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FORMATION OF THE BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY AS AN AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

Ma. Fe Mendoza, R.G.S.

It is only fitting that this mission conference sponsored by the Philippine Association of Catholic Missiologists and focused on basic ecclesial communities (BECs) in Mindanao, should take place in Davao City, close to where they started. The movement began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the deaneries of Lupon and Nabunturan of the Prelature of Tagum under the pastoral care of the Maryknoll Missionaries and some young diocesan clergy.

From the start, what were desired were Christian communities active in the life of the parish, and their formation was geared to this end. The first sign of their gaining ground was in growing liturgical participation. Then Martial Law was imposed in 1972. In the ensuing years, the hard times that martial law brought widened BEC formation to include the concern for bread, justice, peace, and love. The organization of the Church in Mindanao in 1971, through the First Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC I), provided a venue for the spread of the good news of the BECs. By 1974, the Second

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Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC II) had picked it up in the conference theme, "Building Christian Communities in Mindanao-Sulu in the '70s: The Self-Nourishing, Self-Sustaining and Self-Governing Community." The BECs all over Mindanao eventually became targets of suspicion as being anti-government, and they experienced hamletting, massacres, salvaging, and martyrdom. But they endured. Theirs is a glorious memory.

Nearly three decades later, the May 2001 elections took place following EDSA II. If anything, it was an eye-opener for the more attentive within the Church in Mindanao. The issue was to vote for the candidates of either the *Pwersa ng Masa*, the political party of the recently impeached President, or the People Power Coalition of the new administration. Tri-people Mindanao had been suffering under Abu Sayyaf terrorism and the all-out war of the Estrada government against the MILF, which was waging its own war of independence. How Mindanao voted was telling. In general, Muslims voted against the *Pwersa ng Masa* to protest the all-out war policy. Christians, on the other hand, voted for the *Pwersa ng Masa* in favor of the all-out war.[1] Among these Christians, undoubtedly, were the BECs. For those who had invested blood, sweat and tears in interreligious dialogue and in the formation of BECs, especially in the ardor of the early years, these results were a shock and a painful call to reflection. The results demonstrated two realities: (1) the exigency for interreligious dialogue as not yet being in the consciousness of most Christians, and (2) the fragility of the BECs.

The year 2001 was exactly ten years after the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) had decreed regarding BECs:

> Basic Ecclesial Communities under various names and forms—BCCs, small Christian communities, small faith communities, covenant communities—must be vigorously promoted for the full living of the Christian vocation in both urban and rural areas. Active

[1]Allan Nawal, "Mindanao Vote: Christians for PnM; Muslims for PPC," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 20 May 2001, A1.

non-violence will be a guiding principle in their approach to social change.[2]

As the "new way of being Church," in the language adopted by PCP II from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), BECs can trace their missionary identity to *Ad Gentes* when it said in 1965: "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (AG 2).

The year 2001 came eleven years after the promulgation of the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio,* in which BECs received the clearest affirmation since they began some twenty or more years earlier. Of them John Paul II said in no uncertain terms:

> A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young churches—one sometimes fostered by the bishops and their Conferences as a pastoral priority—is that of "ecclesial basic communities" (also known by other names) which are proving to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach.... These communities are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a civilization of love.
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> ...[T]hese communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries. At the same time, by being imbued with Christ's love, they also show how divisions, tribalism and racism can be overcome (RM 51).

What happened to the BECs, we have cause to wonder, in the intervening years between the end of the martial law regime and the elections of 2001? While doing research on BECs in January 2000, I was told of a Mindanao-wide survey that had been undertaken by a Church body. That survey might have given us some clues. Unfortu-

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[2]Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 1992), 267.

nately, that entity was closed down and the survey data were somewhere in Davao City, unpublished, inaccessible, and perhaps still waiting to be systematized until now.

No doubt the formation of the earliest BECs was adequate for their time. One recalls that social analysis was considered an integral part of it, a tool for BECs to understand the Philippine situation under martial rule, their own situation, and eventually their role as agents for social transformation. It would not be a hasty generalization to say that the formation modules of that time were tailored to their context. When, in 1986, the context began to change, we seemed to lose track of the BECs. Did they lose steam because they were no longer challenged, no longer persecuted? Not only of BECs were these questions being asked. Other hitherto vibrant initiatives were asking each other the same questions. *Quo vadis?* The context had indeed changed because democratic structures had been restored, but the shadow of the military was still there, we were still poor, and with globalization in full force with our entry into the World Trade Organization, we would be poorer still. How were the BECs coping? Did anyone ask?

Sustainable Formation: Does It Exist?

My topic is the formation of BECs as authentic communities at the service of mission, but it is not the intent of this paper to present a module for BEC formation. Rather, it aims to offer a screen on which to view BEC authenticity so that hopefully some formation modules may arise.

Our search is directed toward a framework for formation that is transhistorical, which is not bound to a particular history and is valid for all time. Our search widens to include a framework that is transcultural, which applies to communities anywhere in the world. Such a framework has already been offered, waiting to be appropriated, for nearly half a century now. I refer to the insight of the Jesuit theologian and philosopher, Bernard Lonergan, into human authen-

ticity and community. So extensive is Lonergan's contribution[3] to philosophy and theology in the postmodern world that the project of selecting that which directly applies to our task is a monumental one. What is more, his language is not known for being student-friendly, so that even the recognized Lonergan experts continue to call themselves ongoing students of his thought. But to venture in is to find the treasure. Lonergan's insight is valid for all times and all cultures because it is founded on a constant—the normative structure of human consciousness, that consciousness by which we are the image of God, and the very same structure of the human consciousness of Jesus.

Our screen will have three panels. The first panel is on the formation of the authentic individual, the child and the adult, the potential member of a BEC. The second panel is on the formation of the authentic community, the family and the neighborhood, the potential BEC. The third panel is on the redemptive mission of the Christian community, of which the BEC is a basic unit. For a fair treatment of Lonergan's contribution to our topic, there ought to be at least eight panels, but for the time available to us, we shall have to do with three, and hope for the best.

The Formation of the Authentic Individual

Lonergan uses a spatial metaphor to explain human development (for which we substitute the term "formation"). Formation occurs in two distinct modes. It moves from below upwards and from above downwards. The upward movement is *the way of achievement*; the downward movement is *the way of tradition, heritage, gift.* These two modes are interdependent. Both begin from infancy,[4] but the movement from

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[3]The ongoing publication of his 20-volume collected works is with the University of Toronto Press.

[4]Bernard Lonergan, "Questionnaire on Philosophy," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 2/2 (Oct 1984): 10.

above is first in chronology; it creates the conditions for the movement from below to occur.[5] In a climate of affectivity, values are apprehended early on in the way of tradition, but their real assimilation and appropriation belongs to the way of achievement.

A. Formation as Achievement

The path of achievement takes us up the five levels of our consciousness: experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding, and loving. The single name given to each level is a signature, the principal conscious operation among the many that actually occur there, except for loving, which has its own dynamics. "Man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence."[6] To transcend oneself is to move to the next higher level. On these very same levels winds the downward path of the way of tradition, heritage, gift.

Now, before we proceed any further, we hear a word from Bernard Lonergan, an invitation. And the invitation he calls "self-appropriation" is to discover oneself in oneself. As we go through his thematization of human consciousness, we are invited to locate the operations in ourselves and later conduct personal experiments.

1. Experiencing and Its Images. Experiencing is simply to be conscious. It involves the operations of our external and internal senses by which we become aware of objects. By the external sense of seeing, we are aware of the visible; by hearing, of sounds; by touching, of heat, cold, texture; by tasting, of flavors; by smelling,

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[5]For some reason, Lonergan did not elaborate as much on the way of tradition, heritage, gift. Frederick Crowe, widely recognized as his most authoritative interpreter, does this in his two books: *Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education*, supplementary issue of *Lonergan Workshop* 5 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985); *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1989).

[6]Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972), 57. Inclusive language was in use at a later time. This paper will quote Lonergan exactly as he wrote.

of odors. By the internal senses of imagination and memory, the images from external sensation may be recalled, combined or woven into fantasy. Simultaneously, I transcend myself in a three-fold manner when, as a bell rings, I am aware of the bell, I am aware that I am hearing the bell, and I am aware of myself hearing the bell. For me to be fully conscious in this way, I must heed what Lonergan identifies as the built-in transcendental precept of this level: *Be attentive!* Beyond this, Lonergan declares, "Now mere experience has to be enhanced by deliberate attention."[7]

2. Understanding and Insight. The higher animals share the sensitivity of experience with us. What makes us the self-transcendent animal is that we ask questions that follow upon deliberate attention to the data of experience. They are questions for intelligence: what, why, what for, how? Wonder, the prime mover of understanding, Lonergan describes as "that tension, that drive, that desire to understand, that constitutes the primordial 'Why?'" And he continues, "Name it what you please—alertness of mind, intellectual curiosity, the spirit of inquiry, active intelligence, the drive to know. Under any name, it remains the same and is, I trust, very familiar to you."[8] Then picking up from Aristotle and Aquinas, Lonergan would have us observe: "We can all experience in ourselves that, when we try to understand something, we form for ourselves images, by way of examples, in which as it were we inspect what we desire to understand."[9] Intelligence as it were plays around with the images, including those from the remote past or from wider inquiry, until, in a flash,

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[7]Bernard Lonergan, "Christology Today: Methodological Reflections," *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 78.

[8]Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 2, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 38. Translated quotation from *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 84, a. 7c.

[9]Ibid., 34.

insight comes. A situation may be very complex. Then there can be many insights. But for any and every situation, all the significant questions must be asked. Only then can there be the final insight. Self-transcendence at this level would have us obey the transcendental precept: *Be intelligent!* Ideas arising from insight must then proceed to expression or formulation in a concept that can take the shape of a simple declaration or a scientific theory.

3. Judging and Fact. The question at the level of judging confronts the formulated understanding: Is it so? Could it really be? It is the question for reflection. It reviews the task of understanding by validating or invalidating its direct insight. "Insights are a dime a dozen," Lonergan warns, "so critical reasonableness doubts, checks, makes sure." Evidence for the insight is marshaled and weighed in obedience to the transcendental precept: *Be reasonable!*

This higher plane of reflective understanding heads for reflective insight by ascertaining that there are no conditions whatsoever that stand in the way of my being able to say: It is so. When this point is reached, self-transcendence now goes beyond myself to what is independent of myself, not what appears to me or what I imagine, not what I think or wish, not what seems to me, but what is so. Confirmation of understanding is the judgment of fact.

The fulfillment of the first three levels of self-transcendence occurring at the first three levels of human consciousness is Lonergan's account of the dynamic structure of human knowing. What powers the dynamism is the unrestricted desire to know. The structure is normative. If I bypass or neglect any one of the three levels, then I would not truly know. Fidelity to the entire process of knowing requires *intellectual conversion.*

The greater portion of what we know, we do not acquire by our own acts of knowing, the so-called immanently generated knowledge. Most of what we know we receive from others in the way of tradition, heritage, gift. But this is only cognitive self-transcendence. Now Lonergan invites us to "the larger dynamic structure of human living."[10]

4. Deciding and Value. We have come to the existential and responsible level, the level of deliberating, deciding, and acting on truth and value. It is the level of moral consciousness, the level on which consciousness becomes conscience. Our questioning shifts to the question for deliberation that leads to the judgment of value: Is it worthwhile? When we ask, "Is it worthwhile?" what we intend is value. Here Lonergan situates feelings as our initial response to value. And we respond, he says, according to some scale of preference. Then we may ask, "Is there a normative scale of values?" Lonergan says there is. There are vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values in an ascending order.[11]

The self is at the center of every level of the drive for self-transcendence. At every ascent, it takes on a greater significance. The self is more significant as intelligent than as attentive, more significant still as rational, but in moral self-transcendence, the self is identified with the very value upheld and the action taken. At a critical point, "the subject finds out for himself that it is up to himself to decide what he has to make of himself.... On reflection it appears that deeds, decisions, discoveries affect the subject more deeply than they affect the objects with which they are concerned."[12]

At this level, the transcendental precept is: *Be responsible!* "Is it truly good or only apparently good?" is the question for discernment. Here responsibility is greatest. I am my decisions and my deeds. Whether the deeds and decisions be good or evil is determined by

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[10]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 221.

[11]Ibid., 31. See Brendan Lovett, *On Earth as in Heaven: Corresponding to God in the Philippine Context* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1988), 19-46, 59-79. His treatment of the normative scale of values incorporates the values assumed by Lonergan as underpinnings of vital values, that is, the ecological values: physical, chemical, botanical, and zoological values.

[12]Bernard Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 4, *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 226.

the person, at every instance, in the project of "the free and responsible subject producing the first and only edition of himself."[13]

Moral conversion is necessary for authenticity at this level. It consists in the ongoing struggle to place value ahead of satisfaction, others' needs before our personal wants, educating our conscience, as well as our feelings, taking full responsibility for decisions made and actions taken, especially when they are flawed or unpopular, being willing to pay the price for authentic living.

5. Loving. Now the dynamism that powers the operations of consciousness "are just successive stages in the unfolding of a single thrust, the eros of the human spirit."[14] "Self-transcendence," says Lonergan, "reaches its term not in righteousness but in love and, when we fall in love, then life begins anew. A new principle takes over and, as long as it lasts, we are lifted above ourselves and carried along as parts within an ever more intimate yet ever more liberating dynamic whole."[15] Such is the love of husband and wife, of parents and children. Such is the less conspicuous loyalty to country that yields personal good to the good of the country. Such finally is God's gift of his own love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit he has given us (Rom 5:5).[16] *Religious conversion* consists in gratefully accepting God's unconditional love and in desiring to also love others unconditionally. Complete self-transcendence is reached when one falls in love with God. Being in love with God is "not the product of our knowledge and choice."[17] It is a gift.

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[13]Bernard Lonergan, "The Subject," in *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. W.J.F. Ryan and B.J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 83.

[14]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13.

[15]Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in *A Third Collection*, 175.

[16]Ibid., 175.

[17]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 106.

Is there also a transcendental precept at this level of self- transcendence? Yes. *Be in love!* "Being-in-love," says Lonergan, "has its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions. But once it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's decisions and deeds."[18] Being in love takes over every level, but without violating its integrity. One who is in love becomes more attentive, more intelligent, more reasonable, more responsible. For those who have ever been in love, this is familiar territory.

B. Formation as Tradition, Heritage, Gift

1. Loving. As formation, as achievement has its dynamism, so also does formation as heritage. Frederick Crowe, Jesuit friend and foremost interpreter of Lonergan, addressing educators, says:

> Just as the upward development was powered by the capacity for and the drive toward intelligibility, truth, and the good, so the downward development is powered by the love and responsibility of the educator for the child, and the corresponding love for, and ensuing trust in, the educator on the part of the child. This form of communication begins and ends in love.[19]

Crowe continues and names the shape of love as "the patrimony which parents in the family, adult citizens in the community, leaders in the nation, humanitarians in the world confederacy, hold in trust from a preceding generation and hand on in fidelity to the next."[20]

In Lonergan's abbreviated account, formation as handed on, "begins in the affectivity of the infant, the child, the son, the pupil, the follower."[21] The ultimate origin, then, of the way of heritage is God's

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[18]Ibid., 105.

[19]Crowe, *Old Things and New*, 75.

[20]Ibid., 75.

[21]Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 181.

grace; it is God's love mediated first and foremost through the affectivity between parent and child. In reciprocity, the upward and downward paths of formation intersect. We initially see this in the home and in the school. But do we see it at other times?

2. Deciding. Lonergan continues, "On affectivity rests the apprehension of values."[22] In the same way, we have learned that meanings and values in a culture are caught more than taught. With a sense of helplessness, we watch the progressive diminishment of the traditional carriers of values. At the same moment, materialistic and narcissistic values shrill their way into our lives through the mass media and information technology with such regularity that we soon grow accustomed to them. Crowe recalls Lonergan answering a question about violence in movies with the remark that "there is violence in Sophocles too, but violence that raises profound moral questions, not violence that merely provides two hours of diversion for an empty mind."[23]

3. Judging. To continue the sequence of downward formation, Lonergan says, "On the apprehension of values rests belief."[24] Judging, in the way of gift, is directed by values handed down and accepted by belief. For a time we rely completely on a set of judgments which we accept from others who have had the experience and understanding to inform their judgments. With widening experience and increasing understanding, judging becomes more and more one's own. This is not to deny the permanent place of belief in one's life.

4. Understanding. "On belief," Lonergan proceeds, "follows the growth in understanding of one who has found a genuine teacher and has been initiated into the study of the masters of the past."[25]

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[22]Ibid.

[23]Crowe, *Old Things and New*, 80. The occasion was the Boston College Lonergan Workshop in Jun 1982.

[24]Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 181.

[25]Ibid.

The process for understanding in the downward movement is more complex, as Crowe explains: "The act of understanding occurs in the upward movement of the pupil, but it is assisted from above, by an understanding already formed (in another, however) and moving in the downward path of tradition."[26] In family and school, rules of politeness can be accepted not just as rules to be obeyed but as acts of consideration for others that one would desire for oneself. This lays the foundation for understanding those beliefs and traditions that guide us more securely in judgment when internalized and owned because they are first understood. The adolescent who has had this kind of background in formation will still undergo the crises of adolescence. S/he will still grapple with ambivalence between dependence and independence, with sexuality, with deciding what to do with his or her life. But the enterprise will be less bloody.

5. Experiencing. Lonergan concludes: "Then to confirm one's growth in understanding comes experience made mature and perceptive by one's developed understanding."[27] Once again we take an interpretation from Crowe who explains that, in the downward movement of formation, understanding "must wait on experience of life, if it is to be real and not merely notional.... data on reality accumulate slowly in experience of life, a day at a time, over long years. There is no possibility of compressing it into the sort of instant process that is much favored today for making coffee, taking a photograph, and the like; there is no instant experience...."[28]

To conclude the first panel, authenticity then results from the observance of the transcendental precepts: Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love! Lonergan observes that while "unauthenticity is realized by any single act of inattention, obtuseness, unreasonableness, irresponsibility... authenticity is

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[26]Crowe, *Old Things and New*, 81.

[27]Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," 181.

[28]Crowe, *Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education*, 84.

reached only by long and sustained fidelity to the transcendental precepts."[29] He then concludes: "The fruit of authenticity is progress.... The fruit of unauthenticity is decline.... However, beyond progress and decline, there is redemption. Its principle is self-sacrificing love."[30] Already from the first panel we realize that the double path of formation is long and arduous.

The Formation of the Authentic Community

Love is the takeoff point from the individual to the community. Love "transforms an 'I' and 'thou' into a 'we' so intimate, so secure, so permanent, that each attends, imagines, thinks, plans, feels, speaks, acts in concern for both."[31]

Three factors led Lonergan to his insight on community: the emergence of the human sciences, of postmodern existentialist philosophies, and of the notion of culture as historicist, empirical, pluralist, of culture on the move. For all three, meaning is a central concern. All three had a bearing on his concern about where the world was going.

Lonergan simply defines society as any form of human togetherness. "The ideal basis of society is community."[32] And "community is an achievement of common meaning."[33] That achievement is derived from a moral principle, a religious principle, or a Christian principle.

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[29]Lonergan, "Dialectic of Authority," in *A Third Collection,* 8.

[30]Ibid., 9-10.

[31]Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 33.

[32]Ibid., 360.

[33]Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 226.

> The moral principle is that men individually are responsible for what they make of themselves, but collectively they are responsible for the world in which they live. Such is the basis of universal dialogue. The religious principle is God's gift of his love, and it forms the basis of dialogue between all representatives of religion. The Christian principle conjoins the inner gift of God's love with its outer manifestation in Christ Jesus and in those that follow him. Such is the basis of Christian ecumenism.[34]

How common meaning is achieved is explained in this way:

> Common meaning is realized by will, especially by permanent dedication, in the love that makes families, in the loyalty that makes states, in the faith that makes religions. Community coheres or divides, begins or ends, just where the common field of experience, common understanding, common judgment, common commitments begins and ends.[35]

Lonergan adds:

> The common meanings constitutive of communities are not the work of isolated individuals nor even of single generations. Common meanings have histories: they originate in single minds; they become common only through successful and widespread communication; they are transmitted to successive generations only through training and education. Slowly and gradually they are clarified, expressed, formulated, defined, only to be impoverished, emptied out, and deformed.[36]

However appreciative we are of community, we are reminded that community is imperfect. In community, as in the individual, there is progress, decline, and redemption. Community progress is the fruit of authenticity, of obedience to the transcendental precepts that apply to common experience, common understanding, common judgment,

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[34]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 360.

[35]Ibid., 226.

[36]Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," 226-27.

and common commitments. The principle of progress, Lonergan says, is liberty. It is the liberty of the men and women on the spot.[37] Community decline is the fruit of inauthenticity, of disregarding the transcendental precepts. The principle of decline is bias. Its Christian theological equivalent is sin.

There are three biases that generate decline. All three are aberrations to which common sense is subject. Briefly, *individual bias* is yielding to egoistic needs and interests so that consciousness and its norms are made subordinate to their pursuit. *Group bias* operates similarly, except that the needs and interests are those of a group within the community or society. Intelligence is placed at the service of one group's needs and interests over and above the common good so that ideologically-justified class conflicts and rebellions ensue. Contemporary theology would call group bias "social sin." A third bias is the *general bias of common sense.* It differs greatly from individual and group bias, which both generate conflicts that are overt. General bias works unnoticed. By its disregard of other ideas in favor of the practical, general bias not only short-circuits present intelligent development, it sets off a cumulative underdevelopment that leads to the isolation of science, religion and culture in a social deterioration whose residue Lonergan terms the "social surd." It sounds familiar. The most apparent destructiveness of general bias is its disregard of the long-term consequences of short-term benefits. General bias lies behind many of history's ecological disasters, failed government projects, and post-colonial regrets.

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[37]Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. F.E. Crowe and R.M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 259.

The Mission of the Basic Ecclesial Community

Where can society turn for redemption?

Community's susceptibility to bias is a given. Therefore, provisions must be made for a constant renewal of community. There must be individuals, groups, movements and organizations to call communities continually to conversion. This is where, for Lonergan, the Church has its proper place. As community, the Church is an achievement of common Christian meaning. Its central common meaning is redemption through self-sacrificing love actualized in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This common precious memory inspires fidelity to the four transcendental precepts and a leap to the fifth: Be in love!

As in every community, the meaning of which the Church is a carrier is at once cognitive, constitutive, effective, and communicative. Lonergan draws out the implications of this for the Church:

> To communicate the Christian message is to lead another to share in one's cognitive, constitutive, and effective meaning. Those, then, that would communicate the cognitive meaning of the message, first of all, must know it... Next, those that would communicate the constitutive meaning of the message, first of all, must live it... Finally, those that would communicate the effective meaning of the Christian message must practice it.[38]

The Church's redemptive activity is a process to be exercised both within itself and in society. The Church as process of redemption is a process of communication that effects the encounter of faith and culture. Inculturation of the faith, which is communicated in Scriptures, tradition, liturgy, doctrine, and others, will truly have taken place when there results a transformation of culture beginning in the domestic Church, which is the family and in the BEC.

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[38]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 362.

Lonergan was once asked to present a "theological perspective on how a community of love adapts and directs itself for effective mission and witness."[39] In summary, his presentation is a brief analysis of the dynamic structure of human history as progress and decline, and the "law of the cross" as redemption.

The Law of the Cross (Mark 8:34, 35; Matt 16:24, 25; Luke 9:23, 24; John 12:24, 25; Matt 5:11, 12, 28-48) is the doctrine that "understands suffering and death as the result of sin yet inculcates the transforming power of Christ, who in himself and in us changes suffering and death into the means for attaining resurrection and glory... As Christ's death is a principle of salvation, so also are our own deaths, whether understood physically (Phil 3:20, 21), ascetically (Rom 8:13; 1 Cor 9:27), morally (Rom 6:11; Col 3:1-4), and sacramentally (Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 11:26; Col 2:12)."[40] The Law of the Cross is the law of self-sacrificing love.

The mission of the BEC is simply to be in love. Formation to anything less demanding than this loving is to squander our BECs away!

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[39]Lonergan, "The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical Mindedness," in *A Second Collection*, 7.

[40]Ibid., 8-9.