# A CHURCH IN COMMUNION: PCP II AND THE EARLY CHURCH

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*This paper examines PCP II's vision of a Church of the Poor. Addressing what appears to be lacking in the Council's ecclesiology, this paper ventures into a theological reflection on the summaries in Acts 2:42; 4:32-35.*

2022 marked the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of the Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II).1 The decrees do not only attest to the Council's legislative power but are meant to ensure a fuller and faster reception of PCP II. This milestone in our local Church, however, is not just a moment to celebrate but be critical. Thus, we can ask, how much of PCP II have we received so far? To answer this question, we must first ask what kind of a Church we envisioned thirty years ago.

[1]The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) is a significant historical landmark in the life of the Philippine Church. Represented by 146 lay faithful, 12 presidents or rectors of Catholic universities, 24 rectors or deans of seminaries, 21 major religious superiors, 181 priests, and 96 bishops, the Philippine Church has decisively identified itself as a community of disciples, a community opting to be a Church of the Poor, and embarking on a renewed integral evangelization. Hence, the Council was convoked from 20 January – 17 February 1991 at the San Carlos Seminary Complex. After days of sessions, discussions, and deliberations, the Council unanimously approved an integrated document, which was later sent to Rome for *recognitio.* With Rome's decree of *recognitio* issued on 25 April 1992, Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi promulgated the Decrees of the Council on 22 July 1992. The publication of the proceedings and the Acts and Decrees of PCP II took place that same year.

In 2022, in their collective statement on the National Consultation on the Synod on Synodality, the bishops of the Philippines confessed, "We are yet far from our dream of a Church of the Poor."[2] This unsettling realization was expressed once again by the present CBCP President, Bishop Pablo Virgilio David. According to him, "It has been very humbling to admit that, despite PCP II's vision of promoting a Church of the Poor, the poor have remained not only in the margins of society but also in the margins of the Church."[3] Similarly, Manila Archbishop Jose Cardinal Advincula's recent admission of the "'dark and wide gap' between the Church and the poor in our country" is indicative of our reception of the vision of a Church of the Poor.[4]

Filipino ecclesiologists note that PCP II's ecclesiology is mainly contained in Part II of the Acts, "Envisioning a

[2]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, "CBCP Statement on the National Synodal Consultation," *CBCP Archive,* 11 July 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/how-good-and-pleasant-it-is-when-gods-people-live-together-in-unity-psalm-1331/.

[3]This is taken from Bishop Pablo Virgilio David's talk delivered at a conference in preparation for the 50th general conference of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in Bangkok, Thailand. See "New Pathways for Synodality" in CBCP Archive, 26 September 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/new-pathways-for-synodality/.

[4]In a Mass he presided at the *Pontificio Collegio Filippino* last 28 August 2022, Cardinal Advincula expressed, "the Church does not know the poor and the poor do not know the Church." See "Manila archbishop Admits 'Dark and Wide' Between Church, Poor," *CBCP Archive*, 29 August 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/manila-archbishop-admits-dark-gap-between-church-poor/.

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Renewed Church."[5] This vision of a renewed Church is then defined under the subheading, "Discipleship in Community." As expressed by the conciliar text, this overarching theme is derived from the summaries of the life of the early Jerusalem Church in Acts 2:42; 4:32-35.[6] However, the ecclesial model of the early Church in Acts is not sufficiently explicated nor sustained in the subsequent subtopics. For Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, there are notable deficiencies in the overall ecclesiological thrust envisioned by the Council. Treating PCP II's text on the Church, he concludes that "there is no one synthetic ecclesiology present in the section analyzed. What we have are elements of a possible response which have not been knitted together to form a coherent unified vision." [7]

Given these evaluative points on PCP II and the importance of assiduous discourse, perhaps, a theological reflection on the summaries in Acts 2:42; 4:32-35 can help us fully understand the vision of the Council. If PCP II's vision of a Church of the Poor, as Bishop Teodoro Bacani puts it, is "inspired by the example of communal sharing by the first Christian community in Jerusalem,"[8] how can their expe-

[5]See Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, "Discipleship in Community – the Church" *Journeying with the Spirit: A Commentary on PCP II* edited by Paul Bernier and Manuel Gabriel (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1993), 45; Antonio Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology: A Critical Evaluation" in *Landas* 8, 1 (1994), 36-37; Amado Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed: Living the Ecclesiology of Vatican II & PCP II* (Quezon City, Philippines: CCFI, 2022), 19.

[6]See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 89-90.

[7]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 56.

[8]Teodoro Bacani Jr., "Church of the Poor: An Unfinished Agenda," in *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: Quo Vadis* edited by Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, Agnes M. Brazal and Daniel Franklin E. Pilario (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 69.

rience of communion help us better see what becoming a Church of the Poor is?

## The Early Jerusalem Church

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke offers three major summaries in describing the early Jerusalem community. [9] However, with their brevity and abruptness come an array of questions about their authenticity and meaning.[10] Such questions are important not only in understanding the Church they portray but also in the task of renewing our Church today. To begin with, Filipino theologian Fr. Amado Picardal points out that the summaries should be interpreted as "ecclesiological and

[9]See *Acts of the Apostles* 2:42-47; 4:32-37, and 5:12-16. The minor or briefer summaries are found in 6:7; 9:31; 19:20; 28:31. For our purposes, we focus on the first two – to which PCP II anchors its vision of a Church Renewed as a Church of the Poor.

[10]Over the years, there have been conflicting findings on Luke's incorporation of the summaries in Acts. On the one hand, they are understood as one of the ingenious literary techniques of Luke. While on the other hand, the summaries are seen as a detriment to the historical value of Acts. In any case, a key to understanding them is to be aware of the literary character of the book in which they are contained. In Acts, Luke does not only provide some raw data about the early Church. But just like any other historian, he blends his sources with insights relevant to him and the audience he intends to reach. This makes Acts, as Justo Gonzalez puts it, "a selective narrative." See *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 6. Like the other evangelists, Luke adds, omits, and edits. He knew that his task was not a mere passing on of the tradition; instead, in the words of Ernst Haenchen, it was "a work of edification." See *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 103. In other words, Acts can be considered a "theological history." As such, its truth should not be "measured in terms of accuracy in reporting some historical incident but in its correspondence to the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ, which forms the church." See William H. Willimon, *Acts* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988), 6. To conclude, seeing Acts' literary character as a sort of theological history is true not for the entire book in general but also for the summaries in particular.

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kerygmatic texts rather than a strict historical report."[11] This is not to say that the summaries are not anchored on actual events. Nonetheless, Picardal claims that Luke's summary-technique is geared toward a greater purpose – "to provide a model for his contemporary Church."[12]

The summaries, then, reflect Luke's vision of a Church. Hence, they tell us how the infant Church evolved and how the Church should be. As Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) puts it, "Luke intends to clarify the nature of the Church; that is, when he sketches out in the picture of the primitive Church the exemplary form of the Church of all ages."[13] For Picardal, "The summaries in Acts give us a model of the Church as communion."[14] At this point, we can ask: how is this notion of communion expressed in the early Jerusalem Church?

## 1. A Church in the Spirit

According to Picardal, "Luke is regarded as the evangelist of the Holy Spirit and the Acts of the Apostles can also be referred to as the Acts of the Holy Spirit."[15] Thus, when the summaries are read synoptically, we can detect the presence of recurring ideas and parallel details. However, theologian Archbishop George Panikulam explains that "this should not lead the reader to conclude that these summaries are just

[11]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 39-40.

[12]Ibid., 40.

[13]Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion,* trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco, USA: Ignatius Press, 2005), 63.

[14]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 47.

[15]Ibid., 40. New Testament professor David Peterson also shares the same position as he remarks, "Luke's special interest in the Holy Spirit is indicated by the fifty-seven occurrences of the noun *pneuma* ('Spirit') in Acts alone." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 60.

repetitions set by Luke or a redactor. … The author is depicting the growth of the first Christian community under the guidance of the Spirit."[16] By placing the first summary after the accounts of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) and Peter's preaching (Acts 2:14-41), and, at the same time, by describing the community being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31) before the second summary, Luke is implying that "the community in Jerusalem and the communion that the members experience is the consequence of the Pentecostal event."[17]

Similarly, Ratzinger develops his notion of a Church as communion by highlighting the distinct role of the Holy Spirit. Categorically, he claims "that the Church herself, in her essence as the Church, is a creation of the Spirit."[18] Ratzinger then concludes:

> The definition of the Spirit as 'communion'… opens up pneumatology in the direction of ecclesiology, or we might say, vice versa, that it opens a connection from ecclesiology back into theo-logy: becoming a Christian means becoming 'communion' and, thus, entering into the mode of existence of the Holy Spirit. That can, however, in turn take place only through the Holy Spirit, who is the power of communication, its element of mediation, of enabling, and who is as such himself a Person.[19]

Luke's image of the early Jerusalem Church was defined and distinguished by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit reconstituted God's people and built them into a Church in communion.

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[16]George Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament: A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 112.

[17]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 40.

[18]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 39.

[19]Ibid., 42.

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Nonetheless, their Pentecost experience was still not the culmination – but only the inauguration – as the early Jerusalem Church would search for ways to live out the Spirit's gift of communion.

## 2. A Church in Search

New Testament professor Richard Hays claims, "In the Acts of the Apostles, the ministry inaugurated by Jesus is transferred over to the church."[20] Through the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the early Church in Jerusalem was born and tasked to continue Jesus' mission. For the infant Church, this meant searching for ways to carry this out in the context of communion. While Methodist theologian William Willimon argues that the summary in Acts 2 can be described as "a fourfold embodiment of the gospel," Picardal stresses that they can also be seen as "the four basic elements of communion that we find in Acts."[21]

Luke reports that the early Jerusalem Church, first of all, devoted itself to the teaching of the apostles. Historical theologian Justo Gonzalez emphasizes that "persevering in the 'teaching' of the apostles does not only mean that they did not deviate from the doctrines of the apostles or that they remained orthodox. It means also that they persevered in the practice of learning from the apostles – that they were eager

[20]Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (Broadway, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 120.

[21]See Willimon, *Acts*, 39-40. Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 48. Similarly, Jerome Crowe notes, "placed as it is after the first missionary discourse and the conversions that established the growing community, this first summary [Acts 2:42] features the four central, if not constitutive, elements of the Church's life." See *The Acts* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979), 18.

students or disciples under them."[22] For Tagle, their desire and openness to learn were important in preserving the memory of Jesus and in sustaining the community's spirit of communion.

> Members of the early Christian community also opened themselves to the instructions of the apostles. The apostles were eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ. They were the ones who remembered most about Jesus and told and re-told his story. Aside from keeping his memory alive, the apostles also tried to interpret how Jesus would have dealt with the new situations of their time. Their memory and creative insight into who Jesus was and how he would have addressed certain situations were their contributions to the growing Christian community.[23]

Moreover, the teaching of the apostles – as an expression of communion can be seen on two levels. As Picardal argues, "If the teaching function of the apostles is emphasized, this can be the basis for speaking about the teaching office within the Christian community that fosters unity of faith. If the focus is on the teaching as content (that which is taught) then we can talk about the Word that builds and unites the community."[24] In any case, both the act of proclamation and the Word proclaimed made the Church a communion. Thus, as the apostles preached the Word, their hearers were empowered to do the same – making everyone in the community united in the work of *kerygma*. This, in turn, highlights the importance of seeing evangelization as a collective endeavor. While there was an emphasis on the role of the apostles, their authority

[22]Gonzalez, *Acts*, 50.

[23]Tagle, *Easter People,* 40.

[24]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 43.

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did not render the community members powerless.[25] In fact, through the apostles' preaching of the Word, they became evangelizers themselves, not only in word but also in deed. Thus, only when *kerygma* becomes a communal affair that genuine *koinonia* follows.[26]

Secondly, Luke offers a picture of the infant Church that persisted in communal life. According to Picardal, communal life here is often translated as "fraternal communion [or] *koinonia* understood in the sense of community (*Gemeinschaft*)." [27] According to Ratzinger, while exegetes have proposed various interpretations of the meaning of communal life here, as its "context scarcely permits a definitive judgment… [The fact that] the word stands between the two concepts 'teaching' and 'breaking of the bread' (Eucharist); in some respect it seems to link the two together, to be a kind of bridge between the two."[28] In doing so, Luke clarifies that the fellowship among

[25]Willimon observes that while Acts mentions several prominent figures in the early Church, for example, Peter and Paul, these individual characters were not treated "with much depth of detail." Instead, Willimon points out that "Luke had little interest in apostolic biography or a primitive life of the saints. The protagonist of Acts is the Holy Spirit, enlivening and driving the young church. This summary of the activity of the church focuses our attention away from preoccupation with individual actors toward the true concern of the story – the community." See *Acts*, 42.

[26]See Ibid.

[27]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 41.

[28]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 66.

community members cements the unity of the Word and the Sacrament.[29]

Thirdly, Luke draws a picture of a community that persevered in "the breaking of the bread."[30] While we may have hinted at it earlier in our discussion, it is important to reiterate that this is "a technical term adopted by the primitive community for the Eucharist."[31] According to Sulpician priest Frederick Cwiekowski, "For the people of Jesus' culture, sharing a meal implied a bond of unity, a sharing of one's life. Even more, table-fellowship in Judaism implied fellowship before God: those who broke bread at table shared in the blessing which the head of the household pronounced over the bread."[32] While cultural and religious practices may have influenced the first Christians into seeing table-fellowship as

[29]In parallel with Italian theologian Archbishop Bruno Forte's insights on the second level of communion in the Church as "communion with holy things," or the intrinsic unity of the Word and Sacrament is achieved through communal life. See *The Church Icon of the Trinity: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 77-84.

[30]Tagle explains, "the early disciples were a Eucharistic community, that is, they gathered together to break bread and to recall the passion and death of Jesus Christ until he came again." See *Easter People,* 38.

[31]See Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 122. William Dowd proposes that by using this phrase twice in Acts 2 – one in verse 42 and the other in 46, Luke has left scholars perplexed and in disagreement. However, Down also points out that the contention is mainly on verse 46, for "all agree that in 42 the Eucharist is meant." In summary, Down writes, "Most of the details he [Luke] uses are clear enough, but commentators are not agreed on the meaning of 'breaking bread' in verse 46. For some the phrase means the Eucharist or at least the agape which in the early days preceded the Eucharist, but for others it means merely the taking of ordinary meals." See "Exegetical Notes: Breaking Bread (Acts 2:46)" in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 1, 4 (October 1939), 358.

[32]Frederick Cwiekowski, *The Beginning of the Church*, (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1988), 56.

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such, ultimately, they took their cue from Jesus, who treated those whom he shared tables with as friends. In Jesus, tables turned, as it were.[33] Shared meals became both expressions of friendship and a means for salvation.[34] As Filipina theologian Estela Padilla puts it:

> Table fellowship set Jesus apart as a prophet in His time since other prophets also perform healing and miracles. In doing so, His ministry moved away from sacred space: temples, synagogues, altars, and focused on ordinary space: seashores, hillsides, streets, villages, houses, tables. He was invited for meals but He also hosted and served meals. He visited people's homes and used mealtimes as a way to relate with people and express His message of salvation, not so much through words but through welcome and friendship. He believed that commensality – eating at the same table – manifests egalitarianism, shared spiritual and material resources, and is the way of the Kingdom of God.[35]

[33]For the contemporary theologian Sallie McFague, "Jesus' table fellowship with the outcasts of society, his eating with them as a friend (Matt. 11:19), epitomized the scandal of inclusiveness for his time, for he invited the others that were rejected to the fellowship of a meal… Thus, Jesus' invitation to the outsiders to join him as friends at the table became an enacted parable of God's friendship with humanity: the God of Jesus is the One who invites us to table to eat together as friends." See *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 167-168.

[34]A fitting example is the story of the tax collector Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10.

[35]Estela P. Padilla, "Eating and Risking: Jesus' Meal Stories and Eucharistic Praxis in Our Local Churches" in *Theological Symposium Papers and Proceedings of the 51st International Eucharistic Congress* (Paranaque City: Don Bosco Center of Studies, 2017), 327-328.

Since bread breaking was a gesture of "amazement and familiarity" for the infant Church,[36] it became "the celebration of communion, which from the beginning and for many centuries has been the center of Christian worship."[37] Thus, as pointed out by Picardal, "it is for this reason that down through the centuries, receiving the body of Christ in the Eucharist has been called 'going to communion.'"[38]

Finally, Luke's fourth description of the early Jerusalem Church is a community that persisted in the prayers.[39] Earlier, Ratzinger pointed out that the second description could be seen as the link between the first and the third. However, he also claims that setting these four elements in pairs, namely – "teaching and communion" and "breaking of the bread and prayers" – can also be a meaningful way to perceive them.[40] When the community's practice of the bread breaking is read alongside their persistence in the prayers, we see how their table fellowship affects their Jewish cultic and religious life, not to its detriment but its satisfaction. As they frequently met in the temple area

[36]For Filipino liturgist Anscar Chupungco, Jesus' act of bread breaking was a familiar yet compelling scene for his disciples. With great stress on the Last Supper narrative and the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Chupungco highlights how Jesus opened the eyes of the disciples to see that sharing always involved breaking. See *Meditations on the Mass* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2010), 74-75.

[37]See Gonzalez, *Acts*, 51.

[38]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 45.

[39]Peterson observes that "to the prayers *(tais proseuchais),*" with an article in the plural form, "suggests that the reference is to specific 'prayers' rather than to prayer in general. In the context, this most obviously points to their continuing participation in the set times of prayer at the temple." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 162.

[40]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 66.

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and broke bread in their homes,[41] the first Christians remained faithful to the faith of their ancestors.[42] As Tagle claims:

> The early disciples retained the Jewish character of prayer, using the psalms, the prophets, and the teachings of Moses. The early disciples did not break their ties with origins of their spiritual life that were rooted in the prayers of Israel. The prayer of Zachary, the canticle of Mary, and the song of Simeon do not mention Jesus but rather his ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose hopes are now being fulfilled before their very eyes.[43]

To this day, Jewish texts and practices are still part and parcel of Christian liturgies, especially the Eucharist. This is partly because the early Church allowed their liturgies, notably their table fellowship, to be shaped by their Jewish patrimony. The Eucharistic gatherings of the first Christians did not cancel out their ancestral ties. On the contrary, whenever they celebrated the Eucharist, they were not only in fellowship with their fellow Christians but also in communion with their Jewish roots.

True enough, as the Spirit broke through the lives of individual disciples, they were made a Church. Moreover, as they were sent forth by the same Spirit, the four features of their communal life were considered a perennial breakthrough for the Church. As Willimon writes, "in all these activities of teaching, fellowship and sharing, breaking of bread, and praying we see a well-rounded picture of the church, the marks of authentic embodiment of the Spirit in the community's life."[44] Nonetheless, they paint not just any picture

[41]See Acts 2:46.

[42]See Willimon, *Acts*, 41-42.

[43]Tagle, *Easter People,* 36.

[44]Willimon, *Acts*, 42.

of the Church but the most profound being of the Church – communion.[45]

### 3. A Church in Sharing

New Testament scholar Jerome Crowe claims that the summaries are "brief tableaux bringing out the essential features of [the early Church's] life" [46] Hence, for Panikulam:

> We will not be mistaken in thinking that in the first summary, especially in vv. 41-42, the author sets in general terms the main elements that went to constitute the life of the first Christians. The concepts which are left unexplained there receive interpretation in the same summary and verification in the other two. Understood this way, we can observe a progress in thought in the three summaries.[47]

With that in mind, the fourfold description of the early Jerusalem Church receives further elaboration both in the following verses and succeeding summaries.[48] The story of the infant Church, which was in search of ways to express its experience of communion, did not end with their persistence in apostolic teaching, fellowship, bread breaking, and prayers. Instead, these four elements were ultimately demonstrated and concretized in the sharing of goods. As Dominican theologian J.-M.R. Tillard explains:

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[45]See J.-M.R Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. R.C. De Peaux, O. Praem (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 169.

[46]Crowe, *The Acts*, 18.

[47]Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 112. Correspondingly, Peterson suggests the four details in Acts 2:42 "are recorded in a different order and in an expanded form in 4:32-37 and 5:12-16." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 158. Hence, underlining the progressive character of the summaries is key to understanding them more fully.

[48]The first summary in Acts 2:42 is further amplified in verses 44-45 and in the subsequent summaries in Acts chapters 4 and 5.

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> It is not by chance that the first description of the Christian community follows immediately the account of Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47). The word *koinonia (communion)* is found in it. Many interpretations have been given concerning the meaning of this word in this context, connected with the other terms which go side by side with it. We have seen that the most exact one seems to be the one which evokes life through sharing, *communion* in the mutual caring for the good of others. It states precisely, in fact, that Christians 'were united, held all things in common *(hapanta koina),* sold their property and their goods in order to share the proceeds with all according to the needs of each one.' And it is clear that it is again a question of this *koinonia (communion)* in the second description of the same community several pages farther on: 'The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common *(panta koina)*' (4:32). We discover here the indication of an attitude of mutual caring, expressed in the concern for others, especially for those in need, and rooted in the common union with Christ Jesus. Here, *communion* or at least the fact of sharing by putting all in common *(panta koina)*, expresses, 'demonstrates' the unity into which Salvation thrusts believers.[49]

Nevertheless, the sharing of goods – as the decisive expression of communion in the early Jerusalem Church – raises more questions than answers. For one, the early Church's economic life, as portrayed in Acts 2 and 4, has often been regarded as the earliest evidence of "Christian communism."[50] Furthermore, with a great deal of mandates

[49]Tillard, *Church of Churches,* 151-152.

[50]See Timothy Luckritz Marquis, "Between Text and Sermon: Acts 4:32-37" in *Interpretation* 69, 4 (2015), 470. See also Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflicts and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 75; 95-96.

on money and possessions throughout Luke-Acts, the idea of the sharing of possessions has become a conundrum for the Church.[51] Throughout the centuries, though, there have been countless attempts among local communities to live out the communion of goods, not to mention the cenobitic and monastic movements that adopted a more literal and radical interpretation of it.[52] Given the contentions and controversies surrounding this detail, it is necessary to discuss its probable inspiration and implications.

According to Picardal, "the phrase *hapanta koina* (all in common) appears twice," one in Acts 2:44 and the other in Acts 4:32, indicating a strong emphasis on the sharing of material possessions in the early Church.[53] Thus, the second time *hapanta koina* is used, it is predicated on another pivotal remark – of the community of believers being "one heart and mind."[54] That being the case, Crowe argues that the early Jerusalem Church is being portrayed as the fulfillment of the Jewish sense of promise and the Hellenistic ideal of friendship:

> The second summary takes up two elements of the first (2:42-47) to elaborate on the unity of the community and the position of the apostles. It singles out their communion of mind and heart. This group fulfils the noble human aspiration of the Hellenistic world, the ideal of friendship enshrined in the slogans older than Plato and Aristotle, 'friends are one heart and soul,' 'the possessions of friends are common property.' Luke

[51]For an in-depth discussion on the seemingly conflicting stances on material possessions in Luke-Acts, see Luke Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: Mandate and Symbol of Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 11-30; 117-139.

[52]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 46.

[53]Ibid. 45.

[54]See Acts 4:32.

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> repeats that this communion lies deeper than the pagan one, at the level of faith. It is a unity of 'believers' whose sharing of goods is a sign of the deeper life they share in their faith. Thus God's promise of a time when 'there will be no poor among you' (Deut 15:4) is realised in the first community which thus models both the Hellenistic ideal of friendship and the Jewish expectation of a land free of need.[55]

Alluding to these great aspirations of the ancient world, Luke presents the communion of goods in the early Church as the signal of a new era – "God's end-of-time promises" were being fulfilled.[56] Thus, the sharing of goods shows "how the primitive community in Jerusalem realized 'the best ideals both of Hellenism and Judaism concerning life together.'"[57] Having been encouraged by the Spirit at Pentecost, edified by the apostles' preaching, their devotion to the communal life, the bread breaking, and prayers, the first Christians have boldly confronted "the challenge of possessions."[58] More importantly, their sharing of goods affirmed that "the church was called to be an alternative community, a sign, a signal to the world that Christ had made possible a way of life together unlike anything the world had seen."[59] Furthermore, this made the early Jerusalem Church's communion not just realize but

[55]Crowe, *The Acts*, 29-30.

[56]See Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 158-159.

[57]See Ibid., 204. For a detailed discussion on the probable sources of the sharing of goods in the summaries, see Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament*, 114-117.

[58]See Willimon, *Acts,* 52.

[59]See Ibid., 54.

even surpass the ideals of the ancient world.[60] More than anything else, their sharing of goods was founded on their profound memory of Jesus. What led them to the communion of goods was their deep rootedness to Jesus – whose life was marked by sharing and whose being was communion.[61]

In the final analysis, while we can argue that the inspiration behind it is "the wisdom of the ancients," the first Christians' sharing of goods is an imitation of the example of their Lord and a realization of his teachings.[62] It was Jesus – who called the poor blessed (Luke 6:20), told the story of a rich fool who stored all his possessions (Luke 12:16-21), whose disciples left everything to follow him (Luke 5:11), and who challenged the rich official to sell all his possessions and distribute it to the poor (Luke 18:18-22), who was at the heart of this seemingly paradisal scene in the early Church. This Christological character of the sharing of the goods is what prevents us from

[60]According to Gonzalez, the idea of the commonality of goods found in Plato's *Republic* "does not include all citizens but only those of the two higher classes, the rulers and the soldiers or 'guardians'… The purpose of Plato's insistence on the commonality of goods – limited as it is to ruling classes – is not distributive justice but the proper ordering of the state. Extreme poverty is to be banned from the ideal society, not so much because it in itself is evil as because it threatens the stability of the state." See Justo Gonzalez, *Faith & Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1990), 5-8. Against this background, Gonzalez argues that what Luke describes in the summaries is "a community in which mutual love is such that if someone has need others go and sell their real estate in order to respond to those needs." See Gonzalez, *Acts*, 72.

[61]See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith,* 79-89.

[62]For an extensive discussion on the commonality of goods in relation to the ancient worlds – Greek, Roman, and Jewish, see Gonzalez, *Faith & Wealth,* 3-27. For a summary of Jesus' mandate on the use of possessions, particularly in Luke-Acts, see Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 11-29.

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construing this vital tenet in the life of the early Church as something too ideal, romantic, and even utopian.[63]

Finally, the issues surrounding the practice of communion of goods in the nascent Church boil down to the question of implications. As Picardal validly asks, "Does it mean the abolition of private property and adopting the system of communal ownership?"[64] Gonzalez argues that the rigid interpretations of the sharing of goods claim that while it was practiced for a while, the early Church soon had to abandon it – as it contributed to the widespread poverty in the early Jerusalem Church.[65] In sum, positions supporting this argument hold that the commonality of goods was a complete economic disaster.[66] Gonzalez asserts that there are several ways to rebut such claims. For him, nonetheless, it is crucial to pay closer attention to the verbs used in the passages.

> Verses 44 and 45 are then an explanation of this *koinonia*. This consisted precisely in that they 'had all things in common' – the word translated as 'common' comes from the same root as 'communion' or *koinonia*. This does not mean, as it is often thought, that they simply sold all their resources and put them in a common fund, so that no one any longer had anything. The verbs in this verse are in the imperfect, which means that they used

[63]According to Gonzalez, the detail of the commonality of goods in Acts has always been questioned for its historicity and often labeled as Luke's "fictional reconstruction" or "idyllic fiction." See Gonzalez, *Faith & Wealth,* 80-81.

[64]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 46.

[65]For an extensive analysis of these arguments, see Gonzalez, *Acts*, 70-71. Also, *Faith & Wealth,* 79-86.

[66]Gonzalez points out that proponents of this claim even use Paul's collection of donations for the poor in Jerusalem as evidence. See *Acts*, 70-71.

> to sell and used to distribute resources. This implies a continued action, done 'as any had need.'[67]
>
> In parallel, New Testament professor David Peterson observes:
>
> He [Luke] does not mean they automatically sold everything and put the proceeds in a common purse (cf. 4:36-37). They formed a closely knit community, but lived in their own homes and used them for the benefit of the church. There was a readiness to share what they had, because *no one claimed that any of their possessions were their own*. They did not regard possessions as being exclusively for their own benefit and were consequently not captivated by the need to hold on to them. As the need arose, *they shared everything they had* in order to help others (vv. 34-35). Sharing was not a matter of compulsion, and only some property was sold (v. 37). Possessions and money were disposed of at will, as individuals saw fit (5:4). [68]

The story of Barnabas, which immediately follows the second summary, further elaborates and concretizes the sharing of goods in the early Church.[69] For Peterson, "The generosity of *Barnabas* is highlighted as a prime example of the common practice of the Jerusalem church."[70] Thus, the sharing of goods "does not imply the abolition of private property within the Christian community."[71] Nevertheless, as

[67]Gonzalez, *Acts*, 51.

[68]Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 204-205.

[69]Gonzalez asserts that the story of Barnabas is not an isolated nor an exceptional case in the practice of the sharing of goods. On the contrary, Gonzales maintains that "the fact that what Barnabas did is mentioned specifically does not mean that it was an extraordinary case, which would contradict what Luke has told us. This is simply one more case in which Luke, after a general summary, offers a concrete example." See *Acts* 74.

[70]Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206.

[71]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 47.

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Barnabas exhibited, it is the readiness to share what we have for the good of the community.[72] It is the willingness to let go of our riches when circumstances in our community call for it. Thus, the ancient ideal of having all in common will only be possible when, like Barnabas, we can humbly share our prized possessions and lay them at the apostles' feet in self-denial.[73] Ultimately, his generous sharing "is an expression of unity, love and service in accordance with Christ's teaching and example."[74]

## The Vision of a Church of the Poor

At the conclusion of PCP II on 17 February 1991, the members of the Council affirmed that "The ideal of this Church of the Poor remains the first Jerusalem community, where the faithful were 'united, heart and soul' (Acts 4:32) and where no one was in want (Acts 4:34) because everyone shared out of love."[75] By all means, familiarity with the life of the community being exemplified is necessary to realize the Council's vision. However, such articulation of a Church of the Poor by PCP II consequently left to the Philippine Church the complex task of exploring the life of the early Church. While Tagle and Bacani both say that PCP II's vision of a

[72]Peterson writes, "Although only *a field* was sold, ownership of land was the principal source of wealth and social standing in the Greco-Roman world. Barnabas thus embodies the ideal of the 'servant-benefactor', well known in that culture, but to Luke 'pre-eminently exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 22: 26-30)" See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206.

[73]According to Peterson, Barnabas, as a Levite, must have enjoyed the high social regard of his time. However, "when he humbly places the proceeds *at the apostles' feet*, he foregoes the usual social benefit of praise and public honour. In effect, his donation is a private contribution to the common purse." See Ibid., 207.

[74]See Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed*, 47.

[75]Ibid.

Church of the Poor is definitely "a Filipino contribution to the ecclesiological enterprise," both admit that this project remains an "unfinished task."[76] With our insights into the early Church's life, we look at what critical themes of PCP II need further development in its vision of a Church of the Poor.

## 1. Pneumatology

While the Council has correctly identified communion as the overarching theme of the life of the early Church, it missed the very foundation of their communion – the Holy Spirit.[77] As Tagle states, "There is a virtual silence on the Holy Spirit."[78] As a result, for Filipino Jesuit Fr. Antonio Moreno, "This absence of pneumatology weakens the theological motivation to realize the local Church which is primarily the activity of the Holy Spirit."[79] Given this lack of well-defined pneumatology, mixed signals are given.[80] For Moreno, this void poses one pivotal danger: that "the hierarchy does not

[76]See Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 57. Bacani, "Church of the Poor: The Church in the Philippines' Reception of Vatican II," 157; "Church of the Poor: An Unfinished Agenda," 67-72,

[77]See also Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 88-97.

[78]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 48.

[79]Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 10.

[80]See Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 11. In the same vein, for American ecclesiologist Georgia M. Keightley, "The failure of Roman Catholic theologians to give proper accounting of lay ecclesial reality must be attributed to the lack of a robust pneumatology in the West. As a consequence, most ecclesiologies fail to reflect the fact that if it is Christ who institutes the church, it is the Spirit who constitutes it." See "If the Church Makes the Laity, the Laity Make the Church: Ecclesiology and the 99 Percent" in *A Realist's Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Komonchak* edited by Christopher D. Denny, Patrick J. Hayes and Nicholas K. Rademacher (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 186.

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seem to fully motivate the lay (whose baptism seals the presence of the Holy Spirit), like the charismatic communities, to respond to the signs of the times."[81] In addition, by treating the idea of diversity before equality, the Council seems to maintain a hierarchical view of the Church – one which is incongruent with its aspiration of empowering all members of the Church – particularly the poor.[82] For Tagle, the arrangement of themes "should have been reversed in keeping with the consistent methodology of Vatican II of stressing first what binds in common before discussing what differentiates."[83] In sum, Tagle claims that "the already big lacuna in Filipino spirituality and theology regarding the Spirit is here manifest and maintained."[84]

Conversely, the life of the early Church is founded on the Holy Spirit. In the words of Ratzinger, "The origin of the Church is not the decision of men; she is not the product of human willing but a creature of the Spirit of God."[85] Luke presents the diversity in the nascent Church in the context of its Pentecost experience. In doing so, the stress is on who united the first Christians rather than what differentiated them. The Holy Spirit, who, for Ratzinger, is "the love that unites and draws into abiding unity,"[86] made it possible for people with diverse charisms to become a Church in communion. Furthermore, this solid pneumatological emphasis on the life of the early

[81]Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 11.

[82]In expounding the theme of communion, the Council employed two subheadings, "Unity in Diversity" and "Equality in Dignity." See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 91-97.

[83]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 48.

[84]Ibid., 48-49.

[85]Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 43.

[86]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 45.

Church did not do away with ecclesiastical hierarchy. On the contrary, its reception of the Spirit enabled it to persist in the apostolic teaching.[87] In the early Jerusalem Church, apostolic instruction went hand in hand with communal fellowship. As New Testament scholar Fr. Eugene LeVerdiere succinctly puts it, "'The teaching of the apostles' is the foundation for 'the communal life.' And 'the communal life' is a concrete expression of 'the teaching of the apostles.'"[88] In the final analysis, the first Christians' familiarity with the Spirit made them the perfect prefiguration of what PCP II envisioned for our local Church.

> Therefore we need to emphasize today the insights of Vatican II on co-responsibility, shared responsibility in the mission of the entire Church. The movement must henceforth be towards the actual and active sharing of responsibilities among pope and bishops, clergy and religious, lay men and women. And if heavier emphasis is laid on the laity now, it is not to set them against the hierarchical part of the Church nor to form them into a so-called 'Church of the People,' understood as having no place for hierarchical authority and office. It is rather to restore their neglected role of evangelizers, to enable them to exercise that role more fully and efficaciously for the spread of Christ's Kingdom.
>
> When we participatively share charism and ministry for the one mission, we become a Church of Communion

[87]We can also hardly miss that right after the story of Pentecost, Peter – the head of the eleven stood up and preached. Peterson perceives this as "in line with Jesus's commission (1:8), the apostles now presented themselves as his witnesses in Jerusalem. Empowered by the Spirit, they showed a new boldness in confronting their contemporaries." See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 139.

[88]Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Breaking of the Bread: The Development of the Eucharist according to Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998), 77.

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> in truth and in deed. It is a veritably new way, at least for us of this century, of being Church.[89]

Our reception of PCP II should be anchored on a deeper insight into the Holy Spirit. If we deem the early Church's life paradigmatic, then, Pentecost should also be the *terminus a quo* of our ecclesiology. Indeed, only when we build our ecclesiology on pneumatology will every member of our local Church be empowered to realize a shared ecclesiological vision. Correspondingly, only then can there be a communion between the hierarchy, the lay, and most especially, the poor.

## 2. Mission

Another key theme that PCP II has failed to develop adequately is mission. To an extent, Tagle maintains that this inadequacy stems from the conciliar document's "lack of a pneumatology."[90] Tagle's main critique of the Council's treatment of mission is the seemingly vague correlation between mission and communion. For him, "Mission appears in this section of the text not so much as fully constitutive of communion but as an off-shoot of communion. The impression is given that the community is already constituted prior to mission. This is not totally accurate both in praxis and in theory, especially as the basis of a dynamic local ecclesiology."[91] Furthermore, this observation can be seen in parallel with the

[89]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* nos. 100-101.

[90]In summarizing his comments on PCP II's treatment of mission, Tagle concludes, "the many valid points raised by this section should have been supported by a more explicit theology of the kingdom, of an eschatology and a theology of history. But given the lack of a pneumatology, it becomes understandable why these theological strands associated with the Spirit are also absent in the treatment of mission." See "Discipleship in the Community," 51.

[91]Ibid.

recent remarks of David during the National Consultation on the Synod on Synodality. In his homily during the closing Mass, David underscored, "PCP II already broke new ground when it spoke of the Church as a 'community of disciples' but it never went to the extent of stretching that ecclesiology to also speak of the Church as a 'community of apostles,' obviously because we have also tended to clericalize apostleship."[92] While the overall idea of "discipleship in the community" is a step in the right the direction, the Council's inability to stress the primacy and exigency of mission hampers the realization of its vision of a Church renewed. Consequently, for David, "A Church that is not in mission is not a Church."[93]

On the other hand, the life of the early Church was geared toward mission. Since Pentecost was its *terminus a quo*, mission was its *terminus ad quem*. In other words, the first Christians' reception of the Holy Spirit made them receptive to the mission at hand. As Hays puts it, "The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the event that empowers the church to continue Jesus' work."[94] Hence, the Spirit's empowerment was never exclusive to the apostles but to the entire community. As Hays further argues, "Despite Luke's special interest in telling the story of the apostles as successors to Jesus, his vision of the power of the Spirit in the church extends in a more comprehensive and egalitarian way to the whole people of God."[95]

[92]Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, "Community of Disciples in Mission: Bishop David's homily for the closing Mass of Nat'l Synodal Consultation," in CBCP Archive, 07 July 2022, accessed 10 November 2022, https:/ cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/full-text-bishop-davids-homily-for-the-closing-mass-of-natl-synodal-consultation/.

[93]Ibid.

[94]Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 121.

[95]Ibid.

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Moreover, mission in the early Jerusalem Church was not the consequence of their communion but its cause. For Tagle, their reception of the Spirit meant "the birth of a new reality… [making them] a new people of commission."[96] This commission, in turn, made them persist in the apostolic teaching, fellowship, bread-breaking, prayers, and the mission to share their goods. Thus, these elements and expressions of communion were predicated on actual needs in the community. More than a depiction of ancient ideals, Luke's description of the early Jerusalem Church mirrors a community in mission. This also best explains why the practice of the sharing of goods, in particular, even outlived the very community that started it. As Gonzalez writes:

> The commonality of good, far from being an ephemeral element in the life of the early Church, continued for a long time. In the *Didache*, a document that could well date from the end of the first century or early in the second, we are told that 'you are not to overlook the needy but rather are to share (*synkoinonein*, that is, being *koinonoi* jointly) all things with your brother, and are not to say that they are your own. Because if we are partners (*koinonoi*) in the eternal, how are we not to be partners even more in that which perishes?' The same ideas appear, perhaps some fifty years later, in the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*. At about the same time, that is, toward the middle of the second century, the *Address to Diognetus* claims that Christians 'share a single table, but not a bed.' This is probably a brief way of distinguishing the commonality of goods that Christians practice from that which had been proposed by Plato and others, which also included sexual promiscuity. In any case, what is important is that the commonality of goods described in Acts continued at the time of that other writing. Furthermore, similar assertions appear in the writings of Justin Martyr, also

[96]Tagle, *An Easter People,* 89.

> from the middle of the second century, and after that in Tertulian, toward the end of that century.[97]

Although Tagle and David are both not participants as far as the celebration of PCP II is concerned, their assertions help us better assess our reception of the Council. If becoming a Church of the Poor is the Spirit's most urgent call for our local Church[98] – like the early Church – our communion should be derived from and oriented toward mission. Only then will every member of our local Church, especially the poor, realize that we all share in the mission of "consciously prioritizing the ones Jesus himself would prioritize."[99]

### 3. The Eucharist

In assessing the state of evangelization in our country, PCP II admits, "For most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of the rites of popular piety. Not on the Word of God, doctrines, sacramental worship (beyond baptism and matrimony). Not on community. Not on building up our world unto the image of the Kingdom."[100] Despite this sorrowful confession, Tagle asserts that the Council has failed to incorporate the central role of the Eucharist in developing its communion ecclesiology.

> There is also a 'real absence' of any eucharistic discourse in the treatment of communion. An opportunity to 're-construct' the devotion of Filipinos to the eucharist along the lines of fostering community (the scholastic *res sacramenti*) is missed, as well as the chance to retrieve

[97]Gonzalez, *Acts,* 73-74.

[98]See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 122.

[99]See David, "Community of Disciples in Mission."

[100]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 13.

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> the meal or supper tradition of the eucharist, central to the Filipino experience of communion in the family.[101]

In addition, if we survey PCP II's vision of a Church of the Poor, we will realize that there is no mention of the Eucharist – except a marginal note on stipends or stole fees that often prevent the poor from accessing the sacraments.[102] Six years after the Council, however, the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* expressed, "The most serious weakness is that so many Filipino Catholics *separate the Mass from their daily lives*. For many Filipino Mass-goers, the Eucharistic celebration has little to do with their ordinary moral activities, especially any social action for the poor."[103] Given these observations, what insights can we draw from the first Christians whose communal life was centered on the Eucharist?

In the early Church, the Eucharist is described as "the breaking of the bread." For LaVerdiere, although this expression originated from the Old Testament, the first Christians were convinced that Jesus "gave the breaking of bread new and distinctive meaning."[104] As such, LaVerdiere further claims,

> 'The breaking of the bread' *(he klasis tou artou),* Luke's name for the eucharist, highlights the sharing

[101]Tagle, "Discipleship in Community," 49.

[102]See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 128

[103]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Catechism for Filipinos Catholics,* (Manila: ECCCE Word & Life Publications, 1997), no. 1674.

[104]For LaVerdiere, it was customary at the beginning of every Jewish meal for the head of the family or the guest in the banquet to take the bread, say a blessing, break, and share it with those at the table. "In the Old Testament, the gesture of breaking bread can be traced back at least to the time of Jeremiah (Jer 16:7)." See Eugene LeVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 103-104.

> aspect of the eucharist. It speaks of the eucharist as a community event. Bread that is broken is bread to be shared, strengthening and building up the community as an *ekklesia*, an ecclesial community. As a community event, the breaking of the bread is thus an ecclesial event, expressing both 'the communal life' (*he koinonia*) and the mission of the church. The breaking of the bread is both a *koinonia* event and a mission event.[105]

Luke's description of the Eucharist reveals how the sacramental life of the early Jerusalem Church is essentially linked to its missionary task. As Picardal underscores, "The 'breaking of bread' or table-fellowship is, therefore, both the concrete and sacramental expression of communion between the members of the Christian community and with Christ."[106] Since bread was the staple food in the ancient Mediterranean world, LaVerdiere argues that "sharing bread, sharing a meal, joined people in solidarity."[107] In their breaking of the bread, the early Church makes us see an ecclesial communion that is oriented by, and toward, mission. Ratzinger sums this up as,

> Fellowship in the body of Christ and in receiving the Body of Christ means fellowship with one another. This of its very nature includes mutual acceptance, giving and receiving on both sides, readiness to share one's goods. The fact that some people are indulging themselves while others are in want cannot be reconciled with Church fellowship. This is always 'table fellowship' in the most demanding sense of the word, and its members always have to give each other 'life' – physical and spiritual, but especially physical, too. In this sense, the social question is given a quite central

[105]LeVerdiere , *The Breaking of the Bread,* 12.

[106]Picardal, *A Vision of a Church Renewed,* 45.

[107]LaVerdiere, *The Breaking of the Bread,* 12-13.

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> place in the theological heart of the Christian concept of communion."[108]

Conceivably, the early Jerusalem Church's understanding of the Eucharist can aid us in arriving at what PCP II calls "a renewed worship."[109] Like the early Church, by seeing every eucharistic celebration as "the breaking of the bread," we can recover its meal dimension, which for Moreno, "is a symbolic expression of solidarity and communion."[110]

## Concluding Thoughts

Unequivocally, PCP II is a watershed moment for our local Church. With the vision of a Church of the Poor as its distinguishing stamp, the Council has gifted us with a renewed sense of identity and mission. Nonetheless, with thirty years of creative and concrete attempts to implement the Council, we cannot help but wonder what hinders us from fully realizing it. With our earlier evaluation of PCP II's ecclesiology, we cannot deny that interpretation, by and large, affects the implementation. While it is true that the Council is "pastoral in nature, in orientation, and in objectives,"[111] we cannot dispense with the need for a well-developed ecclesiology to define and direct the Church's pastoral endeavors. In short, articulation directs the course of reception.

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[108]Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 69.

[109]Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees,* no. 167-168.

[110]Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology and Other Essays," 11.

[111]Quevedo maintains, "The Acts and Decrees of PCP II are not the work of systematic theology. They are fundamentally pastoral in nature, in orientation, and in objectives… Therefore, PCP II was not meant to give a fully developed ecclesiology for our situation. It would not be proper to critique the ecclesiology of PCP II for something it did not scientifically attempt to do." See "Notes on PCP II Ecclesiology," (January 1992), quoted in Moreno, "PCP II Ecclesiology: A Critical Evaluation," 46.

Our evaluative points on PCP II, in no way, belittle its achievements. At most, they attest to the reality that PCP II is a gift and a task all at once. Responding to the task of exploring the community on whom the Council predicated its vision of a Church renewed, "we are led back to an understanding of the Church as communion." Although for Tagle, "renewal as restoring the primitive Church" has its own limits,[112] we cannot deny that the first Christians' way of being a Church captures, at the same time, enriches what we mean by a Church of the Poor. Like them, we are called to be of "one heart and mind" (Acts 4:32), receptive to the promptings of the Spirit, and ready to exploit avenues where the poor are not passive objects but active subjects of the Church's mission.

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[112]In elaborating on the theological frameworks of renewal in the Church, Tagle maintains that unchecked replication of early Church life can also posit serious dangers. Hence, he argues, "Based on the assumption that the Church was perfect in its inception, renewal therefore means a re-pristination, eliminating accretions or corruption by returning to the beginnings. While providing motivation for correcting abuses, this theory is criticized for idealizing the period of Christian origins and ignoring its defects. It also tends to ignore the action of the Holy Spirit in the more recent past." See Luis Antonio G. Tagle, *"It is the Lord!" Occasional Lectures at Loyola School of Theology* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 2003), 78.

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