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PRACTICAL THEOLOGY'S NEW APPROACHES TO CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY

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I. Introduction

Into the fifth year of the new millennium with a new Pope succeeding the long reign of John Paul II, the Church throughout the world, and the Catholic Church in the Philippines in particular, are constantly being called to face major new challenges, initiatives, developments and trends that were rarely foreseen even a few years ago. These are new dimensions of the traditional, world-wide problems of peace and order, poverty, social justice, public health, sexual morality, education, and the like. In this 40th anniversary of Vatican II, one only has to compare the extraordinary optimism at the close of the Council, hailed as the new Pentecost, with today's more somber mind-set to realize how different the Philippine context has become from that of Vatican II.

Within the area of catechesis / religious education, the past 40 years have witnessed an extraordinary activity and development manifested in the official documents of the Church, both universal and local. On the universal Church level, we have the General Catechetical Directory ((1971) followed by the Synod of Bishops on Catechesis in Our Time (1977), whose "Message to the People of God" was later elaborated in John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae (1979), the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992-94) and the revised General Directory for Catechesis (1997), with additional documents from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Locally among other

relevant documents by the CBCP and ECCCE, we've had our own National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines (1985), the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991), our national catechism, Catechism for Filipino Catholics, and the final draft of the Revised National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines (2004).[1]

Given this wealth of official documentation and the untiring local efforts to actually make catechesis or integral Faith formation the first pastoral priority of the Catholic Church in the Philippines,[2] many traditional challenges remain, some with new "faces." There's a palpable urge to reclaim "religious nerve" in participating in the on-going national dialogue and pursuit of justice, peace, improved education and health services for all.[3] This thrust is raising anew the perennial problems of catechesis/religious education: how to contribute to the general education of all, while focusing especially on the prism of **authentic Filipino Catholic believing in Christ**, and the complex role of family, parish, retreat house, and school in nourishing this belief.

II. General Catechetical Background for Today's Agenda

In our new ever-changing catechetical context, three elements have been the object of increased study and reflection: 1) the very purpose of Christian education in today's consumerist, technological, postmodern world; 2) the Church as its setting; and 3) the best method or methods that can communicate and inspire this faith within today's multi-media and concrete Filipino cultural context.

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[1] One fruitful commentary of the Vatican's catechetical documentation is Anne Marie Mongoven, The Prophetic Spirit of Catechesis: How We Share the Fire in our Hearts (Paulist 2000) 64-86.

[2] Cf. "Message of the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal," Bol.Ecl. 77 #823 (Mar-Apr 2001): 167-68, no.7 A.

[3] Jack Seymour, "The Clue to Christian Religious Education: Uniting Theology and Education 1950-Present," Religious Education 99 (2004): 272-86.

First, the goal of Christian education is conceived today primarily in terms of formation and transformation -- beyond "head knowledge's factual information," toward a heightened awareness of the active role of God in our personal and communitarian lives. This breaks with the traditional "schooling-instructional paradigm" whose "banking method" has been widely criticized as often reducing the Good News to objective informational tidbits, directed toward individualistic learning that ignores all intrinsic community ties and even one's own personal life's story. The Gospel becomes trivialized -- just another book of pious stories for children, or worse, the object of unending technical historical studies that fail to recognize the Gospels as God's living Word of revelation for us today. The current interplay between education as a modern secular discipline and Christian theology as "Faith seeking understanding" brings out how education needs theology to discover the presence of God's grace, while theology needs educational processes to communicate the revelatory meaning and value of Scripture as the living Word of God and of Catholic tradition.[4]

This contemporary vision of the ideal goal of Christian education is being forged in the process of responding to the challenges of postmodern culture, and the specific weaknesses that have become too visible and apparent to ignore. For example, many point out the present growing loss of the communal, corporate Christian "memory" that was characteristic of the Christian Filipino society in the past. They also add that for many young Filipinos with today's scientific, technological-mind set, there's a growing "irrelevance" of the Bible and the way it is taught, despite the popularity of Bible Study among groups of older Filipino Christians. More damaging, perhaps, is the unintended but frequent subversion of ideal Christian goals to psychological, emotional and therapeutic needs of the moment. The common "marketing mechanisms" for selling religious textbooks, with their "cafeteria approach" to truths of the Faith, and their promotion of Faith values like some new product in a shopping mall, offer a concrete example of such subversion.

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[4] Brett Webb-Mitchell, Christly Gestures: Learning to be Members of the Body of Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 1-25.

Secondly, the **ecclesial** dimension of catechesis, with the Church as the indispensable setting for Catholic education, has been strengthened by the pastoral success of the BECs throughout the Philippines. The BECs have become one of the more effective means for fostering maturity in the Faith in Catholic Filipinos. The grace of God mentioned above "is felt almost tangibly in the kind of worship the BECs habitually conduct.[5] New appreciation for the Church as "School of Christ and Christian Discipleship" leads to conceiving the purpose of education in the Church in terms of worship, prayer, and healing service. It means "to perform" the Good News," that is, to follow, imitate, share in "Jesus-life." The "mystery" of the Christian community, the Body of Christ, is grounded on the fact that we don't create it – the Spirit does! (1 Co 12:13) We can't even say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Co 12:3) More than ever, recognition of this indispensable role of the Church is needed today to combat the radical individualistic tendencies – individualism with its self-centered priorities --so often highlighted in the current secular context.

Thirdly, methods of catechesis / Christian education have proven much more difficult to assess. One function of Christian education is undoubtedly fostering "critical reflection on one's religious experience" to help ground one's Christian identity. Yet the "handing down of the Sacred Scriptures and Catholic tradition," forming one scared deposit of Faith, remains a distinct function of equal importance. The processes of instruction and discernment in both functions involve "interpreting the signs of the times," a key phrase inherited from the Vatican II era, but which now has gained new, more complex uses and applications. Often it means recovering historical symbols of the Faith, and traditional paradigms of Faith's initiation, deepening, guidance and formation, but now re-interpreted or re-imaged to make them more intelligible and fruitful in our present Philippine context.

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[5] Cf. Francisco F. Claver, "The Liturgy of the World: Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Dialogue and Its Challenges for Christian Worship in the Postmodern Age," in Liturgy in a Postmodern Age (New York: Continuum, 2003) 148-63, at 156.

On the other hand, this "interpreting the signs of the times" has also resulted in the opposite effect of radical pluralism. The "turn to the subject," the new stress on imagination and on the different human intelligences, as well as the general "experiential thrust," while emphasizing the immediate relevance and practical applicability of the Christian message, unfortunately have also unwittingly helped to produce our present situation of "ignorant Catholics." Various surveys conducted here and abroad have shown how many "Catholic-school-educated students" lack even a rudimentary knowledge of their Christian Faith.[6] Moreover, hastily formed catechetical efforts to rectify this startling deficiency have often failed for lack of adequate research into the actual causes of this ignorance, or from responding with ill-advised corrective measures. For example, the "back to the basics" slogan frequently results in a narrow focusing on memorization of much factual information about the Faith, communicated mainly through abstract formulas. It therefore fails to foster an interiorized faith that "takes root" and can become a vital operational source for daily personal Christian living.

The Challenge of Postmodern Culture

Before moving on to the two key source factors proposed in this paper on a current approach to spirituality, the serious impact of our "**postmodern age**" must be addressed, even briefly.[7] No one today can possibly ignore the tremendous influence of the so-called postmodern culture in Christian communities the world over. Within perhaps the majority of Christian communities today there is a re-thinking and re-imagining of the whole dynamics of educating toward maturity in the Faith -- of developing a deep sense of Christian identity. The traditional catechetical images of "nurturing" and of "metanoia" (conversion) are undergoing substantial modification by a host of postmodern

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[6] Cf.. John C. Cavadini, "Ignorant Catholics," Commonweal (April 9, 2004) 12-14.

[7] Cf. R. Pazmino "Surviving or Thriving in the 3rd Millennium," in Forging a Better Religious Education in the 3rd Millennium, ed. James M. Lee (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 2000).

factors which stress "constructed Christian identity," through focusing on the historicity and bodily situatedness of all human development. The transhistorical and universal structures of meaning and value are relativized to become historical examples, raw materials from which to construct one's present faith identity.

This postmodern thrust represents a certain shift **from** the traditional catechetical focusing on specific religious beliefs of a particular religious group, **to** a relatively newly constructed individualistic view which emphasizes spiritual experiences, religious practices, and the desire to connect spiritually one's "inner self" with God, others, and the world.[8] The growing world-wide pluralism and multi-culturalism, together with the ever increasing rapid changes, have led to less emphasis on a general unified Christian worldview, and much more on drawing on various religious traditions, being able to handle group differences, connecting one's spirituality with others, despite diversity of beliefs, etc. This usually entails a certain re-thinking of the role of all authority, especially religious authority.

The response to this postmodern cultural challenge is, as one would expect, multiple. Some Christian educational leaders stress a Faith formation that is **counter postmodern culture**, that stands over and against this contemporary loss of traditional meaning and values. They firmly reject postmodernist fragmentation, its tendency toward violence, and the destructive dimensions of an individualistic, consumerist postindustrial society which already has a significant impact on our Philippine context. These Christian leaders seem to overlook, however, the postmodern spiritual yearning which is the call for reconstructing our world in life-giving projects.

Other Christian scholars try **adapting modern religious efforts so they can be carried into the postmodern era** and foster Christian personal and social identity in this new age. Helpful are their efforts in exploring and re-imaging deep Christian Faith symbols, especially "hope," versus the common current fragmentation and the trivializing of

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[8] Harold Horell, "Fostering Hope: Christian Religious Education in a Postmodern Age," Religious Education 99 (Winter 2004): 5-21. Cf. also Joanmarie Smith, A Context for Christianity in the 21st Century (Thomas More, 1995).

meaning and values. But again, these efforts tend to become marginalized, weakened by the sheer number and diversity of postmodern spiritual seekers who continue to lack a firm foundation for faith formation.

Finally, some Christian experts are more optimistic in focusing on some new possibilities which postmodernity itself offers, for example, discerning the presence of God in society today, and re-envisioning and re-embodying Christian Faith in ways that respond effectively to the new cultural realities. These experts "connect" with today's wider dialogue with secular and other religious traditions, a dialogue often marked by a new openness and discernment, especially when focused on social issues like our consumer culture and market economy. But there are two ever-present dangers in this approach: 1) its tendency toward being **overly eclectic**, which sometimes results in internal inconsistency or incoherence, and 2) an **inherent instability** which can swing from idealistic optimism to deep pessimism.

Each of these responses have both values and limitations from which we can profit in plotting the future agenda for Philippine religious education. What perhaps is more fundamental are the real possibilities for new hope that postmodernity claims to offer: hope in the Church itself and God's guiding presence among Christians gathered in his name as his People. This hope is strongly manifested in the counter-cultural group, yet always with the humility to be open to God's presence beyond the Church. Hope in the deep strength and continued viability of traditional Christian symbols and practices of Christian faith. We can use the deconstructions of the recent past to begin creating new meanings in the present, moving beyond simply recovering the deep Faith symbols of the Christian past to construct and reconstruct, change and transform them into practices of life that respond authentically to common Filipino life experience today. Hope most of all in the youth being educated, who have grown up in postmodern culture, and are open to discerning God's guiding presence today.[9]

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[9] One insightful positive approach is offered by David E. Nantais, "'Whatever!' Is Not Ignatian Indifference: Jesuit and the Ministry to Young Adults," Studies in Ignatian Spirituality 36/3 (Fall 2004): 1-24.

III. Two Source Factors in the New Working Catechetical Agenda

Anyone seriously proposing a new working catechetical/ practical theology agenda soon becomes painfully aware of the totally unexpected complexity of the whole enterprise. There is no adequate comprehensive plan for complete catechetical/religious educational renewal capable of solving all our ongoing problems -- as our post PCP II pastoral efforts have made abundantly clear. The only practical way to proceed is to be modest enough to accept that even very successful renewal efforts will always be partial, never completely comprehensive, and ever open to diminishing returns and need for further renewal.

This section develops two basic sources of catechetical/ theological renewal that can ground the specific, limited, partial working proposal of this study. Both sources are simply renewed ways of using traditional basic catechetical/religious educational sources: a more holistic study and use of **Sacred Scripture**, and the new theological discipline called **Practical Theology**. The renewed use of two traditional catechetical sources (Scripture and Theology) will be applied to one basic area of catechesis/religious education, namely, Catholic spirituality, developed briefly in Catholic liturgy.

Moreover, it is significant that catechesis/religious education have constituted the guiding perspective and motivating force behind the proposed renewal. For it was precisely the inadequacy, from a religious educational point of view, of serious, critical "professional work" by the experts in Scripture and in systematic, moral and liturgical theology, that has inspired this serious research into the study and use of both Scripture and theology as sources for Catholic renewal in the Philippines.

A More Holistic Approach to the Study and Use of Scripture

Sacred Scripture is the basic primary source for all catechesis/ Christian religious education, and theology itself. Vatican II pithily described the uniqueness of Scripture

Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire ... [as] written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have God as their author, and have been handed down as such to the Church herself. To compose the sacred books, God chose certain man who . . . made full use of their powers and faculties so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written and no more. Since all that the inspired authors affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach the truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures. (DV 11)

While this description of the nature of sacred Scripture is in theory widely accepted, what has been becoming more problematic is the actual study and use of Scripture, particularly in catechesis and theology. More often than not, Bible study has become primarily a study of the history of the times when the text was originally composed, according to the historical critical method [HCM] which has come to dominate biblical study for the past four decades or more. It must be clearly affirmed here, at the outset, that the HCM is **indispensable** for critical Bible study.[10] The issue raised is simply: **is the HCM alone sufficient**, or is there also the need for other studies focusing on the spiritual senses, to gain the full meaning and value of the inspired Scriptural Word of God?[11]

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[10] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger "100 Years: the Magisterium and Exegesis," Theology Digest 51 (Spring 2004).

[11] Markus E. Locker, Ma. Lucia C. Natividad, and Joseph L. Roche,. "The Use of Scripture in Theology and Religious Education," Loyola Schools Review 3 (2003): 3-32. Cf. also Paul Ballard, "The Bible and Christian Spirituality Today," The Expository Times 114 (Aug. 2003): 363-66

The position proposed here claims the need for these additional methods because HCM studies alone focus more on informational facts than on the formational/ trans-formational Scriptural elements. In practice, HCM studies lean toward overly technical, abstract, impersonal expositions which seem divorced from the living faith of both the Scriptural figures and today's believers. As such, they have limited effectivity in communicating Scripture as inspiring, saving, uplifting "Good News" in schools and parishes The basic reason is HCM's emphasis on studying the Scriptural text according to the canons of contemporary secular historical-literary methodology, over its specifically religious content. HCM thus alone fails to adequately fulfill by itself two principal functions of Scripture: as critical -- distinguishing truth from idolatry and superstition – and as formative – fostering the life of the Spirit within the present readers.

These inadequacies come out most sharply in the actual work of catechizing and educating Filipinos in the Faith. In response, as supplementing (not substituting for) the HCM, a more holistic approach to the study and use of Scripture is proposed, drawing on the long Catholic tradition of Scripture study going back to the Fathers of the Church and the medieval monastic and scholastic traditions. This newer approach works from the nature of Scripture itself (what?), to its fundamental goal or purpose (why? wither?), and finally, to the proposed method of study, reading, proclamation, praying (how?).

The **nature of Scripture** as the "inspired living Word of God" can legitimately be viewed as "sacramental," with an "inherent religious power" that constitutes it as "the rule of Faith," bringing readers into God's presence. The Bible is ecclesial -- the book by, of, and for the Church, the people of God. There is a fundamental unity to all the canonical books and the biblical narrative. In short, Sacred Scripture should be studied also as a "work of art," not merely as a collection of historical documents of the past, within the purview of current historical science. Regarding **Scripture's goal**, St. Paul wrote: all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tm 3:16; cf.Col.1:28; 3:16).

Scripture clearly aims at informing, forming and transforming disciples of Christ into active, productive members of his Body, the Church, in all three essential dimensions of the Faith -- doctrine, morals and worship.[12]

It follows, therefore, that an **accurate method** of studying, proclaiming, teaching, and praying with Scripture must flow from this nature and purpose of Scripture. Hence to the "literal" sense of Scripture (newly defined) must be added the **spiritual senses.** Particular new dimensions of current hermeneutics such as "**performance,**" or "**reader response,**" must be incorporated. Moreover, Scripture's literal sense – often erroneously taken today to mean the dictionary meanings of the text's individual terms -- must be re-defined to include both the meaning of the text at its origin and its meaning today, since Scripture was never created only for the people of its historical time, but for peoples of all time.

This "holistic" approach to Scripture, incorporating but going beyond the HCM alone has major repercussions in catechesis and religious education, especially regarding the adequate professional formation of the trained catechist / religion teacher. A certain number of specific "theses statements" about interpreting Scripture could be helpful in sketching this new holistic approach.[13] For example,

-the **truth of Scripture** is affirmed relative to:

1) the narrative of God's action in creating, judging, redeeming the world;

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[12] Michael Leary, Christ and the Catechist (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987)75-95. For an inspiring exposition of Scripture as a source of prayer, cf. Lawrence Cunningham, "The Bible's Prayerful Reading," Origins 35 (July 7, 2005): 122-26.

[13] "Nine Theses on the Interpretation of Scripture: The Scripture Project," in The Art of Reading Scripture, ed. Ellen Davis & Richard Hays (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,2003) 1-5. One example of recovering traditional Catholic understanding of Scripture is the revised notion of Scripture's "literal sense" as reflecting the intention not just of the human author but of God, and hence with a plenitude of meaning. Cf. Christopher Kaczor, "Thomas Aquinas on the Development of Doctrine," Theol. Stds. 62 (2001): 283-302, at 298 and 301.

2) the Gospel narratives of Jesus life, passion, death and resurrection.

-the **interpretation which stresses that Scripture:**

1) is understood as a coherent dramatic narrative, as the Church's rule of Faith;

2) requires an engagement with the whole narrative, both OT and NT;

3) sees beyond the intent of the original human author to the multiple complex Scriptural senses given by God, the author of the whole drama;.

4) calls for the participation by the community, the Church, brought to life by God's covenant call;

5) is guided by the "performance" of the saints of the Church,

6) and by dialogue with diverse others outside the Church;

7) within the eschatological tension between the "already" and the "not yet" of the kingdom of God, in which Scripture is calling the Church to ongoing discernment and fresh re-readings of texts in the light of the Holy Spirit's help.

In conclusion, a more holistic, more Catholic and "spiritual" exegesis, beyond the historical critical method alone, is needed for fruitful catechesis and religious education in the Philippines today. This conviction itself was inspired by the primary problem of all ministry of the Word, namely, how to integrate Christ and his saving message with Filipinos' daily life in today's complex context.[14] This had been the starting point of the original NCDP (1985), the Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC), and the CBCP approved final draft of the Revised NCDP. But now we have entered a whole new context for Philippine religious education, a new world of mass media, marked by a religious pluralism and inter-religious dialogue previously unknown.

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[14] Thomas Groome puts this bluntly: "I'm more convinced than ever that the dynamics of religious education should enable people to 'bring their lives to faith, and faith to their lives.'" Cf. his "Remembering and Imagining," Religious Education 98 (Fall 2003): 511-119, at 519.

This means that current Philippine catechesis is challenged as never before to ground Filipinos in the Catholic tradition, giving them a "sense of belonging," yet at the same time opening them up to appreciate other spiritual traditions and peoples of other faiths. What can produce a more effective and fruitful catechesis for Filipinos of today's complex context, complete with its plethora of current social science data and its mass communications media?[15]

The Emergence of New Theological Discipline: Practical Theology

It is precisely this complex context that calls for a catechesis / religious education that is solidly grounded on **"Practical"** or **"Practicing Theology"** which radically revises traditional understanding of the very nature of the theological enterprise itself.[16] Flowing from the Christian faith vision, and inspired by many of the new approaches to the Biblical narrative, "Practical Theology" insists that **all theological disciplines** must aim at active engagement and transformative action.[17] It thus

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[15] Groome writes: "Truthfully, I'm worried about faith education that simply socializes people into religious identity, without any kind of critical education and consciousness... At a minimum, all religious education should enable people to 'learn from' the great spiritual traditions of humankind for their lives, more than 'learn about' them for their heads." Ibid. 518. D. Murphy states that many accounts of self-knowledge, consciousness, moral development, stages of faith, etc are indebted to modern social science accounts which are highly questionable within a thoroughgoing Christian narration of identity and selfhood. Cf. "Worship as Catechesis: Knowledge, Desire & Christian Formation," Theology Today 58 (2001): 321ff.

[16] L. Gregory Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education," in Practicing Theology, ed. M. Volf (Eerdmans, 2000) 185-205. Cf. also Robert Schreiter, "Practical Theology," Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America 58 (2003) 145.

[17] Cf. description of Raymond Webb's paper on "Catholic Practical Theology: Challenge and Opportunity," given by Kathleen A. Callahan, in Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America 58 (2003): 146.

proposes a model of religious reflection that draws both teachers/catechists and learners/catechized alike, into attentive listening, dialogue, and active participation in religious education and the whole of life.[18]

Perhaps the key to "Practical theology's" potential to provide a solid theoretical ground for a more holistic, effective and fruitful catechesis is its focus on "**Christian practices.**" By this phrase we simply mean "things Christian people do together, overtime, to address fundamental human needs in the light of, and in response to, God's active presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ.[19] These practices actually constitute the basis of "Practical Theology" which can be defined as a "theoretical understanding that builds on a practical basis of religious praxis."

Advantages Offered by Practical Theology

There are **many advantages** for adopting "Practical Theology " as a theoretical basis for developing the insights drawn from the research into a more holistic approach to Scripture, particularly because of practical theology's focus on Christian practices. The **first** is that there is no longer any possible "gap" between theory and practice. Practices are meaningful clusters of human activity, combining both thinking and acting. They are **social**, belonging to people across generations, rooted in the past but constantly adopting to changing cultural contexts. They express the **wisdom of daily life** and activity, not that of academic theologians. When presenting a theological truth, no one can ask: "but what does this have to do with real life?" The Christian practices are

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[18] Barbara Fleischer, "Practical Theology and Transformative Learning: Partnership for Christian Religious Education," in Forging a Better Religious Education in the Third Millennium, ed. James M. Lee (Birmingham: RE Press 2000) 203-25, at 205.

[19] See Dorothy Bass, "On the Bearing of a Living tradition," Religious Education 98 (Fall 2003): 503-10, at 506. She adds: "My conviction [is] that participation in Christian practices requires steady resistance to the larger culture ... The context of my commitment to Christian practices is one of cultural disestablishment." Ibid. 509. See also "Introduction: A Catholic and Evangelical Theology?" in Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church, ed. James Buckley, S.J. & David Yeago, S.J. (Eerdmans, 2001) 4.

"real life." This clearly agrees perfectly with the more holistic study of Scripture already described.[20]

A **second advantage** is that by focusing on **Christian practices**, two common "reductions" are avoided. First, by focusing on "**practices**" there is no chance of reducing theology or catechesis to an abstract, theoretical study, unrelated to daily life. Second, as "**Christian,**" the practices avoid the reductionism of reducing what is specifically Christian to simply the general human secular level of social science.[21]

This raises the question of the crucial but complex relationship between **beliefs**, as expressing Faith doctrines, and **practices,** or more generally, between **systematic theology** (as a critical reflection on revelation-grounded beliefs) and **a way of life** (as the sum of Christian practices).[22]

Beliefs Shaping Practices

It is clear that basic Christian beliefs shape Christian practices, both in setting Christ as our norm and within the larger Biblical narratives of God's creating the world, the divine covenant with Israel, and the human race's final destiny.[23] Beliefs about God and God's relation to the world form the heart of Christian Faith, and therefore of all theology and catechesis. Such beliefs ground the fundamental Christian insight into the identity and goal of every human person. What is said of God does not have to be "applied" later to us – what is said of God is already addressed to us![24]

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[20] Dorothy Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices," in Practicing Theology, ed. Miroslav Volf and D. Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 1-9, at 6-7. http://mymovies.it/dizionario/recensione.asp?Id=16428&ut=2

[21] Cf. Craig Dykstra, Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999).

[22] Miroslav Volf, "Theology for a Way of Life," in Practicing Theology, 247.

[23] Ibid., 251.

[24] Ibid., 253, quoting Gerhard Ebeling.

Moreover, these basic Christian beliefs *as beliefs* **entail practical commitments** inherent in the beliefs themselves. For beliefs are statements **not** about **simple facts** of what was, is, and will be, but rather about what **should** be, and what humans **should** do. Thus the intrinsic flow from beliefs as normative to our Christian practices. But most important is how Christian beliefs inspire us to break out of our "natural" self-centered-ness and come to realize that ultimately Christian Faith is **not** primarily about what we do, **but** about **what God has done,** is doing and will do. It's about human **receiving.**[25]

Practices Exercise Beliefs

But in the process of growing up as Christians, we also know that Christian practices often come first, and the beliefs entailed in these practices are explicitated only later.[26] Engagement in Christian practices often opens our eyes to how we are to understand core Christian beliefs, or at times to even reformulate them in the ever changing context in which we live out our faith. Thus we can say: Christian beliefs normatively shape Christian practices; and, Christian practices can lead to a deeper insight into and understanding of the beliefs.

But which grounds which? Do beliefs ground practices, or do practices ground beliefs? Many today prefer to subordinate beliefs to practices—functionalizing beliefs. Or they distinguish between **chronological priority** of practices as a way of life, and **logical primacy** of the set of beliefs. But Christian beliefs are not just talk about God, but refer to God's very Self. As such, Christian beliefs about God's very self cannot be ultimately grounded in a way of our life. Rather the Christian way of life must be based on adequate beliefs about God. We engage in Christian practices for the sake of our belief in God; we don't make up a picture of God to justify our practices.[27]

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[25] Ibid. 253-54. Cf. also Serene Jones, "Graced Practices: Excellence and Freedom in Christian Life," in Practicing Theology, 51-77.

[26] Volf, "Theology as a Way of Life," 256.

[27] Ibid. 258-60. Cf. also Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices," in Practicing Theology, 13-32.

But if Christian beliefs ultimately ground Christian practices, with God own Self the focus of beliefs, the question of the TRUTH claims about God arises immediately – precisely for the sake of the way of life. The truth claims must be defended by showing how beliefs in God and his relation to the world **fit together.** For example, the belief in the Eucharist has to fit with the account of Christ's death, and with the belief in the Trinity, and the reality of Grace within us. All these beliefs must fit with the way we understand our human predicament, and exercise this understanding in daily practices.[28]

A third and final advantage of practical theology's focus on Christian practices is their **community-situated nature** – family, parish school – all bringing out the essential **ecclesial** dimensions of the practices. This represents another major development of the insights gained in the more holistic study and use of Scripture for catechesis because it constitutes a specifically Christian insight into human experience.

IV. New Approach to Christian Spirituality

In this section we wish to "apply" to the study of the spirituality indicative of Christian Faith, the insights and typical ways of operating from our "holistic" approach to Scripture and from Practical Theology's way of theologizing – of making sense of, and celebrating, Christ's "Good News" in today's postmodern culture. We focus on spirituality because catechetical and religious education leaders have long recognized that its intrinsic elements --prayer, devotions and religious celebrations -- seem to be the most natural avenues for catechizing Filipinos in the Faith. Moreover PCP II called for a serious renewal of worship, and the "Message of the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal," ten years later, described its first pastoral priority as "integral faith formation," "rooted in prayer and the Eucharist." In view, then, of proposing a certain partial agenda for our future catechetical efforts in our present context, we limit our focus to one of the most relevant topics, Christian spirituality and its liturgical dimension.

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[28] Volf, "Theology as a Way of Life," 261.

A. Spirituality

"Spirituality" has become one of the "in" things within most cultures today, enjoying a surprising new found popularity. Most recognize a general "spiritual hunger" as characteristic of our age. What is not equally clear is what precisely is meant by this newly discovered reality of "spirituality," and how it relates to Christian Faith and the Bible.[29]

In general terms, spirituality is used to cover many notions: a capacity for self-transcendence, an inner dimension of the person in which ultimate reality is experienced; or what gives meaning and coherence to life today. An integrated description would be: "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.[30] Thus "spirituality" today is **experiential** – not some abstract idea or ideology – but a personally lived reality with both active and passive elements. It's a conscious **involvement in a project** of life-integration of ongoing growth and development, **consciously pursued**, embracing all our human capacities of body and spirit, both individual and social. Finally, it is pursued positively toward what is perceived as ultimate value or reality Thus two common strands stand out: 1) an awareness of levels of reality not immediately apparent -- there is "more than meets the eye"; and 2) a quest for personal integration over the fragmentation and depersonalization widely experienced in today's society.[31]

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[29] For a critical overview of the history of "spirituality" through the Christian eras, cf. Declan Marmion, A Spirituality of Everyday Faith: A Theological Investigation of the Notion of Spirituality in Karl Rahner (Louvain, Peters Press, 1998) 1-40.

[30] Sandra Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum," Spiritus 3 (Fall 2003): 163-85, at 166.

[31] Patrick Hannon, "More Than Meets the Eye: Morality and Spirituality," The Furrow 55 (2004): 661-73.

But specifically **Christian** spirituality refers to the life of faith, hope and love lived within the Christian community, the Church, with the desired life-integration consisting in personal transformation in Christ through "putting on the mind of Christ" and celebrating sacramentally his Paschal Mystery, before the ultimate value of the Triune God revealed by Jesus Christ as the source and destiny of all.[32] In a more sharply focused manner, Christian Spirituality has been described at length simply by concentrating on the Triune God: first on Jesus – the God-man, the healer, with his unique relation with nature, his power and vulnerability (powerlessness), his option for justice, liberation and the poor; second on 'Abba', the Father's Providence; and lastly on their divine Holy Spirit of love, guidance, and discernment.[33]

Filipino Christian spirituality has been studied and described in many ways, from many points of view. But the most available relevant source is the CBCP's "Pastoral Letter on Filipino Spirituality," originally published in Tagalog, but now translated into English as the "Filipino Way to Holiness."[34] Most significant for our limited study is the fact that its excellent overview of Filipino spirituality is dominated by its focus on Filipino Christian Practices, exemplifying to an extraordinary degree Practical Theology's stress on Christian practices as described above.

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[32] Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality," 167-68. Cf. also Judith A. Merkle, "Spirituality for the World," chap. 3 of From the Heart of the Church: Catholic Social Tradition (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004) 41-59.

[33] Donald Dorr, Time for a Change: A Fresh Look at Spirituality (Columba Press, 2004), "Christian Spirituality," 14-35; "'Worldly Ingredients' of Spirituality," 36-56, and "Spirituality and Religion," 57-77.

[34] Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines [CBCP] Filipino Way to Holiness (Filipino Spirituality), trans Mario Dominic C. Sanchez (Word & Life Publication, n.d.) 64pp. This exhortation could profitably be read together with its parallel, the CBCP's "Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture," published in Landas 13 (1999): 7-36, with an introduction by Bishop Francisco Claver, and two commentaries.

We now turn to three important topics facing any current study in spirituality – dimensions of the topic which were hardly recognized or discerned in their present contours even at the time of Vatican II. We start with the common separation between "spirituality" as widely understood today and denominational religion, then move on to the newly recognized need to integrate Christian spirituality and Christian morality. A third new trend taken up is the relatively new emphasis on "creation spirituality," a world-wide phenomenon arising from multiple current concerns in ecology and interreligious dialogue.

1. Contemporary Tensions Between Spirituality and Religion

It has become commonplace in recent years to recognize the separation of "spirituality" from "religion," variously described in terms of the "Divorce Between Spirituality and Theology," "Worldly Spirituality vs. Religious Spirituality," "Spirituality related to the Holy Spirit or uniquely to the human spirit," or simply "the Conflict between Spirituality and Religion."[35] Many sources or causes are proposed, but two are constantly emphasized: 1) postmodernity, and 2) the ideological criticism of institutionalized religion. **Postmodernity** taken critically emphasizes rejection of any master universal narrative or unitary worldview, rejects all claims to ultimacy or normative principles, proposes total relativism complete with its fragmentation of thought and experience, while focusing on immediate satisfaction or the present moment ("what works for me") over any historical continuity, social consensus or shared hope for a common future. Such a thumb-nail sketch does not pretend to offer an adequate view of postmodernity, but simply concentrates on some general aspects that run counter to all institutionalized religions.

The **major religions, as institutionalized**, on the contrary, are based on some basic worldwide master narrative, claiming universal validity and promising eschatological reward for those who delay personal

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[35] Cf. Dorr, Time for a Change, 36-77; also Marmion, Spirituality of Daily Faith, 18-40; and Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality," 172-176.

gratification for obedient moral and social commitment. But **non-religious spirituality** is perfectly compatible with postmodernity with its privatized, personally satisfying stance against all doctrinal claims or moral authoritarian impositions, thus escaping all social responsibilities while being ever open to being changed or completely abandoned "when it no longer works for the individual."

This postmodernity critique of religion is strengthened by current ideological criticisms of institutional religion as historically exclusive both doctrinally and culturally, and ideological in imposing a particular set of beliefs, obligatory practices and prohibitions. These result in narrow-minded dogmatism and guilt-inducing morality rather than the idealized spiritual breadth, personal autonomy of conscience and psychological maturity sought today. Often characterized by clericalism as well as arbitrary repudiations of other religious sects, "denominational belonging" generally rejects the **eclecticism**, **syncretism** and **relativism** that the postmodern mind accepts as normal in most areas such as art, business, education, and the like. Note that we are not proposing these three "isms" as valid approaches to reality, but rather as representing very common positions of many academicians in our postmodern culture.

Nevertheless, **critical reflection** does reveal the natural "**partnership**" of spirituality with religion. The great religious traditions supply a far more adequate ground and matrix for spiritual development than any personally constructed combination of beliefs and moral practices. Because they lack the roots of historically tested wisdom and community criticism, "private spiritualities" are usually quite naïve about how humans function, often falling into the same mistakes of the past—extremism, fanaticism or the opposite, lethargy. Personal spiritualities lack the consistency of a critically reflective systematic theology that can supply the needed support for "faith and morals." One great weakness of these new "secular spiritualities" is their common source: **disaffiliation** with the organic tradition of the past, developed over centuries in wrestling with innumerable challenges and developments. Without such a past, these private spiritualities have no contribution to offer for future generations, whereas the faithful committed to a religious tradition can profit from, and freely criticize, all that has gone before. "The quest

for God is too complex and too important to be reduced to a private enterprise."[36]

Our holistic approach to Scripture puts its study & use in catechesis squarely within this basic thrust for meaning & coherence in life today, drawing on the vast riches of tradition. The details of this holistic approach to Scripture as described in terms of narrative, symbols, imaginative quality, performance hermeneutic -- are all ways of pursuing "spirituality" as specifically "Christian." Our thrust toward integrating HCM with spiritual-sense methods, stressing the existential, experiential reality of the "Good News" and its Tradition with daily life, constitutes a strong support (source) for integrating any "adequate spirituality" with religion today. So the "natural pursuit" of spirituality for Christians is solidly grounded in our holistic approach to Scripture.

Equally relevant to this partnership between spirituality and religion is Practical Theology with its insistence on Christian practices as offering direct, time-tested links between God's presence and our daily pursuit of meaning and happiness..

2. Christian Spirituality and Christian Morality

One way in which this more holistic biblical approach to Christian spirituality has been carried on catechetically is through the new insistence on the integration of morality and spirituality. The two are distinct areas of study – Christian morality cannot simply be identified with Christian spirituality -- but they are closely interrelated. Unfortunately they drifted apart during the past recent centuries to a definite clear separation, especially in the academic study of both. This separation is now widely

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[36] Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality," 176-81, at 177. Marmion describes spirituality as "An Immature Discipline," Ibid. 37-39.

recognized as disastrous for an adequate appreciation of both Christian morality and Christian spirituality.[37] Nevertheless, from a catechetical / religious educational point of view, the academic studies in the two disciplines are still commonly carried out with little effort to bring out the mutual inter-relations and implications of both disciplines.

An example of this separation was the common position held by many professional moralists in recent years that there is no such thing as a specifically "Christian morality." This position may have some basis in a purely academic theory of the essence of human morality, but from a Christian religious educator's point of view it makes no sense to hold that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has no significant impact on the moral life of his disciples including ourselves. This religious educational judgment, grounded in a Christian "Practical Theology" and a holistic interpretation of Scripture, uncovers the "reductionism" that had taken place among some professional moralists whose efforts to clarify the essentials of human morality led them apparently to ignoring or eliminating the constitutive inner motivational reality inherent in all human moral behavior.[38]

3. Creation Spirituality

A third topic of current interest is "**creation spirituality**" which draws not only on traditional Christian sources, but also on new interest in Asian religions and inter-religious dialogue in general, and the ecological crisis. The modus operandi of both a holistic approach to

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[37] Cf. Spirituality and Morality: Integrating Prayer and Action, ed. Dennis J. Billy and Donna Lynn Orsuto (New York: Paulist Press, 1995). Cf. also Michael Duffy, "Called to Be Holy: the Convergence of Christian Morality and Spirituality," Spirituality Today 38 (Spring 1986): 349-59; and Understanding Christian Spirituality (Paulist, 1977); Richard Gula, The Good Life: Where Morality and Spirituality Converge (Paulist, 1999).

[38] Cf. William Spohn, "The Need for Roots and Wings: Spirituality and Christian Ethics," Theology Digest 47 (Winter 2000): 327-40. Cf. also Richard M. Gula, "Let the Mind of Christ be in You: Moral Formation and the Imagination." Theology Digest 51 (Winter 2004): 315-26.

Scripture as well as Practical Theology is clearly supportive of the major thrusts in the new emphasis on "creation spirituality." The special value of this new emphasis lies in creation spirituality's potential to deepen the understanding and appreciation of numerous current interests and trends. By illuminating new insights into creation itself, the thrust for social justice is significantly strengthened, cosmic story-tellers gain a new hearing, renewed reverence for the earth is fostered, and even traditional Christian spiritualities gain new inspirational power.[39]

On a deeper level, creation spirituality has made a significant impact on the traditional theological understanding of God's Self revelation, and on renewed emphasis in catechesis/ religious education as dimensions of the ministry of the Word. The ecological crisis and globalization have inspired new insights into the created cosmos. A natural process in recent studies is discernible, moving from ecological studies, to new insights in cosmology and the science-religion relationship, to repercussions in sacramental and liturgical theologies – all the while building on sound theological foundations drawn from periti such as Rahner, Schillebeeckx and John Paul II.[40]

But these deeper studies in no way imply that creation spirituality is primarily a speculative research relevant only to the experts. On the contrary, what is proposed is uniquely evangelical Fundamentally, creation spirituality is a reaction against the tendency in Christian tradition that overemphasized the power of sin and the need for redemption, without an equal emphasis on the Christian mysteries of creation,

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[39] These topics are the subjects of individual articles and "Theological Trends" in "Creation-Centered Spirituality," The Way 29 (January 1989): 4-80.

[40] Cf. Dorothy C. McDougall, The Cosmos as the Primary Sacrament: The Horizon for an Ecological Sacramental Theology (Peter Lang, 2003). The book concludes with a 15 page bibliography. Locally, this thrust has been clearly set forth by Georg Ziselsberger, "Waking Up to the Importance of Creation," Docete 25, #114 (July-Aug. 2003): 10-18, and Victoria D. Corral, "The New Cosmology and Creation-Centered Spirituality: Its Exponents and Practitioners" Docete 25 #113 (Apr-June 2003): 17-24.

the Incarnation, and the Spirit's indwelling. A recent study, entitled "Preaching from the Book of Nature" first sets forth Old Testament and Jesus' own preaching as grounds for viewing nature as "Revelation of the Word of God," then goes on to treat of "The Cries of the Poor and the Groaning of the Earth," and concludes with "Formation of the Sacramental Imagination: Scripture, Liturgy, and the Christian Story." The very last paragraphs, drawing on a short homily from Rahner entitled "Easter: A Faith that Loves the Earth," sketches how Christ's Resurrection demonstrates that the tomb of the dead – the body and the earth – has been radically changed into the glorious house of the living God. The Risen Christ possesses definitively this transfigured glorified body, a piece of the earth, now part of the earth's reality and destiny.[41]

These three current trends and new theological initiatives offer further insight into how a more holistic approach to Scripture and a Practical Theology method can have a significant impact on communicating the spirituality dimension of the Faith, perhaps even implying a certain re-ordering of priorities in our present sacramental catechesis. The immediate area of "application" here, of course, is the **liturgy**. The following final section takes up some of the more important manifestations of this impact in the post-Vatican II **liturgical renewal**, with two particular emphases proper to our Philippine catechetical scene: liturgical **inculturation**, and the inherent **"service" dimension** of the **Eucharist**. A brief summary of a number of specific catechetical / religious education suggestions for future action concludes the study.

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[41] Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Preaching from the Book of Nature," Worship 76 (July 2002) 290-313. See her Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination (New York: Continuum, 1997). Cf. K. Rahner, "Easter: A Faith that Loves the Earth," in The Great Church Year (New York: Crossroads, 1993) 192-97.

B. Reverberations in Sacramental Liturgy

The liturgical renewal initiated by Vatican II has perhaps had, among all the Council's initiatives, the single greatest impact on the faithful's ordinary exercise of faith in daily life. Substantial research, experimentation, revision, new initiatives have continued in the years following the Council. Summarizing some of the more important changes and initiatives of the past post-Vatican II forty years can bring out the influence on liturgy and sacraments of our holistic approach to Scripture and Practical Theology's modus operandi.[42]

Beyond the physical changes of language and position in celebrating the Eucharist, the key liturgical thrust of Vatican II was "**active participation.**" The unforeseen problem inherent in this thrust is: just what is the liturgy? The real subject of the liturgy often slipped **from** the Risen Christ who through the Spirit worships the Father and sanctifies people in a symbolic act, **to** human persons or the celebrating community. From an exaggerated fidelity to the rubrics, self-will took over, eliminating every sense of mystery; the '**leit-ourgia**,' or work **of** and **for** the people in relating to God, became a purely human social activity. The Eucharist, rather than primarily "God's work on us," and the epiphany of **the** Christian mystery through the service of the Church continuing the mission of Christ -- a divine project in history beyond us-- often came to be reduced to simply a 'religious meal', not the memorial of Christ's Last Supper with his disciples.

The fundamental attitude of "**homo liturgicus**" involves an attitude of faith, of prayer, of grateful receptivity to God, of self-giving and contemplation, rather than the mindset of the "**homo faber**," the worker, engineer. "Active participation" presumes a proper **understanding** the liturgy which, beyond all renewed structuring of common human

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[42] Cf. Godfried Cardinal Danneels, "Liturgy 40 Years After Vatican II: High Point or Recession," in Liturgy in a Post-Modern World, ed Keith Pecklers (New York: Continuum, 2003), pp. 7-25. The following paragraphs draw heavily on this informative study

religiosity, focuses on the epiphany of God in human history. Thus catechesis and initiation become absolutely basic, since the needed understanding cannot be grasped immediately, all at once, like some simple fact of information, but rather as in whatever touches the depths of the human – love, death, joy, solidarity -- only through a lengthy and progressive process involving **repetition** as in rituals. Repetitive ritual enables those celebrating the real possibility for in-depth reflection and gradual interiorization and community-forming.

This gradual learning process means developing an appreciation for the major liturgical symbols, the creative adaptation of themes and variations, and even of practical questions like duration and proper articulation. Much of the present exaggerated 'verbosity' in the liturgy must yield to greater emphasis on gesture, imagination affect and emotions – a "**sensorial pedagogy**" that gives pride of place to the human body and its senses, to "experience" first, and then to analysis, reflection, explanation. The "experience" embraced extends to the cosmic realities of fire, water, food, day and night, times and seasons, as well as to the historical events of salvation. But liturgy not only **symbolizes human life** – what we do throughout the week is concentrated and purified in the Sunday liturgy: we live for God and for others. It **also symbolizes** and makes present the **mysteries of salvation** (Christ's words and deeds) and also our deeds as reflected, purified and redeemed in Christ, and offered through him to the Father. Liturgy finds its field of application in daily life: life in Christ is built on two things: **cultus** and **caritas**.

C. Liturgical Inculturation

The number of studies and publications in inculturation, and liturgical inculturation in particular, is immense – a topic or theme that constitutes a theological and cultural discipline in itself.[43] Hence our treatment here will necessarily be extremely limited,

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[43] Cf. Peter C. Phan, "Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age," in ibid., pp.56-85, with twelve pages of End Notes (198-211).

focused sharply on the new dimensions of inculturation regarding understanding and communicating Christian Faith and evangelization. One central insight drawn from FABC is that inculturation is not something to be pursued for its own sake, or simply to make worship more palatable to Asians, but rather as part of the more fundamental task of becoming an Asian Church through dialogue with the Asian poor, Asian cultures, and Asian religions. Inculturation is always coupled with liberation and inter-religious dialogue.[44]

In general, it is helpful to distinguish (but not separate) two levels of liturgical inculturation: 1) the more theoretical level investigating the nature and foundations for the reality and process of inculturation; and 2) the more immediately pastoral level of concrete ways and means of creating, implementing, or celebrating an authentically inculturated liturgy.[45] The first level must face the immediate necessity of defining what is the nature, purpose and means of liturgy itself, and liturgical theology. For example there are numerous accepted "models" of liturgy, each with its own insights and limitations: liturgy as institution, as mystery (Word & sacrament), as Sacrament (taken as social symbols), as Proclamation , and as Process (God involved in human life).[46] The second level involves the ever present challenge of the local Christian community to worship God revealed by Jesus Christ. "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth," (Jn.4:24)

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[44] See "A Renewed Church in Asia: Pastoral Directions for a New Decade: FABC Papers no 95, (2000); cf. also Peter Phan, "Ecclesia in Asia: Challenges for Asian Christianity," East Asian Pastoral Review 37 (2000): 220-26; also Aloysius Pieris, "An Asian Paradigm: Inter-religious Dialogue and Theology of Religions," The Month 254 (1993), and local articles in EAPR vols. 37 and 38 (2000-2001).

[45] Both levels are well represented in the end notes of Phan's articles, and in the following footnotes of this study.

[46] Cf. James L. Empereur, "The Theological Experience: Models of Liturgical Theology," Chicago Studies 16 (1977): 45-62.

A basic way of defining liturgy in the concrete is simply to ask: "What does liturgy do?" In pre and post-Vatican II years, the emphasis was commonly focused on the "saving, healing dimensions" of the liturgy, grounded on the New Covenant of the Jesus Christ, experienced and celebrated in and through faith grace-filled encounter with the Risen Christ in his Paschal Mystery.[47] As such, liturgy is not a thing but a meeting of persons and the celebration of an experiential relationship with God and others in Christ through the Holy Spirit – celebrating not a past event but a present reality, an on-going call and response, a new life called "salvation." Briefly, the true Christian liturgy is simply the life of Christ in us, lived and celebrated both personally and ecclesially, the life that is none other than the Holy Spirit, present in us. "If the Bible is the Word of God in words of men, the liturgy is the saving deeds of God in the actions of those who live in Christ." This more traditional emphasis on the soteriological dimension of the liturgy has now balanced with the new interest in creation spirituality as described above.

Insight into the impact of liturgical inculturation on catechesis/ religious education can be gained by focusing on some of the current accepted principles of "liturgical catechesis."[48] Recognizing that the liturgy, focused on Christ's Paschal Mystery, is both source and privileged place for catechesis, liturgical catechesis is sketched as follows: its premier locus is the parish Sunday Eucharist, its model is the baptismal catechumenate, its framework is the liturgical year, its starting point is the believers' actual experience of, and reflection on, the rituals in relation to daily life. Liturgical catechesis is taken to constitute a privileged means for inculturating the Gospel and presupposes an adapted and inculturated liturgy, while at the same time challenging those celebrating the liturgy to a commitment to the Church's universal mission of evangelizing the world

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[47] Cf. Robert Taft, "What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of the Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses," Worship 66 (May 1992): 194-211.

[48] Cf. Veronica Rosier, Liturgical Catechesis ...(Leuven: Peters, 2001) 81-90; see also Gilbert Ostdiek, "Liturgy as Catechesis for Life," Living Light 37 (2001):45-54.

This built-in thrust of the liturgical catechesis toward mission is developed in critical researched studies of the Eucharist in terms of a twofold "diakonia" (service): from the service of cult to the service of charity. The horizontal diakonia of the community (charity) is discerned as the true criterion for the vertical diakonia (worship) of God.[49] This historical research grounds the current stress, especially in terms of PCP II's portrait of our Church as Church of the poor, on integrating authentic worship with the Catholic social thrust, overcoming the traditional caricature of contrasting pious Church-going devotees vs. socially committed workers for justice and the poor.

Conclusion

This exposition of current trends in spirituality and liturgical inculturation needs to be carried forward into the new approaches in sacramental theology. It also clearly manifested the impact of the two sources – holistic approach to Scripture and Practical Theology.[50] Actually the influence of both is evidenced in the theme of a recent work on theologizing in the manner of St. John's Gospel.[51] But the theme of this essay has sufficiently developed to suggest what further analysis would reveal. The practical operational catechetical steps called for must be relegated to a follow-up study.

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[49] Cesare Giraudo, "The Eucharist as Diakonia: From the Service of Cult to the Service of Charity," Liturgy in a Post-Modern World, ed Keith Pecklers (New York: Continuum, 2003), pp 102-32.

[50] Cf. for example, German Martinez, Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments (New York: Paulist, 2004).

[51] Robert L. Kinast, If Only You Recognized God's Gift: John's Gospel as an Illustration of Theological Reflection (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).