded in their culture, witnessing is a special vocation that comes with it.

OFWs and their Gifts for Evangelization

The call to spread the Gospel of Christ is not only for pastors and missionaries who minister to migrants but also for migrants as well. Since *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi,* the instructions of the Church were not only intended to inform and encourage the faithful to respond to the pastoral needs of migrants, but also "to lead [migrants themselves] towards the transformation of their migration experience not only into an opportunity to grow in Christian life but also an occasion of new evangelization and mission."[25] For Pope Benedict XVI, "[t]he present time ... calls upon the Church to

25 Pattaparambil, *New Evangelization and Migration*, 203.

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embark on a new evangelization also in the vast and complex phenomenon of human mobility. This calls for an intensification of her missionary activity both in the regions where the Gospel is proclaimed for the first time and in countries with a Christian tradition."[26] The Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate, too, encouraged the bishops to "[u]se the mobility and migration of the faithful as an opportunity to spread the Gospel of Christ."

Migrants, because of their providential geographical location, the gift of their experience, and their faith, are agents of evangelization in a special way. They have the potential to bring the Good News to the people of Asia through the witness of their lives, in performing their jobs or in their personal encounters with people.

There are many OFWs who are praised by their employers and co-workers, thus giving Filipinos a good reputation – caregivers, nurses, domestic helpers, engineers, factory workers, cab drivers, seafarers, etc. who do their work every day with skill and integrity, though they seldom make it to the news. They are the reason why Filipinos came to be known worldwide as a joyful people, dedicated and honest, and resilient in the face of difficulty.

Unfortunately, what is magnified in the news are often the crimes Filipinos commit abroad, thus sometimes projecting the Filipinos as dishonest and untrustworthy. Examples of this would be Flor Contemplacion in Singapore, the drug mules in China, and Joselito Zapanta in Saudi Arabia. Whether they

26 Benedict XVI, *Migration and the New Evangelization, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2012*, 21 September 2011, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110921_world-migrants-day_en.html (accessed 18 March 2013).

are guilty or not, these news create prejudice. Prejudices create walls. Only personal encounter and witness can break these walls to tell another side of the story. This is where the OFWs potential for evangelization lies. Through their humble lives of service and friendship, they can introduce Jesus Christ to others without preaching.

The Synod on the New Evangelization provides a perspective of witnessing in regions where the Church is in the minority, it says:

> ... where Churches are free to profess their faith and live their religion, minority status is seen as an opportunity to give Christianity greater visibility, to seek avenues of involvement in the world and to work to bring about change. However, where persecution is part of the minority status, evangelization is more closely aligned to what Jesus experienced in his being faithful, even to the cross. Such a situation reveals the bond existing between evangelization and the cross. These Churches bear witness to this close association as a gift to the entire Church, a fact which these Churches should not overlook themselves. These Churches rightly serve as a reminder that evangelization cannot be measured in quantitative terms of success.[27]

This seems to say that the cross of persecution that the migrants carry can be interpreted as a gift they can use to evangelize, with the fidelity of Christ as their example. From another perspective, it can be said that *Erga Migrantes* highlights the hospitality inherent in Christians:

27 Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith,* 19 June 2012, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html (accessed 17 December 2013), no. 46.

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> that for Christians it is not all that important where they live geographically, while a sense for hospitality is natural to them. ... In the early Church, hospitality was the Christians' response to the needs of itinerant missionaries, of religious leaders in exile or on a journey, and of poor members of various communities.[28]

In a special way, this hospitality that excludes no one witnesses to other people what true Christianity is.

The cross and hospitality are two familiar experiences for migrants. The cross, not only of persecution but of alienation and loneliness among others, has been with them since they left their homes and loved ones. Hospitality, which is always volatile for foreigners, is something every migrant hopes to find. These experiences can teach them to empathize with others and have compassion not only for fellow migrants or fellow OFWs, or fellow Christians but for all. Therefore, if OFWs are to evangelize, growth in compassion is a requisite challenge. Compassion is suffering with the other, without discrimination on social status or religion. Jesus taught and lived out compassion. It is, therefore, said to be the true mark of a Christian. In as much as it is a challenge to OFWs, it is the same challenge for those who minister or would minister to them.

Catholic Charismatic Communities

The pastoral care of migrants, as pointed out previously, is not limited to their psycho-emotional and spiritual needs, but oftentimes includes financial and legal assistance also. The dioceses cannot address all these on their own, especially

28 *Erga Migrantes,* no. 9.

in countries where there are no parishes to speak of. Hence, Church and NGO collaborations have been formed. This author believes Catholic Charismatic Communities can be tapped not only in addressing the basic human needs of migrants but also their spiritual formation. A message given by Pope John Paul II at the World Meeting of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 2000 seems to affirm this. He says:

> In our world, often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God, the faith of many is sorely tested, and is frequently stifled and dies. Thus we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid, in-depth Christian formation. There is so much need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world! There is great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium. You are this providential response.[29]

How, then, can Catholic Charismatic Communities be a response to the pastoral needs of migrants? A closer look into the nature and structure of these communities and the Charismatic movement's history would be helpful.

Charismatic Renewal: History, Nature, and Structure

In the beginning, what we now know as "Charismatics"

29 John Paul II, *Message of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal,* 24 April 2000, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2000/apr-jun/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000424_catholic-charismatic-renewal_en.html (accessed 25 February 2012). Italics supplied.

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were called "Catholic Pentecostals," and the movement as "Pentecostal movement." Pentecostalism was first associated mainly with Protestant denominations, whose faith life centered on the experience of "the baptism in the Holy Spirit with its gifts and fruits, particularly the gift of tongues."[30] The "primary and normative reference of the term is to Pentecost itself,"[31] the outpouring of the Holy Spirit experienced by Jesus' disciples after his resurrection described in Acts 2.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between Pentecostal Churches and Catholic Pentecostals. Pentecostal Churches or Pentecostalism often connotes non-Catholic churches or sects.[32] The scope of this essay is limited to Catholic Pentecostals. To avoid confusion, Catholic Renewal Movement, Charismatics, or Charismatic Communities shall be used to refer to Catholic Pentecostals from here on. "The shift from 'Pentecostal' to 'charismatic' reflects the fact that baptism in the Spirit and glossolalia are understood within the framework of the sacramental life of the Church, rather than as forces which serve to separate Catholic charismatics from other Church members."[33]

Understanding the Catholic Renewal Movement's presence in the Church would not be complete without revisiting its history, which began with what is now known as the "Duquesne Weekend." It was in 1966 when some members of the faculty of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, all lay

30 Kevin Ranaghan and Dorothy Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals* (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), 257.

31 Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C., *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1971), 31.

32 *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia,* ed. Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskas (Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1991), 745.

33 *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, rev. and exp. ed., 2004, "Charismatic Movement," by Mary Barbara Agnew, C.P.P.S., ed. Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 151.

and Catholic, "were drawn together in a period of deep prayer and discussion about the vitality of their faith life ... they were concerned with problems of renewal in the Church." They were involved in various apostolic activities, and were men of prayer, yet they still felt "emptiness, a lack of dynamism, a sapping of strength in their lives of prayer and action." They felt that "pervading awareness" of living with Jesus, the risen Lord, "here and now," was missing.[34] They felt they needed animation, a powerful experience, to renew their faith life.

Inspired by the accounts of the disciples' experience of Pentecost, these men began to gather together and pray to the Holy Spirit, to "renew in them all the graces of their baptism and confirmation." They prayed the prayer, "Come Holy Spirit" – the sequence for the liturgy of Pentecost Sunday, for each other each day from then on. As they prayed, they started to read the New Testament again, particularly the accounts of the life of the early Church. This filled them with the expectation that Christ's Spirit would come and bring about the renewal they sought. Their expectations led to providential events, including attending various Charismatic prayer meetings where they met people who inspired them in their faith. "By February of 1967, the four Catholics from Pittsburgh had received baptism in the Holy Spirit. In great joy, they began to witness quietly among close friends."[35] From then on, the Catholic Renewal movement has spread and has animated local churches worldwide.

Charismatic Communities in the Philippines

In the Philippines, one of the pioneer Charismatic

34 Ranaghan and Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals*, 6-23.
35 Ibid.

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communities whose history can be traced to one of the four men from the Duquesne Weekend, is the Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon (LNP) community. LNP has been instrumental in giving birth to many charismatic communities throughout the Philippines. It has also helped in the formation of budding charismatic groups that wanted to form communities as well. Among the communities that are affiliated, or that originated from, or were assisted by LNP are: Ang Lingkod Ng Panginoon (ALNP), Couples for Christ (CFC), Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals (BCBP), Christ's Youth in Action (CYA) and Couples for Christ (CFC). Many of these communities have members who have migrated to other countries and have formed communities in these countries, while some have expanded their mission by sending missionaries overseas for evangelization work. It is interesting to note that what started LNP's mission was a prophecy they received during a weekend retreat in 1975. According to them, the Lord said:

> *Kayo ang aking Ligaya. Ang aking Ligaya ay makikilala ng buong bayan, dito sa Pilipinas at sa lahat ng aking mga tao.* (You are my joy. My joy will be known throughout the nation and among all my people.)
>
> I want you to know that you will proclaim my name not only in Manila, not only in Pasay, not only in one or two cities, not only in the Philippines but all throughout Asia.[36]

Today, the Ang Lingkod ng Panginoon (ALNP) has communities in Dubai and Singapore, while one of the

36 Ligaya ng Panginoon Website, "God's Call to Us," http://lnp.org.ph/about/gods-call-to-us/ (accessed 20 February 2012).

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prolific communities, if not the most, the Couples for Christ (CFC) is in "over 100 countries worldwide," including the Middle East. CFC has a Migrants Program, which is an "active evangelization in migration" that "seek[s] to empower migrants and families to be active witnesses of Christ to their places of work and to be active servants in the Church. It also aims to unite families in the middle of migration through the formation programs available which help address the needs brought about by the separation of the overseas worker and his/her family."[37] Given this development, how can Catholic Charismatic Communities help in the evangelization and pastoral care of migrants?

Gifts of Charismatic Communities

In general, Catholic charismatic renewal is characterized by: "spiritual awakening, renewal of communities of Christians, deeper faith-life; and . . . speaking in tongues, claims of visions, prophecy, and healing,"[38] and "imposition of hands."[39] The "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is experienced as a renewal of faith in the loving presence of the risen Christ.[40] There are three "basics of community": (1) Spiritual formation; (2) building relationships; and (3) service to the Church. [41] On the outset, all these elements seem to be the providential answer to the pastoral needs of the migrants, but a closer look

37 Couples for Christ, "Migrants Program," http://www.couplesforchristglobal.org/migrants.aspx (accessed 17 December 2013).
38 Ranaghan and Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals*, 107.
39 O'Connor, *Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*, 117.
40 Ranaghan and Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals*, 107.
41 Ligaya ng Panginoon Website, www.lnp.org.ph. Although these are very specific statements from LNP, because of its role in the history of the development of Charismatic Renewal in the Philippines, these elements can be found in many charismatic communities at present, like a thread that weaves them all together.

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into each would be necessary.

First, Spiritual formation in Charismatic Communities is about drawing the person to a personal relationship with God. The "generally prevailing image of God. . . is that of a loving, caring, and providing God. . . that God will take care of their needs and protect them in times of need." [42] A member is initiated into the Charismatic spirituality through a 10-week course called Christian Life Program, (or Life in the Spirit Seminar in some communities). Spiritual formation agenda are also incorporated in common liturgical celebrations and important events such as birthdays, weddings, etc. Each member is assigned to a pastoral leader; therefore, pastoral support is personalized. The weekly prayer meetings are venues for both spiritual formation and relationship-building. In such gatherings, prayers are informal and spontaneous, and "are usually filled with joy and gaiety," and "every participant is free to pray in whatever way he likes, provided that he respects the demands of love and faith." There they get to sing songs and listen to Scriptures and exhortations of leaders together. At the same time, in prayer meetings, each gets to hear and be moved by other people's prayers of thanksgiving or petition and testimonies of God's goodness in their lives, and this forms a special bond among them.[43]

Second, community is about building relationships. For Charismatics, the thrust of building relationships is described as a "calling" to "relat[e] to one another as a real family, as brothers and sisters committed to build up one another." They do this by consciously affirming each other's gifts,

42 Christl Kessler and Jurgen Ruland, *Give Jesus a Hand! Charismatic Christians: Populist Religion and Politics in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 127.

43 O'Connor, *Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*, 114-17.

encouragement and mentoring in service, and brotherly/sisterly correction when someone has done wrong. "The movement stresses the recovery of the consciousness and experience of the Spirit-filled community."[44] Most often than not this element is what first attracts people to Charismatic Communities, for every human needs to feel he/she belongs. For migrants who are far away from their families, the warmth of a community where each one is a brother/sister would be attractive.

Lastly, service to the Church is seen as the natural consequence of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The faithful living out of their life as a community as members look after and uplift one another is considered their primary service to the Church.[45] In other words, Charismatics put weight on evangelization through the witness of their lives – by faithfully living out the Gospel values in their neighborhoods and workplaces. However, Charismatics are sometimes criticized for being exclusive, ministering to members only, and too focused on internal affairs, but it is good to be reminded that this is not true for all communities. Many communities are also involved in social issues and charitable works, but there is always room for growth in any community or organization. What is important to note here is that service is seen as a result of a personal relationship with Jesus, which in essence is the foundation of discipleship. With this foundation, Charismatic Communities are assured of being on the right path.

The spiritual renewal, joy-filled gathering, sense of communion, the imposition of hands that happen in small group charismatic prayer meetings could indeed very well fill in the migrants' need for that sense of identity, belonging,

44 Agnew, "Charismatic Movement," 745.
45 Ligaya ng Panginoon Website, www.lnp.org.ph

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and security threatened by their displacement. "In large, diverse and increasingly anonymous cities ... [Charismatic Movements] offer warm fellowship where everyone is recognized and made to feel at home."[46]

Challenges

Catholic Charismatic Renewal is now recognized in the Church as an "ecclesial movement." According to Cardinal Suenens: "[I]t is a movement of the Spirit offered to the entire Church and destined to rejuvenate every part of the Church's life."[47] Using this perspective, "ecclesial movement" is taken to mean that it is an impulse, a development in the Church seen as a gift of the Holy Spirit for the renewal of the life of the Church, a renewal much-needed by our OFW brothers and sisters, especially those experiencing suppression of faith. However, the transparochial nature of Charismatic communities has been a source of tension between the Church hierarchy. A study shows that "networking or involvement in Church institutions is not a priority for Charismatic communities. Most communities choose to concentrate on their community activities, focusing on their members and on missionary work."[48] Furthermore, Charismatic Communities tend to be exclusive because of their shared worldview [49] and distinct culture. This exclusiveness might be more

46 John Mansford Prior, S.V.D., "Jesus Christ the Way to the Father: The Challenge of Pentecostals," *FABC Papers* 119 (2006): 47.

47 Charles Whitehead, "The Role of Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities in the Life of the Church," in *New Religious Movements in the Church*, ed. Michael A. Hayes (London: Burns & Oates, 2005), 17-18.

48 Kessler and Ruland, *Give Jesus a Hand*, 128.

49 Ibid., 124-25. "Whereas two Christians may have quite different interpretations of what the world is like and what being a Christiam means, Charismatic Christians share a certain worldvies, they live in the same cognitive structures, and interpret their different experiences against the same background."

unintended than unconscious, but it does create a barrier between Charismatics and non-Charismatics. In ministering to migrants, networking, collaboration, and coordinated efforts are necessary. Thus, the challenge for Charismatic communities sending missionaries abroad is in working with the Church instead of drawing parallel lines, so to speak. Fr. Pattaparambil gives a valuable reminder: "pastoral care should not create isolation and a ghetto," and that "everything should be oriented for a progressive insertion of the faithful in the local parishes in a way that slowly produces effective participation."[50] Therefore, ministers to OFWs, especially in states where no local parishes are allowed to exist, must keep in mind and heart their unity with the universal Church.

Pope Benedict XVI said in his message during the 12th International Conference of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships with the theme "New Communities for a New Evangelization":

> Anyone who has come across something true, beautiful, and good in his life – the one true treasure, the pearl of great price – hastens to share it everywhere, in the family and at work, in the contexts of his life.

Furthermore, the Pope called the communities to "collaborate even more … in the Pope's universal apostolic ministry, opening the doors to Christ."[51] Charismatic Communities are called to discern how best to participate in and serve the Church, to open their eyes and hearts to the real needs of God's people,

50 Pattaparambil, *New Evangelization and Migration*, 186.

51 Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, *Papal Message to Charismatic-Communities Conference* in "Each Christian Must Become Christ's Follower," 5 November 2006, Zenit, http://www.zenit.org/article-18104?l=english (accessed 18 March 2012).

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and ultimately, to live out what comes from their discernment in the spirit of obedience.

This paper, therefore, proposes that Charismatic Communities be more open to ministering to the OFWs. It is like "striking two birds with one stone." On the one hand, they will be answering the call to minister to those on the margins, and on the other, the call to evangelize the peoples of Asia. Missionaries from these Charismatic Communities can build communities among OFWs with the aim of strengthening and deepening their faith and support system while at the same time empowering them to be evangelizers in their workplaces, and eventually, formators of communities as well. This is the partnership that the final section of this paper envisions.

OFWs and Charismatic Communities: A Partnership

The call of the Church for a New Evangelization is an urgent call. Every baptized Christian is called to be an agent of evangelization. The Spirit of love, the Holy Spirit, is the one who leads and empowers the People of God to mission.[52] The Holy Spirit, therefore, is the active link between the call to mission in Asia and the Catholic Renewal Movement. However, the Church cannot simply do the work of evangelization in Asia and neglect its migrant people's cries, their number, or the depth of their wounds. This is how the OFWs and Charismatic Communities can forge a profound relationship of partnership for mission.

In the book, *Give Jesus a Hand,* the authors cites two forces that lead people to join Charismatic communities, namely,

52 *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, Definitive ed. (CBCP/ECCCE, Manila: Word & Life, 1994), no. 852.

"the quest for religious experience and truth, and situations of crisis."[53] The latter is perhaps where most migrants will find themselves. In the migrants' predisposition toward religious groups because of their situation, Charismatic communities can find an inning. However, the beauty of this relationship is that it is not one-way. Previous sections of this paper have discussed the gifts and the challenges to the OFWs and the Catholic Charismatic Communities, respectively. The gifts, as well as the needs of both groups, complement each other. The OFWs, because of their naturally-Filipino orientation toward family and their penchant for gatherings and fellowship, usually over food, not to mention their own personal need for a faith-supportive group, make them good candidates for community-building.

On the other hand, the Catholic Charismatic Communities are called toward greater participation and service in the Church through the ministry to migrants. The Holy Spirit, through their Pentecost experience, impels them to respond to this need in the Church and to proclaim the Gospel "to the ends of the earth." Their charism of spiritual awakening through communal spontaneous prayer, personal testimonies, and fellowship will appeal to the OFWs, while their formation and resources for building communities can help the OFWs both in their practical and spiritual needs. As John Mansford Prior said, "At its dynamic best the [Charismatic Movement] is a transformative movement from below that has sprung up answering felt needs of laity and religious, a movement which the hierarchies of Asia have come to acknowledge."[54] Lastly, on the practical side, Catholic Charismatic Communities usually send itinerant missionaries. Their itinerant missionaries, in turn, need the OFWs to help them penetrate the

53 Kessler and Ruland, *Give Jesus a Hand*, 144.
54 Prior, *Jesus Christ the Way to the Father,* 48.

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mission areas. The OFWs can introduce them to the place, the culture, and the people. At present, this partnership is happening, especially since many of the OFWs were members of a Charismatic Community before they left the Philippines. Because this relationship has not yet been systematically studied, its potential can still be maximized.

It may be argued that not all people are attracted to or feel comfortable with the Charismatic spirituality. For instance, those whose spirituality leans toward the contemplative may find it difficult to pray with Charismatics. Nonetheless, one can open oneself to other forms of prayer other than what one is used or inclined to once in a while. Besides, when one does not have much options, as in the case of Catholic OFWs in the Middle East, necessity always finds a way. This also poses a challenge to the communities, to be sensitive to those who do not feel they belong. Moreover, if they encounter people who are mainly attracted to the support of the community and not its faith life, they are called to show them charity. Hopefully, it is the charity of the brothers and sisters that will help these people encounter God in prayer. The main mission must be to make Jesus, the Risen Christ, known and to bring people to a personal relationship with Him. It still remains to be seen if they stay committed to the community or not. What is important is that the "seed" be planted.

The Synod on the New Evangelization stressed the importance of a personal experience with the Risen Christ as the solid foundation of evangelization, and that for the Church to evangelize, she must be evangelized herself.[55] The Catholic Charismatic Communities' "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is a means to experience this renewal of faith in the loving pres-

55 Synod of Bishops, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, no. 46.

ence of the Risen Christ. In turn, the OFWs who experience this renewal in Baptism may then be impelled to share the Risen Christ to others, especially to those who have not yet heard of Him, whether to fellow migrants or not, to fellow Filipinos or not.