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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The lives of the saints are like road maps; they are entrusted to us by the Church as trustworthy guides on our pilgrimage toward God. Though we may find ourselves far from our celestial home, uncertain in our steps, and unable to discern clearly the path ahead, our journey through this "valley of tears" remains deeply sustained. Our pilgrimage is sustained precisely because we are accompanied by "so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1) and "a great multitude" of holy people, "standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7:9), who not only show us the way to heaven by their lives but also intercede for us along the way, so that we too may one day share in the glory of the beatific vision. As the French Catholic writer Léon Bloy incisively reminds us, "the only real sadness, the only real failure, the only great tragedy in life is not to become a saint." After all, the Church teaches that holiness is not only the ideal of a few, such as priests and Religious, but the universal vocation of every Christian, for "all in the Church … are called to holiness … all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love" (*Lumen Gentium*, nos. 39–40). The holiness of the saints on earth consisted in their abiding communion with God and their steadfast fulfillment of His divine will while remaining fully engaged in the world. Indeed, as the Synod on Synodality's Final Document *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission* observes, "[l]ooking upon the Lord does not distance us from the tragedies of history" (no. 2). The reverse, of course, is equally true: *the tragedies of history do not prevent us from looking upon the Lord.*

Some saints, however, stand out with particular lucidity, for they offer not only examples of a holy life but also written teachings that continue to illuminate the path for Christians seeking sanctity across diverse times and contexts. Such is the case of the "Doctors of the Church," who, though belonging to different eras and responding to varied ecclesial challenges, help the Church articulate, clarify, and hand on the truths of the Christian faith with greater coherence. Through the enduring relevance of their teachings in matters of doctrine, morality, and spiritual life, they impart a distinctive intellectual and pastoral clarity that enables believers to grasp the mysteries of the Christian faith and embody the gospel with renewed fidelity for all ages.

On November 1, 2025, the Solemnity of All Saints, Pope Leo XIV declared St. John Henry Newman—beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in Birmingham, England, on September 19, 2010, and canonized by Pope Francis in Rome, Italy, on October 13, 2019—the 38th Doctor of the Church (*Doctor Ecclesiae*). According to Pope Benedict XIV's classic formulation in *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione et Beatorum Canonizatione*, the Church recognizes a Doctor of the Church based on three conditions: *eminens doctrina* (eminent doctrine), *insignis vitae sanctitas* (outstanding holiness of life), and *ecclesiae declaratio* (formal proclamation by the Church). Regarding the first condition, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (June 28, 1988), Art. 73, speaks of the saint's "outstanding teaching." Indeed, the title "Doctor of the Church" is given to a saint whom the Church recognizes as having made an eminently important, reliable, and enduring contribution to the teachings of the faith. It constitutes an ecclesial recognition of a saint's exceptional doctrine, holiness of life, and significance for the entire Church.

On the same occasion—celebrated during the Jubilee of the World of Education—Pope Leo also named Newman, together with St. Thomas Aquinas, as co-Patron of the Church's educational mission. By designating Newman as Patron of Education alongside Aquinas, the Holy Father emphasizes that Catholic education lies at the very center of the Church's mission of evangelization and renewal. His

rationale for declaring this English saint both a Doctor of the Church and co-Patron of Catholic Education is clear:

> Newman's impressive spiritual and cultural stature will surely serve as an inspiration to new generations whose hearts thirst for the infinite, and who, through research and knowledge, are willing to undertake that journey which, as the ancients said, takes us *per aspera ad astra*, through difficulties to the stars.

With Aquinas, Newman serves as a model for Catholic educators whose goal is not only to impart knowledge but also to guide people toward truth and accompany them on the journey of holiness. "From a Christian perspective," said Pope Leo, "education helps everyone to become saints." Quoting Newman's famous prayer, *Lead, Kindly Light*, in his homily, the Holy Father encouraged educators to "shine like stars" in the world and described Catholic education as a genuine commitment to the "collective search for truth." Educational institutions are thus sacred spaces of discernment, where truth is pursued through reason illuminated by faith; they are "laboratories of prophecy," where hope is nurtured and witnessed, especially amid social injustice and uncertainty. By choosing Newman as a new Doctor of the Church among modern saints, the Church affirms that the cultivation of the intellect, the deepening of the spirit, and the formation of pastoral insight are inseparable dimensions of authentic Christian witness. For the Pope—and echoing what we noted above—"[t]he lives of the saints teach us that it is possible to live passionately amidst the complexity of the present, without neglecting the apostolic mandate to 'shine like stars in the world' (Phil 2:15)."

Perhaps not all the contributors to this issue of *Landas* are educators by profession; yet, through their diverse theological reflections, they may be regarded as little "doctors of the Church," each offering a luminous insight into the Church's enduring call to holiness and the many ways Christians today can respond with fidelity, discernment, and hope. In the spirit of what this publication celebrates—Newman's elevation to the rank of Doctor of the Church—the diverse articles included in this collection may be read as tiny, fragmentary, yet meaningful guideposts along the journey toward personal and communal sanctity, shedding

light on theology, moral discernment, and spiritual life. In this way, the authors accompany readers much as saints and educators like Newman and Aquinas accompany the faithful, guiding them in the pursuit of truth, the cultivation of virtue, and the living out of a life that is both faithful and hope-filled, amid the manifold complexities and challenges of the world. In our ongoing quest for fresh voices and new insights to illuminate the rich tapestry of theology, we welcome this wide-ranging array of themes that explore both the life of the Church and the study of theology.

We pray that *Landas* may continue to equip priests, Religious, and lay people—here in the Philippines, throughout Asia, and beyond—with insights and reflections that are both illuminating and formative, fostering a renewed encounter with God's Word as "a wellspring of constant renewal" in the life of the Church (*Verbum Domini*, no. 1). In this way, the Church may ever be renewed, as Christ summons her "to that continual reformation of which she always has need" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 6), growing in fidelity to the Gospel as she proclaims its saving truth to the world.

Salvador G. Agualada Jr., CMF
Editor-in-Chief

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THE USE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS IN JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S *AN ESSAY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE*

Salvador G. Agualada, Jr., CMF

Abstract. This paper offers a systematic summary of John Henry Newman's *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, with particular attention to his sustained and methodical use of the Church Fathers. It traces how Newman consistently appeals to patristic testimony in articulating and illustrating his seven "notes" of authentic doctrinal development, showing that the Fathers function not merely as historical witnesses but as integral components of his theological reasoning. By following the structure of the *Essay* itself, the study highlights the role of patristic sources in Newman's distinction between genuine developments and corruptions of doctrine. The paper is primarily expository in nature and aims to clarify Newman's argument by presenting how the Fathers shape his understanding of doctrinal continuity, growth, and ecclesial identity.

Keywords: John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Catholic Doctrine, Doctrinal Development, Seven Notes, Church Fathers, Patristic Theology

Introduction

The life of John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890)—beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in Birmingham, England, on September 19, 2010, and canonized by Pope Francis in Rome, Italy, on October 13, 2019—spanned almost the entire nineteenth century. The literary testament that provides the philosophical arguments and theological justifications for his celebrated conversion from Anglicanism to the Catholic Church in 1845 (at his life's midpoint) was said to be his famous book, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.[1] It is Newman's magisterial work which, in the words of Gerard McCarren, "enabled him to find intellectual warrant for his departure from Canterbury for Rome."[2] The book examines the developments of doctrine that have occurred in the Catholic Church since the time of the Apostles, providing a set of criteria for distinguishing true developments from corruptions and establishing a rationale for doctrinal developments that seemed not to be part of the explicit beliefs of the early Church.

After spending significant time discussing—and ultimately refuting as flawed—the pedagogy employed by the Anglican Divines in distinguishing developments from corruptions, Newman turns to a more constructive task in his work. He demonstrates that the fundamental rule by which Christianity has progressed through the ages in creative fidelity to the teachings of Christ, received by the Apostles and later by "the Church of the Fathers,"[3] is to be found in the principle of development. For him, this principle was what protected

[1] J. Gaffney, "Foreword," in J. H. Newman *Conscience, Consensus, and Development of Doctrine* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vii.

[2] G. H. McCarren, "Development of Doctrine," in I. Ker and T. Merrigan (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 118.

[3] According to James Gaffney, Newman applied this phrase "to that period of early Christianity, mainly in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the main lines of Christian belief and worship were definitively laid down" (Gaffney, "Foreword," ix).

the Christian faith from corruption through the centuries. Newman argues that all the Christian doctrines that developed over time existed in implicit and rudimentary form since the earliest times as part of the Apostolic tradition. They only came to full development and explicit elucidation when the Church, after periods of intense persecution, achieved peace during the reign of the Christian Emperors, and when waves of controversies and heresies started to besiege her from within and without, which precipitated conciliar debates, reflections, and doctrinal formulations.[4] In an earlier essay, entitled "The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine," considered "an eloquent prelude" to the *Essay*, Newman already argues that

> [t]he absence, or partial absence, or incompleteness of dogmatic statements is no proof of the absence of impressions or implicit judgments, in the mind of the Church. Even centuries might pass without the formal expression of a truth, which had been all along the secret life of millions of faithful souls.[5]

Newman's *Essay*[6] consists of twelve chapters, excluding a lengthy introduction and a mere one-paragraph conclusion. After his long Introduction, Newman lays out seven principles, which he calls "notes" (Chapter V), which he describes with secular and religious illustrations, and which, for him, serve to differentiate developments that illuminate

---

[4] For Newman, "an international bond and a common authority could not be consolidated, were it ever so certainly provided, while persecutions lasted… The Creed, the Canon, in like manner, both remained undefined. The Creed, the Canon, the Papacy, Ecumenical Councils, all began to form, as soon as the Empire relaxed its tyrannous oppression of the Church" (Chapter IV, Section III, Par. 5).

[5] J. H. Newman, "The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine" in *Conscience, Consensus, and the Development of Doctrine* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 12.

[6] J. H. Newman, "An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine" in *Conscience, Consensus, and the Development of Doctrine* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 38-385. Henceforth referred to in this paper as *Essay*. Since this book is divided into chapters, chapters into sections, and sections into paragraphs, references to this work are to chapter, section, subsection, and/or paragraph numbers.

an original idea from corruptions that distort it. The remainder of the *Essay* explores Newman's application of these principles to specific historical developments in Christian doctrine (Chapters VI-XII), showing how each of the seven "notes" is applied to instances in history of what appear to be alterations in doctrine.[7]

This paper aims to demonstrate how Newman consistently engages the Church Fathers in his *Essay*, particularly in illustrating and supporting his seven "notes" of authentic doctrinal development. In doing so, it seeks to show that Newman's appeal to the Fathers is neither incidental nor merely illustrative, but constitutive of his theological method and decisive for his judgment concerning genuine doctrinal development, as highlighted in this summary of his work.

II. Newman's Theory of the Development of Doctrine, Its Seven Notes, and Their Applications to the Writings of the Church Fathers

A. The Seven Notes in Newman's Theory of the Development of Doctrine

In the *Essay*, Newman examines the state of Christian life during the Antenicene period of unrelenting persecutions in the Church, which produced scores of martyrs and fortified the Christian faith, as well as the different heresies and controversies that plagued the post-Nicene Church in the earlier centuries of Christianity. He also considers the various beliefs embraced by Catholics, the Eastern Churches, and Protestants, and seeks to establish, through the historical records, the distinctions between "developments" of doctrines and their "corruptions." He attempts to look at the whole range of Christian history with an eye toward elucidating how often those tenets that

[7] In 1990, the International Theological Commission came up with a document entitled, "The Interpretation of Dogma," in which John Henry Newman's Seven Notes/Criteria are endorsed (Cf. International Theological Commission, "The Interpretation of Dogma," in *International Theological Commission Texts and Documents 1986-2007*, Volume II [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009], p. 52.).

appear to be "additions" to the Christian faith are simply developments or a greater and deeper explicit understanding of what was once merely held implicitly in earlier times.

Newman begins the *Essay* with a declaration about the historical character of Christianity: that it is "a fact in the world's history," whose "home is in the world" (Introduction, Par. 1), and thus criticizes those (in Par. 2) who claim that "there is no sufficient body of historical proof" to ascertain that Christianity is a religion of history (Introduction, Par. 3). For him, "the society of Christians which the Apostles left on earth were of that religion to which the Apostles had converted them; that the external continuity of name, profession, and communion, argues a real continuity of doctrine" (Introduction, Par. 3). Hence, "the Christianity of the second, fourth, seventh, twelfth, sixteenth, and intermediate centuries is in its substance the very religion which Christ and His Apostles taught in the first" (Introduction, Par. 3). How one accounts for the lack of concurrence between the early and later aspects of Christianity—such as the absence of a Trinitarian doctrinal formulation in the Antenicene period—if it is assumed that "there has been no variation in the teaching of the Church from first to last" (Introduction, Par. 20), is initially explained by Newman through his appeal to the principle of *Disciplina Arcani*—that is, "the primitive Church's reticence to speak openly to non-Christians about her sacred mysteries."[8]

> It is maintained that doctrines which are associated with the later ages of the Church were really in the Church from the first, but not publicly taught, and that for various reasons: as, for the sake of reverence, that sacred subjects might not be profaned by the heathen; and for the sake of catechumens, that they might not be oppressed and carried away by the sudden communication of the whole circle of revealed truth (Introduction, Par. 20).[9]

[8] J. Carola, "John Henry Newman," in *Dispensa* in *L'uso Dei Padri Della Chiesa Nella Teologia* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, First Semester, School Year 2010-2011), 3.

[9] Joseph Carola, however, observes: "As Newman's own understanding of Christian antiquity evolves, he will appeal less and less to the Disciplina

Having judged Protestantism right away as "not the Christianity of history" (Introduction, Par. 6), Newman excluded it from being considered a genuine outcome of a true and faithful development of Christian doctrine. For him, "whatever history teaches… whatever it says and unsays, at least the Christianity of history is not Protestantism," and "[t]o be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant" (Introduction, Par. 5).[10] What he means by this is that when Christianity is examined seriously through its historical development, Protestantism cannot be identified with the faith of the early Church. He argues that a serious study of Christian history leads away from Protestantism because Protestantism lacks continuity with the beliefs, practices, structures, and authority of historical Christianity. Newman admits, though, that "there are to be found, during the eighteen hundred years through which it has lasted, certain apparent inconsistencies and alterations in its doctrine and its worship," yet those are not enough to nullify the general character and direction of Christianity (Introduction, Par. 7).

Arcani in order to explain the pre-Nicene Church's 'silence' regarding classical Trinitarian doctrine" (Ibid., p. 7). In his *The Fifteenth Oxford University Sermon*, Newman, according to Carola, "no longer appeals to the primitive Disciplina Arcani to explain the ancient Church's 'silence' on key doctrinal matters. Rather, he outlines his theory of development in religious doctrine—a theory which he will elaborate fully in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*" (Ibid., p. 20). Brian E. Daley, likewise, argues: "By the early 1840s, Newman seems no longer to have been content with pointing to the 'discretion' of early Church teachers in expressing doctrine, as he had done in Arians, and to have moved more and more directly towards the conviction that the conceptual content of Christian doctrine—what the Church knows and says of God—itself develops, in an organic but unpredictable way, within the bounds of a living community that is itself the sole herald and interpreter of the Gospel: a theory that clearly relied, for intelligibility, on some kind of institutional teaching office within the Church's leadership" (B. E. Daley, "The Church Fathers" in I. Ker and T. Merrigan [eds.] *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], p. 35).

[10] For Joseph Carola, "[i]n its own way, the comment proved autobiographical for the High-Church Anglican. Newman was received into the Catholic Church [on October 9, 1845] shortly before its publication" (J. Carola, "Pre-conciliar Patristic Retrieval" in *Augustinian Studies* 38/2 [2007]: 386.

In paragraph 21 of the Introduction, Newman begins expounding his Theory of the Development of Doctrine, which he will elaborate in Sections I and II of Chapter I, even providing secular examples both of the process and of the kinds of development in ideas. According to him, the human mind needs time "for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas," since "the highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated… once for all… could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but… [require]… the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation" (Introduction, Par. 21).

Building on this claim, Newman argues in Chapter 1 that the process of "germination and maturation" constitutes a true "development" only if "the assemblage of aspects which constitute its ultimate shape really belongs to the idea from which they start." (Chapter 1, Section 1, Par. 5). By a "great idea," therefore, Newman understands a revealed truth or principle that is given "once for all" and in its fullness from the beginning, yet remains only implicitly grasped and not immediately comprehended "all at once" by the human mind, requiring instead "longer time and deeper thought" for its meaning and implications to be gradually unfolded. For him, the development of an idea has several characteristics, the first of which is that "it cannot progress at all without cutting across, and thereby destroying or modifying and incorporating with itself existing modes of thinking and operating" (Chapter I, Section I, Par. 5). Second, such development "is carried on through and by means of communities of men and their leaders and guides[,]… employs their minds as its instruments, and depends upon them while it uses them" (Chapter I, Section I, Par. 5). Third, "it develops by establishing relations between itself and them; it employs itself, in giving them a new meaning and direction" (Chapter I, Section I, Par. 5). Fourth, "[i]t grows when it incorporates, and its identity is found not in isolation, but in continuity and sovereignty" (Chapter I, Section I, Par. 5). Fifth, "[it] not only modifies but is modified, or at least influenced, by the state of things in which it is carried out, and is dependent in various ways on the circumstances which surround it" (Chapter I, Section I, Par. 6). Finally, "[i]t is elicited and expanded by trial, and battles into perfection and supremacy" (Chapter I, Section I, Par. 7).

In Chapter II, Newman shows how the development of doctrine is not merely consistent, but necessary and to be expected, in the course of time; for to remain static in one solitary interpretation or understanding of Christian doctrine is to deny the Church her life, vitality, and intrinsic dynamism. This is captured in his famous line: "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often" (Chapter I, Section I, Par. 7). For him, "it is precisely the development that discloses the idea," and the rest of the *Essay* is an exposition of the argument that an "original idea" of Christianity has "developed" over the centuries into a much greater, deeper, and ever more expounded elucidation and formulation of Christian faith and doctrine, "apply[ing] the theory of developments so carefully to the writings of the Fathers, and to the history of controversies and councils" (Introduction, Par. 21). Newman's thesis is based on "an argument from antiquity in favor of this organic principle of continuity-in-development applicable to the Church in every age."[11] Thus, after an initial survey of various doctrinal developments, Newman concludes: "No one doctrine can be named which starts complete at first, and gains nothing afterwards from the investigations of faith and the attacks of heresy" (Chapter II, Section I, Par. 12), and that "Christian doctrine admits of formal, legitimate, and true developments, that is, of developments contemplated by its divine Author" (Chapter II, Section I, Par. 17).[12]

[11] Carola, "John Henry Newman," p. 21.

[12] Elsewhere in the *Essay*, Newman also affirms: "Thus developments of Christianity are proved to have been in the contemplation of its Divine Author, by an argument parallel to that by which we infer intelligence in the system of the physical world" (Chapter II, Section I, Par. 8). "[D]evelopments of Christianity were but natural, as time went on, and were to be expected; and that these natural and true developments, as being natural and true, were of course contemplated and taken into account by its Author, who in designing the work designed its legitimate results" (Chapter II, Section II, Par. 1). As to who determines the correctness of the developments of doctrines, Newman offers his insight on the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church: "[I]n proportion to the probability of true developments of doctrine and practice in the Divine Scheme, so is the probability also of the appointment in that scheme of an external authority to decide upon them, thereby separating them from the mass of mere human

Chapter III offers the historical argument on behalf of the existing developments. Chapter IV provides historical instances that illustrate proofs, arguments, and evidence of the intimate connections and oneness between the teaching of the primitive Church and the Catholic faith, the latter being the historical prolongation of Christianity through the past centuries and, indeed, the successor, representative, and heir of the religion of the Fathers of the Church. Among other things, Chapter IV explains the canonicity of the New Testament as it came to us and why such canonicity could be established only in the fourth and fifth centuries: "on the ground that… [n]ow… facilities were at length given for deciding once for all on what had been in suspense and doubt for three centuries" concerning the canon of Scripture due to the lack of "opportunities for research, discussion and testimony" during the great periods of persecution (Chapter IV, Section I, Par. 3). It also explains why, despite the examples of great Fathers and Saints such as St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Basil, St. Augustine, and St. Ambrose, who did not receive baptism until they reached adulthood, it could still be said that the "observance of the rite [of infant baptism] was the rule, and the non-observance [of these great men, or by their Christian parents] the exception" (Chapter IV, Section I, Pars. 5–7). Finally, it addresses why, in such a sensitive issue as the Supremacy of the Pope, Protestants and others who do not recognize Papal Supremacy can never be more mistaken, given that "[s]upposing there be otherwise good reason for saying that the Papal supremacy is part of Christianity, there is nothing in the early history of the Church to contradict it" (Chapter IV, Section III, Par. 7).

The silence of St. Ignatius in his Epistles on the question of the authority of the Pope is, for Newman, understandable. The state of

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speculation, extravagance, corruption, and error, in and out of which they grow. This is the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church; for by infallibility I suppose is meant the power of deciding whether this, that, and a third, and any number of theological or ethical statements are true" (Chapter II, Section II, Par. 4). Hence, "[t]he most obvious answer, then, to the question, why we yield to the authority of the Church in the questions and developments of faith, is, that some authority there must be if there is a revelation given, and other authority there is none but she" (Chapter II, Section II, Par. 12).

Christianity during his time was such that "there was the display neither of bishop nor of Pope" (Chapter IV, Section III, Par. 2), since authority was still exercised by the Apostles. "St. Peter's prerogative would remain a mere letter till the complication of ecclesiastical matters became the cause of ascertaining it" (Chapter IV, Section III, Par. 3), such as local disturbances giving exercise to bishops, and ecumenical disturbances giving exercise to Popes. "[A]nd whether communion with the Pope was necessary for Catholicity would not and could not be debated till a suspension of that communion had actually occurred" (Chapter IV, Section III, Par. 4). Another quite obvious reason, as already mentioned above, is that such centralized power and authority were not possible during the time of persecutions.

In the succeeding seven paragraphs (10–16), Newman mentions Church Fathers (St. Clement, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Irenaeus, St. Cyprian, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome, among those cited), Popes (St. Damasus, St. Siricius, St. Innocent, St. Celestine, and St. Leo, among others), an Emperor (Emperor Aurelian), and even heretics and schismatics (Marcion, Maximus, Theodoret, and a few more). Their words or conduct (of making recourse to Rome in instances of disputes, for help, or on questions of doctrine) testify to the great truth that, as early as their times, the Church of Rome was held to be "the greatest Church, the most ancient, the most conspicuous, and founded and established by Peter and Paul" [St. Irenaeus], and that the occupant of the See of Peter was regarded, exaggeratedly (at least to modern sensibility) as "the head of the world" [Vincent of Lerins] (Chapter IV, Section III, Pars. 10-16, 10, 13). Indeed, "it is true… that the writers of the fourth and fifth centuries fearlessly assert or frankly allow that the prerogatives of Rome were derived from the apostolic times, and that because it was the See of St. Peter" (Introduction, Par. 19).

At the beginning of Chapter V, Newman enunciates the question he intends to study and answer in the remainder of the *Essay*: "The only question that can be raised is whether the said Catholic faith, as now held, is logically, as well as historically, the representative of the ancient faith" (Chapter V, Par. 1). In this chapter, which deals with

"genuine developments contrasted with corruptions," he describes the word "corruption" as "a word attaching to organized matters only," such that "a stone may be crushed to powder, but it cannot be corrupted," since corruption is "the breaking up of life preparatory to its termination" (Chapter V, Par. 3). Newman, then, offers to set down

> seven Notes of varying cogency, independence, and applicability, to discriminate healthy developments of an idea from its state of corruption and decay, as follows: There is no corruption if it retains one and the same type, the same principles, the same organization; if its beginnings anticipate its subsequent phases, and its late phenomena protect and subserve its earlier; if it has a power of assimilation and revival, and a vigorous action from first to last (Chapter V, Par. 4).

Let me now briefly discuss these seven "notes"[13] before proceeding to how Newman views the developments of doctrines in relation to doctrinal corruptions in the first six centuries of Christianity.

The first of these seven notes necessary to guarantee the healthiness and soundness of development is the "preservation of type," which, for Newman, simply means that "the parts and proportions of the developed form, however altered, correspond to those which belongs to its rudiments" (Chapter V, Section I, Par. 1), and that "one security against error and perversion in the process is the maintenance of the original type which the idea presented to the world at its origin, amid and through all its apparent changes and vicissitudes from first to last" (Chapter VI, Par. 1). In other words, while a doctrine may evolve and adapt over time, such a doctrine, according to the first note, must always retain its essential character and identity.

The examples given exhibit more clearly and unambiguously the meaning of this note: "The adult animal has the same make as it had on its birth; young birds do not grow into fishes, nor does the child generate into the brute… In like manner every calling or office has its own type, which those who fill it are bound to maintain; and to deviate from the type in any material point is to relinquish the calling" (Chapter

[13] In the 1845 edition of the *Essay*, Newman employs the word "tests" to refer to what he, in the 1878 edition, calls "notes."

V, Section I, Pars. 1–2). Newman, writes Carola, "remains confident that, despite modifications for good or ill on account of human affairs over the centuries, the Christianity which Christ revealed and the Apostles transmitted remains substantially the same in subsequent ages."[14] Carola likewise observes: "Repeating the refrain 'if there is a form of Christianity now in the world which…,' Newman masterfully illustrates contemporary Catholicism's direct link with the Church of the first six centuries in the first note of his seven-part theory of development: preservation of type."[15]

The second note, "continuity of principles," emphasizes that genuine development upholds and preserves the integrity of the underlying principles, ensuring that while a doctrine may evolve and grow over time, these foundational principles remain unchanged. In Newman's words: "While doctrine organically expands under the guidance of the Holy Spirit operative in the Church's living magisterium, the principles of their development remain a constant."[16] For a doctrinal development to be faithful, it must preserve not only the teaching (doctrine) itself but also the underlying principles that gave rise to it. Without these principles, a doctrine may exist in form but is essentially lifeless, as Newman observes in the case of the Greek Church. Principles are more reliable than doctrines for discerning truth, because heretics may change their doctrines constantly, but they remain consistent with their own guiding principles. Doctrines of heresy are

[14] Carola, "Pre-conciliar Patristic Retrieval," p. 384.

[15] Ibid. Two things, however, must be taken into account in our consideration of this note, at least based on my observation of Newman's elucidation of this principle: First, that "this unity of type, characteristic as it is of faithful developments, must not be pressed to the extent of denying all variation, nay, considerable alteration of proportion and relation, as time goes on, in the parts or aspects of an idea" (Chapter V, Section I, Par. 4). Secondly, that "[a]n idea does not always bear about it the same external image; the circumstance, however, has no force to weaken the argument for its substantial identity, as drawn from its external sameness, when such sameness remains" (Chapter V, Section I, Par. 9).

[16] Carola, "John Henry Newman," p. 21.

temporary and unstable, while the principles behind them endure (Chapter V, Section II, Par. 3).

In essence, Newman's third note, "the power of assimilation," posits that genuine doctrinal development involves the capacity to incorporate and integrate new ideas and insights while remaining firmly rooted in its core principles. This note, which Carola observes, "Newman first encountered in the ancient Alexandrian Church's understanding of the divinity of traditionary religion, remains a vital part of the Church's evangelical mission and enriches the doctrinal expression of her revealed faith in every age."[17] Newman believes that "[i]n the physical world, whatever has life is characterized by growth, so that in no respect to grow is to cease to live," that "[i]t grows by taking into its own substance external materials," and that "this absorption or assimilation is completed when the materials appropriated come to belong to it or enter into its unity" (Chapter V, Section III, Par. 1).

"Logical sequence," the fourth note of true development, which "assures a faithful intellectual development without rupture,"[18] argues that the development of doctrine is not arbitrary but exhibits a coherent and orderly progression, unfolding in a manner consistent with the internal logic of the faith and its historical development. For Newman, "[l]ogic is the organization of thought, and as being such, is a security for the faithfulness of intellectual developments" (Chapter V, Section IV, Par. 1). Two instances in the history of the early Church where this note was in place or absent can be mentioned: St. Justin or St. Irenaeus might not have any digested thoughts on Purgatory or Original Sin, yet they had a strong feeling both of the sin of our original nature and of the duties of our fallen nature. On the contrary, after much labor and having died in peace, having Saints and Church rulers as his students and receiving the praise of great Saints like St. Athanasius, St. Basil, and St. Gregory Nazianzen, and having provided theological materials to St. Ambrose and St. Hilary, the great Origen, three hundred years after his death, was condemned by a Church Council for the

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

heterodoxy that was growing out of his theology (Chapter V, Section IV, Pars. 3–5). Newman, thus, concludes this section: "A doctrine, then, professed in its mature years by a philosophy or religion is likely to be a true development, not a corruption, in proportion as it seems to be the *logical issue* of its original teaching" (Chapter V, Section IV, Par. 5).

In the fifth note, which is the "anticipation of its future," "[a]nother evidence… of the faithfulness of an ultimate development is its *definite anticipation* at an early period in the history of the idea to which it belongs" (Chapter V, Section V, Par. 4). Future developments of doctrine are said to be "often anticipated at an early period—revealing, as it were, a clear family resemblance."[19] In other words, a true doctrinal development is never a later invention but grows organically from earlier beliefs, with its later, mature form already implicitly present in the initial stages. Hence, even as doctrines become more complex and articulated, they retain recognizable features of their original form ("family resemblance"), showing continuity of identity and distinguishing genuine development from corruption or rupture. For Newman, when an idea is alive, it is certain to progress and mature according to its nature, and its tendencies, given the presence of auspicious circumstances, will inevitably manifest themselves over time, whether earlier or later. Its development, even if unclear and isolated, may take place at an early stage, even if a period may be needed to bring such development to perfection (Chapter V, Section V, Par. 1). Newman provides some examples of great men in history whose lives, or at least a portion of them, exhibit such an "anticipation of its future": "The child Cyrus mimics a despot's power, and St. Athanasius is elected bishop by his playfellows" (Chapter V, Section V, Par. 2).

The sixth note means that "[d]evelopment… does not admit of doctrinal reversal… [but rather]… exercises a *conservative action upon its past*"[20] (which is its name), believing that "a developed doctrine which reverses the course of development which has preceded it, is no true development but a corruption" (Chapter V, Section VI, Par. 4). This

[19] Ibid., p. 22.

[20] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

note means that a true doctrinal development is always faithful to what has come before, preserving and building organically upon the Church's historical beliefs and core tenets of the faith without reversing, contradicting, or nullifying them. While allowing for new articulations and deeper insight, such development refines, clarifies, and integrates these truths, ensuring an organic continuity in which the Church's past beliefs remain operative within its present understanding. In light of this, corruption is "a development in that very stage in which it ceases to illustrate, and begins to disturb, the acquisitions gained in its previous history" (Chapter V, Section VI, Par. 1).

The seventh and last note, which is "chronic vigour," means that true developments endure because they exhibit chronic vigor.[21] For Newman, authentic doctrines possess an enduring vitality that sustains them over time, allowing them to persist, adapt, and flourish despite challenges, thereby revealing their resilience and life-giving strength. Unlike the enduring vitality and resilience of authentic Christian doctrine, the corruption of an idea, "being the end of a course, and a transition state leading to a crisis… is… a brief and rapid process… [and]… cannot… be of long standing" (Chapter V, Section VII, Par. 1). Its opposite, then, which is "*duration* is… a test of a faithful development" (Chapter V, Section VII, Par. 1). Applied to heresies, Newman contends, thus: "The course of heresies is always short" (Chapter V, Section VII, Par. 2).

According to Newman, modern Catholicism is simply the natural and necessary growth of the doctrine of the early Church, and its divine authority comes from the divinity of Christianity itself (Chapter V, Par. 1).

B. Their Applications to the Writings of the Church Fathers

From Chapters VI to XII, Newman ventures to apply the seven notes of faithful developments to the case of Christian doctrines by looking at the testimonies and writings of the Church Fathers, as well as the role that the different heresies played in doctrinal developments.

[21] Ibid.

As regards the first note, the "preservation of type," Newman spends considerable effort examining the early history of Christianity—from the first centuries to the fourth, and up to the fifth and sixth centuries—inspecting doctrines and heresies to determine whether the Church, across these diverse periods, was able to maintain its original type and preserve itself from corruption. He argues that a serious investigation of the first Ecumenical Councils demonstrates that, just as the Catholic bishops appended the Creed against the objections of heretical and schismatic groups—who claimed that by rejecting doctrinal developments they remained more faithful and closer to the primitive Church—these bishops, in communion with the Pope, preserved the authentic meaning of the scriptural formula.

Unlike heresies, each of which was "a family… [that]… continually divides and sends out branches, founding new houses, and propagating itself in colonies, each of them as independent as its original head" (Chapter VI, Section II, Par. 4), whose only universal point of unity among themselves was hatred for the Church (Chapter VI, Section II, Par. 5), the Church basked in "a title of honor, which all men agreed to give her… [the] title of the 'Catholic' Church" (Chapter VI, Section II, Par. 6). It was a title that, for Newman, was recognized by Saints, Martyrs, and Church Fathers, from St. Ignatius to St. Augustine, and used by some as an argument against the heretics (Chapter VI, Section II, Par. 7). This was "a confirmatory proof of what is otherwise so plain, that she, as St. Pacian explains the word, was everywhere one" (Chapter VI, Section II, Par. 10), a truly "universal Church" (Chapter VI, Section II, Par. 15), whose bishops were, according to St. Gregory of Nazianzen, not merely bishops of their own respective localities but bishops of the whole world (Chapter VI, Section II, Par. 14). According to Newman, even if the Catholic Church everywhere seemed to have been "buried beneath [the] populations of [the Arian] heresy" (Chapter VI, Section III, Par. 1) during the fifth and sixth centuries, "[t]he Arians seem never to have claimed the Catholic name" (Chapter VI, Section III, Par. 5). Instead, an additional feature was added to the name "Catholics," namely the title of "Romans," as attested by St. Gregory of Tours, Victor of Vite, and the Spanish Councils (Chapter VI, Section III, Par. 5). This title possesses "an allusion to the faith and communion

of the Roman See" (Chapter VI, Section III, Par. 6), even though the association of Catholicism with the See of Rome was introduced as early as the fourth century (Chapter VI, Section III, Par. 8).

Newman identifies himself with the tradition of the Alexandrian Fathers and remains consistent in his dislike of the Antiochene school, which theologically produced figures such as Arius, even though he was born in Alexandria and held a clerical appointment there. According to Daley, central to the appeal that the proponents of the Alexandrian school held for Newman was their strong stress on "the organic unity, and the divine subjective centre, of the person of Christ."[22]

> This is particularly clear in his long-lived predilection for the theological position of Athanasius, the fourth-century opponent of Arius and promoter of the Nicene formulation of Christ's person, and for that of Cyril, his fifth-century successor as Bishop of Alexandria, who opposed the tendency of the later Antiochene theologians to see in Christ two closely entwined but ultimately distinct realities, one eternal and divine, one historical and human."[23]

This prompts Newman to write: "It would have been well had the genius of the Syrian theology been ever in the safe keeping of men such as St. Cyril, St. Chrysostom, and Theodoret" (Chapter VI, Section III, Subsection 2, Par. 4). In the Catholic Church's fight against the Monophysites, the Church found her champion and most zealous defender of her doctrine in the person of Pope Leo, the Bishop of Rome, who "introduces us to the Council of Chalcedon, by which he rescued the East from a grave heresy" (Chapter VI, Section III, Subsection 3, Par. 10).[24]

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[22] Daley, "The Church Fathers," p. 39.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Newman later comments: "That the definition passed at Chalcedon is the Apostolic Truth once delivered to the Saints is most firmly to be received, from faith in that overruling Providence which is by special promise extended over the acts of the Church; moreover, that is in simple accordance with the faith of St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, and all the other Fathers" (Chapter VI, Section III, Subsection 3, Par. 15).

Concerning the second note, the "continuity of principles," such "type" is also preserved when development takes place "on definite and continuous principles" (Chapter VII, Subsection 1, Par. 1). Newman discovered in the doctrine of the Incarnation, which, for him, is "the central truth of the gospel," several Gospel principles such as those of dogma, faith, theology, sacramentality, the mystical sense of the Scripture, sanctifying grace, asceticism, the malignity of sin, and the capacity of matter for sanctification (Chapter VII, Subsection 1, Pars. 3-4).

As regards the principle of the "supremacy of faith," Newman does not mean to imply that "the Fathers were opposed to inquiries into the intellectual basis of Christianity, but that they held that men were not obliged to wait for logical proof before believing; on the contrary, that the majority were to believe first on presumption and let the intellectual proof come as their reward" (Chapter VII, Subsection 2, Par. 4). The life of St. Augustine shows Newman that the human search for truth must be guided by authority, and when the former Manichee asked God to help him choose which authority to follow among so many, Augustine was led to the Catholic Church (Chapter VII, Subsection 2, Par. 5).

Also, though reason may be considered subservient to faith, theology's first step is investigation, which encourages that "loving inquisitiveness which is the life of the *Schola*," and which finds excellent examples in the lives of Ignatius, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine (Chapter VII, Subsection 3, Pars. 1-3). Likewise, doctrinal development respects the spiritual and mystical interpretation of Scripture, as exemplified, for example, in St. Irenaeus' proclamation of the dignity of Mary based on his comparison of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Genesis. While the school of Alexandria embraced such a way of scriptural interpretation, the Antiochene school adopted the literal interpretation (Chapter VII, Subsection 4, Pars. 1-2, 5). "The use of Scripture then, especially its spiritual or second sense, as a medium of thought and deduction, is a characteristic principle of doctrinal teaching in the Church" (Chapter VII, Subsection 4, Par. 8).

Moreover, the development of doctrine values the dogmatic nature of Christianity, as shown by Ignatius, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Clement, and Anicetus, who exercised severity toward the heretics and converted some of them to the Church (Chapter VII, Subsection 5, Pars. 1–4). Tertullian was also vigorous in defending the dogmatic principle (Chapter VII, Subsection 5, Par. 5). In contrast to the doctrinal development in the Church, which is grounded in these immemorial principles, the heresies—characterized, according to Newman, by disdain for mystery, reverence, piety, and holiness—violated those principles: "Thus Arian and Nestorian schools denied the allegorical rule of Scripture interpretation; the Gnostics and Eunomians for Faith professed to substitute knowledge; and the Manichees also" (Chapter VII, Subsection 6, Par. 3).

As for the application of the third "note" of a genuine development, which is its "assimilative power," Newman inquires:

> When we consider the deep interest of the controversies which Christianity raises, the various characters of mind it has swayed, the range of subjects which it embraces, the many countries it has entered, the deep philosophies it has encountered, the vicissitudes it has undergone, and the length of time through which it has lasted, it requires some assignable explanation, why we should not consider it substantially modified and changed, that is, corrupted, from the first, by the numberless influences to which it has been exposed" (Chapter VIII, Par. 1).

Newman believes that, far from losing its identity and essence in its encounter and interaction with the world in its different milieus, Christianity has exhibited "the power, while keeping its own identity, of absorbing its antagonists… [of] incorporat[ing] them into itself… [and of] assimilate[ing] them into its own substance" (Chapter VIII, Par. 1). Also, Christianity has "that hold of truth which gave its teaching a gravity, a directness, a consistency, a sternness, and a force, to which its rivals for the most part were strangers" (Chapter VIII, Subsection 1, Par. 2).

> His Apostles, and they alone, possessed, venerated, and protected a Divine Message, as both sacred and sanctifying; and, in the collision and

> conflict of opinion, in ancient times or modern, it was that Message, and not any vague or antagonist teaching, that was to succeed in purifying, assimilating, transmuting, and taking into itself the many-coloured beliefs, forms of worship, codes of duty, schools of thought, through which it was ever more moving. (Chapter VIII, Par. 1).

The assimilative power of dogmatic truth rests on a conviction that truth, which is a gift from above, a sacred trust, an immeasurable blessing, is one; that it has to be reverenced, protected, defended, and transmitted; that its disappearance is a dreadful dearth, and its loss an unimaginable catastrophe (Chapter VIII, Subsection 1, Par. 4). Doctrine, too, undergoes a process of development in and through various minds, "beginning with writers of inferior authority in the Church, and issuing at length in the enunciation of her Doctors," as seen in Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius, and the Antiochenes, who provided theological materials developed by later Fathers. "St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Basil digested into form the theological principles of Origen; St. Hilary and St. Ambrose are both indebted to the same great writer in their interpretation of the Scripture;… The School of Antioch, in spite of the heretical taint of some of its Masters, formed the genius of St. Chrysostom" (Chapter VIII, Subsection 1, Par. 10). Paragraph 11 offers many examples of the next generation of teachers completing and perfecting the work of their predecessors. The theology of the Church is a product of "a diligent, patient working out of one doctrine from many materials," and "[t]he conduct of Popes, Councils and Church Fathers, betokens the slow, painful, anxious taking up of new truths into an existing body of belief" (Chapter VIII, Subsection 1, Par. 10).

The sacramental principle, on the other hand, affirms that the Gospel possesses a certain grace or virtue that transforms the quality of doctrines, opinions, usages, and personal character when integrated into it. Eusebius relates that Constantine, "in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own" (Chapter VIII, Subsection 2, Par. 6). "The use of temple… incense, lamps, and candles… holy water… holidays and seasons… sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage… are all [of] pagan origin and

sanctified by their adoption into the Church" (Chapter VIII, Subsection 2, Par. 6). The introduction of images is, according to Newman, based on the same lofty principle, and was zealously defended by the great St. John Damascene: "Wherefore the death of Saints is made a feast, and temples are raised to them, and Images are painted… For the Image is a triumph, and a manifestation, and a monument in memory of the victory of those who have done nobly and excelled, and of the shame of the devils defeated and overthrown" (Chapter VIII, Subsection 2, Par. 9).

> So far then from her creed being of doubtful credit because it resembles foreign theologies, we even hold that one special way in which Providence has imparted divine knowledge to us has been by enabling her to draw and collect it together out of the world, and, in this sense, as in others, to 'suck the milk of the Gentiles and to suck the breast of kings' (Chapter VIII, Subsection 2, Par. 12).

The fourth note of an authentic doctrinal development, in Chapter IX, which is its logical sequence, is explained by Newman in the development of theologies and institutions attendant to the consideration of post-baptismal sin. If baptism, which is non-repeatable, produces a plenary forgiveness of past sins, the necessity of being forgiven and absolved from sins committed after baptism developed into various forms and degrees of penances, as well as the doctrine of satisfactions (Chapter IX, Subsections 1-3). Clement of Alexandria contends that if the purifying discipline imposed upon the sinner is not performed and completed in this life, such discipline must be fulfilled after death, hence the doctrine of purgatory. Such a view is confirmed by the story of St. Perpetua and her brother Dinocrates. Purgatory, then, was "brought home to the minds of the faithful as a portion or form of penance due for post-baptismal sin. And thus, the apprehension of this doctrine and the practice of infant baptism would grow into general reception together" (Chapter IX, Subsection 4, Pars. 1-3). The doctrine of post-baptismal sin and the doctrine of purgatory together engendered the development of the necessity of meritorious works, based on the conviction that sin must have its punishment now or in the afterlife, and that such works can make one's penance for one's sin lighter. According to Newman, one form

of such penance is the Monastic Rule, which later gave birth to the Benedictine Order, to the Dominicans and Franciscans, to the Jesuits, and to the many Congregations that emerged much later on (Chapter IX, Subsection 5, Par. 1, and Subsection 6, Pars. 1-5).

The fifth note, the anticipation of its future, argues that if "the so-called Catholic doctrines and practices are true and legitimate developments, and not corruptions, we may expect from the force of logic to find instances of them in the first centuries" (Chapter X, Par. 1). The beliefs and usages of relics, for example, originate from the doctrine that Matter, being God's creature, is "very good," and thus capable of union with the Divine or of being an instrument of divine influence. Hence, "when death is for Christ, the relics of Saints are precious," that "if any one shall touch a Martyr's bone, by reason of the grace dwelling in the body, he receives some participation of his sanctity," and that "the blood of the Saints received from the grace of the One Redeemer a certain expiatory power" (Chapter X, Subsection 1, Pars. 4, 6). The virgin life, too, has its merit, which is acknowledged by the Antenicene writers, as demonstrated by St. Methodius (who refers to the profession of Virginity as a vow) and his work, *Convivium Virginum*. Tertullian employs the metaphor of marriage to describe a Virgin's relationship with Christ, emphasizing that this union involves a solemn vow. Origen describes chastity as dedicating one's body to God. Cyprian refers to a Virgin as someone committed to Christ and ordained for His holiness. Eusebius speaks of those who have consecrated themselves fully (body and soul) to God as living lives of purity and holiness (Chapter X, Subsection 2, Pars. 1-3).

As for the cultus of saints and angels, the Council of Illiberis in Spain, held shortly before the Council of Nicaea, offers an anticipation of the subsequent devotions to angels and saints. The Council says: "It is decreed, that pictures ought not to be in Church, lest what is worshipped or adorned be painted on the walls" (Chapter X, Subsection 3, Par. 1). For Newman,

> This inference then seems to be undeniable, that the Spanish Church considered the Saints to be in the number of objects either of 'worship or adoration;' for it is of such objects that the representations are

> forbidden. The very drift of the prohibition is this – *lest* what is in itself an object of worship… should be worshipped *in painting*; unless the Saints and Angels were objects of worship, their pictures would have been allowed (Chapter X, Subsection 3, Par. 1).

Another passage, from St. Justin, demonstrates that there was a worship of Angels as early as during his time (Chapter X, Subsection 3, Par. 4).

As regards the office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Newman contends that even if her prerogatives had not been fully acknowledged in the Catholic ritual until a late date (for the doctrine of the Incarnation had to be settled first before she could be venerated as the Mother of God), they were not something novel for the Church or the early Church Fathers. This is evident in the treatises of St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian, who discussed Mary's obedience and role in the process of redemption, as well as Eve's disobedience that led to Adam's fall. St. Gregory Nyssen relates that St. Gregory Thaumaturgus "received in a vision a Creed… from the Blessed Virgin at the hands of St. John" (Chapter X, Subsection 4, Pars. 1-2). St. Irenaeus and other Church Fathers describe her also as Patroness and Paraclete (Chapter X, Subsection 4, Par. 3).

Regarding the sixth note, which speaks of a true development as characterized by "conservative action upon its past," Newman, in the example given—devotion to the Blessed Virgin—offers a response to the inquiry of "whether the honours paid to St. Mary, which have grown out of devotion to her Almighty Lord and Son, do not, in fact, tend to weaken that devotion; and whether, from the nature of the case, it is possible so to exalt a creature without withdrawing the heart from the Creator" (Chapter XI, Section II). Newman, looking at the Council of Ephesus, claims that this question was answered by the Fathers' sanction of *Theotokos*, or "Mother of God," as Mary's title, as well as through an answer given in light of the doctrine of the Incarnation. He observes that, at least in Europe, "[t]hey who were accused of worshipping a creature in His stead, still worship Him; their accusers, who hope to worship Him so purely, they… have ceased to worship Him altogether" (Chapter XI, Section II, Par. 1). Also, an investigation of the Catholic services demonstrates that the character of the devotion

accorded to the Blessed Virgin is altogether different from that which is paid to the Eternal Son and the Trinity, as seen in "the tone of the *Dies Irae* from that of the *Stabat Mater*," or "the language of the Breviary services on the Festival of Pentecost, or of the Holy Trinity, from the language of the services for the Assumption" (Chapter XI, Section II, Par. 2). He notes that "[t]he supreme and true worship paid to the Almighty is severe, profound, awful, as well as tender, confiding and dutiful… On the other hand, towards St. Mary the language employed is affectionate and ardent, as towards a mere child of Adam" (Chapter XI, Section II, Par. 2).

The devotion that Catholics pay to the Blessed Virgin indeed has "a special office" and is more connected to the public services and festive dimension of Christianity than to the personal and primary aspect of religion (Chapter XI, Section II, Par. 11). This explains why, in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, "a work so highly sanctioned, so widely received, so intimately bearing upon the most sacred points of personal religion, very slight mention occurs of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God" (Chapter XI, Section II, Par. 5). It also explains why, though Mary is "absolutely the first of created beings" (Chapter XI, Section II, Par. 10) and incomparable with all other Saints, she is mentioned very little in the devotional books that Newman refers to in Paragraphs 7, 8, and 9. Such minimal reference, for Newman, does not imply the authors' intention to negate the lofty place of Mary in the devotional life of Catholics, but to show that such devotion does "not interfere[] with that incommunicable and awful relation which exists between the creature and the Creator," and that honoring Mary does "not… obscure the divine glory of her Son." (Chapter XI, Section II, Pars. 9, 11).

In the seventh note, its "chronic vigour," Newman argues that, given the many challenges, hardships, and tribulations the early Catholic Church faced, it is unthinkable that it would have survived if, as its enemies claimed, it were merely a corruption of Christianity, corruption being "of brief duration, [running] itself out quickly, and [ending] in death" (Chapter XII, Sections 1-2). Yet, despite the fiercest doctrinal controversies that put the Catholic faith in great peril, assaulted by

scores of heresies and schisms on all sides, the Catholic Church witnessed "the sustained and steady march of the sacred science from implicit belief to formal statement," and that, despite the failure of some of the most gifted Fathers and Saints, "the Church… wrought out the one and only consistent theory which can be taken on the great doctrine in dispute, proves how clear, simple and exact her vision of that doctrine was" (Chapter XII, Section 4).

III. Conclusion

James Gaffney, in his "Foreword" to the compendium that contains the 348-page *Essay*, describes Newman's authoritative work in this way: "Newman's most homely way of explaining what he attempted to do in the *Essay* on development was to say that he was trying to decide where, among the multidenominational churches of Victorian England, a reincarnated St. Athanasius or St. Ambrose might find himself religiously at home."[25] Throughout his career as an Anglican, Newman believed that if a time traveler from the Church of the Fathers were to visit nineteenth-century Christianity, he would discover that "essential omissions disqualified Protestantism, while incongruous additions discredited Roman Catholicism"; and that "[b]etween these two extremes of doctrinal barrenness and overgrowth there lay… a middle ground, what he called a *via media*, within the Church of England,"[26] in which this traveler from the early centuries would feel a deep sense of spiritual belonging. Yet, some six years before his conversion to Catholicism and the publication of the *Essay*, Newman realized something that "seriously alarmed" him, and which he later reflected upon in his autobiographical work, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*:

> I began to study and master the history of the Monophysites. I was absorbed in the doctrinal question. This was from about June 13th to August 30th. It was during this course of reading that for the first time a doubt came upon me of the tenableness of Anglicanism… My stronghold was Antiquity; now here, in the middle of the fifth century,

[25] Gaffney, "Foreword," ix.

[26] *Ibid.*

> I found, as it seemed to me, Christendom of the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries reflected. I saw myself in that mirror, and I was a Monophysite. The Church of the *Via Media* was in the position of the Oriental communion, Rome was, where she now is; and the Protestants were the Eutychians.[27]

On October 9, 1845, at exactly the midpoint of his life, and after years of self-examination and soul-searching, he converted to the Catholic Church. The rationale for such a pivotal decision is crystallized in the *Essay*: "I have maintained that modern Catholicism is nothing else but simply the legitimate growth and complement, that is, the natural and necessary development, of the doctrine of the early church, and that its divine authority is included in the divinity of Christianity" (Chapter V, Par. 1).

Hence, in a long paragraph that deserves to be cited—because if the *Essay* is "[t]he literary monument of that transition, and fullest record of the argument of which it was for Newman the compelling practical conclusion,"[28] this paragraph contains the very conclusion to his philosophical and theological argumentation for his landmark conversion—Newman proclaims:

> No one doubts… that the Roman Catholic communion of this day is the successor and representative of the medieval Church, or that the medieval Church is the legitimate heir of the Nicene…. On the whole, all parties will agree that, of all existing systems, the present communion of Rome is the nearest approximation in fact to the Church of the Fathers, possible though some may think it, to be nearer still to that Church on paper. Did St. Athanasius or St. Ambrose come suddenly to life, it cannot be doubted what communion he would take to be his own. All surely will agree that these Fathers, with whatever opinions of their own, whatever protests, if we will, would find themselves more at home with such men as St. Bernard or St. Ignatius of Loyola, or with the lonely priest in his lodging, or the holy sisterhood of mercy, or the unlettered crowd before the altar, than with the teachers or with the members of any other creed (Chapter II, Section III, Par. 5).

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[27] J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of his Religious Opinions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 114.

[28] Gaffney, "Foreword," vii.

Indeed, as Newman would later admit to his former colleague Edward Bouverie Pusey: "[T]he Fathers made me a Catholic."[29]

In conclusion, this paper has traced the intellectual and spiritual journey that led Newman from Anglicanism to the Catholic Church, showing how his engagement with the Fathers of the Church, sustained historical study, and critical reflection on doctrinal development culminated in the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* and enabled him to articulate a method for discerning authentic doctrinal development from corruption or heresy. In doing so, the work has sought to situate Newman's *Essay* within the concrete context of his personal struggle and encounter with historical Christianity, highlighting that the study of doctrinal development is not just an abstract exercise but is closely connected to lived faith and the life of the Church. Finally, by revisiting Newman's seven notes of doctrinal development, the *Essay* continues to serve as a valuable point of reference for theologians and Church historians who seek to reflect on the faithful growth of doctrine amid the challenges of change, innovation, and diversity within the Christian tradition.

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[29] Daley, "The Church of the Fathers, p. 45.

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PROPOSED PATHWAYS FOR RENEWAL: FABC RESTRUCTURING IN THE LIGHT OF SYNODALITY

Charles Bertille

Abstract. Church organizations, like secular ones, face ageing, inertia, and the need for reform. Management scholars argue renewal is best pursued during an organization's prime, when it is thriving. The Synod on Synodality offers such a pathway, continuing the vision of Vatican II. Renewal is urgent today, given shifting mission contexts and declining religious participation, with many Christians among the religiously disaffiliated. In the build-up to the FABC 50 assembly (November 2022), bishops' conferences in Asia raised concerns about the Church's internal life—its structures, ministries, relationships, and governance; and called for a review of the organizational framework of the FABC. For the Church, structures are never neutral; they embody theological and anthropological principles. Insights from Christian anthropology, Vatican II ecclesiology, and the interplay of theology and canon law highlight the importance of structural reform. Synodality, understood as the living Church of one People of God, represents a new stage of consciousness. These raise pressing questions: how would relationships, practices, processes, structures, and policies be reshaped in a truly Synodal Church? The paper acknowledges its limitations, as the author writes from outside the FABC, yet it underscores the urgency of renewal for the Church's mission today.

Keywords: renewal, synodality, structures, Ecclesiology, FABC

Introduction

We know that change means "dying:" it requires leaving behind what is known to embrace the unknown, and that can be very difficult. Pop songs and musicians have struggled with change as much as churches and disciples. David Bowie's 1971 track, "*Changes*," perfectly captures this dilemma of change – to move forward, what is known must be left behind. It addresses the generation's divide and resistance from those who cling to tradition. The consolation is that while everything shifts and evolves, some fundamentals—like the "stream of life"—remain. The iconic Michael Jackson's "*The Man in the Mirror*" (1988) places the responsibility for global change on each one, and the struggle to initiate personal transformation for the greater good.

Handling the Seasons of Life

Life has its recurring seasons, and we are aware of our life cycles embedded in this flow of time – from conception and birth to growth, peak, regression, and ultimately, death. The same is true for an organization's life cycle – birth, life, peak, and death – much like a bell-curve. Many civic and church institutions founded in the 1960s and 1970s in Asia are struggling to keep themselves going or attract the resources they once did. Now in their late 50s or 60s, the prime of life is over, and they are challenged to reinvent themselves or become part of history's flow. Why is it important to be aware of the organization's life cycle? Because, like any organic entity that grows and evolves, we need to accompany each phase of growth intelligently. No two organizations are ever the same, nor are their needs. Therefore, care and resources must be allocated differently. As Pope Francis would say, it is easy to become fossilized, saying "we have always done things this way" (EG 33). Groupthink or "closed circles" of management of "the elect" few set in.[1] The very structures that once helped the organization grow

[1] Robert Mickens, "Letter from Rome," 01 May 2017, *Commonweal*, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/letter-rome-122 (Accessed on 7 September 2025).

and take form now inhibit the organization's ability to respond to the evolving challenges or its missionary mandate. There is a disconnect between the center and the field, be it a lay movement, diocese, or Rome (*cf.* EG 16). Physical and emotional exhaustion set in.[2]

The former President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)[3] and convener of the FABC 50 assembly, Cardinal Oswald Gracias from Mumbai, India, called for restructuring during their assembly in November 2022, after helming the institution for nearly a decade. He said a restructured federation would help make the Churches in Asia "relevant and responsive" to the people of Asia, and "to renew and revitalize our pastoral thrust," making it "a vibrant Church working for a better Asia." It was reported that the call to restructure the FABC comes amid criticism that the federation has remained practically inactive for almost two decades.[4]

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[2] For further reading, view Judith Sharken Simon with J. Terence Donovan, https://www.nationalforests.org/assets/pdfs/Tool-Building-Your-Organization-Five-Life-Stages-of-a-Nonprofit-Organization_NFF.pdf; John W McCoy, "Organizational Life Cycle: Definition, Models, and Stages," https://www.aihr.com/blog/organizational-life-cycle/ (both accessed on 7 September 2025).

[3] The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) is a voluntary association of episcopal conferences of the Catholic Church in South, East, Central, and Southeast Asia. It was established with the approval of the Holy See in 1970. Its purpose is to foster solidarity and co-responsibility among its members for the welfare of the Church and society in Asia. The decisions of the Federation are without juridical binding force; their acceptance is an expression of collegial responsibility. The FABC comprises 17 Episcopal Conferences, 2 Synods of Oriental Churches, and 3 Associate Members. There are 28 territories included in the FABC membership from the four sub-regions of Asia. They are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor Leste, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam. For more details, see FABC, "The Beginnings of the FABC," https://fabc.org/history/ and FABC ACAS Final document, 16 March 2023.

[4] UCANews, "FABC gathering urged to adopt South American model," October 13, 2022, UCANews.com/news/fabc-gatherings-urged-to-adopt-south-american-model/99075 (accessed 9 February 2026). Pope Francis appointed

When is the best time to rethink or reinvent an organization? Management scholars tell us that it is at the prime of life, that is, at its peak, while basking in its glory, that consolidation and revitalization plans need to be put in place. The leadership must map out the processes of institutional regeneration, mentoring of the next generation, and transition plans, which will include decentralizing decision-making and team leadership.

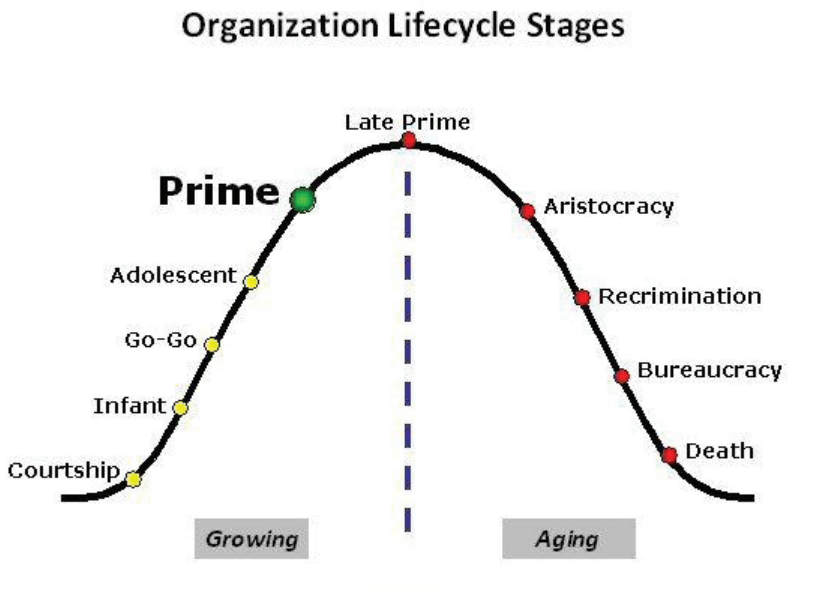


Diagram 1: Organizational Life Cycle Stages[5]

In the Gospels, Jesus tells us repeatedly, "Go," "put out into the deep," "cast your net together," and he adds, "do not fear... I am with you." Any change process requires everyone's participation – even the critics and slow coaches! Synodality affirms this clearly. Francisco Claver tells us, "Any socio-cultural change (change involving whole peoples)

Cardinal Gracias as President of the FABC to the Council of Cardinals (or C9) in 2013, to help him with reforming the Church's central administration.

[5] Cf. https://continuolearning.wordpress.com/2012/07/22/organizational-life-cycle-the-importance-of-training-development/.

will not catch unless it is understood, decided on, acted on, in a word, participated in, by as wide a spectrum as possible of the members of the society undergoing change."[6]

Evolution of Organizations

In addition to the Organization's life cycle, management researcher Frederic Laloux[7] writes on the evolution of organizations, which reflects the evolution of human consciousness. The five levels are designated colors – red, amber, orange, green, and teal or turquoise, depending on how "evolved" they are.

- The first real organizations emerged about 10,000 years ago and are analogous to wolf packs or street gangs. Like the small groups of hunter tribes *organized for survival* against various external dangers, they are effective in chaotic environments and focused on the short term. Power is highly concentrated in a few and exerted through fear and exploitation.

- About 4,000 years ago, as human beings settled into communes, sedentary agrarian life, organized religion, and fundamental forms of hierarchy were established. The amber has a *strict hierarchy with formal roles and reporting lines*, requiring compromise, and thriving in stable, predictable environments. Examples are government agencies, the military, and traditional churches.

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[6] Francisco Claver, "The Church in Asia Twenty and Forty Years after Vatican II. Personal Reflections: 1985 and 2005," *Exploring the Treasures of Vatican II,* ed. James Kroeger (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications and Jesuit Communications, 2011) 126.

[7] Frédéric Laloux, *Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness* (Herefordshire: Nelson Parker, 2014). See "Book Summary – Reinventing Organizations," *Reading Graphics*, https://readingraphics.com/book-summary-reinventing-organizations/

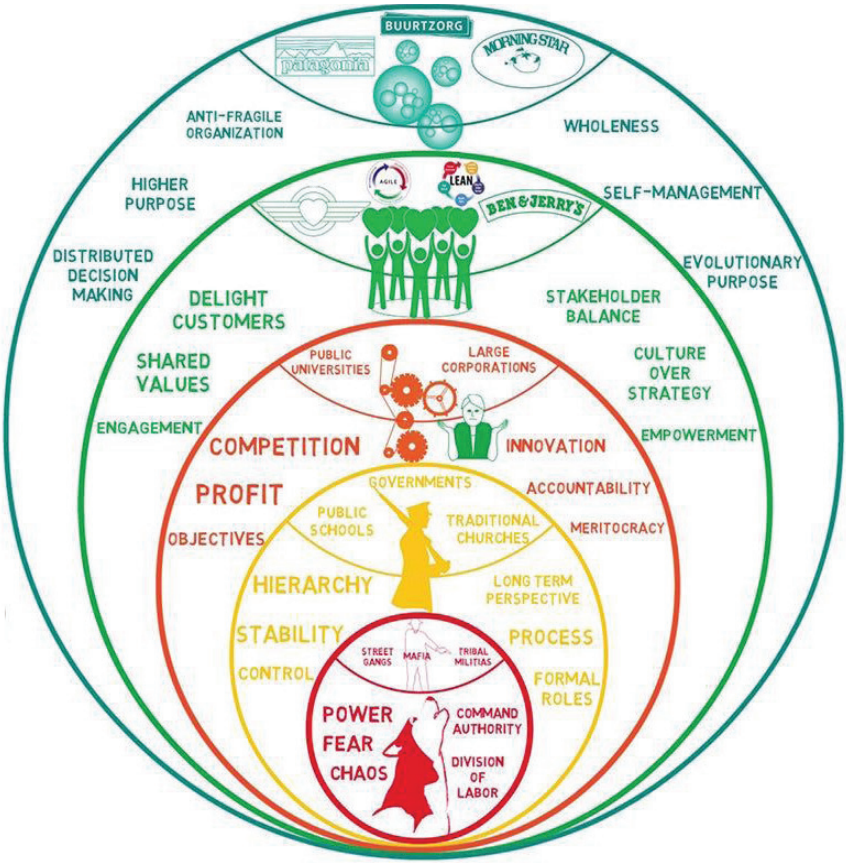


Diagram 2. The Laloux Cultural Model

- This is followed by the industrial revolution about 250 years ago, which focused on *mass production, results, efficiency, and profits*. Large multi-national corporations (MNCs), investment banks, and public universities are examples. They are objective-led and competitive, promoting innovation, accountability, and meritocracy, but can also be soulless machines.

- Then came a new way of thinking in the late 20th century that emphasized *corporate culture and family-spirited organizations*. While they operate in a hierarchy, green organizations try to motivate people through empowerment, a value-driven culture, and customer satisfaction. They seek to promote participative, servant

leadership, and consensus decision-making. Examples could be the Japanese Kaizen method, Ben & Jerry's, Zappos, and others.

- The next that emerged at the turn of the century is teal or turquoise organizations, which promote *self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose*. It is no longer an external authority supervising workers for productivity, but groups of people who have internalized the vision and mission of the organization and are capable of self-organizing. It is not about hierarchy and targets, rather soulful practices drawing more on human potential that make them productive and purposeful. Profits are a consequence. An example is Buurtzorg, which started in 2007 to provide home-based nursing care. Today, it engages 10,000 nurses in 850 *self-directed teams* in the Netherlands. They are now present in 24 countries, with an annual turnover of €280 million in 2014.[8] Another is Patagonia corporation, which has created a Trust, and all (100%) profits will be channeled through the Trust for environmental conservation.[9]

All these experiences and innovations tell us one thing – that we can have a more meaningful way to work and create the envisioned future if we can change our mental models or belief system, "...be transformed by the renewal of your minds, *so that* you will be able to discern the will of God" (Romans 12:2). A Synodal Church would require *a leap of faith* and rebooting structures and systems from an amber to a teal organization – from being perceived as one of *fear and control* to walking together with humanity and creation in compassion.

A Christian parallel would be the story of modern mega-churches, many of which were built around small cell groups and team efforts

[8] See their website. Buurtzorg International, "About Us," https://www.buurtzorg.com/about-us/our-organisation/. Their tagline is "Humanity over bureaucracy."

[9] Their mission statement reads, "We're in business to save our home planet." See the Case Study, https://www.causeartist.com/case-study-patagonia/.

at evangelization.[10] A home-grown version of this would be the small Christian communities of various lay renewal movements and the Basic Ecclesial Communities that were promoted by the local churches of Asia and the FABC (known as Asian Integral Pastoral Approach or AsIPA), encouraging the faithful People of God to gather around the Word, in prayer, fellowship, and witness. Unfortunately, its early success was its limitation. Not having addressed issues of hierarchy, authority, and governance, the BECs, SCCs, and even renewal prayer groups found themselves constantly being subject to the control of the local clergy and called upon for other tasks. Eventually, many BECs and movements have dwindled or died off, losing their early energy and promise. It is a lesson to take to heart as we work out the dynamics of a Synodal Church – how to articulate the *sensus fidelium* of the People of God at every level, which is manifested in various movements of the Spirit, albeit in any limited form, with the hierarchical understanding and institutional structures?

Systems Thinking

Our faith calls for integrity between Faith, Worship, Morals, or coherence of Belief, Practice, and Values. Scripture-Tradition-Magisterium is a coherent whole; so too is Communion, Participation, Mission. Seeing the whole and the interrelationships of parts, or noticing the patterns of change, rather than a static picture or in binaries, is an integrative discipline called "systems thinking."[11] Pope Francis popularized it in *Evangelii Gaudium* (234-237) with his Bergoglian principle, "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts." It builds on the principle of *interconnectedness* and avoids quick fixes by recognizing

[10] cf. Adam Volle, "Yoido Full Gospel Church," *Brittanica*, brittanica.com/topic/Yoido-Full-Gospel-Church (accessed 9 February 2026).

[11] In academia and management, Peter Senge popularized systems thinking in his acclaimed work, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990, rev. ed. 2006). Systems Thinking is the "fifth discipline" that integrates and binds the other disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning, into a learning organization.

deeper structural patterns and feedback. It requires deep listening and attentiveness to leverage points where small shifts can lead to lasting systemic change. Practiced consciously, with other disciplines, it promotes a "learning organization."

Another Bergoglian principle states, "Time is greater than space." We are asked to initiate processes that can generate life rather than to seek to occupy positions of power. Such changes require the Spirit's grace and human formation. Cultural shifts require us to challenge our mental models, assumptions, and beliefs that shape our behavior. Asia suffers from a culture of silence, excessive deference to leadership, passivity or being "yes-men," avoiding conflicts, clericalism, attitudes that silence the voices of those at the margins, a lack of critical thinking, human maturity, and more.[12] Pope Francis' call to practice *parrhesia* in speech would be a good antidote to help build agency in the Church and society.

What could this mean for a Synodal Church and the FABC? First and foremost, it means seeing the People of God as one body (cf. 1 Cor 12), our primordial identity as baptized. The Final Synod document proclaims there is no higher dignity than our baptismal identity (FD 21). We are each co-responsible for the life and mission of the church. It also expresses a fundamental truth that in all living organisms — human bodies, ecosystems, or churches — the whole becomes qualitatively greater than the individual parts. It is in their interconnection and shared purpose that a transformative power is unleashed, richer than what each could achieve alone. This is the synodal triptych, or *circularity*, between communion, participation, and mission—they are not stand-alone principles. "Our dependence on one another embodies the heart of synodality" (FD 13). A synodal church can flourish or become a dynamic church-in-movement at the intersections of authentic communion, participation, and mission.

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[12] The author and team offer a comprehensive review of key orientations for effective ministry among all pastoral workers, including formation. See Christina Kheng, "Toward Effective Mission in Asia Pacific Today: Key Orientations for Pastoral Workers and Implications for Formation," *Asia Pacific Mission Studies* Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 2, (2020). DOI: https://doi.org/10.13185/2704-3339.1061.



Diagram 3: Interconnectedness between Communion, Participation, and Mission in a synodal Church.

Shifts in Religious Participation

A recent global study using data from 111 countries (Pew Research Centre and other sources),[13] carried out across various faith groups and countries, shows a global decrease in religious participation. The model was found to fit countries with Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist populations from the four continents. The study concludes that "secularization follows a consistent sequence: first, participation in public rituals declines; second, importance of religion drops, and third, people shed their formal belonging, referred to as the Participation–Importance–Belonging (P-I-B) sequence."

With increasing modernization and high exposure to institutional and technological innovation, the symbolic and social functions of religion decline. As people find more efficient solutions to health or welfare in modern institutions, religion loses its immediate functional relevance. This transformation, in turn, contributes to an intergenerational breakdown of religious socialization within the fabric of society as seen in many traditional Western Christian countries. The large increase in the religiously disaffiliated population, or those who

[13] J. Stolz, N.D. de Graaf, C. Hackett, et al. "The three stages of religious decline around the world," *Nat Commun* 16, 7202 (2025): 2.. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-025-62452-z

choose "*No religion*," makes up 24.2% globally and is mainly due to Christians leaving the churches.[14]

Asia, too, has been undergoing rapid transformation and modernization. The findings should spur the FABC and Asian churches to the urgency of working for a Synodal Church and open new pathways and spaces to generate greater participation of the young and laity in shaping the life and mission of the church.

A Basic Intuition

What the FABC needs at this time seems to be: *greater internal coordination and collaboration* among all entities and personnel – in a reciprocal exchange of love and service (FD120-121); *external networking and communications* – to give and receive life and walk together with all peoples of goodwill; and an *existential organic openness to the People of God* from within whom the episcopacy, and thus the FABC, arises and for whom they are to exercise their ministry of unity and apostolicity – with and among their people.[15]

To develop this intuition in three parts: there is the background or management concepts underlying this paper, a quick off-the-cuff assessment of the structure (more by experience and an outsider looking in), and recommendations drawn from Catholic theology, the Bangkok document, and the Synod Final document (FD). Along the

[14] Conrad Hackett, Marcin Stonawski, Yunping Tong, Stephanie Kramer, Anne Shi, and Dalia Fahmy "How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020 - Muslims grew fastest; Christians lagged behind the global population increase," June 9, 2025, *Pew Research Report*, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/.

[15] Pope Francis said, "The Bishop, the principle and visible basis of unity of each particular Church, cannot live out his service except within the People of God, with the People of God, leading, standing among, and following the portion of the People of God that has been entrusted to him." *Opening Address of Pope Francis at the Second Session of the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 02 October 2024, para.18.

way, some *principles* on which to build become clearer: relationality and circularity, the People of God and *sensus fidei*, and the prophetic nature of the church.

A key question to ask ourselves would be: ***If synodality, as one People of God, is the new stage of consciousness for the Catholic Church, what would it feel and look like? What would relationships, practices, processes, structures, and policies be like in a Synodal Church?*** (cf. FD: conversion of hearts, relations, processes, and bonds/structures.) It calls our local churches, congregations, and movements to move away from static notions of hierarchy and structures to accept permanent processes of consulting, listening, and discerning as a pilgrim Church on the way to the Kingdom.

Christian Anthropology, Canon Law, and Structural Renewal for a Synodal Church

The call for ecclesial reorganization and renewal in Asia—articulated most clearly in the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) 50th General Conference of 2022 (Bangkok Document, March 2023) and the Asian Continental Assembly on Synodality (ACAS, March 2023)—cannot be reduced only to questions of pastoral efficiency or institutional management. While these human sciences are important and necessary, the call to reform or conversion is grounded in Christian theological anthropology, the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, and a renewed understanding of the relationship between theology and canon law.

The work of twentieth-century theologians such as Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, and Joseph Ratzinger—and Asian theologians such as Felix Wilfred, Aloysius Pieris, Catalino Arévalo—articulate clearly that calls for structural reform is not a compliance with modern organisational logic but a theological imperative arising from fidelity to the Gospel, the dignity of the baptised, and the Church's mission in history. More recently, in the context of synodality, Vimal

Tirimanna, a member of the Theological Commission of the General Secretariat for the Synod on Synodality, put in perspective the following:

> Institutions are necessary, but not the way they have been functioning. In some circles, such institutions are canonized. Let's not forget that institutions are only means or structures to work for an end – the kingdom. Even the Church is there for the Kingdom of God, as Pope John Paul II himself said so many times. Jesus appointed apostles as a means to spread the liberating message of the gospel. But what has happened is that oftentimes the Church has become the end in herself… the clergy has become an end in themselves… the hierarchy has become an end in itself. Structures become a doctrine and the doctrine has become an end in itself. Doctrines are to help us reach Jesus of Nazareth. If we are worshipping the doctrines, that's heresy.[16]

Christian theological anthropology begins with the affirmation that the human person is created in the image and likeness of the Triune God (Gen 1:26–27). Because God's own being is communion, the human person is intrinsically relational, dialogical, and oriented toward participation—and "exercising synodality makes real the human person's call to live communion." Against the horizon of integral human development and ecclesial becoming, the Trinity remains the "source, model, and horizon" for the People of God, in pilgrimage.[17] Vatican II retrieves this anthropology by presenting the Church first as mystery and communion (People of God), before addressing hierarchy, offices, or juridical order.[18] Such a change in order broke the long-held division of the *Ecclesia docens* (teaching Church) and *Ecclesia discens* (listening church), or the unequal society between clergy and laity, and reinstates the People of God as the hermeneutical key

[16] Christopher Joseph, "Interview with Fr Vimal Tirimanna. Bishops should teach continental theology in Asia," Part 2, *RVA News*, October 28, 2022. https://www.ucanews.com/news/bishops-should-teach-continental-theology-in-asia/99228

[17] International Theological Commission, Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church (ITC 2018), no. 43.

[18] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (21 November 1964), §§1–13.

to interpret all subsequent roles and offices.[19] Ecclesial structures—including canonical norms—must therefore foster participation, shared discernment, and co-responsibility. When legal or organizational forms inhibit participation or marginalize voices within the community, they fail to correspond to the anthropology they are meant to serve.[20]

This anthropological vision can be traced at the heart of the FABC 50 Bangkok Document, which places synodality at the center of the Church's self-understanding in Asia. Communion, participation, and mission are identified not as optional emphases but as constitutive dimensions of ecclesial life.[21] Implicit in this vision is an understanding of the baptized as moral and ecclesial subjects capable of discernment and responsibility, rather than passive recipients of clerical decision-making. The document's repeated insistence on "journeying together" challenges ecclesial structures that concentrate authority or reduce collaboration to mere consultation.[22] (*Amoris Laetitia* reinforces a similar

[19] For the Biblical theology of the ITC 2018 document, see García Fernández, Marta. 2024. Notes on the Biblical Foundation of the Document of the International Theological Commission, "Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church." *Religions* 15: 1244. https://doi.org/10.3390/ rel15101244.

[20] ITC 2018, no. 46 states, "The gift of the Holy Spirit, which is one and the same in all who have been baptised, is manifested in many forms: the equal dignity of the baptised; the universal call to holiness [LG 39-42]; the participation of all the faithful in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Jesus Christ; the richness of hierarchical and charismatic gifts [LG 4, 12b]; the life and mission of each local Church." These also provide some of the foundations for Catholic Social Teachings and human rights – the right to association, to free speech, to respect, and autonomy.

[21] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), *FABC 50 General Conference: Final Document* (Bangkok: 2022) §§16–19.

[22] FABC, *FABC 50 General Conference: Final Document*, §§20-26. The need for journeying together with all the peoples of Asia in humble and loving dialogue and storytelling was re-emphasized at the Asian Mission Congress/ Great Pilgrimage of Hope. See https://www.rvasia.org/asian-news/gph-day-3-cardinal-ambo-david-calls-asian-church-let-jesus-reappear-and-through-us. Long before doctrine, Asian civilizations passed down truth through epics, myths,

understanding when it states that the role of the pastor is to educate [form] consciences, and not to replace them.)[23]

This insight resonates with the ACAS Final Document, which poses a critical question: *"Which ecclesial structures need to be changed or created to enhance the synodality of the Church in Asia?"*[24] This question presupposes that structures, including canonical ones, are historically conditioned and therefore subject to reform. Structural renewal is not perceived as a threat to ecclesial identity, but rather as a condition for its faithful expression in changing historical contexts.

Here, Felix Wilfred's insights on theology and canon law can provide an important methodological key for interpreting the call to reform. Rejecting the assumption that theology and canon law are polar opposites, Wilfred argues that both must "journey together" in service of the People of God. When canon law becomes detached from theological vision, it risks degenerating into "legal positivism"—prioritizing order over communion and compliance over participation. Law, in Wilfred's view, must remain dynamically oriented toward the Church's theological self-understanding as a pilgrim people on the way to the Kingdom. He goes further to say that "the subjecthood of the community and its process of appropriation of laws" have to be respected by both theology and canon law. Just as the community has

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songs, rituals, and sacred narratives. "In Asia, truth comes to us not primarily as a concept ..but as a story we enter into," according to Cardinal Ambo David.

[23] "We find it difficult to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them." — *Amoris Laetitia* §37. See also AL §§300–303 on the pastoral method or how to go about it. These paragraphs reflect the teachings of Vatican II (*Gaudium et Spes* 16): on the conscience as the "most secret core" of the person, classical Moral theology: on the principle of graduality (not "graduality of the law"), and pastoral practice of Synodality: that emphasises accompaniment, listening, discernment.

[24] Asian Continental Assembly on Synodality (ACAS), *Final Document* (Bangkok: FABC Office of Synodality, 16 March 2023), §30.

the *sensus fidelium* in professing faith, similarly, "laws that bind them need to also vibrate with this sense of the faithful."[25]

The ACAS Final Document identifies clericalism, concentration of power, and lack of accountability as significant obstacles to synodality.[26] Wilfred's analysis helps to interpret these not merely as pastoral shortcomings but as theological distortions that arise when legal and organizational structures lose their grounding in ecclesial anthropology. A law that fails to serve communion risks undermining the *sensus fidelium* and the baptismal dignity of the entire People of God.

Yves Congar offers a foundational theological framework for evaluating such distortions. In *True and False Reform in the Church*, Congar distinguishes between the Church's immutable divine constitution and its historically conditioned forms, including legal and administrative structures.[27] Grounded in a realistic anthropology that acknowledges human fallibility—even within ecclesial authority—Congar insists that

[25] Felix Wilfred, "Theology and Canon Law: Journeying Together," *Concilium: International Journal of Theology*, (July 2022): 45-56. See 47, "For anything to qualify itself as law, it should conform to the standards of reason and contribute to the common good. This would save canon law from arbitrariness and authoritarian imposition. Applying today the standard of reason – which faith is not expected to contradict – would mean that the laws of the Church be such that they do not go against or undermine human dignity and basic human rights, that there be equality, fairness, and natural justice, and that there be no discrimination on gender basis. All these form part of universal human rights, of which humanity has become increasingly conscious. Canon law cannot argue in the name of faith and justify violation of any of these fundamental questions common to the human family."

[26] ACAS, *Final Document*, see The Experience of Wounds §§63–72, Asian Tensions §§84–115.

[27] Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, translated and with an introduction by Paul Philibert, OP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), Part I, *Why and How Does the Church Reform Itself?* (esp. p. 82 – 101), and Part II, *Conditions for Authentic Reform Without Schism* (esp. P. 229, 248). (English translation of *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église*, originally published in 1950; revised edition, 1968).

structures are provisional mediations of grace. They must be reformed whenever they obscure the Gospel or hinder participation.

Congar frames the Church within the classic theological pair *sacramentum* et *res*: the Church is both *sacrament* (a visible sign, "form"/ mediating reality) and *res* (the real, saving presence). If the Church is both *sacramentum* and *res*, then offices, structures, and roles must both *mediate* Christ's grace visibly and *realize* communion, service, and mission. Structures are not ends in themselves—they exist to make the Church's saving reality present. He *intentionally* frames ministry—especially hierarchical ministry—within the life of the *People of God*, and he calls for a pneumatological and prophetic functioning of the hierarchy. He clarifies that, "The hierarchical principle is not by itself the whole of God's design; it involves the complementing give-and-take of a community and the fullness that comes from the association of the two."[28]

Henri de Lubac affirms this perspective by insisting that the Church is fundamentally a mystery of communion before it is an institution.[29] He resists any reduction of the Church to its juridical or administrative dimensions. Because the human person is ordered toward communion and transcendence, de Lubac argues, ecclesial structures must never become ends in themselves. When institutional forms eclipse mystery, they distort human freedom and obscure the work of grace – rather, organizational and canonical forms must remain transparent to the Church's sacramental vision.

Karl Rahner's theology further strengthens the link between anthropology, history, and structural renewal. Rahner understands the human person as a self-transcending subject called to freedom and

[28] Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater, rev. ed (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), 272.

[29] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 29–42. His work affirms, among others, the Asian communitarian anthropology and that salvation in Christ concerns the whole human family, not atomized individuals. The Church exists within the life of Asian peoples as a sign and servant of communion.

responsibility. Therefore, the Church must be understood as a historical *event of grace*—always "becoming what she already is."[30] Ecclesial and legal structures must therefore evolve in response to historical change and authentic human growth, lest they inhibit mature faith and growth of responsible conscience. In summary, ecclesial structures must enable Christian *agency* and not lead to passivity or atrophy of baptismal grace.

Joseph Ratzinger, though often perceived as cautious regarding reform, likewise affirms the necessity of ongoing structural renewal. In *Called to Communion*, he insists that ecclesial structures, while necessary, are always secondary and instrumental to *communio*.[31] Authority, grounded in Christ, exists for service and must remain open to reform whenever it becomes self-referential or obstructive. This understanding aligns closely with the FABC's emphasis on leadership as accompaniment rather than control, and with Wilfred's insistence that law must serve theology.

The Second Vatican Council brought together all these theological insights and provided the magisterial framework to integrate them: *Lumen Gentium*'s presentation of the Church as the People of God establishes baptismal dignity as the foundation of all ecclesial life – in (LG 1) the Council placed sacramentality at the heart of ecclesial identity, so structures must serve that sacramental mission, not replace it. *Gaudium et Spes* calls the Church to scrutinize the signs of the times and respond creatively to historical realities.[32] *Apostolicam Actuositatem* affirms the proper responsibility of the laity in the Church's mission, and *Ad Gentes* underscores the need for adaptability and flexibility in the Church's missionary structures at the service of evangelization. Together, these documents establish a clear doctrinal mandate for ongoing ecclesial and canonical renewal.

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[30] Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 11–25.

[31] Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 44–58.

[32] Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §§1, and 9–13 on People of God; Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, §4.

Pope Francis has explicitly retrieved and deepened this conciliar vision by identifying synodality as "the path that God expects of the Church of the third millennium."[33] He consistently links synodality with the rejection of clericalism, which he describes as a deformation of ecclesial relationships and a betrayal of baptismal equality.[34] Structural and canonical reform, therefore, cannot be separated from spiritual conversion and cultural change.

In the Asian context—marked by religious pluralism, cultural diversity, poverty, and the minority status of Christian communities—the integration of theology, canon law, and synodal practice becomes especially urgent. The FABC 50 and ACAS documents represent a distinctly Asian reception of Vatican II, enriched by Wilfred's insistence that theology and law must journey together. Ecclesial restructuring thus emerges not as institutional populism, but as an act of theological fidelity, ensuring that ecclesial structures remain transparent to communion, participation, and mission in the life of the Church in Asia.[35] At the same time, it is also the path of becoming an Asian Church – a dream cherished by the founding fathers and peoples of the FABC.[36]

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[33] Francis, "Address Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops," 17 October 2015; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 107 (2015): 1145.

[34] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation (24 November 2013), §§93, 102–105, 120.

[35] Felix Wilfred, in "Asian Christianities and Theologies through the Lens of Postcolonialism," *Concilium* 2018-1 (2 & 3), analyzes how colonialism continues to affect the theological frame of thought, epistemology, and hermeneutics in Asian theology and churches. He turns to "postcolonialism to decolonize theology and explore how ...to deconstruct missionary discourses, practices, and structures of power – an important premise for Asian theologies."

[36] "We need to be Asian, but as things stand today, the Church in Asia is not yet fully Asian. The FABC should continue to work, and it has a lot of ground to cover. In the initial three decades of the FABC, it was bubbling with Asianness. But that Asianness has been gradually waning. However, we cannot and should not go back to the 1970s and 1980s. We have to face today's reality and respond.

A Synodal and Missionary Church

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) *studies* ways to advance the apostolate in Asia in light of Vatican II, *works to intensify* the Church's role in the holistic development of Asian peoples, *helps* examine shared challenges and *investigates* coordinated solutions, *promotes* communication and cooperation among local Churches and Bishops, *renders service* to Episcopal conferences to better respond to the needs of the People of God, and *fosters* both the ordered development of international Church organizations and movements as well as ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue and collaboration.[37]

While the FABC's long-standing tradition of dialogue, consensus-building, responsiveness to the signs of the times, and fostering a "Church of the poor" aligns with synodal principles, structural issues and *status quo*, including the entrenched culture of clericalism and *hierarchology*, can inhibit full participation.

First, how are the FABC structures conducive to synodality and mission?

Embracing dialogue and discernment:

- **"Triple Dialogue:"** For over five decades, the FABC has promoted a "triple dialogue" with Asia's peoples, cultures, and religions. This has fostered an intrinsic culture of listening and encounter, which is foundational to a synodal approach.

Today's Asia is not the Asia of the 1970s or of the 1980s. So, we have to be Asian according to today's Asia." Cf. Christopher Joseph, "Fr Vimal Tirimanna: Asian Church should become 'more Asian, less Roman.'" *Catholic Outlook*, 26 December 2022. https://catholicoutlook.org/fr-vimal-tirimanna-asian-church-should-become-more-asian-less-roman/

[37] *The Functions of the FABC*, see https://www.fabc2020.org/functions-of-the-fabc. To put it in a motto-like form, it could read: "The FABC studies, works, helps, investigates, promotes, renders, and fosters the Church's mission in Asia" – a *rosary* of verbs to promote the mission.

- **Spirituality of harmony:** Silence and contemplation, communal sensitivity, and consensus have been part of the Asian ethos – and such Asian cultural values, with their emphasis on harmony and relationality, resonate deeply with the synodal journey.

- **Commitment to the poor and marginalized:** A consistent call in FABC's theologizing has been *with* and *for* the "Church *of* the poor," prioritizing solidarity and advocacy for the vulnerable of Asia, and a call to serve those at the peripheries.

- **Collaborative culture:** FABC meetings have often included significant participation from non-bishops, including priests, religious, and laypersons (men and women). This has created a culture of consultation and shared responsibility that predates the recent Synod on Synodality.

- **New Commission for Synodality:** In March 2025, the FABC established a Commission for Synodality specifically tasked with strengthening collaboration and promoting synodal principles within and among the FABC Offices, animating synodality at all levels of the Asian Church. Formation programs have been put in place for bishops, seminary rectors, and Synod teams across member countries.

How are the FABC structures not yet fully conducive to synodality and mission?

Challenges in practice and implementation:

- **Layers of Clericalism:** The FABC's Document for the Continental Stage (ACAS) acknowledged a "divide" within the Church between the clergy and laity. In many parts of Asia, decision-making is often by the clergy, with little consideration for the voices of the laity and minority groups. Authoritative and domineering leadership styles persist across clergy, religious, and laity, festering a divide and exclusion. The clergy are apprehensive

that empowering the laity would weaken their role and Church structures.[38]

- **Structural and Systemic Inertia:** Despite various recommendations from FABC assemblies over the decades, implementing the vision of an Asian Church at the diocesan and parish levels has faced resistance or inertia. As scholars and critics have noted, without intentional conversion of hearts and structures, the call to synodality could become a mere "grand conference with fine words but little consequence."[39]

- **Lack of Inculturation and Communication:** Asian and Indigenous cultures are living textbooks or resources for synodality.[40] Nearly all country reports from Asia (*Responses to the Guide Document for the FABC 50 General Conference*) highlighted the need to deepen Inculturation. Yet many countries and Bishops' Conferences faced challenges in making available timely translations of official Synod documents in the vernacular. This logistical and structural issue limited the understanding and involvement of grassroots communities.

- **Lacking Critical Self-reflection:** Episcopal Conferences have pointed to an "absence of a critical reflective look at the Church *ad intra* in Asia in the last 50 years," suggesting that while the FABC has excelled at external dialogue, its internal structures and functioning leave matters wanting. (*See the following section below.*)

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[38] See Justin McLellan, "Fighting clericalism means empowering laity," *Natianal Catholic Reporter*, 19 May 2023, https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/fighting-clericalism-means-empowering-laity-cardinal-says.

[39] Sandra Ann Inbaraj, "Synodality demands conversion, not business as usual", *Herald Malaysia*, 06 Sept 2025, https://www.heraldmalaysia.com/news/synodality-demands-conversion-not-business-as-usual/84563/1?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed on 08 September 2025).

[40] Charles Bertille, *"Pastoral Ministry at the Intersections of Life – towards a Synodal Church in Asia,"* 16 August 2025, Keynote Address, 60th Anniversary of the EAPI, Manila.

There is a need for better coordination and cooperation among the various FABC offices, partners, and donors.

- **Uneven efforts and reception:** Some Conferences, over the years, have invested in the education of the laity and involved many people from diverse backgrounds in Synod assemblies locally, regionally, and even sent them to Rome. Others carried out quick online surveys without any animation or organized assemblies, where the clergy still held the dominant voice. Such efforts, implemented unevenly, limited the continental experience, and the faithful wonder what changes they can hope to see.

New Pathways for the FABC

In the FABC Papers No. 167, *Responses to the Guide Document for the FABC 50 General Conference*)[41] Part 1 on *Emerging Realities and Trends of Concern in Asia*, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) wrote under (i) "Church *ad intra* in Asia. There is a serious attempt at reflecting on the Church *ad extra* on the present realities; however, there appears to be an absence of a critical reflective look at the Church *ad intra* in Asia in the last 50 years." (pg. 22).

In Part 3, *Envisioning Possible "New Pathways" for the Church in Asia and the FABC*, the CBCP commented, "On the Organizational Structure of the FABC. It is an opportune time to re-look at the organizational structure of the FABC in order to serve better in the midst of the emerging realities-challenges." (pg. 27).

While acknowledging many contributions to dialogue with cultures, religions, and the poor (the famous "triple dialogue"), the CBCP response on the FABC's journey since its founding (1970–2020),

[41] *FABC papers* No. 167 cover the Southeast Asia responses to the FABC-50 guide document. It was published in August 2021 by the FABC-OTC. Due to constraints of time and space, only four reports from the Philippines, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Indonesia, and Myanmar have been scanned to survey the feedback on organization matters.

noted that the internal life of the Church in Asia—its structures, ministries, internal relationships, and governance—had not been subject to equally sustained theological or pastoral reflection. The observation was meant as a call for the FABC-50 General Conference (2022) to give greater attention to ecclesial self-understanding and renewal "*ad intra*" alongside its mission "*ad extra*."

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei (CBCMSB) had related comments with a clear call for deeper internal formation, discipleship beyond sacramental focus, theological grounding, and ecclesial identity, which echoed the CBCP on the need for self-understanding and internal renewal.

The *Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia* (KWI) or the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Indonesia, highlighted in Part 1, that the Guide document fails to mention internal problems and challenges within the Church—such as clericalism, inculturation, and pastoral engagement with children and youth—and urges that these be elaborated. Like the CBCP, the Indonesian bishops point to an internal deficit—that resonates with the idea of an under-examined Church "*ad intra*."

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) emphasized urgent themes, including governance, threats to indigenous peoples, the rights of migrants, ecological justice, and pastoral accompaniment. It urged the Church to reflect internally on its structures and adapt pastoral responses amid the external crises. Today, with millions displaced in Myanmar due to the civil war, pastoral care and accompaniment take on a very different tone and urgency. Religious, clergy, catechists, and lay leaders continue to accompany the displaced in complex and volatile situations. These are pastoral learning points for the Church in Asia.

In the FABC Paper 186,[42] FABC acknowledges:

[42] FABC, "TOWARDS OCTOBER 2024: The Asian Response to Deepening Aspects of the Synthesis Report of the Synod, October 2023 – Guided by the question: 'How can we be a synodal Church in mission?'" *FABC Papers* 186 (October 2023). The FABC articulates the experiences of the churches in Asia

"Some bishops and priests who feel 'threatened' to lose their relevance, authority, income, and privileges: …there is an unwarranted fear among the clergy to recognize and empower the charisms and ministers of the lay people." (26).

"Synodality in the cultural context of Asian countries "requires an approach that is sensitive to the rich diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and traditions present within the country." (27).

"Parish structures, seminary formation, presbyteral, and episcopal bodies must be reviewed to integrate a synodal spirituality that promotes the journeying together of all the members of the People of God living in an evangelical way—*modus vivendi* and *modus operandi*." (39)

The Final FABC-50 document

How did these critiques and concerns shape the FABC-50 General Conference in November 2022 and the Bangkok document of March 2023? Using the journey of the Magi (Mt 2:1–12) as its guiding framework, the Bangkok Document organizes its response into five parts following the See–Judge–Act *pastoral method*: Journeying Together, Looking, Discerning, Offering Our Gifts, and Opening New Pathways.

Under Section V, *Opening New Pathway*, it outlines the responses as "New Pathways": *Pathway 1* (BD 141 – 147) from Foreign expressions to inculturated proclamation of the Gospel, *Pathway 2* (BD 148 – 149) from Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) towards building Basic Human Communities (BHCs), *Pathway 3* (BD 150 – 153) from Triple dialogue to Fourfold synodality including with Creation, *Pathway 4* (BD 154 – 155) from Proclamation to Storytelling in Asia, *Pathway 5* (BD 156 – 162) from Beaten track to New Pastoral priorities.

This paper does not intend to analyze the full spectrum of concerns and critiques that were raised, nor the responses given. Suffice here to state that the Bangkok Document addresses the issues raised above by the four Conferences (FABC Papers 167) as well as

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to the Synthesis Report based on the reports received from the Conferences across Asia.

the concerns of human formation, cultures, and structures (FABC Paper 186). It now requires *follow-through* for implementation at the Asian and local levels:

1. **Renewal of Ministry and Internal Formation**: "We will work towards renewing our ministries in all our local churches in Asia towards mission by nurturing our communities in the dynamics of communion and participation. By doing so, we hope to reorient our faithful from self-referentiality to truly living out our calling…from merely serving the Church to serving the world, as part of the mission of a servant Church." (BD 157).

    a. This responds to the lack of self-reflection raised by the CBCP, with a renewed commitment to ministries, communion, and participation — i.e., internal renewal as a foundation for mission.

2. **Maintenance mode to Mission Parishes:** "We commit ourselves to transforming our parishes from maintenance to mission, by fostering Basic Ecclesial Communities that build Basic Human Communities." (BD 158)

    a. The document adopts this shift, from an explicit sacramental maintenance model raised by Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei to moving parishes to be missionary, with BECs as the framework for renewal of church and society around.

3. **Contextualized Formation in Asia:** To adapt the formation of our clergy to the Asian context and culture, "we have to come up with programs and structures of formation that are contextualized in our specific cultures and worldviews in the different countries of Asia…The ordained must learn to share roles of leadership with the laity and consecrated..." (BD 117).

    a. This responds to the KWI or Indonesia's call for better formation and inculturation by pledging contextualized clergy formation, an explicit intra-ecclesial reform.

4. **Human Formation and Theology of Communion:** Such an approach to formation would also require "Bishops, Priests and Religious [ ] to be trained to empower the laity to live their baptismal commitment, both in the Church and Society" (BD 115), and "to restore the ministerial priesthood's grounding on the common priesthood of the faithful" (BD 116), the "participation of lay people, including women, in their human, spiritual, pastoral, and intellectual formation ..will raise 'shepherds with the smell of the sheep'" (BD 118).

    a. This will help address the 'unwarranted fear' of some bishops and priests who feel threatened by the laity and help integrate a synodal spirituality that promotes the journeying together of all the members of the People of God (FABC Paper 186, nos. 26 and 39).

5. **Institutional Awareness and Pastoral Conversion:** While not responding directly to Myanmar's concern, the Bangkok document commits to strengthening synodal governance in solidarity with the poor and marginalized (BD 158), and to pastoral and ecological conversion (BD 159).

    a. A study of the BD shows it denounces certain practices of Asian Churches, and affirms the equal dignity of the baptized, rooted in Communion, opposing exclusion and clericalism. Participation opposes the monopolization of leadership by clergy, while calling for the promotion of *sensus fidei* and shared discernment (BD 18).

    b. It presents mission not as a self-referential church, but a Church for the Kingdom of God engaged in "multilogues that promote critical thinking and communal disciplines of discernment" (BD 19, 162).

6. From Triple Dialogue to Multi-prong Synodality

Both the Bangkok Document and the FABC Paper[43] outline the development from FABC's Triple Dialogue to the *Four Pathways to Synodality*:

1. Synodality with Culture – Beyond Inculturation to Interculturality, Greco-Roman to Local (BD 18-21),
2. Synodality with Religions – From "Other" to Neighbor Faiths (BD 24),
3. Synodality with Poor – From "For" to "With," BECs to BHCs (BD 148 – 149),
4. Synodality with Creation – Ecclesial Call (BD 104).

All these presuppose a posture of openness and learning for the Asian churches, not only seeing ourselves as a teaching church but more importantly a *listening* church, welcoming people of different cultures, faiths, the poor, and Creation as partners in our common pilgrimage towards God's Kingdom. Indeed, the "need of the hour" calls for a "comprehensive worldview, [with] viable ethical and moral guidelines" (BD 65).

Structural Changes

Based on the above analysis and commitments of the Bangkok document, the FABC is mandated to draw forth concrete recommendations in evolving its structures and functioning towards a more synodal and missionary Church. Taking a cue from the Bangkok document, "How do we *strengthen synodal governance in solidarity with the poor and marginalized*?"

[43] The FABC Paper 193 titled: *Follow-Up of FABC 50 Bangkok Document Workshop for Rectors of the Major Seminaries*, 28 April–1 May 2025, outlines the development from FABC's Triple Dialogue to the *Four Pathways to Synodality* (p. 10-13). More details can be read in UCA News reports on the presentations made at the Great Pilgrimage of Hope, 2025.

As the Fathers of the Church, Vatican II, the recent Synod documents, and Popes have situated the episcopacy within and at the service of the People of God, they encourage the inclusion of the People of God in various offices and decision-making instances. It does not alter the identity of the FABC as a body of Asian bishops but clearly projects its role from *within* and at the *service of* the entire People of God. Thus, the mandate, tasks, and communications of all the FABC Offices must flow from such a situatedness.

The recommendations below are subject to further study and discernment among the bishops and offices:

1. **Strengthening Synodal Governance**

   - **Global initiatives:** As part of the Synod process, the Vatican convened the five federations of bishops' conferences from America, Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia-Oceania. Complementing this, the South-South Conference gatherings have fostered mutual learning and exchange. On September 25, 2024, bishops from the Global South issued a joint letter to the United Nations addressing the climate crisis. And a delegation of bishops and young indigenous representatives from Asia-Oceania took part in COP 30, held in Belém, Brazil.

   - **Regional Asian Synodal Council**: Drawing inspiration from Latin America and REPAM, Asia could establish a permanent ecclesial assembly—comprising bishops, clergy, religious, and lay members, including women and youth—that would provide counsel, foster co-discernment, and support the FABC in its pastoral mission. An Asian Synodal Council could be created to serve this role.

   - **Rotating Leadership Roles**: Adopting shared leadership models, supported by mentoring from experienced individuals, would allow laity, women, religious, and youth to take on entrusted leadership and decision-making responsibilities within commissions and task forces. (This inclusivity is important given that, for example, the Asian delegation to the

Synod Assembly in Rome consisted solely of clergy—bishops and priests—alongside women religious and consecrated members, but notably excluded male laypersons and young people.)

- **Continental Listening Structures**: There is a need to institutionalize regular "listening assemblies" at continental and sub-regional levels to keep the synodal spirit alive between plenaries and avoid becoming insular. (The Asian Mission Congress, with its wide representation, can be re-oriented to become a listening assembly.)

    - **Safeguarding:** For the credibility and well-being of the Asian Church, a special Commission could be created under the FABC President's Office (cf. BD 94). They can liaise with the regional delegate of the Pontifical Commission and the various Conferences in Asia, to gather information on ongoing initiatives and resources, promote communication of these, and extend support to local Conferences where needed. A *sacred space* is needed among bishops to exchange and discern the way forward at the national and regional levels.

    - **Instituting Memory:** Christian faith is memory, "*Do this in memory of me*." Communication is storytelling and transmitting communal memory. Like the recent global joint letter on Climate, the FABC can institute *a day of remembrance*, with memorial services, calls for peace, and prayer for the many countries and numerous victims in the region, without politicizing them: Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Gaza, the uprising in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Nepal all warrant our solidarity (cf. BD 27, 34). Here, Indigenous rituals of remembering, forgiveness, and reconciliation among our Asian peoples can be researched and used as resources.

2. **Deepening Missionary Engagement**

- **Cross-Border Mission Teams**: Small missionary teams of clergy, religious, and laity across Asian cultures modeling synodal collaboration in mission and exchange of gifts (FD 120 – 121), reflecting the *missio inter-gentes,* would be wonderful to behold. Pooling missionary experiences and resources is so much needed today. Mechanisms can be worked out around specific time-bound projects. (Churches in Germany and America have been practicing these to support the Church in Asia.)

- **Digital Mission Hubs**: FABC-led digital platforms for evangelization or missionary outreach, dialogue, and formation—in vernacular languages—particularly for migrant workers, youth, and those in remote areas, would have an impact. The structural challenge requires Safeguarding-driven frameworks and transparency (cf. FD 98, 149-150) to be built in.

- **Casting the Net Together**: There are opportunities to network with Pastoral centers and Institutes of Formation that promote synodal formation, such as the Network of Institutes for Formation and Studies-Asia (NIFSA) in Manila, Philippines. This would be one way of "casting the net together" (Jn 21:5 – 6). And in Asia, casting the net together would require 'weaving the net together,'" moving away from some of our silos and closed circles.

- **Calling and Training Volunteers and Disciples**: Many Asian Churches need more volunteers and disciples, especially young people. Social services and all ministries have to be animated by faith reflection and pastoral accompaniment to form inculturated disciples (BD 81, 117, 146). Some lay movements and missionary societies are forming young and lay people for mission work. A little encouragement and coordination with the FABC can go a long way.

- **Interreligious Dialogue Units**: Promote studies to understand and overcome identity politics and the raging neo-fundamentalism. Establish permanent structures for dialogue with other religions, rooted in Asia's pluralism, and link them more closely to social justice and peace-building efforts (BD 147-153). This includes skills for spiritual listening and conflict transformation (FD 112 - 118).

3. **Enhancing Inclusivity and Co-Responsibility**

- **Lay and Women's Participation**: Establish a *Council of Lay Advisors* or sub-group of lay advisors to the Asian Synodal Council at the continental level, ensuring representation of women theologians, leaders, and grassroots voices in FABC discernment and decision-making processes (cf. BD 40, 41, 42, 84, 85).

- **Youth Synodal Forum**: Integrate a standing "Asian Youth Synodal Forum" into FABC's structures so that youth concerns are not episodic but continuously heard. Space can be opened for them to innovate new ways of being church in mission (cf. BD 46-48, 51, 90-93). The institutional church offices do not have to appropriate every initiative—all can learn to *walk together* as groups and movements are part of the charismatic dimension of the church.

- **Grassroots Linkages**: Many Catholics and Christians across Asia are engaged in civil society and NGOs working for the common good. The FABC can help bridge such networks by requesting that each Episcopal Conference develop synodal "base networks" with these individuals and entities, for they are the Church's partners in working for the coming of God's Kingdom. These can be for conversations and goodwill, or collaboration on common issues such as natural disasters, poverty alleviation, and peacebuilding (cf. BD 159 – 162). The updates can be reported to an office of the local Conference and picked up at the FABC, so that local voices genuinely shape continental priorities.

4. **Reforming Structures for Flexibility and Responsiveness**

- **Issue-Based Task Forces**: Establishing *task forces* with a clear mandate and flexibility with a mixed team of experts from the field can help deepen the understanding and respond to urgent issues (climate crisis, migration, digital ethics, interreligious conflict). The Commissions and Task Forces can be part of an FABC Office or the Secretariat. (The practice of being accountable vertically only to a president or bishop chair can never resolve far-reaching societal issues or build a Synodal church, for socio-pastoral issues transgress ministry boundaries and require a transboundary and transdisciplinary approach.)

- **Climate response**: A partnership document exists between the FABC Office of Human Development (OHD), Caritas Asia, and River Above Asia Oceania Ecclesial Network (RAOEN)[44] – and all three are mandated by the FABC with specific roles, as no one entity can offer a complete response to the climate crisis and the ground realities of vulnerable communities. (The Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania can also be invited to participate in some of these listening assemblies around ecology and pastoral challenges as we share a common biome.)

- **Decentralized Hubs**: Instead of centralizing or over-bureaucratizing one secretariat, *Praedicate Evangeliium* invites us to consider decentralization,[45] which could be sub-

[44] See RAOEN, "Church Groups in Asia Launch Regional Alliance to Tackle Social and Environmental Crises," https://www.raoen.org/2025/03/06/church-groups-in-asia-launch-regional-alliance-to-tackle-social-and-environmental-crises/ (accessed 9 February 2026).

[45] Josef Sayer, FABC Paper 194, *Praedicate Evangelium — Development Process, Hermeneutics, and Significance for the Church*. Part V of the above paper highlights how the drafting of *Praedicate Evangelium* was shaped by a broad, dialogical process rather than an isolated committee. The Council of Cardinals incorporated perspectives from bishops' conferences across continents, lay organizations, curial officials, and even pontifical universities, ensuring the Constitution reflected

regional hubs (South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, etc.). Such a mechanism could better animate and accompany the shared history, cultural similarities, resources, and missionary opportunities within and among countries in the sub-regions that reflect Asia's diversity. It can also serve as a mechanism for listening and discerning the voice of the Spirit.

- **Synodal Audits**: Leadership must exemplify the political will to move critical areas. Instituting periodic "synodal audits" to evaluate whether a diocese or FABC's structures themselves embody listening, participation, and shared discernment is vital. As any ecclesial office, the FABC is also accountable to the People of God. As such, it needs to become *more present* in the lives of people and churches, and not be seen as on its own.

    - **Feedback Loops:** Feedback loops are important to help balance or reinforce processes. Consultation, dialogue, and discernment are part of such feedback processes. The FABC must build channels for open feedback from grassroots, BECs, SCCs, migrants, and young people with the bishops. Such listening will help deepen appreciation for the People of God and the *sensus fidei* and nurture the prophetic voice of the church.

- **Networking and Communication**: Synodality itself requires a more collaborative, relational, and network style of leadership, capable of liaising and building networks with ecclesial and civil bodies, especially at the Asian level. The work and reflections of the various offices and the Secretariat need to be communicated promptly and widely. This is part of accountability and feeding into the synodal

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global concerns. The process remained rooted in Pope Francis's vision of reform as a dynamic, pastoral, and synodal journey rather than a static legal exercise. The work that began in 2013, was promulgated in March 2022 and effective at Pentecost that year. It is not merely about curial reform but about the Church's essential mission: *Praedicate Evangelium*—to preach the Gospel.

movement animating the Asian churches, and that could have a wider impact on our societies (BD 95).[46]

5. **Formation for Synodality and Mission**

- **Leadership Formation**: Strengthening BECs as spaces of listening and discernment, promoting digital synodality to embrace the wider diaspora and 'enlarge the tent of participation', formation of synodal leaders in critical reflection, are all necessary for structural change (cf. BD 115).

  - **Bishops' Formation –** Synodality-focused leadership training for bishops, clergy, religious, and laity can be developed in partnership with pastoral-theological institutes across Asia. We can also learn from the past – some bishop luminaries of yesteryears testify to the value of the BISA, BIRA, BISCOM, and other FABC-led programs. It tells us that ongoing *exposure-immersion learning* is critical for a synodal missionary Church.

  - **Inculturation** becomes important for a Synodal Church. Many of our Asian cultures and traditions have synodal resources embedded in them. Certain congregations have been doing significant work in this area for decades. A Task Force could network and research particular areas, e.g., Indigenous cultures and liturgy, or work in partnership with institutes, and others like the ROOTS Network.[47]

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[46] The Church must be involved in efforts to effect long-term change through formation, systemic and structural changes, and advocacy in defence of the vulnerable. Many of these initiatives have to be carried out by collaborating and networking with non-governmental and civil society organizations for the good of all. These partnerships only accentuate the fact that the Church does not exist for herself but is at the service of all the peoples of Asia as she continues to announce the Kingdom of God and transform our realities in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. LG,5)." BD 95.

[47] ROOTS is a Catholic Network among all those working with Indigenous peoples of Asia. "Asian Forum on Synodality and Indigenous Living Traditions within the Church amplify IndigenousVoices," *RAOEN*, See https://www.raoen.

- ***Corpus* of FABC teachings:** It needs greater exposure, understanding, and implementation across Asia. How can these be better introduced in the formation of seminarians, novices, catechists, and lay leaders?

- **Asian Synodal Research Centre**: Establish a center or centers by sub-regions for theological reflection, research, and resource-sharing on synodality and mission in Asia's unique context. This could be a network of centers, like hubs, each specializing in specific fields, and accessible to Catholic scholars, pastoral workers, and professionals. (Besides theological journals from India or the Philippines, very little is known from other Churches.)

  - **ASIPA**: It will be valuable to connect with the significant work done by Offices like AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach), a Desk of the FABC *Office of Laity and Family*. They had developed training modules for a 'Word-centered' participatory and communitarian church in more than 30 Asian languages.[48]

- **Intergenerational Mentoring**: Create mentorship programs pairing elder bishops/religious leaders with young and lay leaders to sustain continuity and innovation. Ongoing human and spiritual formation are necessary to overcome personal dysfunctions (FD 142 – 143).

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org/2024/12/10/asian-forum-on-synodality-and-indigenous-living-traditions-within-the-church-amplify-indigenous-voices/ (accessed 9 February 2026).

[48] AsIPA highlights the importance of integrating spiritual and social dimensions of life, addressing the realities faced by Asian communities, such as pluralism, poverty, and the advancement of women. It seeks to equip the People of God for their mission in the Church and world, and fosters a renewed model of leadership rooted in shared responsibility among clergy, religious, and laity alike. "What is AsIPA?," *AsIPA*, https://asipafabc.org/what-is-asipa/.

The Inverted Pyramid

Keeping in mind the overall aim of this review of the FABC structures is to help it move from being *primarily consultative and episcopal* toward being a synodal missionary body that is *participatory, inclusive, and mission-driven*, in line with the universal Synod Final document and Asia's cultural and religious diversity. The structures must also strive to reflect and fulfil the desire of Pope Francis for an episcopacy that is at the service of the entire People of God and walks with them.[49]

The following organizational structure (see next page) shows how the FABC Assembly connects to an Asian Synodal (ecclesial) Council, which then branches into sub-regional Hubs, Offices, and issue-based Task forces, and Participatory councils (laity, women, youth, grassroots), all feeding into a Synodal Research & Formation Center or Centers locally, and regionally for reflection and capacity building. It is subject to further deliberation and discernment.

Overall Flow of the Structure

The FABC Assembly, in mutual listening with the Asian Synodal Council, welcomes and sets the strategic direction for the FABC and Churches in Asia. This can give it more strength and "bite" than the current practice of a few bishops participating, and the FABC directions and teachings are then left open-ended or subjective in implementation.

The Asian Synodal Council, in mutual listening with the Sub-Regional Hubs, Offices, Task Forces, Councils, and Forums, exercises discernment and co-responsibility in a spirit of subsidiarity.

Grassroots Networks of groups, Initiatives, Councils, and Task Forces listen to life realities as bottom-up listening and bring this for further study and reflection.

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[49] Pope Francis, *Address of Pope Francis to a Group of Recently Appointed Bishops*, 19 Sept 2013, Speeches, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130919_convegno-nuovi-vescovi.html.

There is a need to situate our *praxis* within the concrete realities of Asian societies—marked by cultural and religious pluralism, economic marginalization, environmental crises, and the nine challenges named in the Bangkok Document (BD 71). Central to its methodology is the formation of bishops, priests, religious, and laity (BD 115), for the empowerment of Asia's laity to exercise their ecclesial and societal mission.[50] The paradigm of leadership must be characterized by shared responsibility and collaborative participation among clergy, religious, and lay members to foster a synodal church.

The Research & Formation Centers operate within a network model that connects diverse structures—such as pastoral centers, institutes of national conferences, and regional hubs of various congregations and movements. This collaborative framework fosters deeper reflection, the development and exchange of training modules, and the encouragement of local innovation. Each subregion may establish its own hubs and centers to strengthen this shared mission.

[50] For a study of the FABC Theology of the Laity and its Relevance for the Formation of Lay leaders in Asia's Local Churches, see Charles Bertille, *Empowering Asia's Laity* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian, 2014).

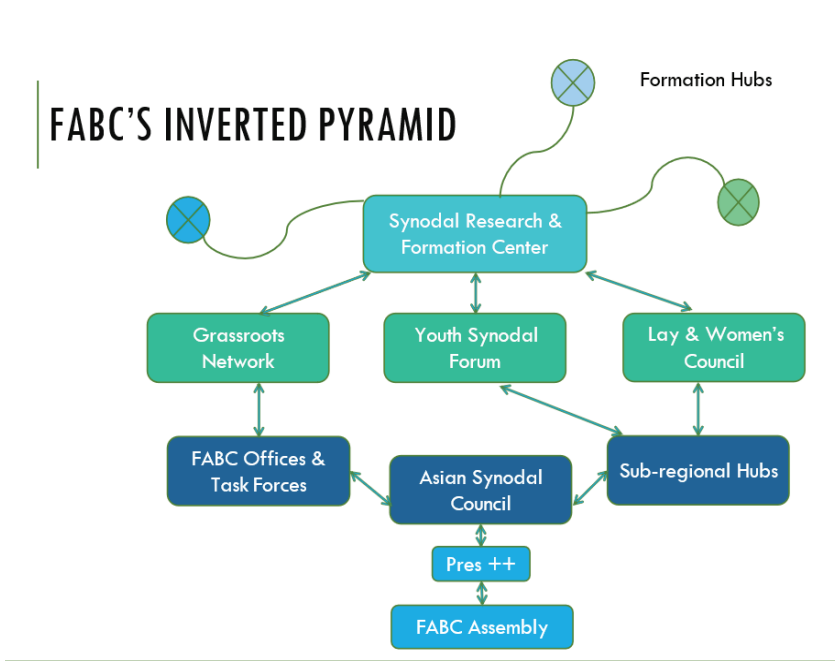


Diagram 4: FABC's Inverted Pyramid

A Proposed Roadmap for Renewal

Any change process requires facilitation and discernment. The restructuring plans need to be rolled out in a phased manner and reviewed periodically.

- In the short term, it is prudent to start small, establishing councils, hubs, and forums. The goal or keywords for structural renewal are *inclusion and experimentation*.
- In the medium term, the FABC can expand its structure, sub-regional structures, launch the synod research center, and deepen grassroots participation. The goal is to *consolidate and broaden participation.*
- In the long term, FABC can review how and how much it has helped integrate synodality into governance, decision-making,

and missionary outreach across the Churches of Asia. The goal is a fully *synodal & missionary* culture.

The matrix below lays out in summary the phases of restructuring:

Short-term (0-3 yrs)	Mid-term (4 – 6 yrs)	Long-term (7 – 10 yrs)
▪ Wider consultation & discerned restructuring ▪ Establishing Team/s & Roadmap ▪ Relaunch Offices ▪ Task Force on Migration, Climate, & Digital ▪ Asian Synodal Council ▪ Pilot Sub-regional Hubs (2 regions) ▪ Lay & Women's Council & Youth Forum formed ▪ Plan Synodal Research & Formation Centers ▪ Financial Task Force launched to study status and needs ▪ Annual evaluation of Offices, Secretariat, Synodality (participation, communion & mission)	▪ Expand Regional Hubs to all subregions ▪ Grassroots Networks established ▪ Pooling of resources & Cross-border missionary teams ▪ Ministry volunteer programs launched ▪ Synodal Research & Formation Centers opened ▪ Mentorship programs launched ▪ Financial Training launched. ▪ Regular Synodal Audits	▪ Synodality integrated into governance ▪ Promotion of FABC teachings & theology ▪ Digital Mission Hubs institutionalized ▪ Lay/Women/Youth in decision-making roles ▪ Interreligious Dialogue Units strengthened ▪ Rotating leadership models are adopted ▪ Financial sustainability plans are in place ▪ 5-year reviews for agile structures & renewal.

Proposed Restructuring of the FABC Offices

Based on the above analysis and rethinking, a reorganization of the offices is proposed.

1. Reference is made to the *motu proprio, Praedicate Evangelium* (Preach the Gospel).

   a. The FABC Offices can reflect the structure of the Roman Curia as affected by Pope Francis.

b. *Praedicate Evangelium* clearly states that lay people can oversee offices, or even dicasteries. How could these directives be reflected and applied in the Asian context and the FABC?

c. Could there be a team of consultors or experts for each Office and Task Force? And could it consist of various sectors (e.g., lay, women, young, religious, priests) instead of solely bishops? (The Vatican is already practicing this.)

d. Can there be a non-clergy co-chair with the bishop chair? (Such a set-up is being practiced by some dioceses in the Philippines.)

2. The purpose and identity of the FABC Secretariat and Offices are to be reviewed in the light of synodality.

a. An explanatory note on the mission and function of each Office is needed.

b. Each office has a distinct task and is co-responsible with other offices.

c. It may be timely to organize the offices by 'clusters' or groupings, according to their areas of mission, to foster trans-ministry thinking.

d. Names of Offices could be brief and clear, leaving out descriptions. It is better to avoid words like "concerns," "affairs," etc.

e. The related files, accounts, and information must be handed over and signed off by each new executive secretary.

The Present Offices of the FABC	Proposed Offices & Task Force for the FABC *
1. Human Development 2. Social Communication 3. Laity and Family 4. Theological *Concerns* 5. Education and Faith Formation 6. Ecumenical and Interreligious *Affairs* 7. Evangelization (Peace and Harmony) 8. Clergy 9. Consecrated Life	1. Integral Development a. Climate Crises Task Force (ID-CJ, Caritas Asia, RAOEN) b. Migration Task Force 2. Social Communication a. Digital Task Force b. Vernacular languages 3. Laity & Family (youth, children…) a. Revive Youth Commission 4. Theology (ecclesiology, liturgy, inculturation) a. Inculturation Task Force b. Study Forums on Ecclesiology & Synodality c. Promote FABC teachings 5. Education & Culture (culture is a hallmark of FABC theology and Asian reality) a. Indigenous Peoples Task Force 6. Ecumenism & Dialogue a. Institute joint *"Memory Days."* 7. Evangelization & Faith Formation (take *Faith Formation* from current no. 5 and assign here) 8. Clergy and Religious Others 1. Commission on Synodality a. Under Secretariat – Synodal Research & Formation Task Force 2. Commission on Safeguarding a. Under the FABC President's Office – to support & liaise with initiatives of Asian Churches

*All these proposals require prayer and discernment.

3. Consultation on the mission and mandate of the Offices will be helpful.

    a. The consultation done in the past could be evaluated, and based on it, further discussions can be conducted.

    b. The bishops and executive secretaries of each member Conference dealing with specific sectors could be asked to comment on an online consultation. (Before the FABC 50, a similar exercise was carried out by certain offices.)

    c. There is a need for closure and continuity for Offices and personnel who have served devotedly.

4. Structures and governance norms for the Offices should be clearly laid down.

    a. These include mandatory meetings, reporting, joint and collaborative programs, and handing over charges to successors.

    b. Joint annual review and planning with other Offices is needed for shared understanding and priority during the mandate. This will enhance the energy for moving towards a common challenge.

    c. The Communication on the website needs to be enhanced. While the Offices are mentioned, there is no write-up of their plans or activities.

5. Identifying and preparing the various Executive Secretaries.

    a. Transition plans must be in place, and potential candidates identified early.

    b. Executive secretaries are to be well elected or trained where necessary.

    c. A proper induction, briefing on roles and responsibilities, and handing over must be carried out. The higher instance is to ensure that this happens.

d. They must take the baton and continue the race, with the foundations that have been laid, without undoing everything.

e. One executive secretary per office is prudent, even when there is more than one portfolio within it.

f. All executive secretaries must be trained to make an annual Office calendar and budget.

g. They must attend the Office and common FABC events a certain number of times during their mandate for teamwork and coordination.

h. An annual review of their performance is to be carried out by one of their consultors. Mentoring is to be provided where needed.

6. Permanent Office or Desk space is to be allotted at the Central Secretariat.

a. Each office can maintain its files, documents, bank papers, etc., for smooth transfer of power and continuity.

7. Fundraising with donors can be built around common needs or challenges.

a. There can be greater transparency among the Offices and Secretariat of which organizations are supporting them, and what their plans are for the year.

b. Foresight planning is helpful for the financial viability of FABC's operations.

c. Roundtable conversations with partners and stakeholders could generate new partnerships and bring in funding.

d. With clear programs and desired impact, it will be possible to secure funds from donors and Conferences for staffing.

8. In the light of Synodality and changes in the universal Church, the FABC Central Secretariat needs to review its role, mode of functioning, and future work.

    a. As an example, from a supporting role to the President and team, it could become more of an "open hub" for networking, communication, and fraternity in various instances.

    b. It needs to ensure greater, timely, and wider communication on the activities and reflections that are coming up from the various Offices and the ground.

    c. No one person can take on all these responsibilities effectively. Team ministry is vital.

        i. The shared vision and cooperation of the Offices and executive secretaries are necessary.

        ii. The Central Secretariat can be strengthened with volunteers and competent project-bound personnel.

        iii. The Secretariat and Offices can solicit and engage competent people to help the FABC to be creative and effective in its renewal.

    d. While respecting and honoring the contributions of the various Assistant Secretary Generals and their team members, isn't Asia ready for a layperson (man or woman) to play that role? In the same vein as *Praedicate Evangelium* (Part I, art. 10), Felix Wilfred highlights the right of the laity to governance: "Nothing then, theology, history, nor actual practice, stands against the exercise of the jurisdictional power by the laity."[51]

[51] Felix Wilfred, "Theology and Canon Law: Journeying Together," *Concilium: International Journal of Theology*, (July 2022): 49: "Canon law has little to invoke in support of its present position of negation of this power to the laity. One may try to find a theological argument in the fact that according to the teaching of Vatican II, the bishop through their consecration receive not only the office of sanctifying and teaching, but as well *the office of governance*. This is a teaching whose importance lies in the fact that the office of governance is not additionally

A Proposed Ecclesial Verification

Human and management sciences can offer useful tools for our ecclesial pilgrimage journey – helping us discern if we are on the right path and checking in at the right milestones. For the Church, structures are never neutral: they must remain servants of the *sacramentum* in view of the *res*—the lived reality of grace, communion, and mission in the world.

The FABC 50 Bangkok Document invites the Church in Asia to journey together, reading the signs of the times through prayerful listening, spiritual conversation, and shared discernment. It calls the Church to attend seriously to *emerging realities*, to walk "as Asian peoples," and to allow structures to be continually reshaped by mission rather than preserved for their own sake. In such a spirit, the following criteria are proposed as a simple ecclesial verification applicable to any office, rule, or structure.

Mission *(oriented to the sacramentum):* We first ask ourselves, *How does this structure enable, deepen, and communicate the Church's mission and sacramental life—Eucharist, Baptism, the Word of God, and Life in the Spirit?*

- The Christian journey begins from the **encounter** with Christ. Structures that are detached from the sources risk losing their ecclesial meaning. Where no clear orientation can be articulated, rethinking, or even letting go becomes necessary.

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granted by the pope, which could make them appear as officers of the pope. By rooting the power of the bishop in the sacrament, the Council has brought to balance the relationship between episcopacy and primacy. The same, however, should not be extrapolated in the relationship of the laity and clergy, to argue that because they do not have ordination, the laity therefore do not have the power of governance. This is to wrongly apply a teaching, culling it out of context, and to completely misunderstand the spirit and teachings of Vatican II." See PE, art 10. "Each Christian, by virtue of baptism, is a missionary disciple. This must necessarily be taken into account in the reform of the Curia, which should consequently make provision for the involvement of lay women and men, also in roles of government and responsibility."

Pastoral fruits *(attention to the res): Does this structure bear recognizable pastoral fruit?* It can be a growing participation in sacramental life, deeper faith formation, greater solidarity with the poor, care for creation, the genuine empowerment of lay women and men, and more. Does it help our people grow in relation to neighboring faiths and be an inculturated church?

- Structures cannot be evaluated by internal efficiency alone or mere corporate KPIs, but rather by how they mediate grace in lived realities. The Bangkok Document (BD) urges the Church to remain close to the **concrete lives of people**, especially amid poverty, migration, family fragility, youth vulnerability, and ecological crisis.

Life in the Spirit: Planning processes, meeting agendas, job descriptions, and evaluations can begin with the question: *How does this structure and ministry serve to listen to the movement of the Spirit in the people and life realities we serve?*

- The BD emphasizes **spiritual conversation** as a method of discerning the Spirit's movement. Structures that do not make space for prayerful listening and movement of the Spirit risk becoming technocratic, even when well-intentioned. But without a praxis, spirituality risks becoming self-referential and ensnared with rubrics.

Subsidiarity and Co-Responsibility: *Does the structure foster shared discernment, decentralization, or local co-responsibility, or does it centralize authority and limit the participation of the baptized?*

- A central insight of the BD is that the Church in Asia must learn to **walk together** through listening, especially to voices often unheard. This requires structures that encourage collaboration between clergy and laity, church and civil society, and enable genuine co-responsibility rather than dependency or clericalism.

Time over Space (pastoral processes): *Are the structures and office bearers adaptable to processes and pastoral change?* Permanence must be justified by its sustained fruits.

- Echoing Pope Francis, the BD invites the Church to privilege **processes over position** or possessions. Therefore, encouraging experimentation, time-bound task forces, locally animated initiatives, and regular reviews will serve the mission more faithfully than rigid, self-perpetuating offices.

Formation as Constitutive: *Has a real formation needs assessment been done with the various stakeholders? Do office bearers have a personalized plan of formation and a mentor or spiritual guide? Who accompanies their journey of discipleship?*

- The Bangkok Document stresses that ecclesial renewal is inseparable from **personal and communal conversion**. All office bearers are encouraged to participate in ongoing formation together with the People of God—in 'doing theology' with the people, pastoral accompaniment of lived realities, and synodal discernment. Structural reform without formation and discipleship risks superficial change.

Transparency and Accountability: *Why does this structure exist, how does it serve the Church's mission, who benefits, and what criteria will be used for its review or reform?*

- Opacity allows structures to harden into ends in themselves; it is important to reflect on the above question and publish the responses. Such transparency reflects the synodal ethos promoted in the BD. Synodality is not a technique but a **way of being Church**, marked by listening, shared responsibility, and discernment of the Spirit.

Synodal Discernment: When appointing leaders, a fundamental question can be asked: *Concretely, how will you help this office serve the faith life and synodal co-responsibility of the local Churches?*

- Leadership, as implied throughout the BD, is not the exercise of control but a **ministry of communion**, animated by service, listening, and discernment of the Spirit. It is insufficient to listen to the voice of just one leader or clergy; rather, a wider consultation is needed.

A Final Discernment: Ultimately, the decisive question remains – the one repeatedly posed by the FABC 50 Bangkok Document:

> ***Does this journey help us choose the poor, walk with the wounded of our societies, and become ever more authentically a Church of the poor and for the poor in Asia?***

Only structures that keep this question alive can help us remain true to the memory of Jesus in Asia – and be true servants of the *sacramentum* and credible signs of the *res* they are meant to mediate.

Structures to Serve Synodality

The above points of reflection can be grouped under: *Identity (sacramentality, spirituality), Praxis (pastoral fruits, option for the poor), Communion (subsidiarity & co-responsibility, adaptability, leadership),* and *Discipleship (formation, sustainability & accountability).* (See Appendix 2 for more details). These reference poles or axes can help us hold-in-focus the various dimensions of Christian life and ministry,[52] and verify if our efforts and offices are offering a more integrated and holistic approach to *being* and *becoming* a synodal church in Asia. "The established administrative processes, standardized pathways, control mechanisms,

[52] The workshop findings and statements of the FABC Offices and Plenary Assemblies are documented in the series: *For All the Peoples of Asia* (FAPA), Vol. I – VI, covering the period from 1974 to 2016, and published by Claretian Communications, Quezon City, Philippines. These provide very rich tools and resources for dimensions of Christian life, such as prayer, spirituality, dialogue, inculturation, women, Christian priesthood, etc. For purposes of our study here, see the "triple rootedness of Asian discipleship" in FAPA III (BILA on Women II, 1998, art 3.2, 75), or FAPA I (FABC IV, 1986, arts. 4.8.2 – 4.8.8, 195-197).

and cherished routines must now be scrutinized from the perspective of synodality, of being a synodal Church."[53]

They can be developed into a tool and used for annual evaluation: how ecclesial offices, rules, and structures serve the *sacramentum* of the Church and bear fruit (*res*) in the lived realities of the People of God. It can be laid out as per the diagram: a matrix with vertical and horizontal axes, with evaluation indices; the vertical gives a scoring on the deepening of *Identity* and *Praxis*, while the horizontal captures the growth in *Communion* and *Discipleship*.

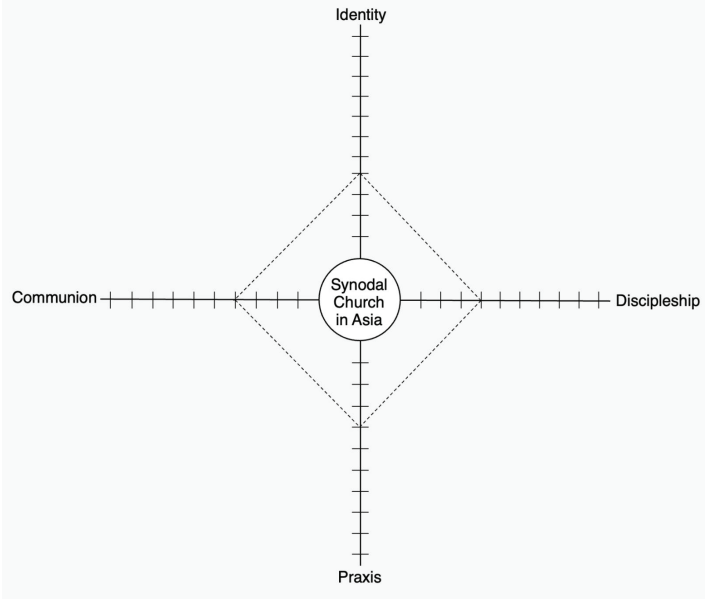


Diagram 5: Evaluation Matrix for Synodal Church

"A Change is Gonna Come"

One of the most popular songs by a black American songwriter-singer was titled "*A Change is Gonna Come*" by Sam Cooke.[54] He wrote

[53] Josef Sayers, FABC Pp 194, *Praedicate Evangelium — Development Process, Hermeneutics, and Significance for the Church*, p.10.

[54] Listen to the song, "A Change is Gonna Come," *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEBlaMOmKV4.

the song from his own experiences of being discriminated against and oppressed by the social structures of his time, and the apartheid regime in America (segregation of blacks & whites). Like Martin Luther King Jr, Sam Cooke was shot dead, and the courts never convicted the killer. His song became the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. He sings with hope that one day, surely, change is coming. We are invited to sing and to work for renewal with that same hope.

The words of Pope Francis, "I dream of a missionary option that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything…" (EG 264), and "I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security" (EG 27), sings a similar song. Only by dreaming can we become prophets of a future not our own. Only by risking will we learn and trace the new pathways of mission and synodality for the Church and humanity in Asia in the 21st century. More than ever, Mother Church needs our prophetic *munera.*

From knowing, we are invited to step into the unknowing so that we may come to know in new ways; from control and domination, we are asked to let go so we can receive everything anew as a gift. There is a paschal mystery, a *kenosis* or emptying, that we are invited to live as *missionary disciples* of Jesus:

> Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties […] Jesus calls us, as he did the rich man in the Gospel, to empty ourselves, to free ourselves from all that is worldly, including our inward-looking and outworn pastoral models; and to ask ourselves what it is that God wants to say to us in this time and the direction in which he wants to lead us.[55]
>
> For 'Every new step in the life of the church is a return to the source.'[56]

[55] Pope Francis, *Homily at the Opening Mass for the Synod on Synodality, in St. Peter's Basilica,* Rome, Homilies 10 October 2021. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2021/documents/20211010-omelia-sinodo-vescovi.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

[56] This opening line from the Final document of the Synod echoes the Second Vatican Council's claim that "Every renewal of the church essentially consists

APPENDIX 1: Proposed Roles & Interactions of the Various Offices

Here is a brief description of proposed structures and roles, explaining how various entities in the FABC structure interact in practice (This may not be exhaustive):

1. **Asian Synodal Council** (Bishops, Clergy, Religious, Laity)
    - *Role:* The main synodal governance body, ensuring prophetic listening, shared discernment, and co-responsibility.
    - *Interaction:*
        - Studies-reflects on various inputs from regional hubs, councils, and forums.
        - Proposes policies and initiatives to the FABC Plenary Assembly.(The plenary report of the Asian Synodal Council is more than 'merely consultative'.
        - Oversees alignment of mission priorities with local realities.
2. **FABC Assembly** (Bishops' Conferences)
    - *Role:* The highest deliberative body, setting overall direction for the Church in Asia, and walking with their peoples.
    - *Interaction:*
        - Mandates and commissions members of the Asian Synodal Council and receives regular reports from it.
        - Extends pastoral support to various offices, networks, and initiatives; and
        - Implements the FABC vision in their local contexts.

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in an increase of fidelity to her own calling" (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 6). (Cf. Daniel Ang, *Catholic Weekly*.)

- The FABC Central Committee continues to play its coordinating role. (It could be open to non-bishops by invitation.)
- FABC Central Secretariat is at the service of both the Asian Synodal Council and the FABC Central Committee.

3. **Sub-Regional Hubs** (South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, etc.)

- *Role:* Decentralized hubs ensuring cultural and contextual diversity is respected, while being rooted in a shared praxis as Asian churches.
- *Interaction:*
  - Facilitate grassroots consultations.
  - Relay local pastoral needs to the Synodal Council.
  - Support formation and inter-diocesan/inter-country collaboration.
  - Helps in the alignment of mission priorities with local realities.

4.**FABC Offices** (with Commissions, Task Force)

- *Role:* Driving the vision and mandate of the FABC, supporting local Conferences and the entire People of God in their care.
- *Interaction:*
  - Facilitate cross-sector and expert consultations.
  - Develop plans, programs, and budgets in alignment with the overarching vision and mission of the FABC
    - Accountable for the implementation of its mandate and activities

5. **Issue-Based Task Forces** (Migration, Climate, Digital, Dialogue, etc.)
    - *Role:* Flexible, time-bound teams responding to urgent missionary challenges.
    - *Interaction:*
        - Report findings and proposals to the respective Office and subsequent reports for the Asian Synodal Council.
        - Collaborate with grassroots Networks for real-world insights.
        - Help articulate the voices of vulnerable people and the local church with civil bodies and authorities.
6. **Lay & Women's Council**
    - *Role:* Permanent advisory body with changing membership to ensure lay co-responsibility and women's leadership.
    - *Interaction:*
        - Provides perspective directly to the Regional Hubs and Synodal Council.
        - Partners with the Synod Research & Formation Centre for leadership development.
7. **Youth Synodal Forum**
    - *Role:* Standing structure to keep youth voices continuously engaged.
    - *Interaction:*
        - Supports and promotes new initiatives and collaboration of the young across Asia

- Consists of persons from lay movements, congregations, and diocese offices.
- Collaborates with Regional Hubs to gather youth concerns.
- Works closely with the Synod Research & Formation Centre for youth formation programs.

8. **Grassroots Networks** (Base communities, parishes, movements)

- *Role:* Foundation of synodality—ensuring lived experience informs leadership.
- *Interaction:*
  - As a network to be a 'pulse-point' for the *sensus fidei.*
  - Provide bottom-up feedback to Task Forces and Regional Hubs.
  - Help channel innovations and good local practices to be studied continentally.

9. **Synodal Research & Formation Centre/s**

- *Role:* A continental think tank and program developer, in network with sub-regional training hubs
- *Interaction:*
  - Receives and synthesizes insights from the forums, hubs, and networks.
  - Develops resources for synodal leadership, interreligious dialogue, and pathways for mission.
  - Feedback on research, training, and best practices to the Synodal Council and Assembly.

APPENDIX 2 – Review of Structures and Ecclesial Alignment

The grouping below helps us keep-in-view the various dimensions of Christian life and ministry and check if our efforts and offices are offering a more integrated and holistic approach to being and becoming a synodal church in Asia. It can be used as a tool for annual review-reflection.

I. Spiritual–Sacramental Grounding *(Who we are in Christ – Identity)*

CRITERION	KEY DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS	ECCLESIAL ALIGNMENT	REFLECTION
SACRAMENTAL MISSION	*How does this structure arise from and serve the sacramentality of the Church in the world?*	*Lumen Gentium* (LG) 1, 11 (Church as sacrament); FABC 50 (BD 1): journey begins from encounter with Christ.	
SPIRITUAL CENTRALITY	*Are prayer, worship, and spiritual conversation integral to planning, meetings, and review processes?*	*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10; Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG 262); (BD 4): discernment rooted in prayer.	

II. Discernment of Lived Realities
(Reading the signs of the times – Praxis)

CRITERION	KEY DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS	ECCLESIAL ALIGNMENT	REFLECTION
PASTORAL FRUITS	*Does this structure lead to deeper participation, stronger formation, greater charity, care for creation, and empowerment of the baptised?* *Does it help our people grow in relation to people of neighbouring faiths and be an inculturated church?*	LG 33, mission of all baptised; EG 24, Church which goes forth; BD 62: engagement with emerging realities and neighbour faiths.	

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR	*Does this structure concretely help the Church walk with the poor, the wounded, and the marginalised?*	LG 8b; EG 198–201; BD 1, 4, 141: Church walking with Asian peoples... for the Kingdom of God.	

III. Synodal Configuration of Structures

(How we walk together – Communion)

CRITERION	KEY DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS	ECCLESIAL ALIGNMENT	REFLECTION
SUBSIDIARITY & CO-RESPONSIBILITY	*Does the structure decentralise authority and foster shared discernment among the People of God?*	LG 30–38; Pope Francis, Address 17 Oct 2015 (Synodality); BD 16: listening and shared responsibility	
TIME OVER SPACE (ADAPTABILITY)	*Is the structure open to change, experimentation, and learning, or does it exist mainly to preserve itself?*	EG 222–223; BD part 5, esp. 156-157: new pathways and pastoral flexibility.	
SYNODAL LEADERSHIP	*Are leaders appointed with a clear mandate to serve communion, participation, and mission – rather than control?*	LG 27; EG 24; *Praedicate Evangelium* 1, 4, 11, 12: reform & service; BD 117: leadership as service.	

IV. Sustainability, Formation, and Accountability
(Conversion over time – Discipleship)

CRITERION	KEY DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS	ECCLESIAL ALIGNMENT	REFLECTION
FORMATION AS CONSTITUTIVE	*Do office bearers undergo ongoing formation with the People of God in theology, pastoral realities, and synodal practice? Are we missionary disciples?*	LG 12 *sensus fidei*; *Christus Vivit* 239; BD 6, 8, 15, 150: conversion of structures and the ways of ministry.	
TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY	*Is it publicly clear why the structure exists, who it serves, how it is evaluated, and when reform or closure may be needed?*	EG 27: missionary option, EG 95: spiritual worldliness; BD 149, 157-162: credibility, trust, and shared responsibility.	

The final integrative Discernment Question remains:

Does this structure help the Church become more clearly a sacrament of communion, a synodal People of God, and a Church of the poor in Asia?

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ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH MYSTAGOGY

Roberto Ma. R. Buenconsejo, SJ

Abstract. Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual progress unfolded as a transformative mystagogical journey shaped by two decisive conversions that prepared him for the illuminative stage and unitive life. His first conversion followed the battle of Pamplona, when he turned from a sinful past toward an initial desire to follow Christ to Jerusalem. This conversion, however, remained marked by narcissism and externalism. A second and more radical conversion occurred in Manresa, involving the purification of his self-propelled perfectionism. During this period, Ignatius entered the purgative stage through active asceticism and a painful passive purification characterized by scrupulosity and deep depression rooted in the persistent memory of past sins. In this period, he confronted his inner demons and came to recognize that spiritual growth was not self-achieved but initiated by God. Gradually, Ignatius moved into the illuminative stage, gaining clarity of vision and discernment, and eventually into a mystical stage marked by inner visions and union with the Divine. Throughout this journey, he was driven by his zeal "to help souls" and a desire to do so "in poverty and humility." His sanctity matured through a kenotic life of self-abnegation and the mortification of his will and passions, enabling deeper devotion and union with the Divine Persons.

Keywords: mystagogy; purgative; illuminative; unitive

Introduction

The word "mystagogy" means "initiation into the mysteries." It comes from two Greek root words: "*mystos,*" which refers to mysteries, and "*agia*," the substantive of the word "*ago,*" which means "to lead into." The word "*mysterio*" refers to "that which is secret or hidden," which in turn comes from the verb "*myo*," which means "to keep the eyes and lips closed." In the Hellenic world, the mystagogues were priests who initiated people into mystical experiences through rituals.[1]

In the Church's sacramental language, the word "mystagogy" is employed by the first Christians who called the sacraments "*mysteria*." The sacraments of initiation, Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are the paths through which Christians are introduced into the deifying Christic experience and the Christian community. Perhaps the most significant of the writings among the Church Fathers that employed the term *mystagogia* was Cyril of Jerusalem. In his mystagogic catecheses, he explained the sacraments as the *mysteria* of initiation of the Church.[2]

Ignatius himself traversed a personal mystagogy, with God's gentle Spirit accompanying him into the depths of his darkest "inferno," only to emerge into a life of illumination, and leading him into a life of profound familiarity and union with God. His mystagogical journey commenced with an unexpected twist—an apparent setback and somber descent into ignominy. In his mystagogy, he traversed a kenotic experience, characterized by a painful purification, until he was led into a divinizing[3] mystical union with God, which granted him the gift of finding God in all things.

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[1] Javier Melloni, S.J. *La Mistagogía de los Ejercicios* (Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero and Santander: Editorial Sal Terrae, 2001), 21-22.

[2] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 21-22.

[3] The term "divinization" refers to the transforming effect of grace on us, allowing us to participate in the divine life of the Trinity. Divinization as the process of transformation of individuals does not alter human nature. Even as our nature is elevated, we do not become gods. We are not divine by nature in

Initial Transformation of a Soldier's Imaginations and Introspections

Ignatius had two conversions: the first was in Loyola after the battle at Pamplona, and the second was in Manresa. The first conversion occurred on account of having been wounded at a battle in Pamplona, where his leg was hit by a cannonball. Being a vain man, he was displeased by the fact that his right leg was shorter than his left; thus the gruesome intervention of pulling this leg. During his months of immobility, Ignatius, who had been attached to the vainglory and pleasures of the world, was able to look deeply into himself. This first fire was his initial conversion that ignited his desire for Christ. The second conversion, a second fire that purified him of his narcissistic ego, occurred in the town of Manresa, where his profound spiritual experiences radically transformed him from a self-propelled to a Spirit-led man.

While recuperating at his castle in Loyola, he read two books, the *Flos Sanctorum* (The Golden Legend) by Ludolph of Saxony and the *Vita Christi* (Life of Christ), both of which provoked the movement of imagination and introspection.[4] During his convalescence, he also noticed a shift in interior feelings, which he later named "consolation" and "desolation." While imagining great deeds of preaching like Dominic and living in poverty like Francis, he would feel deeply peaceful and joyful. On the other hand, while musing on thoughts of chivalry, conquests, and romance, he would feel dry and empty after the exhilarating daydreaming.[5] This sharp contrast of feelings directed

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the way that the Second Person of the Trinity is. We are invited to cooperate with the divine, to the point where a deepening transformation occurs in us and thus become deified.

[4] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 31-32.

[5] "The Autobiography," in *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, George Ganss, S.J., ed; with collaboration of Parmananda R. Divarkar, S.J., Edward J. Malatesta, S.J., and Martin E. Palmer, S.J.; prefaced by John W. Padberg, S.J. (New York & Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991). Henceforth, referred to as "Auto," followed by the paragraph number.

his first election: a radical conversion from his former life of conquest and vanity to that of a poor pilgrim.

His months of convalescence at Loyola were his initial conversion – and as such, it was inchoate and in need of deeper purification, which would occur later. His initial conversion was characterized by narcissism and externalism. Ignatius was still focused on himself, his idealized self-image, and projections, in a way that he was excited about his "new and improved self." He had an obsession with performing great acts and focused on himself and his dreams, a notch higher than his former desires to conquer women and the world. His self-dialogue was a projection of what he wanted for his brand-new self, rather than the outcome of seeking the will of God for him. "(He) would stop and think, reasoning with himself: How would it be if I did what St. Francis did and that which St. Dominic did?"[6] He was burning with generous desires; however, they were blind, self-centered, and impulsive – his narcissism was still deeply entrenched in his consciousness. Furthermore, the conversion was still largely external as he wanted to leave for the Holy Land, a geographic site of his pilgrimage, but not the permanent internal disposition of seeking and actualizing God's most holy will. His idea of pilgrimage was spatial rather than internal, and a permanent movement of decentering as the means of uniting oneself with God. Much later, the old Ignatius would call himself a pilgrim, but one who had truly found himself in God,[7] united with the divine after having been thoroughly purified by his kenotic journey.

Nevertheless, God was transforming Ignatius through these external means – his wound, the long months of convalescence, the readings, *Flos Sanctorum* and the *Vita Christi*, and his introspection and self-dialogue. Although they were still ambivalent and self-centered, his libidinal desires were initially being redirected from what was sinful and worldly to an inchoate religious longing.

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[6] *Auto.*, no. 7.

[7] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 33-34.

Convalescing at Loyola, Ignatius also considered entering the Carthusians of Seville after his planned pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The passion for contemplation was driven by a desire to immerse himself in the transfigured humanity of Christ through the senses of the body and soul. Although his dream to become a monk never materialized, his affection for the Carthusians remained. As soon as Ignatius had recuperated and sold his properties, he embarked on his pilgrimage, the itinerary of which included the Benedictine monastery, the closest he could get to his desired contemplative life. At the Abbey of Montserrat, he spent three days in preparation for a general confession, the first exercise that the Abbot recommended to anyone before embarking on a spiritual journey. He then exchanged his clothes for a beggar's sackcloth and held an overnight vigil before Our Lady to whom he offered his sword.[8]

When Ignatius set foot in Montserrat on March 22, 1522, he was aware that he could not delay his journey to Barcelona if he had to reach Rome, which issued pilgrimage permits to the Holy Land only once a year on Easter Monday. Since Easter Monday that year fell on April 20, Ignatius had less than a month to travel to Rome for the permit. The *Autobiography* mentions that the entourage of the new Spanish Pope, Hadrian VI, was passing through Catalonia, which meant that his old friends from the Court of Arevalo in Barcelona could easily recognize the begging pilgrim as the courtier from Loyola. Avoiding the awkward situation of being recognized by the aristocrats who knew him, Ignatius decided to postpone his trip to Barcelona, which meant delaying his pilgrimage to the Holy Land for a year.[9]

Not being able to lodge at the Abbey of Montserrat, Ignatius proceeded to Manresa, a town that nestled at the foot of the serrated mountains on March 25, 1522, and lodged at the Hospital de Sta. Lucia for free. The setback was providential for the pilgrim since it afforded him more time to pray, journalize his spiritual experiences, seek spiritual direction with Dom Chanon, and read the *Compendio Breve de Ejercicios*

[8] See *Auto.*, nos. 11-14 and nos. 17-18.

[9] See *Auto.*, no. 18.

Espirituales, an anonymous summary of Dom Cisneros' *Ejercitatorio de la Vida Espiritual*, a synthesis of the best of the one thousand years of monastic tradition and of the great spiritual masters. The *Compendio* was organized by weeks, with seven hours of prayer each day; hence, when Ignatius wrote in his *Autobiography* that he prayed seven hours a day, he was referring to mental prayer and the meditation on the antiphons which guided the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways. He practiced the monastic prayers recommended in the *Compendio*, even as he was receiving guidance from Dom Chanon. Indeed, Ignatius' link to the monastery was not simply devotional, but much more extensive.[10] In Manresa, Ignatius was able to note down ideas from the *Compendio,* which Dom Chanon handed over to him.

Two Stages of Purification in Manresa

Manresa was a kenotic mystagogical experience for Ignatius as he peregrinated for two periods in his spiritual journey there. These two stages were the active purification, which was preparatory, enthusiastic, and peaceful, in which Ignatius embraced some of the practices of the eremitical life; then a second stage of passive purgation, which was marked by a depressive scrupulosity.

The Stage of Enthusiasm or Active Purification

The first stage was the enthusiastic period[11] when Ignatius felt reborn and full of zeal. He was filled with love and devotion as he embarked on his newfound life in the Lord, "even though he had no knowledge of spiritual matters, yet in his speech he revealed great fervor and eagerness to go forward in God's service."[12] The enthusiastic, purgative stage began in Montserrat, when he made his general confession with Dom Chanon, for which he had prepared for three days. Once he settled in Manresa, he focused on the elements

[10] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 35-36.

[11] *Auto*., nos. 19-21.

[12] *Auto*., no. 21.

of a hermit's life, the primitive mystagogical stage of his spiritual life. This primitive and eremitical life was influenced by his immersion in the Abbey of Montserrat, where he was exposed to the solitary life of the monks, literally following the liturgical hours of the monastery. This eremitical life was also influenced by his conversations with the Prior of San Pablo, who had formed a group of hermits, praying in *La Cova*, the cave where Ignatius stayed for four months. In the *Autobiography*, he narrates that he spent seven hours on his knees, "getting up regularly at midnight."[13] Ignatius used the guidelines for praying the seven hours as presented in the *Compendio,* which instructs the practice of mental prayer.[14] With this increasing intensification of prayer, he engaged in severe penitential practices, letting his hair and nails grow.[15] The guidelines in the *Compendio* reinforced his intense desire for prayer and solitude. The following condensed text, essential in monastic mystagogy, was given to Ignatius:

> Those who are dedicated to the service of God and called to a particular vocation by His Majesty (…) are promised more particular gifts. He has segregated them from the world, enclosed them in their houses, freed them from the noise and turmoil of their confusion, and removed them from many occasions of offending him, placing them in spaces of peace and quiet where they can correct their past lives through penance and compunction; so that they can give thanks for these countless benefits, so that by considering his perfections and wonders through the exercise of contemplation they may become one in spirit with him through love and attain true wisdom (…) He has separated them from the quarrelsome and bothersome affairs of the world, so that all their activities would consist in contemplating and pondering that God is the infinite Good whom they ought to love.[16]

[13] *Auto*., nos. 25 and 26.

[14] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 38.

[15] See *Auto*., no. 19.

[16] "*Los que son dedicados al servicio de Dios y llamados de su Majestad con particular voccación (…) les promete dones más particulares, [a los] que ha segregado del mundo, encerrado en su casa, librado de los estruendos y tumultos de su confusión , y quitándoles muchas ocasiones de le ofender, poniendolos en lugar de paz y de quietud, adonde puedan corregir su vida pasada, por la penitencia y compunción; para que de los innumerables beneficios le den gracias, y para*

In the text above, the three classic ways of the spiritual life are sketched:

First, the *via purgativa* is reflected in the words, "where they can correct their past lives through penance and compunction;"

Second, the *via illuminativa*: "so that they can give thanks for these countless benefits"; and

Third, the *via unitiva*: "so that by considering his perfections and wonders through the exercise of contemplation they may become one in spirit with him through love and attain true wisdom."

The pilgrim had begun the kenotic *via purgativa* when he confessed his sins to Dom Chanon in the Monastery of Montserrat, and the months thereafter when he practiced severe penances. The *Autobiography* narrates that initially, he felt "the same interior state of the very steady joy, without having any knowledge of the interior things of the spirit."[17]

He would be so astounded by the changes that transpired, gradually transforming him in a kenotic and divinizing process. Previously, he had said that "Our Lord dealt with his soul, which was still blind, though greatly desirous of serving him as far as his knowledge went …. but not looking at any interior thing, nor knowing what humility was or charity or patience, or the discretion that regulates and measures these virtues."[18]

He had only an undiscerned passion, such as desiring to kill a Muslim for questioning the post-partum virginity of Mary, on his way

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que, consideradas sus perfecciones y maravillas por el ejercicio de la contemplación, se hagan por amor un solo espiritu con Él y alcanzar la verdadera sabiduría (…) Los apartó de los bulliciosos y enojosos negocios del mundo, [para que] toda su ocupación sea en contemplar y pensar que Él es Bien infinito a quien han de amar" from an Unknown 16th Century Monk of Montserrat, *Compendio Breve de Ejercicios Espirituales, Melloni,* ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2006), nos. 2, 3, and 4, pp. 5-6, quoted in Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 38.

[17] *Auto*., no. 19.

[18] *Auto*., no 14.

to Montserrat.[19] Clearly, he had not yet been purified of his aggressive ego; he had only shifted the direction of his energies. Ignatius was still very much a haughty *hidalgo,* and his impulse was to fight for honor;[20] as such, his narcissistic aggression still had to be purged. He had not yet resolved his inner conflict; thus, his infantile solution: "being tired of examining what would be best to do…, he decided as follows: to let the mule go with the reins slack as far as the place where the ways parted. And if the mule took the village road, he would seek out the Moor and stab him; if the mule did not go toward the village but took the highway, he would let him be."[21] Providentially, "the mule took the highway and left the village road."[22] Ignatius still had a long way to go in the mystagogy where he would begin to discover that in the life of the spirit, one does not grab; one lets go and allows oneself to be seized by the Spirit. He had to realize that one does not lead but is led by the Spirit; one does not take the initiative,[23] but is led into a kenotic process by God's initiative.

Although this stage was enthusiastic, active purgation was also occurring in Ignatius. According to the *Autobiography*, the first temptation he experienced was depression as a result of the evil spirit's taunt, "How will you be able to endure this life for the seventy years you have to live?" He immediately overcame the thought and remained at peace by retorting, "Wretch! Can you promise me an hour of life?"[24] Then he experienced strong alternating movements of consolation and desolation which came and went without his knowing how: "Sometimes he felt so out of sorts that he found no relish in saying prayers nor in hearing Mass nor in any other devotion he might practice. At other

[19] See *Auto*., nos. 15-16.

[20] William W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., *Ignatius of Loyola, The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 61-62.

[21] *Auto*., no. 16.

[22] *Auto*., no. 16.

[23] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 39.

[24] *Auto*., no. 20.

times, quite the opposite of this came over him so suddenly that he seemed to have thrown off sadness and desolation just as one snatches a cape from another's shoulders…perturbed by these changes that he had never experienced before…he said to himself, 'What new life is this that we are now beginning?'"[25] Unbeknownst to him, he was gradually entering the passive *via purgativa* – this time, not in the way he had chosen—enthusiastic and eremitical—but one in which he had to be led. He was being directed into a kenotic dark night, into a descent into his "inferno," which corresponds to the second stage of the initiatory movement of purgation, which follows.

Kenotic Passive Purification

This second stage of *via purgativa* was an experience of great depression[26] when his subconscious was being opened to God's mystery, and he realized that his spiritual progress was not a matter of self-determination. He experienced that he was no longer master of himself, and the narcissistic stage of his spiritual journey was being painfully purified. The purgative process turned for the worse, especially when he started comparing his ego ideal with the reality of his past life, and he was incessantly haunted by his oppressive guilt. This passive purification in which he found himself helpless was to become more arduous and extreme as he combatted against his scruples. It was most likely that Ignatius' scruples were stirred by the *Compendio*'s spiritual exercises on the *via purgativa,* which proposed an extensive meditation on one's sins[27] where there is a fostering of fear for the consequences of personal sins: death, judgment, and hell, [28] employing examples of Lucifer, and Adam and Eve,[29] interjecting the

[25] *Auto*., no. 21.

[26] See *Auto*., nos. 22-26.

[27] *Compendio,* nos. 20-33, cited in *Mistagogía*, 40.

[28] See *Compendio*, nos. 28-32; and 49-85, cited in *Mistagogía*, 40.

[29] See *Compendio*, nos. 27; 37-48, cited in *Mistagogía*, 40.

passion and death of the Lord.[30] In the *Compendio*, Ignatius could have pondered on these points:

> Consider and ponder the multitude and gravity of the sins you committed before your conversion; these cry out to God, demanding your chastisement, because through them you offended your Creator, and through this ingratitude, you have crucified him one more time. [31]
>
> Consider how little you have made satisfaction for them and how small your contrition has been, seeing how ugly, how stupid, and prejudiced they have been to you and your neighbors.[32]
>
> Consider and be assured that in this life you will pay for them in full, until you have paid for them with your last money.[33]

Alas, the glaring contrast between the reality of his sinfulness and his identification with St. Onofre, his idealized self, and his extreme scrupulosity led him to suicidal ideation. In all this, Ignatius' narcissistic desires and egoistic will were being excruciatingly stripped from him in his purgative experience of *kénosis*. The *Autobiography* narrates that Ignatius suspected that he had made a bad confession in Montserrat. Consequently, he confessed repeatedly what he feared he had not confessed previously, and still, he would not be at peace.[34] This anguish lasted for months as his past sins repeatedly hounded him, leaving him in great torment. Sigmund Freud would have commented that Ignatius' superego was harsh and severe and had turned against his ego. The

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[30] *Compendio*, nos.33; 52; 46; 63; 73; 86-116, cited in *Mistagogía*, 40.

[31] "*Piensa y pondera la muchedumbre y gravedad de tus pecados antes de tu conversión cometidos; los cuales dan voces a Dios demandando castigo, pues por ellos ofendiste a tu Criador, y por el desagradecimiento, otra vez lo tornaste a crucificar*" from *Compendio*, no. 42, quoted in Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 40.

[32] "*Piensa cuán poco has satisfecho por ellos, y cuán pequeña ha sido tu contrición, siendo ellos tan feos, tan torpes y tan perjudiciales a ti y a tus prójimos*" from *Compendio,* no. 43, quoted in Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 40.

[33] "*Piensa y ten por cierto que en esta vida o en la otra lo has de pagar, hasta el postrero dinero*" from *Compendio*, no. 44, quoted in Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 40.

[34] *Auto*., no. 24.

Jesuit psychiatrist, William Meissner, suggests that the punitive demands that lay behind his scrupulous obsessions were possibly the result of "superego regression," punishing his ego for his self-centeredness, which still remained in him.[35] The shadows of his sins and the scars of his past and the intensity of his unrelenting culpability drove him to the brink of suicide: "the temptation often came over him with great force to throw himself through a large hole in his room, next to the place (a small room that the Dominicans had given him in their monastery) where he was praying.[36] The destructive forces of his superego unleashed in this self-annihilating process emanated from his aggression, which had been effectively sublimated by his ego ideal[37] during the earlier, enthusiastic stage of the mystagogy.

There was nothing that could alleviate his passive night of the spirit—indeed, the pilgrim experienced a kenotic mystagogy during this second phase of the purgative period. He was brought to a radical awareness of his spiritual poverty, no longer the newly converted warrior who thought he could manipulate God with his prayer and fasting. Indeed, he was being purified of unconscious forces from which he could not liberate himself without de-centering and abandoning himself completely to God. "Although he was practically convinced that those scruples did him much harm and that it would be good to be rid of them, he could not break himself off."[38] Ignatius was utterly helpless.

His ego-ideal in his early enthusiastic stage—expressed in his arrogant proclamation in the days of his convalescence, "St. Dominic did this, therefore I have to do it; St. Francis did this, therefore I have to do it"[39] and in the early days in Manresa, "when it occurred to him

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[35] Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint*, 74 and 75.

[36] *Auto*., nos. 23 and 24.

[37] Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint*, 76.

[38] *Auto*., no. 22.

[39] *Auto*., no. 7.

to do some penance that the saints practiced, he determined to do the same and even more"[40]—has crumbled in the face of the poignant and painful revelation of his unconscionable past. The impulses of his will—the attainment of sanctity out of sheer will—have been rendered futile and powerless. God was teaching Ignatius that to reach Him, the only route was self-dispossession: not knowing,[41] not controlling, not conquering.

Once in great distress, he wished he could follow a puppy[42]– a point where he reached utter humility and the beginning of liberation. In his extreme austerity and ascetical practices, he started imagining meat, which was an invitation for him to stop pushing himself to his ascetical limits, an experience similar to Acts 10: 9-16—Peter's vision of the fowls and birds and the Lord's mandate, "What God has made clean, you are not to call profane (v. 15). This second stage of depression was a mystagogy to surrender, humility, and freedom. It is precisely in this limit of abasement, having been drained of his narcissistic ego, that the Lord could begin revealing Himself to him clearly. The *Autobiography* chronicles that

> the Lord deigned that he wake as from sleep…(and) he began to examine the means by which that spirit had come. He thus decided with great lucidity not to confess anything from the past anymore; and so from that day forward he remained free of those scruples and held it for certain that Our Lord had mercifully deigned to deliver him.[43]

Ignatius' experience of liberation from "hell" is reflected in the exercise at the end of the *First Week* when an exercitant cries an "exclamation of wonder and surging emotion, uttered as I reflect on all creatures and wonder how they have allowed me to live and have preserved me in life" (*Sp.Ex.*, no. 60). Liberated from the ghosts of his past and deeply in touch with his spiritual poverty and his absolute

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[40] *Auto*., no. 14.

[41] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 41.

[42] *Auto*., no. 22.

[43] *Auto*. no. 25.

dependence on God, the illuminative stage of his mystagogy has commenced.[44] The kenotic movement of his dark night of the soul had paved the way to a deepening divinization.

The Stage of Liberation or Illumination

What followed the purgative stage was the mystical stage of inner visions when Ignatius was filled with the presence of the Lord. As the passive purgative stage, the illuminative stage likewise occurred in Manresa. He felt like a child being taught by his schoolmaster[45] and no longer the proud man arguing with the Muslim about the eternal virginity of Mary.[46] The divine Teacher was illuminating him internally about the essence of the Trinity, his creative energy, his presence in the humanity of Christ, and the ultimate end of things.

Mystical Invasions in Manresa

Joseph de Guibert remarks that the mystical visions of Ignatius are characterized by a great poverty of imaginative elements and the richness and importance of the contents that Ignatius attributed to them thirty years later. Ignatius' visions are internal, which profoundly impacted his understanding and greatly moved him, rather than the powerful, external images that he saw outside of him. The graces that Ignatius received from internal visions from the time of Manresa were "eminent intellectual lights." The poor "symbolic images" that he recorded were reactions to these divinely infused "eminent intellectual lights". Ignatius seems to invite us to delve into the deep interpretation of the "symbolic images"[47] rather than be caught up with the images in themselves. His mystical visions pointed to eternal truths about the

[44] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 42.

[45] See *Auto*., no. 27.

[46] See *Auto*., nos. 15-16.

[47] Joseph De Guibert, S.J., *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice* (St. Louis, MI: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1964), 31-32.

Trinity, the Triune God's eternal plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, and how we are incorporated into God's salvific plan.

Ignatius had five mystical understandings in Manresa: his inner understanding of the Holy Trinity; his understanding through a vision of creation; his inner understanding of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist; his inner understanding of the humanity of Christ; and his vision at the river Cardoner.[48] The first four understandings could have made him an *alumbrado,* having had no formal education – but in the *Autobiography* he confessed that even if the Sacred Scriptures did not exist, he was willing to die for the truth of his personal experiences: "These things he saw strengthened him then and always gave him such strength in his faith that he has often thought to himself: If there were no Scriptures to teach us these matters of faith, he would be resolved to die for them, solely because of what he has seen."[49]

The most significant of the five mystical experiences was at Cardoner, also referred to as *eximia ilustracion* (profound enlightenment):

> Once, he was going out of devotion to a church situated a little more than a mile from Manresa; I believe it is called St. Paul's, and the road goes by a river. As he went along, occupied with his devotions, he sat down for a little while with his face toward the river, which ran down below. While he was seated there, the eyes of understanding began to be opened; not that he saw any vision, but he understood and learnt many things, both spiritual matters and matters of faith and of scholarship, and this with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him.
>
> [Camara]: This left his understanding so very enlightened that he felt as if he were another man with another mind.[50]

In his whole life, Ignatius never received an interior enlightenment so powerful and decisive as the "single stroke with lights equally abundant…and with supernatural insights equally comprehensive" at

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[48] See *Auto.*, nos. 28 to 30.

[49] *Auto.*, no. 29, 4 (fourth point).

[50] *Auto.*, no. 30, 5.

the banks of Cardoner[51] It was from this mystical space that he would understand everything and would shed light on very important matters in his life and the life of the Society of Jesus in the future.

There is no way of knowing what specifically was revealed to Ignatius at Cardoner. However, since the time of this internal vision, Ignatius moved on from an eremitical life[52] to one that was more balanced and apostolic, and yet deeply rooted in this mystical experience at Cardoner, such that Nadal said that at Cardoner "Ignatius understood all things with an elevated clarity and light, to which he would later refer when giving the rationale of things when asked about them, whether it was about the Society or other spiritual matters."[53]

The Cardoner enlightenment gifted Ignatius with an internal transformation of perceiving reality; from thereon, everything appeared to him in a new light such that "This was such that in the whole course of his life, after completing sixty-two years, even if he gathered up all the various helps he may have had from God and all the various things he has known, even adding them all together, he does not think he had got as much as at that one time."[54] The experience was apophatic in the sense that he understood many things and was granted a new way of seeing; however, he could not articulate these realities in propositional truths or statements. The mystical experience was not external, such as his vision of Our Lady in Loyola.[55]

Rather, he was inside the mystical experience and not outside of it. He had a cosmic understanding of realities – including matters of the

[51] De Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, 40.

[52] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 45.

[53] On p. 45 of Mistagogía, Melloni quotes Nadal from Fontes Narrativi (FN) II, *Pláticas de Coímbra*, pp. 152-153: Ignacio "*entendió [alli] todas las cosas en una claridad y luz muy subida, a lo cual se solía referir después dando razón de las cosas que acontecía demandarle, ansí de la Compañía, como otras espirituales.*"

[54] *Auto*., no. 30, 5.

[55] See *Auto*., no. 10.

faith, such as the Trinity, spiritual and scholarly matters. This profound mystical experience at Cardoner not only radically changed his horizon of experiencing, understanding, and thinking, but was a turning point for Ignatius as he had begun to be completely open to mystical realities and therefrom received the grace of finding God in all things.

From the perspective of the mystagogy that Ignatius was undergoing, the *Autobiography* describes that "God treated him at this time just as a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching."[56] To be initiated into the mystagogical journey is to take the stance of a pupil—humble, willing, eager, and obedient. This mystagogy into mystery can only occur if one possesses a disposition to receive God's word – *via passiva*. In the first months of Ignatius in Loyola, he was still too independent and self-focused, so it was not possible for him to receive without reserve. The initial conversion that occurred in Loyola was powerful and even gifted him with the freedom from his sexual disorders through a vision of the Mother and Child.[57] But the import of this vision dawned on him much later, when he was being purified of his narcissism, and the memory of his past sins was being healed through the kenotic journey he went through in Manresa. Indeed, Ignatius had to go through a mystagogical process that necessarily went through the dark night of the soul before he entered the stage of illumination.

It has been said above that Ignatius had absolute certitude of the authenticity of his mystical experiences, such as the internal vision of the humanity of Christ which "strengthened him then and always gave him such strength in his faith that he has often thought to himself: If there were no Scriptures to teach us these matters of faith, he would be resolved to die for them, solely because of what he has seen."[58] At this juncture, the mystic is one who has been led by God himself into His mystery and radically transformed by what had

[56] *Auto*., no. 27.

[57] See *Auto*., no. 10.

[58] *Auto*., no. 29, 4.

been unveiled to him. He was transformed into a witness of what he had been led by God to see. Ignatius thus gained a certainty that God directly communicated with each person who dispossessed himself for a mystagogical encounter.[59] We thus see Ignatius's assertion of his experience in his instruction to the facilitator of the *Spiritual Exercises*: "leave the Creator to act immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord."[60]

Transformative Effects of the Mystagogy on Ignatius

Ignatius had thus entered the *via illuminativa* and the **beginnings** of the *via unitiva* in the mystagogy that God was leading him into, understanding the mysteries clearly, even if he could not articulate them. He was able to comprehend God's act of creation: "the manner in which God had created the world was presented to his understanding with great spiritual joy."[61] He was able to see clearly the presence of Christ in the Eucharist: "although he cannot explain this very well after so long a time, nevertheless, what he saw clearly with his understanding was how Jesus Christ our Lord was there in that Most Holy Sacrament."[62] And at Cardoner, his "eyes of understanding began to be opened; not that he saw any vision, but he understood and learnt many things, both spiritual matters and matters of faith and of scholarship, and this with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed to be new to him."[63] The clarity with which he was able to see and understand these great mysteries indicated that he had veritably penetrated the illuminative stage and, at the same time, his mystical knowledge had awakened; thus transforming him into a person in the process of uniting oneself with the Beloved. Ignatius himself was being divinized by the transformative experience.

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[59] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 45-46.

[60] *Sp.Ex.*, no. 15.

[61] *Auto.*, no. 29, 2.

[62] *Auto.*, no 29, 3.

[63] *Auto.*, no. 30, 5.

The narcissism in the newly converted Ignatius at Loyola was expunged and transformed. No longer was he the self-focused romantic, in a monologue about how to imitate the great saints[64] but one purified in the crucible of the dark night of the spirit, and now a recipient of the divinizing gift of illumination, invited by the Lord "whoever would like to come with Me is to labor with Me, that in following Me in the pain, he may also follow Me in the glory" (*Sp.Ex.* no. 95, 5). To seek God's glory marks the decentering from the search for personal glory. The glory of God will be a shared divinizing glory as it deals with an interchange between the two lovers: "love consists in interchange between the two parties; that is to say in the lover's giving and communicating to the beloved what (one) has or can; and so, on the contrary, the beloved to the lover" (*Sp.Ex.*, no. 231, 2).

Transformation also occurred in the pilgrim's view of contemplation and action. Initially, there was a divide between Ignatius' attraction to contemplating Christ and identification with his works. The mystical experiences made him realize that there was no chasm separating the two, but they were intimately linked to each other. The interior understanding of Creation and the mystical enlightenment at Cardoner showed him that the whole world was open to contemplation. The mystical experiences in Manresa presented the world as transparent to the presence of God. The pilgrim intuited that all things and situations could be occasions for profound prayer and contemplation, thereby finding God. The question was not choosing between contemplation and action; rather, the question was one's disposition and contemplative awareness of God's presence and Self-communication wherever one is.[65] Such an attitude of openness and receptivity and contemplative disposition would allow for a permanent contemplation which characterizes the Ignatian charism of being "contemplatives in action." Jerónimo Nadal believes that Ignatius' special charism was "to see and contemplate in all things, actions, and conversations the presence of

[64] See *Auto.*, no. 7.

[65] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 47-48.

God and the love of spiritual things, to remain a contemplative even amid action" (*simul in actione contemplativus*).[66]

With his mystical experiences and insight, Ignatius contributed something new to spiritual tradition; that is, the union between action in the world (beyond the monastery) and contemplation. The union is realized in seeking and performing the will of God. In life and prayer, one must search to know and accomplish God's will. The mystagogy of the *Spiritual Exercises* liberates the person from inordinate attachments, initiates the person in a loving encounter with Christ, transforms one's value system, orients it to the Kingdom, disposes the person to self-dispossession, progressively configures one to Christ and divinizes him at deeper levels, and prepares the person to discover God's unique will for him. As the pilgrim's life was marked with self-dispossession, self-knowledge, and divinizing configuration to Christ, he thus conceived the *Spiritual Exercises* for the purpose of "seeking and finding the will of God" (*Sp.Ex.*, nos. 1,4; 4,5.7; 11,2; 15,3; 16,3; 20,8; 76,1; 87,3; 189,9).

Zeal to Help Souls

In Manresa, there was no spiritual person who could assist Ignatius during his dark night of the spirit in the purgative stage; much less, during the mystical invasion of the illuminative stage, which followed. He was not able to receive any guidance from Dom Chanon at Montserrat, the Dominican confessor of the cathedral,[67] nor the prior of San Pablo, who passed on after his return from the Holy Land. Because of the dearth of spiritual masters who could have assisted him and others, Ignatius was inspired to help souls as expressed in the dictum, "*ayudar las almas*." Polanco declares, "Here, God imprinted within him a very great zeal for souls"[68] and that "he always had those

[66] On p. 45 of *The Jesuits*, de Guibert quotes Nadal from MonNad, IV, 651; *Acta quaedam*," in SdeSI, I, 472; FN, II, 123 in *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*.

[67] See *Auto.* no. 22.

[68] On p. 49 of *Mistagogía*, Melloni quotes Polanco from *Chron.*, I, 25.

desires, to pass on to his neighbor what God was giving him, finding out through experience that what he was communicating to others was not diminishing but rather growing in intensity within him. Thus, he began to give the *Spiritual Exercises* to various people while he was residing in Manresa.[69] Indeed, mysticism for Ignatius was not an end in itself but a channel for him to carry out his own service directed to the greater glory of God.[70] His profound kenotic experience and divinizing configuration to Christ sparked in Ignatius an ardent zeal to lead souls to God.

The pilgrim grew from a focus on himself and a literal imitation of the poor Christ, expressed in an eremitical lifestyle, into a constant awareness of God's presence, an attentiveness to His will, and a desire to help souls become intimate with God and discover His will. He thus cast aside severe fasting and penance, and started to eat meat and trim his hair and nails.[71] And from an exclusively eremitical and contemplative space, he moved into a burning desire to share his personal experience and the insight derived from it: God has a will for each one and each one has a personal vocation. This constituted the core of his originality and what would govern his future decisions.

Transitions and Choices the Pilgrim Elected

a. Pilgrim at a Crossroad

The pilgrim was resolute in going to the Holy Land, even after he had changed his initial plan eleven months ago on account of the nobles who could have recognized him in Barcelona. The entire Manresa experience reinforced his desire with "a great assurance in his soul which he could not doubt but gave him the conviction that

[69] On p. 49 , Melloni quotes *Fontes Narrativi*, I, 163-164.

[70] De Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, 178-179.

[71] See *Auto.*, nos. 27 & 29, 3.

he would, in fact, find a way to go to Jerusalem."[72] Even when he reached the Holy Land, "his firm intention was to remain in Jerusalem, continually visiting those holy places; and in addition to this devotion, he also planned to help souls."[73] Upon his return from the Holy Land, Ignatius was not exactly sure of what he should do: "After the pilgrim realized that it was not God's will that he remained in Jerusalem, he continually pondered within himself what he ought to do."[74] At this juncture, the pilgrim was ruminating on entering "a religious institute or going about the world."[75] What was clear was he wanted to help souls. Lainez narrates that deep down Ignatius sensed "that he was called to help others, he said that he wanted much more to become a conventual rather than an observant, to be able to be of help to others."[76]

b. Choosing to Study to Help Souls

Guided by the personal vocation of helping souls, the pilgrim felt "inclined to study for some time so he would be able to help souls; he thus decided to go to Barcelona."[77] From Barcelona, Ignatius would then proceed to Alcala, Salamanca, and Paris for studies, enduring various trials and yet absolutely trusting and remaining focused on serving God.[78] Continuing to partake in the Self-emptying of Christ, Ignatius was led to a divinizing union with the Triune God.

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[72] *Auto*., no. 40.

[73] *Auto*., no. 45.

[74] *Auto*., no. 50.

[75] *Auto*., no. 71.

[76] On p. 50 of *Mistagogía*, Melloni quotes *FN*, II, 137-138.

[77] *Auto*. , no. 50.

[78] See *Auto*., nos. 54-86.

c. Choosing "Wherever" was the Glory of God

After seven years, after the group of seven companions had been formed, Ignatius still had the persistent desire to return to Jerusalem; this time, however, his main criterion was "the good of souls." "(T)hey had all determined what they would do, namely go to Venice and to Jerusalem, and spend their lives for the good of souls; and if they were not given permission to remain in Jerusalem (where they could help souls), then they would return to Rome and present themselves to the Vicar of Christ, so that he could make use of them wherever he thought it would be more for the glory of God and the good of souls."[79]

Two criteria characterize the decisions that the pilgrim would make from the time of his conversion in Loyola until the foundation of the Society of Jesus in Rome. These criteria provided cohesiveness and unity to all of his decisions and accounted for his vocation. First, he was propelled by his zeal "to help souls," and second, he desired to accomplish the former "in poverty and humility." These two criteria formed one unifying central motivation in fulfilling his vocation. Although his spirituality was no longer a literal imitation of Christ lived out in an eremitical fashion, his life was increasingly marked by self-dispossession. His discernment and election of choices and decisions were always rooted in his desire to help souls, actualized in poverty and humility, in union with the *Kénosis* of Christ.[80]

Mystagogy Leading Ignatius to the Unitive Life

The years 1540 to 1556 were a period of great importance in the life of Ignatius. The mystagogical path for Ignatius did not culminate in Manresa as God unceasingly accompanied him into deeper kenotic and divinizing union throughout his life until his last years in Rome. Not

[79] *Auto*., no. 85.

[80] Cf. "The Deliberation on Poverty and Selections" and "The Spiritual Diary," in *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, pp. 216-270.

only did his sanctity reach its full maturity; he was also fully conscious of the Society's mission and his vocation as founder.[81]

In Ignatius, we observe that the unitive life is marked by an *Election*, choosing what is for the greater glory of God, wherever one is immersed. Contemplating the face of God does not constitute the unitive path for Ignatius. Divinizing union is conforming oneself to the desires of the Crucified Christ by doing his will lovingly and humbly, which unites one to God.

The two criteria for his election were the zeal to help souls and the accomplishment of this task in poverty and humility. His *Deliberations on Poverty* and *Spiritual Diary* testify to his complete abandonment, poverty, and desire for union with God in the discernment process and election he went through from February 2 until March 12, 1544. His journal of this process evidences how the pilgrim reached and lived out a kenotic way of life, wherein the pilgrim was completely dispossessed of everything to accomplish God's will. At the same time, at this juncture, Ignatius had entered a mystical union, possessing an interior knowledge of what would please the Lord and a divinizing love that united him with the Crucified and Risen Lord.

Background on the Pilgrim's *Deliberation on Poverty*

Poverty and humility were always Ignatius' guiding principles in serving the Divine Majesty in helping souls. Since their vows at Montmartre in 1534, Ignatius and his companions had been living in evangelical poverty as itinerant preachers like Jesus Christ. In 1541, Ignatius ruminated on how he would write on the canonical poverty of the Society's churches and sacristies, as he had been tasked to write the *Constitutions*. In March of the same year, Ignatius and his professed companions met to discuss the implications of the contents of *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*, the bull promulgated by Pope Paul III in September 1540, which approved the Society of Jesus. The Society could have no civil right to own stable goods or property like a residence or a

[81] De Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Practice and Doctrine*, 39 and 41.

church; they were confined to administering it. Ignatius and his five companions agreed that the "sacristy may have a fixed income for all things necessary, from those revenues which will not be for the professed." Three months later, Pope Paul III handed over the Church of Our Lady of the Way to the Society and applied the income it previously possessed to its sacristy.

As 1544 began, Ignatius had become uneasy about the decisions of March 1541 to accept fixed income for the sacristies. He was apprehensive that such a decision veered away from the austere evangelical poverty they had promised to live out. He thus decided to re-examine the pros and cons of this decision in prayer and discernment.[82]

Radical Kenotic Transformation of the Pilgrim

In the three pages of the *Deliberation*, one observes how his mind was working according to the "*Third Time for Making a Sound Election*" (cf. *Sp.Ex.*, no. 177) when a person is in a state of calm and is rational. In his *Spiritual Diary*, his inner self functioned according to the "*Second Time*" (cf. *Sp.Ex.*, no. 177) as he experienced profound consolation and would then plunge into desolation at times. Ignatius' discernment lasted forty days before he received a confirmation of his election. The "*Introduction to the Spiritual Diary*" explains why the discernment process would last forty days. It explains that there were two movements taking place, namely, Ignatius' and God's, each with one's own style and schedule. Shortly after he commenced his days of discernment, Ignatius had already thought himself prepared to make an *Election* within a week. However, God wanted to help him not only make a decision but also lead him into a mystagogy marked by profound mystical experiences and educate him more extensively than arriving at the *Election* proper. God was teaching him to submit himself entirely in affectionate awe and loving humility, which would require a longer time. Thus, although Ignatius strongly felt that the pros and cons favored no fixed revenue earlier on, and on other days

[82] "Introduction to the Deliberation on Poverty," in Ganss (ed.), *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, 217-219.

of his discernment, he would slip into deep desolation movement, all this time, God was training him to trust Him absolutely and not on his expectation of how God ought to confirm his *Election*.[83]

From February 2 until March 12, 1544, the mystagogical path to divinizing union was indeed an ongoing self-dispossession for Ignatius, a call to deep humility and trust. God was patiently instructing him to surrender to His will completely. The reader notes that his earlier passion was to live in Jerusalem, which eventually transformed into a passion for doing whatever God desired, which was not confined to a place.

In Greek, the two words for "will" are βούλομαι (*boúlomai*) and θέλημα (*thélema*). *Boúlomai* connotes commandment or a mental decision, which is rigid and closed to any other option. *Thélema,* on the other hand, is a dynamic, co-creating decision that adapts to different situations. In Ignatius' life, he eventually discovered that "Jerusalem" was not a geographical place but could be anywhere God wanted him to be.

In his discernment on whether to receive revenues for the Society's churches and sacristies or not, God was drawing him to complete abandon to divine providence. In the forty days of his intense prayerful discernment, God was moving him away from his centeredness on the "I" and his "desires" to "letting himself" be found by the "Thou" of God, which ultimately ended up permeating the pilgrim's entire horizon.[84] Ignatius thus elected poverty as he found himself in the Heart of God, truly a divinizing experience through the path of *kénosis*.

Ignatius in a Lifetime State of Interior Union with God

Inchoately, the divinizing union with God commenced in Manresa after the profound enlightenment at Cardoner, which was nurtured

[83] Ganss (ed.), *Ignatius of Loyola*, 217-233.

[84] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 52.

for the rest of his life. I reiterate that Ignatius does not mention the unitive stage in the *Spiritual Exercises,* as we see in no.10:

> When the one giving the Exercises perceives that the recipient is being assailed and tempted under the appearance of good, the proper time has come to explain to the retreatant the rules of the Second Week mentioned just above. For ordinarily, the enemy of human nature tempts under the appearance of good more often when a person is performing the exercises in the illuminative life, which corresponds to the Exercises of the Second Week, than in the purgative life, which corresponds to those of the First Week.

His silence on the unitive stage in the *Spiritual Exercises* does not mean that he never participated in the unitive stage, which was intuited earlier in Manresa. The later years of Ignatius were marked by such profound intimacy with the Lord and a mysticism of apostolicity. In the years 1540 to 1556, his sanctity reached full maturity. They also evidenced that he penetrated the unitive life with the Divine Persons. As the old Ignatius was concluding his dictations to Gonçalves, he reviewed and summed up his life since his conversion at Loyola, thus, "after he began to serve him, he had never consented to mortal sin. Rather, he had always grown in devotion, that is, ease in finding God, and now more than ever in his whole life."[85] He had increased his devotion, familiarity with God, and ease in finding God more than ever. At any time, he desired to find God, Ignatius found him, and at the same time, he was settled in his role as general of the Society (from 1541), a life entirely dedicated to his mission as founder and organizer of the Society of Jesus.[86]

What was Ignatius' interior life like in the last fifteen years of his existence, as he was fully conscious of his mission in the Church? De Guibert remarks that his spiritual experiences during his last years are pivotal in determining the characteristic traits of the order he founded.[87]

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[85] *Auto*., no. 99.

[86] De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 39 - 42.

[87] De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 42.

a. Contemplative-In-Action

Jerónimo Nadal, who knew Ignatius intimately, asserts that the special charism that Ignatius received was "to see and contemplate all things, to remain a contemplative even in the midst of action." Ignatius was in constant and continual recollection, even amid apostolic endeavors. For the pilgrim, devotion--the sense of consolation--was so crucial to Ignatius that Ribadeneyra narrated that he had heard Ignatius assert in 1554 that "as far as he could judge, it would not be possible for him to live without consolation, that is, without experiencing in himself something that he was not and could not be apart from himself, but depended entirely on God."[88] Ribadeneyra added, "It is unbelievable with what ease our Father recollected himself amid the tide of business, apparently having at his disposal and under his hand so to speak, the spirit of devotion and torrents of tears."[89] Such devotion, innate ability to find God effortlessly, and a keen sensitivity to the Spirit in a consistent fashion indicate a profound divinizing state of union with the Triune God.

b. Union with God in Service

In serving God by helping souls, "*ayudar las almas,*" Ignatius plunged into the depths of mysticism. His devotion understood as a kenotic and divinizing union with God, was through his engagement in the world through service. Alfonso de Mora writes of Ignatius' brand of devotion as

> the union of wills.… In this union of wills, the affection of charity becomes an intense desire for union and familiarity with God in all and in each and everything, and all moments, and the insatiable thirst

[88] On p. 67 of *Mistagogía*, Melloni quotes Ribadeneira, from *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, Scrip. De S. Ign.* (Letters of St. Ignatius), I, 349 and 399; [Fontes Narrativi II, p. 367] "*a su juicio, no podía vivir sin consolación , esto es, si no experimentaba algo en sí, que no fuese suyo, ni pudiera serio, sino que del todo dependiese de Dios.*"

[89] On p. 45 of *The Jesuits*, de Guibert quotes Ribadeneyra. See *De Actis P. N. Ign.,* 31 and *Dicta et Facta S.I.*, 33, in *SdeSI,* I, 349, 399; *FN*, II, 338, 477; *De actis P. N. Igna.*, 63, in *SdeSI*, I, 367; *FN*, II, 364.

of redeeming souls for the Lord, the faithful expression of Ignatian devotion.[90]

c. Self-Abnegation (*Kénosis*)

The devotion and familiarity with God and the ease with which Ignatius found God were by no means saccharine. The means was the practice of self-abnegation, the complete renunciation of one's material comfort, honor, power, and the attachment to one's judgment—in a word, *kénosis*. The unitive life was only possible through the mortification of one's will and passions.[91] Thus, in the mystagogical journey of Ignatius, we recognize a kenotic movement that purifies the will of all self-preferentiality so that it is wholly united with God. Ignatius was thus in constant discernment, finding God's divine will, relinquishing one's desires, and being magnanimous in accomplishing what pleases God.

Ignatius was convinced that kenotic and divinizing union is attained through the *Election*; that is, choosing the greater good in one's life for the glory of God. This *Election* is not simply ethical but a mystical act, an emptying (*kénosis*), so that one is configured to Christ by the Spirit (divinization) at a definite point in history through a concrete manner of service.[92]

To illustrate the importance of self-abnegation, we listen to Nadal's first-hand experience of his master. When Nadal spoke to Ignatius about the hour and a half of prayer he had permitted in Spain, the latter affirmed that for those studying, one hour for prayer was

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[90] In footnote no. 139, on p. 67 of *Mistagogía*, Melloni quotes Alfonso de la Mora's *La devocion en el espiritu de San Ignacio in Extracto de la disertación ad Lauream en la Facultad Pontificia de la Gregoriana* (1957), Mexico, 1960, 46-47: "*Es la unión de voluntades (…) En esta union de voluntades, el afecto de la caridad será un deseo intenso de unión y familiaridad con Dios en todas y cada una de las cosas y momentos, y sed insaciable de las almas redimiadas por su Señor, expresión fiel de la devoción ignaciana.*"

[91] De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 85 and 86.

[92] Melloni, *Mistagogía*, 27.

sufficient, presuming that the scholastics were practicing self-denial and mortification. Ignatius placed the foundation of spiritual life in mortification, self-denial, and renunciation of the will. He stressed the primacy of mortifying one's will over the length of prayer. He had complete mastery over his passions. Ignatius thus established the foundation of the Society on holy indifference, pursuing only what God desires in one's concrete context.[93]

d. Finding and Serving God in the World of Matter

Ignatius' kenotic spirituality, evidenced by the asceticism of the will, was purely for praising and reverencing God through active engagement with the world. His devotion, however, was not a flight from the corporeal. On the contrary, imagination, nature, and the world of matter were always the *loci* of his mysticism. He sought the will of God in the heart of the world, whether it was grace-filled or far from grace. Rather than fleeing the world, his incarnational spirituality sought God in the world of matter and accomplished God's gracious will therein.[94]

Summary

Ignatius of Loyola underwent a transformative mystagogical journey, marked by two significant conversions, before his journey into the illuminative stage and unitive life. His first conversion occurred in Loyola after the battle at Pamplona, where he transitioned from a sinful past to an initial desire to follow Christ to Jerusalem. This conversion, however, still retained signs of narcissism and externalism.

The second conversion took place in Manresa and involved a deeper purification of his self-propelled perfectionism. In this second wave of conversion, he experienced the purgative stage, including an active purification, followed by a passive purification characterized by scrupulosity and deep depression on account of the haunting memory

[93] De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 89.

[94] De Guibert, *The Jesuits*, 59.

of his past sins. During this excruciatingly painful passive purification, Ignatius grappled with the reality of his inner demons and painfully recognized that his spiritual progress was not self-determined but was God's initiative.

Eventually, Ignatius moved from the purgative stage to the illuminative stage when he began to see life with great clarity. His spiritual journey then transitioned to a mystical stage, marked by inner visions and a profound sense of union with the Divine. He embraced God's divine will with radical *disponibilité*, transitioning from a haughty perfectionist to a contemplative apostle, guided by a burning love for God and the Church.

Throughout this mystagogical journey, Ignatius was propelled by his zeal "to help souls" and a desire to do so "in poverty and humility." He arrived at a point where he discerned that Jerusalem was not a specific geographical place but could be anywhere God led him. His sanctity matured through his kenotic life, namely, self-abnegation and the mortification of his will and passions, allowing him to find God more easily and grow in devotion and union with the Divine Persons. His kenotic journey led to an experience of profound divinization, configured to Christ and united with the will of the Triune God.

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CONTEXTUALIZING ECUMENISM IN THE PHILIPPINES THROUGH *LOOB* AND *KAPWA*

Roy John R. Del Rosario

Abstract. The two-fold ecumenical approach – inter-ecclesial ecumenism (Global North) and trans-ecclesial ecumenism (Global South) – reaches its limitations when viewed through the Philippine context. This gap refers to the distinct ecumenical challenges that need to be addressed. Thus, this study proposes a unique ecumenical model that integrates the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa*. Appropriating Stephen Bevans' synthetic model of contextual theology, the author argues that this proposed framework takes advantage of the existing models' contributory insights while addressing their conceptual deficiencies. It considers the shared charismatic experiences between Protestants and Catholics as *loci theologici* or resources of theology that can boost the ecumenical model's inclusive thrust. Finally, this study suggests that, through "lived ecumenism" that embodies *loob* and *kapwa*, the proposed ecumenical model can explore the possibility of welcoming other Christian churches that fall within the grey area between strict ecumenism and interreligious relations.

Keywords: Ecumenism, *Loob* and *Kapwa*, Philippine Context

Introduction

Contemporary theologians have labored much in the field by navigating the tension between the classical method and the emerging social realities. Among the significant frameworks produced is the twofold ecumenical approach articulated by Aloysius Pieris, which highlights the tension between inter-ecclesial ecumenism in the Global North, which focuses on doctrinal and institutional dialogue, and trans-ecclesial ecumenism in the Global South, often centered on liberation and interreligious praxis. While recognizing its inherent contributions, the two-fold model encounters conceptual deficiencies when applied to the unique religio-cultural landscape of the Philippines. The Philippine context—marked by a distinctive blend of colonial Christianity, indigenous spirituality, and a vibrant charismatic renewal—tends to reject a simplistic version of ecumenism, suggesting the need for a more nuanced theological framework.

This paper seeks to address the following queries: *How can the Philippine indigenous values of loob and kapwa overcome the limitations of inter-ecclesial and trans-ecclesial ecumenical frameworks? What is the significance of this attempt when applied to the unique religio-cultural setting of the Philippines?* To do this, the author seeks to overcome the conceptual deficiencies existing in the current ecumenical frameworks by incorporating *loob* (interiority/holistic self) and *kapwa* (shared identity/the self) as cultural/theological enrichment. It results in a nuanced ecumenical framework suitable to address the unique ecumenical situation in the Philippines. This paper considers the shared charismatic experiences between Protestants and Catholics as "lived ecumenism," strengthening the model's conceptual pillars necessary in the promotion of a solid ecumenical praxis on the grassroots level. In this light, the proposed ecumenical model addresses the possibility of accommodating some Christian groups that do not strictly adhere to the traditional Trinitarian doctrine, which is a basis for ecumenical unity.[1] It is due to the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa*

[1] In the succeeding paragraphs, the paper adheres to the ecumenical movement's standard definition, anchoring on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity clearly states that the "basis of the

that can extend beyond the parameters of standard ecumenism, namely, adherence to Trinitarian belief within the Christian churches involved. In exploring this dimension, this enriched ecumenical framework does not intend to deviate from the established ecumenical guidelines; rather, by examining possible alternatives, it seeks to account for the fact that

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common Christian faith" is the "Christological confession of Nicaea" expressed in the following words: "*one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the Father as only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, not created, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things in heaven and on earth have come to be* (italics mine for emphasis)." According to the Dicastery, this Nicaean confession "represents an important, albeit not yet completed, stage on the way to the great confession of faith of Nicaea-Constantinople in 381," where it includes and reinforces the divinity of the Holy Spirit, "enabling the formulation of the dogma of the Divine Trinity in the specifically Christian form of monotheism." See Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity, "Council of Nicaea – A Unifying Moment in the Life of the Early Church With Its Continued Impact on the Diverse Realities of the Present Day Church," *Lecture at the Christian Study in Rivalpindi*, March 27, 2025, available at https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/cardinal-koch/2025/Conferenze/en2.html (accessed January 30, 2026). Within the Philippine context, certain ecumenical initiatives have expanded their traditional boundaries to include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). This inclusion is notable because LDS theology regarding the Godhead departs significantly from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Trinitarian doctrine that typically defines ecumenical fellowship. Article of Faith states: *"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. We believe They are Three distinct personages, not one singular being. We call Them the Godhead* (italics mine for emphasis)." See the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, "Do Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Believe in the Trinity," available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist/article/do-latter-day-saints-believe-in-the-trinity (accessed January 30, 2026). Despite these doctrinal distinctions, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is frequently invited to participate in major ecumenical events in the Philippines. A primary example is the local observance of the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity facilitated locally through the collaboration of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Ecumenical Affairs and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). See The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, "Christians Participates in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity," January 21, 2022, available at https://news-ph.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-participates-at-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity (Accessed January 30, 2026).

some Christians, even though they do not profess the same Trinitarian faith, are willing to engage in ecumenical dialogue.

Ecumenical Challenges in Global Perspective

The call for Christian unity finds its root in the words of Jesus praying to the Father: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."[2] Over the years, Jesus' prayer has remained a work in progress for Christians across generations because the actual practice of ecumenism has encountered significant challenges.

Inter-Ecclesial Ecumenism

On the conceptual level, Matthias Haudel voices a shared opinion by "individual theologians" in the 19th and 20th centuries, stating that the "fundamental ecclesiological differences" are results stemming from "different doctrines of…God," most specifically the "differing priorities set by their trinitarian theologies in referring to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[3] The doctrinal divergences are issues that "inter-ecclesial (classical) ecumenism"[4] of the Global North continues to

[2] Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio,* no. 2. Cf. Jn 17, 21. Christian unity refers to the standard English term "ecumenism" which comes from the Greek word *"oikoumene,"* which means "the whole inhabited world." It refers to the "promotion of cooperation and unity among Christians." See USCCB, *"Ecumenical"* available at https://www.usccb.org/committees/ecumenical-interreligious-affairs/ecumenical (accessed January 29, 2026).

[3] M. Haudel, "The Relation Between Trinity and Ecclesiology as an Ecumenical Challenge and Its Consequences for the Understanding of Mission," *International Review of Mission* 90, no. 359 (October 2001): 401–8, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2001.tb00310.x.

[4] Aloysius Pieris defines inter-ecclesial ecumenism as a "traditional movement" that works for unity of the churches not in the sense of uniformity previously expressed in restoring "communion with Rome." Instead, this unity is derived from an effort to consider "one another's denomination as a 'church.'" See A.

address, arguing that the obstacles to Christian unity come in "varying degrees," considering the unique circumstances found in the "Church of the East, the Orthodox and Protestant."[5] Bernard Leeming calls it the "status of separated church communions" identified as "real and shows itself in doctrine, in worship, in methods of administration and…in psychological attitudes and general outlook."[6]

While these churches struggle to attain what Haudel calls "an agreement on the understanding of the church" as a basis for "ecumenical progress," the consequences of Christian disunity at the grassroots level pose a significant threat to realizing this ecumenical vision. They are manifested in the "lack of sympathy,… prejudices, misunderstanding…unhappy historical memories"[7] and a "distressing lack of charity which Christ commended so strongly to all his followers."[8] That said, ecumenism faces a twofold challenge:

Pieris, SJ, "Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life" Ecumenism in the Asian Context*, ed. Pedro S. de Achútegui, SJ, Cardinal Bea Studies, IV (Makati, Rizal Philippines: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., 1976), 156.

[5] A. Cardinal Bea, *The Unity of Christians*, ed. Bernard Leeming, SJ (Wimbledon, London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd, 1963), 40.

[6] B. Leeming, SJ, *The Vatican Council, and Christian Unity: A Commentary on the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, Together with a Translation of the Text* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 36 – 38.

[7] Cardinal Bea, *The Unity of Christians*, 44.

[8] Leeming, *The Vatican Council, and Christian Unity*, 54 – 55. Pedro de Achútegui calls this ecumenical challenge as a form of "Christian apartheid," explaining the existing "splits and divisions… in mission territories, the very planting of the various churches was…planting of a division…a Christian monster to regions and peoples which did not deserve such an un-Christian treatment." Consequently, these occasions led to "insurmountable obstacle in…missionary churches and societies" on account of the "drive and effort to bring all men to Christ." See P. de Achutegui, SJ, "Mission and the Ecumenical Dimension," in *Ecumenism and Vatican II: Select Perspectives*, ed. Pedro S. de Achútegui, SJ, Cardinal Bea Studies, III (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology: Ateneo de Manila University, 1972), 117, as quoting A. Cardinal Bea, *Unity in Freedom* (London:1964), 82.

to overcome divergent theological viewpoints on the Trinity and ecclesiology at the conceptual level, and to address increasing animosity among Christians at the practical level. As a starting point, Pedro Arrupe offers an illuminating piece of advice to theologians: "to put more theological value on Orthopraxis."[9]

While agreements on doctrinal standpoint remain essential, it is equally important as well to consider other non-theological elements (psychological and social dispositions) that are embodied within the Christian personhood. They can serve as resources in the proper actualization of ecumenical goals. As Leeming argues, "it is not merely doctrines which have to be reconciled, but living human beings who exist in complicated associations with one another."[10] Cultivating an inclusive disposition is fundamental because the ecumenical movement demands the proper attitude to carry out the ideals pronounced in doctrines. In this sense, Raedel argues for a renewed Christian disposition by turning the obstacles into opportunities to "encourage the churches to unite" and to address the current ecumenical status in a new light.[11] Thus, it suggests a "future of ecumenism (that) will no longer be primarily imprinted by confessional differences," and this calls for a transformed ecumenical ethos.[12] Furthermore, Lorenz Cardinal Jaeger calls for spiritual conversion, describing the ecumenical predicament as "sin and to overcome it by forgiveness and reconciliation."[13]

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[9] P. Arrupe, *Pro Mundi Vita* (PMV), Special Note 36 (1975), 4. As quoted in Pieris, SJ, "Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life,"* 154.

[10] Leeming, *The Vatican Council and Christian Unity*, 35.

[11] C. Raedel, "Unity to the Greater Glory of God. Promising Paradigms in Current Ecumenism," *Review of Ecumenical Studies* Sibiu 8, no. 2 (August 1, 2016): 172, https://doi.org/10.1515/ress-2016-0015.

[12] Raedel, "Unity to the Greater Glory of God," 172.

[13] L. Cardinal Jaeger, *A Stand on Ecumenism: The Council's Decree* (Great Britain: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd, 1965), vii.

From this perspective, a real ecumenical progress occurs through the actualization (living out) of a renewed ecclesiological ethos enriched by a solid Trinitarian foundation. As Vatican II teaches, the ecumenical movement, more than just mere theory, advocates for "the restoration of unity among all Christians" made concrete in the lives of Christians "who…invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior."[14] Orthodox John Zizioulas expresses much optimism.

> If we are to seek unity on a stable and healthy basis, we need a sound doctrine of God as Trinity and of the divine economy in Christ in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit. These doctrines are… indispensable presuppositions for an ecclesiology of communion as well as for all the efforts to overcome division with the help of such an ecclesiology.[15]

It clearly defines the parameters of the ecumenical movement, that member churches must explicitly confess their belief in the Trinity as the foundation for unity. Moreover, a solid Trinitarian foundation is what makes the Church truly of Christ. According to Vatican II, this Church "subsists in (*subsistit in*) the Catholic Church," adding that "although many elements of sanctification and truth can be found outside her structure, such elements as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ are forces impelling Catholic unity."[16] *Subsistit in* is

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[14] Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 1. The Trinitarian nature of the Church is explicitly pronounced in *Lumen Gentium,* no. 4 in the words "…the Church has been seen as 'a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'" See Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4.

[15] J. Zizioulas, "The Church as Communion," in Best, T. and Gassmann, G. eds. *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela 1993*, WCC, 1994.

[16] K. Becker SJ, "The Church and Vatican II's '*Subsistit In*' Terminology," *CNS* 35 no.31 (January 19, 2006): 514-522. To properly understand the history behind such development, one needs to know that *subsistit in* as a replacement to *est* in paragraph 8 is a direct consequence of the Council's intent to establish spaces "… for the recognition of components of the genuine Church beyond the confines of the Catholic Church," amidst theological disagreements. The choice of *subsistit* in assists the Church of Christ in finding her fullest expression, aligning with the Spirit's all-encompassing nature and inclusive disposition. This decision is also a

the hermeneutical key to understanding the ecumenical significance of the Church as it implies the creation of spaces where other Christians join the faith conversation on the Trinity regarding salvation. Interestingly, the inclusive disposition associated with the term finds its fullest expression in *Unitatis Redintegratio* concerning the promotion of "Christian unity" both on the levels of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.[17]

Doctrinal differences must not be the starting point. As Walter Kasper argues, "the Catholic understanding of unity…presupposes a given unity within the Catholic Church and its partial communion with the other churches…in order to reach full communion with

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crucial aspect in reinstituting an ecumenically inclined ecclesiology. Thus, *subsistit in* facilitates a renewed expression of the same doctrine with the sole purpose of lessening the exclusivist tendency associated with est, in accordance with Peter Luning's analysis. P. Luning, "Das Ekklesiologische Problem der Subsistit In (LG 8) im Heutigen Okumenischen Gesprach," *Catholica* 52 (1998): 1-23, at 6, as cited P. Gamberini, "*Subsistit* in Ecumenical Ecclesiology: J. Ratzinger and E. Jungel," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 72 (2000): 68.

[17] A significant portion of the paragraph is quoted in length to emphasize the various precedents justifying the unity of the Church and her propensity for ecumenical movement. Vatican II writes: "The term 'ecumenical movement' indicates the initiatives and activities planned and undertaken, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity. These are: first, every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult; then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and Communities. At these meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. In such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions. In addition, the way is prepared for cooperation between them in the duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience; and, wherever this is allowed, there is prayer in common. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform." Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio,* no. 4.

them."[18] This finds inspiration in the Triune God, who is the source of unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as stated in *Lumen Gentium*. This urges Christians, especially the Catholics, to heed the call for self-transformation. As *Unitatis Redintegratio* teaches, "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart."[19] Through inter-ecclesial ecumenism, the Churches in the Global North, despite present challenges, have the means to push for greater unity of Christians. Ecumenism of this sort offers a way to heal and reconcile doctrinal divides as opportunities to advance the work of reconciliation, emphasizing what holds in common among Christians rather than seeing divisions as obstacles to attain unity.

Trans-Ecclesial Ecumenism

However, the classical approach to ecumenism encounters a conceptual (and practical) deficit when strictly implemented in a non-Western environment, specifically the distinct Asian context marked by multi-cultural and multi-religious conditions. Thus, Aloysius Pieris suggests another ecumenical model known as "trans-ecclesial ecumenism," introducing a four-fold movement consisting of evangelism, dialogism, spiritualism, and activism as appropriate Christian (faith) approaches to God's revelation in Christ (Word and Sacrament) in the Asian context's cultural and religious diversity.[20]

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[18] W. Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity Today* (London: Burn & Oates, 2004), 68.

[19] Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 7.

[20] A. Pieris, SJ, "Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life" Ecumenism in the Asian Context,* ed. Pedro S. de Achutegui, *SJ*, Cardinal Bea Studies, IV (Makati, Rizal Philippines: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., 1976), 156-158. Trans-ecclesial ecumenism aims to provide unique ways to address the predicament by refining what has already been offered by inter-ecclesial ecumenism: the greater desire for Christian unity through a radical change of attitude. A change of heart is the first step; it needs to be properly internalized, and that desire for unity must flow from the mind (cognitive) to the heart (affective). This is essential for an informed ecumenical action. In this sense, ecumenism offers renewed vistas that transcend mere

Transitioning from mere "transplantation of Christian ideals," classical evangelism takes a nuanced perspective, arguing that there is more than "one-sided missionary initiatives."[21] Transcending such limitations results in what Francisco calls the "Christianization beyond mere transplantation,"[22] a process to rectify an incomplete representation

disagreements generally caused by "giving an exaggerated importance…to the *bible* and the *church*," forging a balanced perspective to form "one evangelical strand."

[21] Some theologians in Asia argue that the one-dimensional nature of Western missions in the region manifests in various ways. Aloysius Pieris characterizes the introduction of Christianity into Asia as an "unholy alliance of the missionary, the merchant, and the military," a description that tarnishes the image of Christianity and portrays it as an unwelcome presence, largely attributable to the associated atrocities. A. Pieris, "Asia's Non-Semitic Religions and the Mission of Local Churches," in *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1988). Similar to the imperialists who sought to exploit the resources of Asia, Edmund Chia declares that Christianity was perceived to arrive with intentions to exploit the souls of Asian peoples. This perception is valid in as much as Christian missionaries prioritized the salvation of souls and the establishment of churches, often with minimal regard for the cultures and religions of the local population. E. Chia, *Asian Christianity and Theology: Inculturation, Interreligious Dialogue, Integral Liberation* (London: Routledge, 2021). Furthermore, Joseph Kitagawa observes that Christian doctrines have been, and continue to be, presented through Greco-Roman thought patterns and Christian practices, a phenomenon he designates as the "European Captivity." J. Kitagawa, *The Christian Tradition: Beyond Its European Captivity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992). Stanley Samartha employs the metaphor of a helicopter to illustrate the introduction of Christianity in Asia. According to Chia's interpretation, as the helicopter descended from above, it metaphorically cleared the ground, creating a pathway for the European Church to establish itself. S. Samartha, "The Making of a Revised Christology," in *One Christ, Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991).

[22] J. Francisco, SJ, "Translating Christianity into Asian Tongues: Cultural Dynamics and Theological Issues," in *Thought the Harder, Heart the Keener: A Festschrift for Soledad S. Reyes*, eds. Eduardo Jose E. Calasanz, Jonathan Chua, and Rofel G. Brion (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Loyola Schools, Ateneo de Manila University, 2008), 93-107. This article was based on Fr. Francisco's Gasson Endowed Professorial Chair Lecture delivered at Boston College on 27 November 2005 and was republished in Jose Mario C. Francisco,

of Christian evangelization by recovering the dynamic role of cultural context in reshaping Christian ideals based on local customs and language. The limitations caused by classical evangelism set the stage for a more dialogical approach.

Pieris' notion of dialogism seeks fresh and innovative interpretations of the same divine reality of Christ and the Spirit. It states that "the Christ he encounters in the Bible is a salvific phase of an Event still waiting to be revealed beyond the Bible; that the Christ he encounters in the church is an intensive moment of a Presence still seeking to be recognized beyond the church."[23]It speaks of dialogism's inclusive and expanding nature to accommodate other means to discover Christ beyond the scriptures and the Church. Furthermore, the integration of spiritualism is valuable as it grounds one's subjective experience of Christ upon the identity of the Messiah, whose "salvific role predominantly resides within the inner realm of the individual soul or spirit."[24] This appeals to one's spiritual interiority, leading to a profound realization that "liberation in Christ embodies a profound psychological inclination."[25] The spiritual depth of a dialogist is commendable when s/he actualizes what s/he knows and believes about Christ being in solidarity with fellow human beings through transformative actions. This has resulted in a kind of activism which Pieris believes to be the "most audacious example of trans-ecclesial ecumenism," given that "its focus is on social liberation, which is clearly in stark contrast to the psychological approach of the third group."[26] Authentic Christian unity is measurable through what it contributes to social liberation.

SJ, *Between Celebration and Critique: Snapshots from 500 Years of Philippine Christianity* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2021), 376-378.

[23] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 158. The ecumenical significance of dialogism addresses the root cause of persisting divisions among Christians, that unless Christian faith is authentically grounded in a cultural context, ecumenical initiatives cannot flourish as intended by the Spirit.

[24] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 158.

[25] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 158 – 159.

[26] Pieris, "Contemporary Ecumenism," 160.

Addressing Gaps in the Existing Models

While inter-ecclesial (classical) ecumenism and trans-ecclesial ecumenism provide significant insights useful in this paper, they nevertheless contain ideas born out of different cultural contexts. For instance, the dominant Western culture influences inter-ecclesial ecumenism, while the broader Asian realities push Pieris to come up with trans-ecclesial ecumenism, whose distinct socio-religious realities do not reflect the same way in the Philippine context. Thus, appropriation or nuancing is necessary to come up with the proposed ecumenical model. Guided by Stephen Bevans' synthetic model,[27] it reinterprets the following areas of concern: the value of the gospel message, referring to Jesus' priestly prayer in John 17: 21 (*that all may be one*), the value of inter-ecclesial ecumenism, specifically on the importance of doctrinal clarity, and the value of trans-ecclesial ecumenism, specifically in the area of spiritualism and dialogism, in the light of the author's embodied experience of *loob* and *kapwa*. It hopes to see the correlation of these insights and discover what lies in common amidst distinctiveness and peculiarities. This helps generate an enriched ecumenical model.

[27] The author of this paper takes careful nuancing of Stephen Bevans' synthetic model to align with the objectives. Accordingly, it explains "synthetic" as a process of preserving "the importance of the gospel message and the heritage of traditional doctrinal formulations while at the same time acknowledging the vital role that context has played and can play in theology…In addition, the synthesis will include the importance of reflective and intelligent action for the development of theology that does not ignore the complexities of social and cultural change. Second, the synthetic model reaches out to the sources of other contexts and other theological expressions for both the method and content of its own articulation of faith…Third…this model is synthetic in the Hegelian sense of not just of attempting to put things together in a kind of compromise but of developing, in a creative dialectic, something that is acceptable to all standpoints." See S. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 89 – 90.

Current State of Ecumenism in the Philippines

As stated, the unique cultural ethos makes the ecumenical situation in the Philippines distinct from the mainline ecumenism of the Global North, as well as the general Asian perspective. Borrowing the ideas of Felix Wilfred, ecumenical responses in the Philippines necessarily require a culturally sensitive approach distinct "from the (Global) North."[28] Thus, the author explores the inclusive ethos embedded in *loob* and *kapwa* in creating a contextualized ecumenical approach while recognizing the value of other models.

The Exclusivist Tendency as an Ecumenical Challenge

Despite some efforts of the Catholic Church in the Philippines concerning the promotion of Christian unity,[29] Broderick Pabillo

[28] The abridged statement comes from a foreword written by Felix Wilfred for Jose Mario C. Francisco, SJ's published work entitled Between *Celebration and Critique: Snapshots from 500 Years of Philippine Christianity* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2021).

[29] The Catholic bishops in the Philippines reaffirm the relevance of ecumenical dialogue in the context of New Evangelization. Bishops write: "…New Evangelization calls us to continue more earnestly the initiatives and projects which have been ongoing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are called to examine more deeply the pastoral situation that we all face together as the Church in the Philippines!" This renewed evangelization hopes to create new strategies to effectively proclaim Christ in the culture, and this requires listening to the Spirit's promptings. Initially addressed to Catholics, this evangelization ministry hopes to inform and transform them to become genuine followers of Christ who treat other Christians well. This culminated in designating 2020 as the Year of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, fostering a renewed sense of being a Catholic through exploring the opportunities for strengthening the "ecumenical and interreligious relationships (that) emphasize open, honest, respectful, and loving dialogue of life, prayer, and action." This vision stems from reflection on peace and harmony in contexts of "armed conflict, social change, societal healing, integrity, and justice in the land." See Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of New Evangelization (Longer Version)," https://cbcponline.net/cbcp-pastoral-exhortation-on-the-era-of-new-evangelization-longer-version/ (accessed 6 February 2025).

observes some discrepancies in the proper implementation of its vision. He writes:

> There is already a consciousness among Church leaders about the need for ecumenism, but this is not yet so among ordinary Catholics in the Philippines. In fact, there is much suspicions among Catholics towards the Protestants and the Evangelicals. The aggressive behaviors of the 'Born Agains' in recruiting members or attacking traditional Catholic practices do not help in allaying the suspicions. So, there is much yet to be done in the field of ecumenism, especially during this year of 2020, when our theme is on ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue, and indigenous peoples, that is, in building harmony through dialogue with those who are different from us.[30]

This outcome reveals a level of ambivalence in the ecumenical movement. It only proves that ecumenical vision, while clearly written and expressed in the official Church documents, does not necessarily translate into practice without a proper attitude or disposition to fulfill its mandate. In the 1976 Report on Ecumenism, Pedro S. de Achutegui quotes the PCP II as recognizing Vatican II's contributions in "reducing the hostilities between Catholics and Protestant churches, resulting in mutual understanding, tolerance, and occasional joint prayer"[31] but asks "what might have prevented the Council members from drawing out the logical consequences and coming out with a real ecumenical stand and program which could have opened a new era in the Philippines."[32]

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[30] B. Pabillo, "Prayer for Christian Unity," *Panaghoy, CBCPNews*, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/prayer-for-christian-unity/ (accessed 6 February 2025).

[31] P. de Achútegui, SJ, "Report on the Philippines," in *Towards a "Dialogue of Life" Ecumenism in the Asian Context*, ed. Pedro S. de Achutegui, SJ, Cardinal Bea Studies, IV (Makati, Rizal, Philippines: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc., 1976), 270 – 271. Citing PCP II, 216.

[32] de Achútegui, enumerates some compelling reasons to this predicament: "History of antagonism between Catholics and other Christian churches and individuals;…the arrival of Protestant missionaries who came to 'evangelize' the Philippines and carried with them not a few anti-Catholic prejudices and entered into conflict and polemics with Catholics who carried in turn their anti-Protestant prejudices." See P. de Achútegui, SJ, "Ecumenism in the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines," *Landas*, no. 6 (1992): 180–202, 191.

This makes ecumenical challenges in the Philippines increasingly distinct and complex, highlighting several obstacles that impede the advancement of the ecumenical movement.

> a) The peculiarity of the religious situation is the prevailing context why the ecumenical situation in the Philippines cannot be compared with European and North American contexts…b) With divisions still recent and mostly imported, quite a few non-Catholic Christian groups are openly proselytist and aggressive. Many Catholics, in turn, have adopted, at least until the recent past, an attitude of 'aggressive defense…' c) A kind of stubborn traditionalism may be at the root of reluctance to change.[33]

The problem points to an exclusivist attitude, a dispositional refusal to recognize the shared humanity or valid experience of others' faith. It is the opposite of the inclusive ethos written and expressed in Church documents. The problem is fueled not only by conflicting opinions regarding doctrines but by cultural differences as well. It reveals that Christian disunity is not essentially a doctrinal or religious in nature, but it concerns much of the people's attitude as a precondition, for such an exclusivist propensity has become part of the culture.

Divergent Socio-Political Standpoints: Hindrances for Relational Unity

As previously stated, the human propensity for exclusive attitude is, first and foremost, a socio-cultural phenomenon. The lived Christianity in the Philippines has assumed a distinct cultural form that embodies both the religious reality and the "social reality."[34] While this section

[33] de Achútegui,, "Report on the Philippines," 274.

[34] Jayeel Cornelio identifies key factors contributing to Christianity's diverse phenomenon. First, Roman Catholicism as "the religion of the Filipino majority" exists side by side with the presence of other emerging Christian groups. He frames this kind of Christian diversity under the rubric of "recognition and visibility" known for Christian groups to stay in a "competitive religious environment" as a method to gain recognition among others. See J. Cornelio, "The Philippines," in *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 242-243.

mentions Christianity as religious in nature, it focuses more on its sociological significance. The socio-cultural worldview contains positive and negative elements that can significantly affect Christian practices, making it susceptible to certain issues regarding the mistranslation of the authentic Gospel values. This has repercussions for the divergent socio-political positions of various Christian groups. This argument draws the logical conclusion that cultural attitudes or orientations play a significant role in rearticulating and living out Christian ideals.

For instance, the social justice issues trigger most Christians of various denominations, including Roman Catholics, to speak up against the oppressive social structures. As a case in point, Cornelio and Maranon mention that the "official leaders of Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals have issued statements against the drug war, expressing concern over human rights, due process, and extrajudicial killings among the poor"[35] Despite Christian initiatives to counteract the culture of corruption and violence, there are also cases where some Christian groups foster ambivalent positions on socio-political issues. For instance, Jose Mario Francisco's delineation of *Dutertismo* has generated "conflicting reactions among Christians" to the "contradicting behavior by the president towards Christianity."[36] Some Christian movements support Duterte's war on drugs, such as "Apollo Quiboloy's Davao-based Kingdom of God and the *Iglesia ni Cristo*, known for electoral bloc voting."[37] Furthermore, they resonate

[35] J. Cornelio and I. Maranon, "A 'Righteous Intervention': Megachurch Christianity and Duterte's War on Drugs in the Philippines," *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 2, no. 2 (October): 211-230, https://doi.org/10.1163/25424246-00202005. Mentioned in Francisco, *Between Celebration and Critique*, 433.

[36] Francisco, *Between Celebration and Critique*, 433. This statement is drawn from a shortened and revised version of the author's journal article titled "Challenges of Dutertismo for Philippine Christianity: Revisiting Populism and Religion" originally published in the *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 4, no. 1 (March 2021): 145-160.

[37] Francisco, *Between Celebration and Critique*, 433. Interestingly, they belong to what Cornelio calls "individual churches" embodying ideals of a "Restorationist theology" that tends to disregard other groups as having inauthentic Christian

a strong indigenous position resisting foreign elements as a method of forging out a uniquely contextualized religious institution befitting its fundamentalist sentiment.

While the discussions involve Christian members with conflicting socio-political standpoints, the paper does not intend to play the blame game as to who among them is on the right or wrong side. Nor does it specify a serious concern in ecumenism yet. It refers to the propensity for conflicting judgments rooted in divergent socio-cultural predispositions. As mentioned earlier, Filipin@[38] Christians from various traditions carry within themselves culturally conditioned values and beliefs that may affect their reactions to certain issues. What needs to be done so that Christians may recognize the value of relational unity amidst conflicting positions? This attitudinal crisis calls for critical scrutiny of Filipin@ cultural value system. Proposing a conceptual solution to the problem does not necessarily translate into practical action. It intends to create a dispositional posture that guides one's actions in promoting this relational unity.

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revelation and regard their groups as having a "true and faithful form of Christianity" instead. See Cornelio, "The Philippines," in *Christianity*, 246. Moreover, this is not to prejudge that non-indigenous churches like the Roman Catholic Church are exempt from exclusivist and conflicting positions on social-political realities, nor throw a biased opinion against these individual churches due to their conflicting socio-political standpoints. Instead, this exposition points to the overall human condition, the weakness of Christian movements constituted by imperfect individuals that may result in such judgments, irreconcilable with the Christian spirit of truth, accountability, and moral decency. The continuing task is to keep identifying potential risks to address certain gaps. Thus, Christianity has the moral imperative to speak against structures that oppress people.

[38] To promote gender inclusivity, the term "Filipin@" is used throughout this work to refer to people, language, and culture. Direct quotations and bibliographic references retain the original term "Filipino."

Unleashing the Inclusive Ethos of *Loob* and *Kapwa*

Understanding *loob* and *kapwa*[39] goes beyond a dualistic or binary conception of reality, as in the West. The breadth and depth of these indigenous values lead the author to appreciate what is necessary and relevant for this study.[40] Thus, the discussions will focus on the articulation of an inclusive ethos in *loob* and *kapwa*, serving as a dispositional posture shared with the other. It is a fundamental step to bring into awareness the cultural value of shared identity that, despite conflicting forces, Christians may recognize that what unites them is more important than what divides them.

The *Loob* (Inner Self) and the Filipin@ Interiority

The preference for the *loob* to be described rather than defined sparks interest among scholars to unravel its significance to related field of studies. This is to establish parameters that distinguish it from a conceptualist definition, mostly common in places influenced by the Enlightenment tradition, not uniquely the same in the Philippine context. In this objective, the author finds Rowan Rebustillo's scholarly work engaging, as it offers a groundwork for subsequent analysis

[39] The author emphasizes the relational dynamics of *loob* and *kapwa* sourced from various studies in the field. *Loob* refers to distinct Filipin@ interiority. It is a central concept to which *kapwa* is attached. The foregoing discussions follow this main idea.

[40] The author limits the discussion on the moral value of *loob* that spells out its inclusive ethos. Thus, it does not explore much of its negative connotations, evident in what Rowan Rebustillo calls vicious *loob (masamang loob)* in which "*loob*, instead of fostering a loving relationship together with the *kapwa* becomes an instrument of division and destruction." Although, this can be nuanced as an exclusive force that affects one's predisposition, resonating the previous section on the ambivalent attitude that this paper wants to address. See R. Rebustillo, "A New Look at Intersubjectivity and Theology: A Retrieval of Filipino *Loob-Kapwa* Relationality In Dialogue with Gabriel Marcel and Ludwig Binswanger" *Melintas* 33 no. 3 (2017): 251.

of varying elements on *loob*, which he diligently gathers from other scholars.[41]

The uniqueness of *loob* lies in its tendency for "surplus meaning," which Rebustillo shares with Leonardo Mercado, Albert Alejo, Jeremiah Reyes, among other related scholars in the field.[42] The rich meanings associated with *loob* are a supplementary perspective that grounds it to the very core of the cultural context to rediscover its authenticity. Mercado argues that more than its literal sense, *loob* acquires a personalist character understood as "*sarili*" that differs from the traditional notion

[41] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa Relationality*," 247.

[42] Rebustillo mentions Dionisio Miranda, arguing that understanding loob is "pregnant with meanings." Miranda writes: "*Loob* is a Filipino term rich in many meanings, as found in its various cognates or derivatives. Consider, for example, these terms: *looban, kalooban, paglolоob, panlolоob, pinaglooban, pinakaloob, kaloob-looban, kaloob, loobin, pagbabalik-loob, kusang-loob, kapalagayang-loob, lamang-loob, kabutihang-loob, kasamaang-loob, utang na loob, buong-loob, tamang-loob, maling-loob, malakas ang loob, mahina ang loob, maruming loob, malinis na loob, maliit na loob, malaking loob, sirang-loob, maayos na loob, panloob*, (Italics mine) etc. Because of this, there is more than a little truth to the observation that loob is initially best described rather than defined" D. Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within* (Manila: Divine Word, 1989) 1. Rebustillo also acknowledges the extensive scholarly contribution of A. Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pagunawa sa Loob ng Tao*. In terms of *loob*'s distinct features, Rebustillo cites Jeremiah Reyes to strengthen the argumentative position that the concept of *loob* is distinguished from the value understood by Kluckhohn as a "conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of the individual or characteristic of a group…" See C. Kluckhohn, "Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action," in *Towards a General Theory of Action*, eds. Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1951), 395. Instead, Rebustillo acknowledges Reyes' point, stating that a value "must describe a positive value towards it. It does not say what it is, but only that it is considered good, desirable or important." J. Reyes, "*Loob* and *Kapwa*: Thomas Aquinas and a Filipino Virtue Ethics," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, KU Leuven, 2015). In this perspective, Reyes argues that *loob* is "holistic and relational will…(that gives birth to) Filipino virtue ethics." Reyes, "*Loob* and *Kapwa*," 73.

of self but "embodies the 'essence' of the Filipino 'cosmic self."[43] In this regard, Rebustillo adds that *loob* is not to be "conceived in a compartmentalized way of thinking of the West."[44] Rather, Mercado states that *loob* perfectly captures how "Filipino looks at himself as a self, as one who feels, as one who wills, as one who thinks, as one who acts: as a total-whole- as a 'person,' conscious of his freedom, proud of his human dignity, and sensitive to the violation of these two."[45]

Loob prefigures a wide array of enriching discussions since *loob* encompasses thought, emotion, and will.[46] These contents of *loob* clearly refer to the embodied self, manifested in their dynamic interaction and correlation. Alejo argues that "the *loob* is not only the combination of the *lawak* (breadth) and *lalim* (depth) of the walls, floors, and eaves of a room but the *laman* (content) which are gathered in the center and that which moves from the center unto the corner and out in the front."[47] Interestingly, Rebustillo connects it with Reyes, stating that the embodied self that is *loob* "is and will always be directed towards something, especially towards other people."[48]

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[43] Rebustillo interprets Mercado's "*sarili*" in three different senses: "First, *sarili* means self. Second, by extension, *sarili* connotes freedom or independence. Third, *sarili* extends itself to property and possession. L. Mercado, *The Filipino Mind* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 32, 34. However, Rebustillo observes in Mercado's argument about the conceptual limitations of *sarili*, stated as "superficial and does not capture the essence of Filipino 'self' as much as the Tagalog word *loob*…characterized as (1) holistic and (2) as interior." See L. Mercado, "Reflections on *Buut-Loob-Nakem*," *Philippine Studies* 20, no. 4 (1972): 597-598.

[44] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," *Melintas*, 249.

[45] L. Mercado, "Reflections on *Buut-Loob-Nakem," Philippine Studies* 20, no. 4 (1972): 598, 600-601.

[46] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," *Melintas*, 250.

[47] Alejo, *Tao Po! Tuloy!*, 79. Quoted in Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," Melintas, 250.

[48] J. Reyes, "*Loób* and *Kapwa*: An Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics," *Asian Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2015): 148-171, 154 doi:

Jeremiah Reyes further intensifies the action-oriented principle of *loob* through his analysis of Aquinas' doctrine of potency and act, wherein he correlated it with *loob* as *potentia* (potency) that is likened to an idea of a seed charged with potentiality to become a tree (act).[49] Through this analogy, Reyes states that *loob*, more than just an inner self, "can be properly comprehended not just through the process of intellection but through living in relationship with others."[50] Here, the notion of *loob* expands and continuously acquires enrichment. The moral potentialities in *loob* receive actualization through the virtue of *kagandahang-loob,* defined as connoting "all that is good in someone, a quality of being which has its roots in the very heart of the person, and which is given expression in the totality of one's life of interrelationship."[51] In this sense, *loob* expresses its fundamental and authentic notion in *kagandahang-loob*.

The *Kapwa* (Shared Inner Self) and Relational Ontology

The previous discussions on *loob* reveal not only its inclusive tendency (containing one's thought, intention, and feeling) but also the dynamic interaction of these elements. When a person (P1) knows another person (P2), P1 knows P2 not through a strict intellectual cognition of the Enlightenment tradition. Rather, P1 lets P2 enter into P1's *loob*, creating this shared identity (*kapwa*). It makes the notion of *kapwa* transcend the standard definition of the other understood as

10.1080/09552367.2015.1043173. Quoted in Rebustillo, "Loob-Kapwa Relationality," *Melintas*, 250.

[49] J. Reyes, "*Loob* and *Kapwa*: Thomas Aquinas and the Filipino Virtue Ethics," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, KU Leuven, 2015), as quoted in Rowan Rebustillo, "A New Look at Intersubjectivity and Theology: A Retrieval of Filipino Loob-Kapwa Relationality In Dialogue with Gabriel Marcel and Ludwig Binswanger" *Melintas* 33 no. 3 (2017): 240-278, 10.26593/mel.v33i3.3072.240-278.

[50] Rebustillo, "*Loob-Kapwa* Relationality," *Melintas*, 251.

[51] De Mesa, *In Solidarity with Cultures*, 47, quoting Erlinda Reyno, "Maling Akala, Maling Pangarap," in *Liwayway* 57 no.33 (Enero 12, 1981), 41-43.

totally different from the person, a "total stranger…or outside him or herself."[52] Virgilio Enríquez argues:

> When asked for the closest English equivalent of *kapwa*, one word that comes to mind is the English word 'others.' However, the Filipino word *kapwa* is very different from the English word 'others.' In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the 'self' and 'others.' The English 'others' is actually used in opposition to the 'self,' and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others.[53]

This shared identity that is in *kapwa* resonates with other scholars. Alejo argues that "*loob* is not just the whole aspect of self for herself/himself alone but the gift of self is shared with and for *kapwa* (others)."[54] Considering this, *kapwa* is best translated as what Reyes calls "together with the person" since the point of departure in its understanding is the term "togetherness."[55] The state of "togetherness"

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[52] De Guia, *Kapwa*, 28. Cited in Rebustillo, "A Retrieval of *Loob-Kapwa*," 252.

[53] V. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines, 1992) 52. Cited in Rebustillo, "A Retrieval of *Loob-Kapwa*," 253. Enriquez's kapwa as shared identity resonates in Brazal's work when correlating utang na loob (debt of human solidarity) in *kapwa* as an "appreciation of *kapwa* solidarity." Agnes Brazal, "Reinventing *Pakikipag-Kapwa*: An Exploration of Its Potential for Promoting Respect for Plurality and Difference," in *Fundamentalism and Pluralism in the Church* ed. Dennis T. Gonzales (Manila: DAKATEO, De La Salle University), 64. It is noticeable that *utang na loob* in no way produces an uncomfortable feeling rooted in an idea that bothers one's conscience to immediately pay back the goodness one provides to another in a rather forceful way. Instead, *utang na loob* transcends this notion by making it simplified and straightforward. It is responding to the call for mutual solidarity and respect. This results in how a person relates and treats others (*kapwa*) with respect and genuine love despite differences.

[54] A. Alejo, SJ, *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao*, (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, AdMU, 1990), 30. Original Cited Text: *"Ang loob, ayon parin kay de Mesa, ay hindi lamang buod ng pagkatao sa kanyang sarili kundi siyang sarili ng tao bilang kapwa."*

[55] Rebustillo prefers Reyes' translation of *kapwa* as "together with the person," as more inclined with the distinct reality of Filipino cultural ethos, compared

attributed to *kapwa* cosmology transcends the limitations of the word "self," which is already a loaded term in English translation, as Enriquez argues.[56] Moreover, the actualization of *kapwa* refers to the virtue called *pakikipag-kapwa*, the act of being together with the person. In principle, as well as in reality, the inherent goodness existing in *kapwa* actualized in *pakikipag-kapwa* emanates from the inherent goodness existing in *loob* actualized in *kagandahang loob*. Simply put, a genuine *pakikipagkapwa* reveals a genuine *kagandahang loob*, vice versa. In this sense, something good springs from this dynamic interaction.

Loob and *Kapwa* in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement

The previous discussions illuminate the significance of *loob* and *kapwa* in terms of their inclusive ethos. While remaining cultural, *loob* and *kapwa* can correlate with the inclusive ethos mostly evident in theological resources. The theological significance of these cultural values helps establish a nuanced ecumenical model that honors the contributions of the two-fold ecumenical approach previously discussed. In strengthening this proposed model, it recognizes the role of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement. It introduces the value of this dispositional posture associated with "charismatic ecumenicity,"[57]

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to the translation of "self" provided by Enriquez and De Guia. Reyes' notion of "togetherness" is a product of his critical analysis of ancient texts which Rebustillo mentions in his paper. Reyes writes: "Compare my translation with the old *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* where capoua means 'Ambos a dos igualmente (both two equally) and capoua co tauo means 'hombre como yo' (man like me). See De Noceda and De Sanlucar, *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala*. Reyes, "*Loób* and *Kapwa*: An Introduction," 156.

[56] Rebustillo mentions Charles Taylor about the English word "self" as an already loaded category, "sculpted by a long and complex history of ideals and upheavals in modern times." See C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1989).

[57] Koichi Kitano, "Spontaneous Ecumenicity between Catholics and Protestants in the Charismatic Movement: A Case Study," (PhD dissertation, Centro Escolar University, Philippines, 1981), 28. Kitano describes ecumenicity as the "quality or state of being ecumenical in terms of nonstructural ecumenism" which is

defined as "a desire and an effort to experience a feeling of togetherness and cooperativeness among Christians, rather seeking organized or structural unity among the churches." C. Stanley Lowell, The Ecumenical Mirage (Grand Rapids, Michigan: baker Book House, 1967), 11-12. Cited in Kitano, "Spontaneous Ecumenicity," 28. This sense of being ecumenical encapsulated in the term "ecumenicity" is understood in its historical precedents. As Protestantism was introduced in the Philippines, it emerged due to the American expansionist movement which, according to scholars, was an important factor in propelling the evangelizing mission in the country. See K. Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898-1916* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986); G. Anderson, ed., "Providence and Politics Behind Protestant Missionary Beginnings in the Philippines," Studies in *Philippine Church History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969); M. Apilado, "Revolution, Colonialism, and Mission: A Study of the Role of Protestant Churches in the United States' Rule of the Philippines, 1898-1928," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, August 1976), D. Gardinier, "Ecumenism Among Philippine Protestants," *Philippine Studies* 50 no.1 (First Quarter 2002): 3-22, 4. In the context of different Protestant groups coming in, an agreement called comity was established to designate certain places where these Protestant groups can only conduct their missionary activities, instilling a new consciousness, religious liberty attributed to Protestant missionary effort. Over the years, nationalism has become the hermeneutical key for independence and therefore, it coincided with the clamors of the native Protestants of the country to be free from foreign domination. Such an event paved the way to rethink and reimagine its ecumenical task. Consequently, it led to the creation of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). Speaking about its ecumenical character, Oscar Suarez argues that the Council "represents the largest organized form of interfaith cooperation among mainline Protestants" because for him, it is "…one of the most tangible evidences *(sic)* of Protestant participation in society (that) occurs at the level of ecumenical work." O. Suarez, *Protestantism and Authoritarian Politics: The Politics of Repression and the Future of Ecumenical Witness in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1999), 5. According to T. Valentino Sitoy Jr., the NCCP's constitution consists of a somewhat looser structure since it does not mention of union in terms of uniformity or uniting all Protestant Churches into a single unified body, a significant aim held by its predecessors since Evangelical Union. See T. Valentino Sitoy Jr., *Comity and Unity: Ardent Aspirations of Six Decades of Protestantism in the Philippines* (1901-1961) (Quezon City: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1989). NCCP's ecumenical vision as "Christian unity without union" finds resonance with the then "new Catholic attitude" espoused by Pope John XXIII in convening the Second Vatican Council. In

as an antidote to what scholars call the "scandal of disunity."[58] This ecumenicity, as a sentiment of belongingness, implies an inclusive posture, which is an important baseline for institutionalizing ecumenical initiatives. As an implication, institutionalizing ecumenicity relies on its dynamic correlation with ecumenism from a non-structural point of view. This means that for an authentic ecumenical movement to emerge, it must be grounded in what unites Christians first before focusing on the differences, resonating with Kasper's viewpoint mentioned earlier. In this case, ecumenicity as a feeling of belongingness must guide the institutionalization process.

The Charismatic movement in the Philippines can strengthen and support this structural aim for ecumenicity.[59] Christl Kessler and Jürgen

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this new pathway inaugurated by the NCCP, ecumenical endeavors have been more fruitful. The NCCP's shift in ecumenical vision becomes an opportunity not only for its inward task to unite Protestant Churches but also provides an impetus that builds ecumenical relationships with the Roman Catholic Church, although the NCCP is declared as "an ecumenical fellowship of non-Roman Catholic denominations in the Philippines working for unity in faith and order." The National Council of Churches in the Philippines, "Brief History," https://nccphilippines.org/about-us/brief-history/ (Retrieved 17 October 2025). In the end, Catholicism and Protestantism share many things in common, the greatest of which is the belief that Jesus is Lord, and He is found in all cultures and traditions.

[58] Kitano mentions several authors speaking about this "scandal of disunity" between the Catholics and the Protestants. Kitano understands David Moberg's work, arguing that "most analysis of Catholic-Protestant relationships is distinctly partisan because the subject is emotion-laden for so many people." D. Moberg, *The Church as A Social Institution* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Pretice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 300. Kitano also mentions Karl Adam, stating that "The special characteristic of Protestantism is isolation, abrupt separation and schism, not only in the sphere of church government, but in that of religion generally. K. Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. by Dom Justin Mccann (New York: Image Books, 1954). Kitano cites the work of Robert Brown, arguing that "neither group (Catholic or Protestant) is particularly happy about the other. On almost every level of relationship, there is irritation and ill-will, if not active dislike." Robert Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 159.

[59] The Charismatic movement is understood in terms of its "organizational structures, cognitive patterns, and practices of people from different

Rüland recognize the movement's ecumenical significance, stating that "the Charismatic worldview transgresses not only class, but also denominations. Although ecumenical cooperation in terms of joint institutional activities is virtually nonexistent, Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics acknowledge their similarities."[60] This resonates with what Kitano observes in his study, the inclusive potential of ecumenicity. Before the explicit intent to achieve Christian unity in a more formal and structured sense as described in ecumenism, this ecumenicity, as a spiritual disposition that binds Protestants and Catholics, is more enhanced through "charismatic experiences," a potential ingredient for the institutionalization of this desired goal. It also reveals how the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* resonates with the Charismatic Christians' welcoming and open disposition. In this lived ecumenism, the implicit ecumenicity can become part of the overall ecumenical framework. This becomes part of the renewed Christian praxis. In this way, ecumenical initiatives bear the practical fruits of authentic Christian dialogue and unity of Christians in a local context.

Toward a Contextualized Ecumenical Model

Guided by Bevans' synthetic model, the proposed ecumenical framework is a product of contextualizing the relevant concepts from established models (inter-ecclesial ecumenism and trans-ecclesial ecumenism) using the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* as a cultural and theological lens.

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backgrounds." Following the dynamic flow of ecumenicity-ecumenism articulated earlier, the principle of institutionalization refers to the Catholic Church's response in overcoming "its initial suspicions…and instead of fighting it, the hierarchy sought to integrate it." Its integration into the Church's hierarchy is not to be seen as gaining total control of the entire movement, as it is categorized as "transparochial," which is not "under the direct supervision of the priest." See C. Kessler and J. Rüland, *Give Jesus a Hand! Charismatic Christians: Populist Religion and Politics in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 116, 118-119.

[60] Kessler & Rüland, *Charismatic Christians*, 125.

Appreciating the Two-Fold Ecumenical Framework

As mentioned at the outset, the primary challenge of ecumenism lies on the level of praxis. Inter-ecclesial ecumenism ultimately finds inspiration and expresses cooperation in Jesus' prayer to the Father in Jn 17:21 (*that all may be one*). This finds concrete manifestations in how Christians from the Global North can reach a consensus on the nature of the church, grounded in a solid Trinitarian basis. This aim for doctrinal clarity is necessary to guide the ecumenical process amidst the consequences of Christian disunity felt on the ground. Trans-ecclesial ecumenism, while recognizing the valuable contributions of the first model, is a response to the latter's inability to address the specific ecumenical concerns of the Global South, highlighting its multi-cultural and multi-religious identification. As the paper develops a distinct ecumenical model, the inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* helps the reader reread and reinterpret the significant features common among the existing models while acknowledging their distinct particularities.

The dispositional (inclusive) posture precedes the identification of a unifying principle essential for promoting relational unity. Vatican II mentions the importance of the conversion of the heart (*metanoia*) as the primary step. Walter Kasper, among others, has expressed a similar point of view, stating that achieving unity begins by looking at the commonalities rather than the differences. This aim for unity begins by paying attention to the common humanity that Christians share. This shift in focus results in fostering avenues for mutual collaboration and enrichment that are vital in developing a more solid Trinitarian basis influencing ecclesiology. This inclusive path, while distinct, resonates a similar disposition shared by trans-ecclesial ecumenism. Like the first model, it expresses its fundamental intention to promote Christian unity. It emphasizes as well the value of spirituality that ushers a conversion of the heart, a primary component of a dialogical posture. Where lies the distinction points to its desired goal: to consider other cultural/religious realities exclusively found in the Global South, like the multi-cultural and multi-religious identification.

The Uniqueness of the Proposed Ecumenical Model

The proposed ecumenical model, like the other ones, expresses the same intention to promote Christian unity, but it differs when considering the peculiar socio-cultural and socio-religious perspectives in the Philippines. The inclusive ethos of *loob* and *kapwa* serves as a cultural and theological lens to see the values of conversion of heart, relational unity, and dialogue not merely as concepts but as lived experiences. Through a cultural lens, *loob* is a central concept that manifests as an interior space within the person where thinking, feeling, and willing interact, collaborate, and negotiate. Through a theological lens, *loob* becomes a sacred spring within the person who espouses a Christian affinity towards other Christians. Considering this fact, it establishes a distinct Christian *loob* that, transcending mere differences, forms solidarity and offers help to the Christian *kapwa* who is not a total stranger. It makes the reader more aware of what holds them together toward a common vision. Filipin@ Christians may appreciate it very well through the actualization of *loob* and *kapwa* through the virtues of *kagandahang loob* (good will) and *pakikipag-kapwa* (relational will). The shared charismatic experiences between Protestants and Catholics can boost the ecumenical model's credibility and effectiveness because of this so-called "lived ecumenism." Although tensions persist in the practice of ecumenism, this model helps Christians view these problems in a different light. This model fills them not only with knowledge but with the necessary light from Christ who wills "that all may be one" (Jn 17:21).

Summary and Conclusion

The actual challenges of ecumenism in the Philippines led the author to develop a contextual model. By focusing largely on addressing conceptual gaps, it aims to create enriching spaces for further conversations in the field. This enriched framework, rooted in *loob* and *kapwa*, incorporates valuable themes from the two-fold ecumenical approach: inter-ecclesial ecumenism and trans-ecclesial ecumenism. Bevans' synthetic model helps the author unleash helpful concepts that align with the spirit of *loob* and *kapwa*. Through its

inclusive thrust, it helps readers grasp the essence of what it means to be ecumenical, which aligns with specific cultural sensibilities. The ecumenical model's contextual nature facilitates a cultivation of values that enrich the *kapwa*. This contributes to the realization that Christians become more grounded and more aware of what holds them together. Thus, the proposed ecumenical model is a lived testimony that cultural contexts such as the Philippines contain God's presence, waiting to be revealed, nurtured, and developed through local customs and language. This model can potentially shape a Christian's dispositional posture to imbibe a more welcoming and inclusive ethos. Through this, ecumenical Christians may encounter the value of *loob* and *kapwa* as a means to transcend barriers of division and to help create theological vocabularies that can address the special case of some Christians who, though outside traditional ecumenical borders, express the same affinity for other Christians. Despite doctrinal divergences, their lived Christian experiences can be a reflection of the Trinity as they embody the spirit of relational unity, to be a Christian *kapwa* with and for others who are not totally strangers. This ecumenical model inaugurates the transformation of Christian *loob* so that it can establish this so-called Christian togetherness without borders. Lastly, this ecumenical model, when applied in context, may strengthen this inclusive disposition and convince theological experts to consider the possibility of theologically nuancing the current status of ecumenism.

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PRAYER AND SELF-COMMUNICATION: REVISITING JOSEPH RATZINGER'S EUCHARISTIC ECCLESIOLOGY

Antonio Esquillon

Abstract. This article explores the Eucharistic Ecclesiology of Joseph Ratzinger, which takes its bearings from Christology. It discusses how Ratzinger understands the Church as fundamentally originating from the prayer of Jesus, which assumes its supreme expression in His Eucharistic self-communication. The communication and communicability of the Body of Christ finally draws out the intrinsic connection between Christology, Pneumatology, and Ecclesiology, so central in Ratzinger's Eucharistic Ecclesiology.

Keywords: Ratzinger, Eucharistic Ecclesiology, Prayer, Self-communication, Communion

Introduction

The overarching ecclesiology that emerged from Vatican II was *communio* ecclesiology. "*Communio* ecclesiology" is a term with complex and nuanced meanings that has currency in Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic theologies.[1] The 1985 extraordinary

[1] For a synthesis of communion ecclesiology in the Orthodox communion ecclesiology, see Philip Kariatlis, *Church as Communion: The Gift and Goal of Koinonia* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2011). John Zizioulas has also been a central figure in the development of Eucharistic ecclesiology in the Orthodox tradition. See

Synod of Bishops synthesized the ecclesiology of Vatican II under the category of *communio* ecclesiology, identifying it as the interpretative key for the conciliar documents.[2] *Communio* ecclesiology understands the Church, in her inner mystery and visible structure, as communion. The communion ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac, which centers on the interconnectedness between the Church and the Eucharist, can be summed up as follows: "The Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist."[3]

In Joseph Ratzinger's perspective, *communio* represents the fundamental concept that expresses the very essence of the Church. *Communio* refers to "the eucharistic center of the Church and thus anchors our understanding of the Church in the most intimate encounter between Jesus and mankind, in his act of giving himself to us."[4] In this way, Ratzinger's understanding of *communio* ecclesiology is, in its inmost nature and supreme expression, a eucharistic ecclesiology.

> The Church is a *communio;* she is God's communing with men in Christ and hence the communing of men with one another - and, in consequence, sacrament, sign, instrument of salvation. The Church is the celebration of the Eucharist; the Eucharist is the Church; they do not simply stand side by side; they are one and the same.

John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1993).

[2] "The Final Report of the Extraordinary Synod of 1985," *Origins* 15 (December 19, 1985): 444-50. See also Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, trans. Michael J. Miller et. al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 17.

[3] Henri De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 134. Dennis M. Doyle offers a synthesis of de Lubac's communion ecclesiology. See Dennis M. Doyle, "Henri de Lubac and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 209-227. The insights of de Lubac significantly influenced Ratzinger's own ecclesiology. See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 17.

[4] Joseph Ratzinger, "Eucharist-Communio-Solidarity," in *Collected Works*. Vol. 11, *Theology of the Liturgy*, ed. Michael J. Miller, trans. John Saward, Kenneth Baker, Henry Taylor, et. al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 360.

> The Eucharist is the *sacramentum Christi* and, because the Church is *Eucharistia,* she is therefore also *sacramentum* – the sacrament to which all the other sacraments are ordered.[5]

The relationship between the Church and the Eucharist thus provides the inner content of Ratzinger's *communio* ecclesiology, which this article seeks to explore in two phases. In the first, I outline Ratzinger's thesis that the Church is founded on the prayer of Jesus through his exegesis of two Gospel events: the Calling of the Twelve and the Last Supper. Following this, I discuss Ratzinger's understanding of Jesus' self-communication in the Eucharist by which the intrinsic connection between Christology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology is established, and through which his Eucharistic ecclesiology becomes coherent.

The Church Founded on the Prayer of Jesus

As a foundational insight into this idea, Ratzinger highlights the event following the multiplication of the loaves (see Mark 6:45-52; Matt 14:22-33). Jesus withdraws to the mountain to pray while the disciples set out on the lake, struggling on the water without making any progress against the wind. The account continues: "when he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea." (Mark 6:48)[6] Ratzinger comments on the ecclesiological symbolism in this text:

> The decisive point is this: in his prayer, when he is with the Father, he is not absent from them. In his prayer, he sees them. Where Jesus is with the Father, the Church too is present. Here, the problem of the Second Coming of the Lord is taken onto a deeper, trinitarian level and transformed: Jesus sees the Church in the Father, and on the basis of the Father's might, in the power drawn from his speaking with the Father, he is present to the Church. It is precisely

[5] Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 53.

[6] Scripture passages quoted are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVCE) translation.

> his speaking with the Father, his being on the mountain, that makes him present, and so we can say that the Church is, as it were, the object of the conversation between the Father and the Son and is thereby anchored in theology.[7]

Ratzinger emphasizes the fact that Jesus still sees the disciples within his prayer to the Father. It is an existential concretization of his *homoousios*: Jesus is with the Father and yet remains present to His disciples. The Church, therefore, is amidst the eternal dialogue of the Father and Son as the object of their communication. From this foundational insight, let us proceed to examine two events that demonstrate how the Church finds its origin in the prayer of Jesus: the calling of the Twelve and the Last Supper.

The Calling of the Twelve

The calling of the Twelve is recounted in all the Synoptic Gospels (See Mark 3:13-19; Matt 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16). While Mark situates the calling on the mountain, the stress lies on the vocation of the Twelve: "to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message." (Mark 3:14) Commenting on this Markan text, Ratzinger observes that "their primary task is simply to be the community of the Twelve,"[8] to be in fellowship (*koinonia*) and communion with Jesus. It is from this being-with-Jesus that they are enabled to be sent out to proclaim the Gospel. In Matthew, the calling of the Twelve attains a distinctly apostolic and missionary thrust. Ratzinger points out that "in Matthew, the calling of the Twelve follows Jesus' exhortation to 'pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest' (9:38). The choice of the Twelve appears as the first answer to this prayer. It is as though Jesus himself were anticipating the response that the divine authority would subsequently make to the prayer of his disciples."[9]

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[7] Joseph Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ: Meditations on the Triune God*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 90.

[8] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 25.

[9] Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 90-91.

In Luke, however, the calling of the Twelve clearly arises from the prayer of Jesus (see Luke 6:12-17). Ratzinger reflects that "the calling of the Twelve proceeds from prayer, from the Son's conversing with the Father. The Church is born in that prayer in which Jesus gives himself back into the Father's hands and the Father commits everything to the Son. This most profound communication of Son and Father conceals the Church's true and ever-new origin, which is also her firm foundation (Lk 6:12–17)."[10] The origin of the Church from the eternal dialogue between the Father and the Son is a fundamental and recurring theme in Ratzinger's ecclesiology: the *communio* that is the Church is ever-born from the Trinitarian *communio.*

All this indicates that, in Ratzinger's reading, the Twelve represents the Church. In light of the Pentecost event, the Twelve is the origin and foundation of the new Israel that is sent into the world to proclaim the Gospel.[11] In the Twelve, Jesus is inaugurating the "People of God" in a new way, such that their calling is the theological locus of the beginning of the Church.[12] Their primary vocation was none other than to be that compactly knit core, that clearly delineated community which attains its inner thrust from being in communion with Jesus.[13] It is precisely from this being-with-Jesus that they are then taken into and participate in the prayer of Jesus.

The participation of the Twelve in the prayer of Jesus is recounted in Luke 9:18: "Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him." According to Ratzinger, this apparent contradiction in which Jesus is "alone" and yet "with the disciples" conceals a deeper theological meaning that must be interpreted in light of the subsequent confession that Peter offers.[14] The fundamental stance of the Twelve

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[10] Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One.* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 18.

[11] See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 25.

[12] See Ratzinger, *Behold*, 18.

[13] See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 24-25.

[14] See Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 92.

towards Jesus–their response to his "who do the people say that I am?"–is disclosed at the very moment they had begun to share in the hiddenness of his prayer.

> In this way, the Evangelist makes it clear that Peter had grasped and expressed the most fundamental reality of the person of Jesus as a result of having seen him praying, in fellowship with the Father. According to Luke, we see who Jesus is if we see him at prayer. The Christian confession of faith comes from participating in the prayer of Jesus, from being drawn into his prayer and being privileged to behold it; it interprets the experience of Jesus' prayer, and its interpretation of Jesus is correct because it springs from a sharing in what is most personal and intimate to him.[15]

It follows that participation in the prayer of Jesus leads to the profession of faith in his true identity as "the Messiah of God." (Luke 9:20) Ratzinger asserts that "if the profession of faith is to grow, it must share in Jesus' solitude, in being with him where he is alone with the Father."[16] This points to the very nature of the Christian faith, which cannot be reduced to mere propositions but is, in the final analysis, prayer. Only prayer yields the inner meaning of the Christian faith and the confession of Jesus' true identity.[17] The Church lives by this confession and is united in it, "which is why the Simon who makes it is called Peter, designated and appointed the rock of unity. Thus, the confession and the Petrine office, the confession of faith in Jesus and the unity of the Church, are inseparably linked together with Peter and centered on him."[18] In this way, faith in Jesus Christ, the faith confessed by the Twelve, constitutes an essential dimension of ecclesial communion.

Ratzinger notes that this faith is never just an individual confession but made within the context of the Church–it is an ecclesial faith.

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[15] Ratzinger, *Behold*, 19.

[16] Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 92.

[17] See Ratzinger, *Behold*, 19.

[18] Ibid., 18.

Sharing in Jesus' praying involves communion with all his brethren, in which the individual "I" is taken into the collective "I" of the Church.[19] Communion with Jesus, which proceeds from participation in his prayer and thereby constitutes the all-embracing fellowship that Paul calls the "Body of Christ," is never an isolating event; rather, it is the locus from which the Church originates and in which the members of His Body are gathered together, an event fully realized in the Eucharist.

The Church Founded in the Last Supper

The prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper is a defining moment in which the Church is constituted and formed: "The Church came into being when the Lord had given his body and his blood under the forms of bread and wine, whereupon he said, 'Do this in memory of me.'"[20] Here, Ratzinger is merely specifying the first aspect of de Lubac's Eucharistic ecclesiology: the Eucharist builds the Church. Insight into Ratzinger's understanding of the transformation of the Passover in the Eucharist and the self-communication of Jesus in the Eucharist leads to a further exploration of this ecclesiology.

The foundational acts of Israel were accomplished with the Passover and the covenant at Sinai.[21] Yet the Passover was not simply a historical event that led to the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt (see Exodus 12); rather, it remained a "perpetual ordinance" (Ex. 12:14), a memorial in which the divine power of the original event

[19] The collective dimension of faith is also explained by Ratzinger: "Belief in the Trinity is *communio*; to believe in the Trinity means to become *communio*. Historically, this means that the "I" of the credo-formulas is a collective "I," the "I" of the believing Church, to which the individual "I" belongs as long as it believes." Ratzinger, *Principles*, 23.

[20] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 75.

[21] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 27. See also Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 40.

was remembered and drawn upon in the present.[22] Joachim Jeremias writes that

> the Passover at the time of Jesus looked both backwards and forwards. God's people remember at the feast the merciful immunity afforded the houses sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lambs and their deliverance from servitude in Egypt. But that is only one side. At the same time, the Passover is a looking forward to the coming deliverance, of which the deliverance of Egypt is the type. This typology is a concept that 'most comprehensively determined already in early times, as no other concept did, the form that the doctrine of final salvation took.' The Messiah comes on this night![23]

The Passover that Jesus celebrated with his disciples (see Mark 14:12 ff; Matt 26:17ff; Luke 22:7ff) was thus a transhistorical event in which the past and present are always bridged through the remembrance of God's enduring blessing. Jesus prays within the heart of Israel's tradition that embraces the covenant, the Temple, and the prophets. Specifically, he integrates Himself within the Passover *Haggadah*, the prayer of thanksgiving at the heart of Israel's worship in which the great works of God are remembered and praised.[24] In so doing, he transforms the Passover into an entirely new worship: Jesus prays his new prayer within the Jewish liturgy.[25]

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[22] See Thomas J. Nash, *Worthy is the Lamb: The Biblical Roots of the Mass* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 74-77.

[23] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Arnold Ehrhardt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 137-138.

[24] See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 26-27 and Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 265. Ratzinger further states that "in the period in which Jesus lived, there was a growing consciousness of the Passover Haggadah as being at the real heart of Israel's worship, as being the true offering to God." Ibid.

[25] See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 26. The action of Jesus at the Last Supper is – as Ratzinger puts it – "something new" that is woven into the context of the Jewish Passover celebration, "but it is clearly recognizable as an independent entity." Ratzinger, The *Feast of Faith*, 40.

At the heart of this transformation, Jesus understands Himself to be the true Paschal Lamb that dies vicariously for the whole world, a self-understanding which provides the inner content and meaning of the words of institution: "This is my body, this is my blood." While these words contain a radical novelty which only Jesus can bestow, they are nonetheless "taken from the Israelite language of sacrifice, which designated the gift offered in sacrifice to God in the Temple. If Jesus makes use of these words, then he is designating *himself as the true and ultimate sacrifice,* in whom all these unsuccessful strivings of the Old Testament are fulfilled."[26] Moreover, in these words are gathered the inner content of the Law and the Prophets, echoing in particular Exodus 24–the sealing of the covenant on Sinai–and Jeremiah 31–the promise of the new covenant.[27] As Jesus prays within the tradition of Israel, he "elevates the meal in which his flesh is eaten and his blood is drunk to the status of the true, definitive Passover meal. That means that this meal has no other meaning than the one that was once characteristic of the Jewish Passover celebration. So, it follows automatically that this meal appears as *the source and basis of a new Israel* and as its abiding core."[28] Just as the Sinai covenant constituted Israel as the people of God, so the new covenant Jesus institutes at the Last Supper is the foundation of the new Israel.

The transformation of the Passover at the Last Supper can only be understood in the context of Jesus' unceasing prayer to the Father, which reaches its culmination on the Cross. Ratzinger firmly holds that the Evangelists all agree on this fundamental fact: Jesus died praying

[26] Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 253-254.

[27] See Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 127, 130-131.

[28] Maximilian Heinrich Heim*, Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology: Fundamentals of Ecclesiology with Reference to* Lumen Gentium, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 272. Emphasis mine.

Psalm 21, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[29] The Evangelists are thus in agreement that

> the last words of Jesus were an expression of his devotion to his Father, and that his cry was not uttered to anyone, anywhere, but to Him, since it was of his innermost essence to be in a dialogue relationship with the Father. Thus, they all agree that his dying was itself an act of prayer, his death was a handing-over of himself to the Father. Finally, they all agree that Jesus prayed in the words of Scripture and that Scripture became flesh in him, became the actual Passion of this Righteous One; and that he thus inserted his death into the word of God, in which he lived and which lived in him, declaring itself in him.[30]

In the context of Jesus' prayer, the intrinsic and indissoluble link between the Last Supper and the Cross is made clear: his dying words fuse with His words at the Supper; the reality of the Cross and death fuses with the reality of the Supper. Jesus' act of communicating and sharing His Body and Blood is actually fulfilled on the Cross in such a way that the Supper anticipates His death and transforms it into an act of love.[31] Ratzinger stresses this internal unity between the Supper and the Cross: "the death without the Supper would be empty, without meaning: the Supper without the actual realization of the death it anticipated would be a gesture without reality. Supper and Cross together are the only inseparable source of the Eucharist."[32] Yet a final step needs to be made: for the death of Christ on the Cross and the words uttered at the Last Supper would remain meaningless if the resurrection had not come about. Thus, Ratzinger claims, "the

[29] See Ratzinger, *Behold*, 24: "Common to all the Evangelists is the conviction that psalm 21 - in its entirety - was connected in a special way with the Passion of Jesus, with its actuality as well as with Jesus' acceptance of it."

[30] Ibid., 24.

[31] See ibid.

[32] Joseph Ratzinger, *Journey Towards Easter*, trans. Dame Mary Groves (Homebush, NSW: St. Paul Publications, 1987), 105.

three belong together: the word, the death, and resurrection."[33] These three constitute the mystery of Easter, and it is here that the source and origin of the Eucharist is to be found.

This leads us to reflect on the words in the institution narrative of Mark and Matthew: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." (Mark 14:24; Matt 26:28) The "for many" incorporates the tradition of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53,[34] which understood that the "suffering of Israel is the true sacrifice, the great new form of worship, with which it could come before the living God on behalf of mankind, on behalf of the whole world."[35] Inherent to the Suffering Servant tradition is the notion of Israel's vicarious and universal vocation for the nations. Since this vocation was never completely accomplished on account of Israel's sin and guilt, it opened up the expectation for the true Suffering Servant of God. This is fully realized in Jesus, who identifies with Isaiah's Suffering Servant:

> He is suffering for the many, and he shows, thereby, that in him this expectation is fulfilled: that this great act of worship on the part of mankind comes to pass in his suffering. He himself is, so to speak, the pure representative, the one who does not stand on his own behalf but stands before God on behalf of all.[36]

Jesus, the Suffering Servant, is the one representative *for many*. Though he prays within the tradition of Israel, it becomes clear that in the new worship He inaugurates in His person and suffering, He opens Himself up for all, on behalf of all. In so doing, Jesus "did not destroy the letter of the Old Testament, i.e., the common religious tradition of

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[33] Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 261.

[34] "Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Is 53:12.) See also Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two*, 134-138.

[35] Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 255.

[36] Ibid.

Israel, but showed its real depth for the first time, 'fulfilled' it."[37] Jesus fulfills Israel's expectations by bestowing on it a universal character. This is significant when considered in the light of ecclesiology:

> "This universalization of the tradition is its ultimate ratification, not its abrogation or replacement. If we grasp this, it becomes clear that Jesus did not need to start by founding a People of God (the "Church"). It was already there. Jesus' task was only to renew this People by deepening its relationship to God and by opening it up for all mankind."[38]

Let us now synthesize all these insights with the prayer of Jesus as our foundational lens. In the Last Supper, Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples, thereby praying within the Tradition of Israel. By understanding Himself as the true Paschal Lamb and the Suffering Servant, Jesus transforms the Passover into an entirely new worship, which finds its inner content and meaning in His death on the Cross. In Jesus' prayer, His death is transformed into an act of love and worship. The Supper and the Cross thus form an intrinsic unity and are together the only inseparable source of the Eucharist. The Supper-Death dynamic, which happened once and for all in history, is thus ritualized and sacramentalized in the Eucharist, which contains the ultimate prayer-word of Jesus to the Father, His complete self-communication. In the Eucharist, Jesus universalizes the tradition of Israel, establishes the new covenant, and thereby renews the People of God such that the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper becomes the origin of the New People of God, the Church.[39]

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[37] Ratzinger, *Behold*, 29.

[38] Ibid., 29-30.

[39] See also Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, 17-18: "Jesus' Last Supper can now be recognized as the real act of founding the Church: Jesus gives to his disciples this liturgy of death and of his Resurrection and thus bestows on them the feast of life. In the Last Supper he renews the covenant of Sinai, or rather: what was then only a symbolic start now becomes total reality—the communion of blood and life between God and man. When we say this, it is clear that the Last Supper anticipates the Cross and Resurrection and at the same time necessarily presupposes them, for otherwise everything would remain empty gestures. That is why the Church Fathers could say, in a very beautiful image, that the Church

The Self-Communication of Jesus in the Eucharist

To understand how Jesus communicates Himself in the Eucharist, let us explore further the meaning of "body" in the context of the words of institution, "This is my body," (Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24) and the resurrection of Jesus. The Hebrew notion of the body refers to the entire person, since there is no distinction between body and soul in the Hellenistic sense.[40] Yet from the perspective of relationality, the body also becomes both a boundary from and a bridge to others. Ratzinger thus comments that

> the body is a boundary that makes us opaque, impermeable to each other, which sets us beside each other and prevents our being able to see or to touch each other's intimate selves. But there is a second thing: The body is also a bridge. For we meet each other through the body; through it we communicate in the common material of creation; through it we can see ourselves, feel ourselves, come close to one another. In the gestures of the body are revealed who and what the other person is. We see ourselves in the way the body sees, looks, acts, and offers itself; it leads us to each other: it is both boundary and means of communion in one[41]

The bridging dimension of the body implies that communication and communicability take place in and through the body. The body grounds communication in realism and sensibility such that bodily existence can be lived "as opening oneself up, as the developing freedom of a person who shares himself."[42] This opening and sharing of oneself reaches a culmination in Jesus' Eucharistic self-

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sprang from the Lord's wounded side, from which blood and water flowed. In reality that is the same thing, merely expressed from a different perspective, as when I say that the Last Supper is the beginning of the Church."

[40] See Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 287-288. See also Barnabas Mary Ahern, "The Christian's Union with the Body of Christ in Cor, Gal, and Rom." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1961): 199-209, at 200-201.

[41] Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 288.

[42] Ibid., 289.

communication. Ratzinger thus interprets Jesus' words at the institution of the Eucharist as follows:

> 'In this bread I give myself'–that is the meaning of *soma*–'I give myself up for you, through it I am in your midst and there for you,' whereby this expression 'for you' specifies and defines what is proper to Jesus' 'I,' so to speak, the genuine substance, the core of reality … his whole existence. The 'I' of Jesus is precisely in its most authentic reality the act of self-giving, of service, of being open for all.[43]

These words particularly indicate Jesus' mode of being as one of existing-for-others, of pro-existence: Jesus does not live for himself but *from* God and *for* humanity.[44]

Jesus' Pro-Existence in the Holy Spirit

In the Eucharist, Jesus continues to live "for the life of the world" (John 6:51) by being shared out to others in sheer pro-existence. Since the Eucharist originates from the Paschal Mystery, the body that Jesus gives is His crucified and resurrected body. Ratzinger reflects on the significance of the opening up of Jesus in the piercing of his side (see John 19:34):

> Jesus' side is opened, and from it come forth blood and water, that is, the two fundamental sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, and therein the Church. From this open side comes the fact that Jesus now exists as otherwise only spirit can exist, namely, as the one who is opened, the one who at all times can be there and is there for

[43] Joseph Ratzinger, "Kirche als Tempel des Heiligen Geistes," in *Vom Widerauffinden der Mitte: Grundorientierungen: Texte aus vier Jahrzehnten*, ed. S. O. Horn, V. Pfnür (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1997), 151, quoted in Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church*, 239.

[44] See Ratzinger, *Behold*, 21-22. De Gaal comments that "Proexistence belongs to the very essence of Christianity, inseparably combining selfless glorification of God the Father with magnanimous service to humankind." Emery De Gaal, *The Theology of Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), 141.

> everyone. And that means, in biblical terminology, that the *soma* of Jesus, that is, his form of corporeality, is *pneuma*.[45]

This pneumatic interpretation of the Paschal Mystery means that Christ communicates Himself to us *as* Spirit and *in* the Spirit. For Ratzinger, such a pneumatic interpretation "brings out the connection between Christology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology: Christ communicates himself to us in the Holy Spirit."[46] In this way, the Holy Spirit is operative in the sheer openness of Christ's pro-existence, especially in the resurrection in which Paul describes the risen Christ as "a life-giving spirit." (1 Cor 15:45)[47] In the Holy Spirit, the resurrected body of Jesus ceases to be a boundary that sets Him off against others, becoming, instead, pure communicability and openness. Ratzinger maintains that

> to have risen from the dead means to be communicable; it signifies being the one who is open, who gives himself. And on that basis we can understand that Jesus, in the speech about the Eucharist that John has handed down to us, puts the Resurrection and the Eucharist together, and that the Fathers say that the Eucharist is the medicine of immortality.[48]

Only in light of the Spirit-filled risen body of Christ do we grasp the inner meaning of Jesus' action of breaking the bread at the Last Supper. The absolute openness and transcendence of the risen body of Christ allows it to be shared beyond the limits of place and time. Yet this act of being broken and shared is paradoxically the means through which

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[45] Ratzinger, "Kirche als Tempel," 152.

[46] Ratzinger, *Behold*, 48-49.

[47] Ratzinger's exegesis of the Eucharistic discourse in John 6 and the Pauline notion of the resurrection in 1 Cor 15 leads to his understanding of the risen body of Christ as a spirit-flesh dialectic. See Patrick J. Fletcher, *Resurrection Realism* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2004), 165-67. See also Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 169-70.

[48] Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 289. See also Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two*, 244.

humanity is gathered into communion with God in Jesus. Ratzinger asserts that "it is the act of distributing that creates community. This archetypally human gesture of giving, sharing, and uniting acquires an entirely new depth in Jesus' Last Supper through his gift of himself. God's bountiful distribution of gifts takes on a radical quality when the Son communicates and distributes himself in the form of bread."[49] The designation of the Eucharist as the "breaking of bread" in Acts 2:42 expresses this communal and social dimension of the Eucharist, wherein the Church shares in Jesus' mode of being as pro-existence.[50] It is precisely through this Eucharistic self-communication in the Holy Spirit that the Church is both gathered and formed. The intrinsic connection between Christology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology, constitutes the inner core of Ratzinger's Eucharistic ecclesiology. As a final move, let us now focus on how the Church is formed and gathered as a communion in the Eucharistic Body of Christ.

The Church as a Communion in the Eucharist

The Pauline passage concerning the notion of *Soma Cristou* (σῶμα Χριστοῦ) is of central concern here: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Cor 10:16-17). Ecclesial unity is thus achieved through the members partaking in the one bread by which is constituted the one ecclesial Body of Christ. The outward action of eating in the context of the table fellowship is "the expression of that intimate penetration of two subjects."[51] Ratzinger interprets this reality of communion through the lens of assimilation.

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[49] Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two*, 129.

[50] See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 43: "We must further add that the designation of the sacrament as the 'breaking of bread' expresses the social requirement of the Eucharist, which is not an isolated cultic act but a way of existence: life in sharing, in communion with Christ, who gives the gift of his very self."

[51] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 37.

Communion means the fusion of existences; just as in the taking of nourishment the body assimilates foreign matter to itself and is thereby enabled to live, in the same way my "I" is "assimilated" to that of Jesus, it is made similar to him in an exchange that increasingly breaks through the lines of division. This same event takes place in the case of all who communicate; they are all assimilated to this "bread" and thus are made one among themselves—one body.[52]

In this process of assimilation in the Eucharist, the initiative belongs to God: "We do not assimilate it into ourselves, but rather it assimilates us into itself, so that we are conformed to Christ–in Paul's words, as members of his body, one in him."[53] Ratzinger's use of assimilation brings to mind the Platonic Form, the perfect pattern into which the individual objects assimilate themselves. From this perspective, the Eucharist is the Form not only of individual existence, but of the Church herself.[54]

This assimilation, or fusion of existences, into Christ necessarily leads to communion with others who also partake of the same Eucharist. In Christ, the members of the Church also become members of one another, for "to be in communion with Christ is by

[52] Ibid., 37. *In Behold the Pierced One*, Ratzinger also speaks of assimilation as a fusion of existences: "The man who eats this bread is assimilated by it, taken into it; he is fused into this bread and becomes bread, like Christ himself. 'Though many, we are one body, for we are one bread.' The result of this insight is quite clear: Eucharist is never merely an event *a deux*, a dialogue between Christ and me." Ratzinger, *Behold*, 89.

[53] Ratzinger, "Eucharist-*Communio*-Solidarity," in *Collected Works*, 362.

[54] "'He who eats me will live because of me' (Jn 6:57). These words of Jesus make us realize how the mystery "believed" and "celebrated" contains an innate power making it the principle of new life within us and the form of our Christian existence." Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 70. In this way, St. Irenaeus says that "our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking." St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses*. 4,18,5 (PG 7/l.1028).

its very nature to be in communion with one another as well."[55] The assimilation about which Ratzinger speaks with regard to Eucharistic communion should not be construed as a kind of identity-negating collectivism. He insists that "the eucharistic fellowship of the Church is not a collectivity, in which fellowship is achieved by leveling down to the lowest common denominator, but fellowship is created precisely by each of us being ourselves. It does not rest on the suppression of the self, on collectivization, but arises through our truly setting out, with our whole self, and entering into this new fellowship of the Lord."[56] Communion seen as assimilation in the Eucharist does not deny the individual's freedom or identity. The many is not drowned out in the process of becoming one, just as the Eucharist is not reduced to collectivism, and the Church is not reduced to a federation.

In the final analysis, the Eucharist is the locus of communion with Christ and with those who also partake of the same Eucharistic bread. Since the Eucharistic bread, which forms the Church, is one, the Church is also one. The intrinsic unity of the Church obtains because she

> originates in the one bread, in the one Lord, and thanks to him, she is first and foremost and everywhere the one and only Church, the one body that comes from the one bread. She does not become one through a centralist form of government; instead, one common center for all is possible because she is always derived from the one Lord, who in the one bread makes her to be the one body. That is why her unity goes deeper than any human union could ever go. It is when the Eucharist is understood in the full intimacy of the union of each individual with the Lord that it automatically becomes also a social sacrament in the highest degree.[57]

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[55] Ratzinger, *"Eucharist-Communio-Solidarity,"* in *Collected Works*, 362. Ratzinger also asserts that "Communion with Christ is of necessity a communication with all those who are his: it means that I myself become part of this new "bread" which he creates by transubstantiating all earthly reality. Ratzinger, *Behold*, 89.

[56] Ratzinger, "The Eucharist–Heart of the Church," in *Collected Works*, 290.

[57] Ibid., 363.

This being the case, the unity of the Church is not imposed from without as if it could be achieved through human efforts and based on human criteria. Such a sociological understanding of the Church would reduce it to a mere association or club in which the verticality of communion is disregarded.[58] Instead, the unity of the Church belongs to and is constitutive of her very nature as *communio.* The unity of the Church finds expression in the twofold dimension of communion: vertical and horizontal. As Ratzinger states,

> It is vertical unification, which brings about the union of man with the triune love of God, thus also integrating man in and with himself. But because the Church takes man to the point toward which his entire being gravitates, she automatically becomes horizontal unification as well: only by the impulse power of vertical unification can horizontal unification, by which I mean the coming together of divided humanity, also successfully take place. The Fathers summed up these two aspects—Eucharist and gathering—in the word *communio*.[59]

For Ratzinger, the primacy and priority belong to the vertical dimension of communion: the union of humanity with the Triune God. Only in and from this vertical communion can horizontal communion among persons find its true grounding.[60] Horizontal communion depends on vertical communion, for the true criterion and inner impulse for communion comes from God. The one Lord, who gives Himself in the one Eucharistic bread, gathers and forms the one Church that is also His Body: "The Church, which is built upon the sacrament of the Body of Christ, must herself be a body. And she

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[58] See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 157-165.

[59] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 76.

[60] See Ratzinger, *Behold*, 88-89: "The Christian 'community' cannot be explained in a merely horizontal, essentially sociological manner. Its existence presupposes this relationship to the Lord as its origin and goal. Indeed, we can say that the Church, of her essence, is relationship, a relationship created by the love of Christ, and she in turn founds a new relationship between men."

must be a single body, corresponding to Jesus Christ's uniqueness."[61] In this way, the unity of the Church is expressed in her "bodiliness," in her being in the form of the one Body of Christ. Such unity demands visible, concrete, and even institutional unity.[62] For Ratzinger, the understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ is the underlying image that sustains his Eucharistic ecclesiology.

Conclusion

The hermeneutic key to understanding Joseph Ratzinger's Eucharistic ecclesiology is the notion of *communio,* the intimate union between God and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Ratzinger's fundamental assertion is that the Church originates from the Triniatrian *communio,* the eternal dialogue between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, which enters history in the prayer of Jesus Christ. This dialogue attains its supreme expression of in the self-communication of Jesus in the Eucharist, in his self-giving "yes" to the Father and humanity summed up in the words of institution: "This is my body, which is given for you." By these words, Ratzinger concludes that Jesus' mode of being is one of pro-existence: He does not live for himself but *from* God and *for* humanity. Since the Holy Spirit is operative in Jesus' self-communication and pro-existence, the Body of Christ now becomes pure communicability and openness. By masterfully weaving the key threads of Christology and pneumatology in light of the Paschal Mystery, Ratzinger establishes the foundation of his Eucharistic ecclesiology.

As the Eucharist is the event of gathering the members of the Body of Christ in the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist is the *fons et culmen* where the Church comes to be through the self-communication of the Lord. Indeed, it is in the Eucharist that "the Church is most compactly

[61] Ratzinger, *Behold*, 94.

[62] See Ratzinger, *Behold*, 93.

herself—in all places, *yet one only*, just as he is one only."[63] In the final analysis, Ratzinger's Eucharistic ecclesiology affirms the inner unity of the Church – a unity that obtains from the one Lord and the one Eucharist. Let us give Ratzinger the last word: "The Church is built up from the Eucharistic meal, and conversely the whole purpose of the Eucharist is to gather people into the Body of the Lord and thus into the Spirit of the Lord, to transform them into the living Body of Christ, the place of the concrete and mighty present of Christ in the world."[64]

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[63] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 37. Emphasis mine. See also Ratzinger, *Behold*, 88.

[64] Joseph Ratzinger, "Einleitung," 10.

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STRUCTURAL PARALLELS BETWEEN POPULISM AND CATHOLICISM: *VOX POPULI, VOX DEI*

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Abstract. Why do populist groups attract religion as a partner or foe? Responses to this question often remain on the functional level and primarily stress the material content of populist and religious doctrines. Thus, they generate heated partisan polemics rather than enlightening insight. This multidisciplinary study focuses on the structural parallels in gathering people and discovering their authoritative will in the body politic and religious. First, it notes the family resemblance in their composition. Given the populist association of 'the people' with the nation, the authoritative will of the people serves as its ground and goal. The Christian *ekklesia* or gathered people of God rely on the *sensus fidei* as orientation, process, and content in gathering the faithful. Second, both populism and religion aim to articulate the authoritative will of their constituents. Populist groups seek to discover the *vox populi* in the socio-historical processes that constitute them. Christian ecclesial communities discern *vox Dei*, also within and not apart from their socio-historical processes. With these structural parallels between the populist body politic and the religious *ekklesia*, intersections between populism and religion are likely to occur.

Keywords: *populism; religion; Philippines; Duterte; vox populi*

Laying the Groundwork

Earlier studies like the 2017 *Oxford Handbook of Populism* focused on identifying the basic core around which people are gathered.[1] Some proposed ideological doctrine as its center; others, political strategy, and still others, performance style. More recently, however, scholars have shown that these three proposals are not mutually exclusive and therefore could be integrated under a more operative description. According to Olivas Osuna, "today populism is broadly understood as a distinct form of politics that champions 'the people' and their sovereignty while antagonizing political—and/or other—elites or a multi-faceted establishment that is seen as unresponsive to popular needs and aspirations."[2]

This essay takes this operational description and proceeds to its consideration of the much-heated discussion of the link between populism and religion. For instance, populist leaders like Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, America's Donald Trump, and the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte have engaged religious groups regarding controversial issues such as COVID-19 vaccination, the war on drugs, and immigration.

These discussions, however, fail to shed greater light, as they remain on the surface functional level. They consider such interactions as either politicizing the sacred or sacralising the political; the former "refers to the ways in which, in old and present times—both in moderate and extreme forms—traditional religion serves to legitimize a social order, a particular regime, or a political community against destructive forces" while the later to when politics "is viewed and experienced as a tool for total change, anchored in myths, rites, and

[1] Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[2] Jose Javier Olivas Osuno, "From chasing populists to deconstructing populism: a multidimensional approach to understanding and comparing populism," *European Journal of Political Research* 60 (2021): 833.

symbols that galvanize group solidarity and give ultimate meaning to the life and destiny of communities."[3]

Moreover, this essay considers such functional links as inadequate and thus takes a multidisciplinary perspective. It does not engage in partisan polemic arguments about which approach is correct, much less whether Trump or Duterte's populism is morally grounded. It poses the central fundamental question, why populist groups attract religion as committed partners or bitter foes.

In moving from the functional to the fundamental, it affirms the characterization of the people as dynamic and underlines its fundamental quality, that is, its character that lends it authority beyond the empirical. In this sense, it may be even regarded "theological," not in the narrow disciplinary sense of *fides quarens intellectum* [faith seeking understanding] in Anselm's classic description.[4]

This multidisciplinary essay then proceeds to examine the sociohistorical processes of gathering people and discerning their sovereign voices for both the body politic and the religious community. What becomes apparent is that structural parallels are found in both. Hence, even though these processes remain distinct, intersections are likely to appear.

First, the essay notes the analogous composition of populist groups and religious communities. Without denying their differences, both involve composing their constituencies; for populism, through its links with nationalism and democracy, and for the Catholic *ekklesia*, through the *sensus fidei* [sense of faith] as orientation, process, and content. Catholicism is chosen, not only because it is the dominant Philippine religious tradition but also because it is the most institutionally differentiated.

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[3] Jose Pedro Zuguete,"Populism and Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Espejo and Pierre Ostiguy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 445-66 at 446 and 450.

[4] Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, trans. Max J. Charlesworth (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

Second, both populist and Christian groups engage in analogous dynamics of finding the authoritative voice of the people or of God through the people's voices. "Authority," it must be remembered, comes from the Latin *auctor*, initially referring to origin and only later to a text's writer. Whether in the context of the body politic or religious, the people as gathered possess the aura of authority, because "authority is what enables a community to be bound together in all its interactions."[5] Given these two structural parallels, it is then unlikely that intersections between populism appear.

Populist Body Politic in Search of *Vox Populi*

This section highlights two central features of the populist body politic—first, its composition of those it counts as part of the people, and second, its dynamism to discover the people's authoritative will.

Gathering the Populist Body Politic

Populist association with nationalism and democracy is commonplace. Thus, many modern nations and democracies appeal to the will of the people as their basis as well as their goal. This theme of the will of the people weaves through the nexus of populism, nationalism, and democracy. Its authoritative character emerges in the gathering of the nation and is expressed through differing political practices and organizations.

First and foremost, as Gellner writes, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist."[6] This process of constructing the nation accounts for "the long-standing historical identification of 'the people' with 'the nation' and even the 're-emergence of nationalist-populist politics'."[7] Furthermore, this process of gathering people engages

[5] David J. Stagaman, *Authority in the Church* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 35.

[6] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), p. 169.

[7] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 23.

various constituent sectors with differing goals and interests, some in agreement, others in conflict.

In general, then, goals and grounds for gathering the people determine those included and those excluded on account of what Anastasiou and Custodi describe as "their symbolic and socio-historical dimensions as well as their role in fostering forms of identification."[8] Its "broad and diffuse institutionalization enables it to signify not only diverse social configurations, but multiple forms of exclusions as well…"[9]

Moreover, this "nationalist" tag is applied across a wide spectrum of social realities from the mundane to the systemic, from the benign to the bellicose. Thus, national cuisine and artistic forms generate pride just as do "bellicose forms of exclusion that could enable exploitation, oppressions and violence (e.g., against ethnic minorities and immigrants)."[10]

Such applications could take institutional form through the nation-state. After all, "'the nation' is what symbolically demarcates the (institutional) limits of modern political communities (e.g. 'the nation-state,' 'national citizenship,' 'national sovereignty,' 'national elections,' etc.)" and "conjures up a world outlook, wherein the limits of 'culture' and 'society' are seen as being coeval and coterminous with a particular political apparatus operating over a determinate territory."[11]

Given such apparent totalisation in the nation-state, it is perhaps not surprising that many contemporary populist leaders hold public office, despite claiming to be outside the political establishment.

These populist links with nationalism also raise the question "whether populism is, at heart, anti-democratic."[12] In response, one

[8] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 26.

[9] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 27.

[10] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 27.

[11] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 27.

[12] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 27.

cannot take either "entrenched theoretical inclinations, considering populism to be inherently undemocratic or illiberal," what is relevant is how the authoritative character of the people, that is, the will of the people, finds expression in democratic forms of governance.

Nootens thus underscores what lies at the core of the will of the people—the conversion of "the multitude" to "the people" or, in other words, the construction of the people.

In Search of *Vox Populi*

The second feature of the populist body politic is its orientation to discover the authoritative will of the people, which is not divorced from but is integral to the people as a process. Thus, "we consequently deem it methodologically prudent to understand populism and nationalism as sets of family resemblance (Wittgenstein 1967) that are contextually situated and, in certain cases, historically entrenched (Laclau 1990:35-50)."[13]

The categories of "the people" and "the nation" are understood "as symbolic fields through which political practice and forms of social organization are enabled."[14] What this implies then is that the authoritative will of the people cannot be identified and reduced to that of a particular group, even the majority, or, much less, its leader; "It is, rather, the precise product of political acts that, on an ongoing basis, *reproduce the populist logic across time and space*."[15] This authoritative will of the people, then, much like the composition of the people, is not a perspective or program defined *a priori* or abstracted from a specific context, but the continuing articulation of dynamic social practice from all those constituting the people.

To this end, it employs both formal and informal mechanisms that are meant to express the people's voice. For example, constitutionally

[13] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 28.

[14] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 26.

[15] Anastasiou and Custodi, "The Populism-Nationalism Nexus," p. 27.

mandated processes like elections and referenda serve as means by which constituent sectors speak their voices to those in governance. In addition, mass actions by way of "the parliament of the streets" provide venues for those at society's margins.

However, for both platforms, the importance of integrity in these processes cannot be overstated if they are to discover the authoritative will of the body politic. For instance, in the case of democracies, the majority vote cannot be automatically regarded as "the will of the people" without serious consideration of whether elections or referenda have been free and fair, whether the constituents have been critically informed and formed, and whether the rights and welfare of minorities have not been violated.

The Catholic *Sensus Fidei* Discerning *Vox Dei*

This section shows that the historical character of Christian revelation does not undermine its supernatural origin. Thus, the triple meaning of the *sensus fidei* as orientation, as process of discovery, and as content of faith grounds its authoritative nature.

Gathering People in the *Sensus Fidei*

The *ekklesia*, the church assembly, is characterized by two features—gathering of the people in the *sensus fidei* and discerning the *vox Dei*. This theme is first explicitly articulated in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* [*LG* 4] but considered as long operative in the church's scripture and history.[16]

The gathering of the *ekklesia* in the *sensus fidei* must be understood in the context of its supernatural origin. First, this supernatural origin of God's revelation and self-communication does not imply "out of" or independent from the world of time and space. Indeed, unlike any community and organization, Christianity's origin comes from God's initiative through the historical life and ministry of Jesus Christ: "His

[16] International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*, 2014, http://www.vatican.va. (hereafter cited as SF).

[God's] will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made Flesh in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (cf. Eph 2:18; 2 Pet 1:4) [*DV* 2].[17]

Moreover, "God graciously arranged [that] all the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in its entirety, through all the ages, and be transmitted to all generations" [*DV* 7]. Thus the community of the followers of Jesus—first, the apostles and subsequently disciples from all ages and places—receive and transmit this revelation through Scripture, "the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit" and Tradition, which "transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit" [DV 9].

What this underlines is that the *ekklesia*, the gathering of the faithful, though it considers its origin in God's revelation, receives and transmits this revelation in time and space—the ministry of Jesus, the preaching of the first disciples, the commitment into writing of scriptures, and the ongoing transmission of revelation. In other words, the supernatural origin, reception, and transmission of God's revelation in Jesus Christ is mediated through human socio-historical processes, not from some ideal and perfect world.

What this also implies is that this gathering in the *sensus fidei* is not bound to any particular historical order, be it that of ancient Israel, medieval Europe, or any other. Its divine character is, in fact, manifested in and not diminished by the open-ended process through which it is incarnated in diverse contexts. Thus, it is empowered to undertake its universal mission in the most challenging circumstances.

Discerning the *Vox Dei*

Christianity's divine origin and universal mission lay the groundwork for discerning the authoritative character of the faithful.

[17] Documents of the Second Vatican Council, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm. Particular documents are referenced with their Latin titles followed by the original paragraph number.

This authoritative character finds expression in the different dimensions of the *sensus fidei*: as an active orientation toward faith, as the process of discovering the faith, and as the expression of what the faith consists.

First, the *sensus fidei* as an orientation toward faith [e.g., *LG* 12] is described by Vatican II in many analogous terms: *sensus Ecclesiae* ["the sense of the Church" *DV* 23], *sensus apostolicus* ["the apostolic sense" *Apostolicam actuositatem* (*AA* 25)], and *sensus catholicus* [*"the catholic sense*" (AA 30)]. All these emphasize its origin from God and therefore its authoritative character: the whole body of the faithful receives "an anointing from the holy one (cf. 1 Jn. 2:20 and 27)" and "[t]his characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole people" (*LG* 12).

Second, the process through which this supernatural orientation discovers what the faith consists in operates within the historical processes through which God's revelation in Jesus Christ is communicated, received, and transmitted to all. This link of the *sensus fidei* to the historical unfolding of God's revelation and of its transmission in tradition is stated by the ITC document thus: "the *sensus fidei* is presented as Christ's gift to the faithful, and once again is described as an active capacity by which the faithful are able to understand, live, and proclaim the truths of divine revelation. It is the basis for their work of evangelization" (*SF* 45). In addition, this active capacity "is also evoked in the council's teaching on the development of doctrine, in the context of the transmission of the apostolic faith. *Dei Verbum* says that the apostolic Tradition 'makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit'" (*SF* 45).

Thus, sensing the faith could be described by the traditional theological image of seeing with the eyes of faith, "enabling the one church throughout the world to receive revelation faithfully and meaningfully, and then to tradition it effectively."[18] What this implies is that the authoritative character of the *sensus fidei* is not appended to

[18] Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), p. 241.

but is integral to the dynamic nature of the People of God as receiver and transmitter of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Third and of great import is the meaning of the *sensus fidei* in terms of what the faith consists in and its relation to the official teaching office [*magisterium*]. The *sensus fidei* is characteristic of "the whole body of the faithful" comprised of those with official teaching position in the *magisterium*, those in the theological community with their specific expertise and the majority laity with "a knowledge by empathy, or a knowledge of the heart" (*SF* 50), which is derived from "the concrete reality of the existential situations in which he or she is placed by family, professional and cultural relations" and "enriches the personal experience of the believer" and "enables him or her to see more precisely the value and the limits of a given doctrine, and to propose ways of refining its formulation" (*SF* 54).

These three meanings of the *sensus fidei* are realized through formal and non-formal processes and structures. For instance, when a particular religious belief or practice generates ecclesial division, the church lays down specific protocols for evaluation.

These protocols notwithstanding, the *sensus fidei* primarily operates as a vibrant sensing of faith rather than a formal juridical protocol. Thus the dogmatic definitions of Mary's Immaculate Conception, Pius IX's *Ineffabilis Deus* [*ID* (1854)] and her Assumption into Heaven in Pius XII's *Munificentissimus Deus* [*MD* (1950)] state these doctrines as integral to the faith of "the universal Church, in which the Spirit of truth actively dwells, and which is infallibly guided by him to an ever more perfect knowledge of revealed truths, [and which] has down the centuries manifested her belief in many ways" [*ND* 714].[19] In other words, their definitive status comes not as the product of a formal protocol but from the lived faith of the *ekklesia* for centuries. Consequently but surprisingly, the ITC document speaks of the infallibility of the *sensus fidei*, affirming "the idea that the Church as

[19] Jacques Dupuis, S.J. and Joseph Neuner, S.J. (eds.), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* Sixth Revised and Enlarged Edition (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1999), p. 263.

a whole is infallible in her belief, since she is the body and bride of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12; 5:21–32; Rev 21:9), and that all of her members have an anointing that teaches them (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27), being endowed with the Spirit of truth (cf. John 16:13), is everywhere apparent from the very beginnings of Christianity" (*SF* 7). Another subsequent text states, "the *sensus fidei fidelis* [the sense of faith of the faithful] is infallible in itself concerning its object: the true faith," thus indicating the theological significance of lived Christianity (*SF* 55).

Intersections in Populist and Religious Dynamics

The preceding sections note the difference in nature as well as in vision-mission of the body politic and the religious community. However, both are vulnerable to nationalistic and other forces. It is common that populist groups and religious communities take on a nationalistic ethos. Conflicts have been fought and wars waged on the basis of nationalist, ethnic, and other differences.

Furthermore, the search for the populist vox populi has also taken on the aura of divine providence. Hence, the common construal of the *vox populi* as *de facto* or *de jure vox Dei*. This apparent mantle of transcendence has made antagonisms between groups and communities even violent.

Given these structural parallels in their gathering of people as well as in their search for their sovereign will, various forms of intersections between these processes are likely to take place. They could range from those based on specific issues to those where both processes become conflated.

Example of Specific Intersection

This is illustrated in the nationalist and revolutionary movements during the late nineteenth century. Different constituencies and groups with their distinct interests responded to Spanish colonial rule from their own interests. According to John N. Schumacher, the 1898 Philippine Revolution and its short-lived Philippine Republic "allows us to see

the plurality of movements which coalesced into the Revolution—the many *revolutions* within the one *Revolution*. For there were many aspirations in the late nineteenth-century Spanish Philippines which hoped for their fulfilment from a national revolution."[20] These included "aspirations for modernizing economic reforms," "the desire for the civil and political liberties comprehended in nineteenth-century European liberalism," "the *kalayaan* sought by the peasant masses" and "a separate Filipino nationality" first articulated by the native clergy.[21]

There were even differences in their views regarding relations with Catholicism. First were those who desired a close relation for either religious or nationalist ends. Thus, Felipe Calderon, among others, voted for the establishment of Christianity under the Malolos Constitution of the short-lived Republic. In contrast, nationalists Isabelo de los Reyes and Fr. Gregorio Aglipay desired a church decidedly nationalist, and although other reasons obtain, they eventually established a schismatic church called *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (IFI) [Philippine Independent Church].

Nevertheless, these different groups with varied internal interests were united in their opposition to Spanish colonial rule. Some among the *illustrados* initially lobbied for equal representation between Spaniards and colonials, but were pushed toward seeking independence through a revolutionary movement.

But geopolitical events, the Spanish-American War in particular, overtook its course with the incorporation of the Philippines as a colony under the U.S. Hence, the Philippine Revolution became known as "unfinished" and the nation as "aborted."[22]

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[20] John N. Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement*, 1850-1903 (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1981), 268-69.

[21] Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 268-70.

[22] Floro C. Quibuyen, *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999).

Example of Conflation

This is illustrated in the sociohistorical dynamics of forming the colonial body politic and the colonial Catholic Church begun during the sixteenth century. This process arose in accordance with the *Patronato Real de las Indias*, the juridical agreement between the Spanish monarchy and the Papacy that put the task of evangelization in the colonies under the monarchy.[23] Thus, the monarchy and papacy remained distinct and even disagreed in certain matters, but they were collaborators in the evangelical mission. This intersection transformed the native into both a colonial subject and a baptized Catholic.

Two important infrastructures facilitated this intersection and the subsequent transformation. First, small scattered reduced and centralized in Spanish-style towns where church and government buildings occupied prominent places in the *plaza*.[24] This reduction was further reinforced by the lack of Spanish personnel, so that the Spanish parish priest often took colonial tasks.

Furthermore, native languages were also reduced, that is, transformed from their syllabic form and codified in the Roman alphabet.[25] This linguistic reduction allowed colonials to learn these native languages. Thus, *Doctrina Christiana,* the first book printed, carries renditions of Catholic prayers in syllabic as well as alphabetized forms.[26] Communication between native and Spanish about Catholic and secular matters employed the same Romanized form of the native languages.

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[23] John N. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1979), 9.

[24] Rene B. Javellana, "The Tenacious Village," Paper presented at the Colloquium on Nations, Cities, Civilizations, stories and Arguments (Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, 4 February 2003), pp. 2-3.

[25] Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), 90.

[26] *Doctrina Cristiana: The First Book Printed in the Philippines*, Manila 1593 (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1991).

This intersection of the formation of the colonial body politic and the colonial Catholic Church was so entrenched that those who escaped the centralized towns and returned to the mountains were called *remontados*, that is, renegade apostates of the faith.

Concluding Remarks

These cases exemplify forms of intersection as a result of structural parallels between the populist body politic and the religious community. Whether in specific form or conflated, whether due to external forces or internal interests, intersections appear bound to occur despite the imposition of American-style constitutional separation of church and state. Thus, intersections of Philippine populist and religious dynamics continue to surface in twentieth-century developments during the People Power EDSA Revolutions or the Duterte presidency. Bearing this in mind prevents narrow partisanship of whatever political color and promotes a better understanding of collusion between populism and religion.

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THE BOMBING OF CITIES AND ECONOMIC SANCTIONS: A COMPARATIVE MORAL ANALYSIS USING THE CATHOLIC JUST WAR TRADITION

Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, SJ

Abstract. This essay analyzes two moral cases using the Church's just war teaching: the Allied bombing of German cities during World War II and modern-day economic sanctions imposed by certain governments on other countries. The first part of this paper discusses the arguments used by moral theologian John C. Ford, S.J., in his article "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," to condemn the Allied forces' policy of bombing civilian areas in Germany during World War II.[1] The second part of this article discusses how economic sanctions are used in international relations as a non-violent means to punish or correct the behavior or policies of certain governments. The third part of this paper attempts to apply Ford's moral critique of obliteration bombing analogously to the imposition of certain economic sanctions that affect civilian populations. This paper shows that imposing economic sanctions on basic goods and services that cause suffering to ordinary citizens of targeted countries is morally wrong and violates just war principles.

Keywords**:** economic sanctions; just war; proportionality; noncombatant immunity

1 John C. Ford, S.J., "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," *Theological Studies* 5 (September 1944): 261-309.

I. "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing" by John C. Ford, S.J.

Fr. John Cuthbert Ford, S.J., was one of the leading moral theologians in the United States in the 1950s. Early in his career, he wrote the groundbreaking article "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing" in *Theological Studies* in 1944. This article is one of the best moral critiques of a particular strategy of waging war against Germany during World War II. The article's simple yet forceful application of moral reasoning to evaluate the ethics of obliteration bombing ran counter to the prevailing attitude of American and British military leaders to end the war at all costs. The timing of the article was also significant because World War II was still in progress, and any criticism of Allied military tactics could be interpreted as unpatriotic.

Ford defines obliteration bombing as the practice of bombing large areas of a city that often include both industrial and residential districts. This type of bombing was different from precision bombing, which targeted very definite, limited targets like bridges, airfields, munitions factories, etc. The purpose of obliteration bombing was to wipe out not only the industrial sections of a city but also the residences of the industrial workers in an effort to damage German war production capabilities. The homes of workers were bombed to increase worker absenteeism and disrupt industrial production.[2] Ford maintains that both British and American leaders shared moral responsibility for adopting and implementing the policy of obliteration bombing.[3]

The moral problem raised by obliteration bombing, according to Ford, is about the rights of noncombatants, particularly civilians, to their lives in wartime. Ford appeals to the natural law right to life of noncombatants. Ford raises the two moral questions: "Do the majority of civilians in a modern nation at war enjoy a natural law right to immunity from repression?" and "Does obliteration bombing

[2] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 264.

[3] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 261-2.

necessarily involve a violation of the right of innocent civilians?"[4] In answering these two main questions, Ford attempts first to answer a more basic question: "Who are to be considered noncombatants in a war like the present one? (i.e., World War II)." This question is essential to apply the distinction between innocent and guilty and thus determine who can and cannot be targeted with military violence. Ford affirms the Catholic view that taking the life of an innocent person is always intrinsically wrong. The state of modern warfare in World War II has blurred distinctions between innocent and guilty, combatant and noncombatant, in the minds of military and national leaders. In modern economies, noncombatant citizens are seen as cooperating with the combatant citizens through their direct and indirect participation in the country's war production industry. They were considered guilty by association and became military targets of the enemy. While Ford acknowledges the difficulty of drawing the line between guilty and innocent in modern war, he still asserts that obliteration bombing goes beyond the line wherever it is drawn because this type of bombing makes no distinction between civilians and combatants. Ford says that it is defeatist to abandon making distinctions simply because they are hard to make.[5]

Using the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" as a starting point, Ford asserts that the burden of proof lies on those who wish to abandon distinctions and widen the number of targets to include civilians. It is not the burden of civilians to prove their innocence to avoid being bombed. Ford used in his article available military statistics, testimonies, and quotes from national and military leaders to present the clear intention of including civilian targets and the devastating effects of obliteration bombing on entire cities.

Ford firmly asserted that the majority of civilians in a modern nation at war enjoy a natural law right to immunity from military violence. The Church has long recognized this natural right in its just war tradition. In the 13th century, during the papacy of Gregory IX,

[4] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 271.

[5] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 273-81.

canonists had made a list of eight classes of persons who should have complete security against the violence of war: clerics, monks, friars, other religious, pilgrims, travelers, merchants, and peasants cultivating the soil as well as their animals and goods. These are all persons, because of their social function, have nothing to do with war, and thus they should not have war made against them.[6] This attempt of the medieval Church to protect specific persons from the violence of war was called the Peace of War. It would eventually become the basis of the just war principle of non-combatant immunity enshrined in the Church's current just war teaching articulated in the pastoral letter on war and peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response (1983)." The US bishops asserted in their pastoral letter that "the intentional killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants is always wrong."[7] This recognition of the right of non-combatant immunity during war has also been adopted in international law through the Geneva Conventions.[8]

Ford also gave a counterargument against the Allied military forces' appeal to the principle of double effect as a moral justification for obliteration bombing. The principle of double effect is a traditional Catholic moral principle applied to situations in which one action produces both a good effect (beneficial) and an evil effect (harmful) simultaneously. The principle can only justify an action with both effects if four conditions are met: (1) The object of the act is not

[6] James T. Johnson, "Perspectives on the Birth of a Tradition: The Middle Ages," in *Just War Tradition and the Restrain of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) 127.

[7] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," 1983, https://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf (Accessed December 21, 2025).

[8] American Red Cross, "Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols," April 2011, https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/ redcross/atg/PDF_s/International_Services/ International_Humanitarian_Law/IHL_SummaryGenevaConv.pdf (accessed December 23, 2025).

intrinsically evil, (2) the good and evil effects happen simultaneously (i.e., not a result of a cause-and-effect relationship), (3) the good effect is intended while the evil effect is unintended, and (4) there is a gravely proportionate reason to tolerate the evil effect.[9]

Ford presented the Allied military's proposed application of the principle of double effect as follows: The destruction of war production was the intended good effect while the civilian casualties was the unintended evil effect; the destruction, deaths and suffering caused by obliteration bombing can be permitted because of weightier desired effects such as shortening the war, military necessity, and saving soldiers' lives; the solution to the moral problem was simply for the military planners to withhold their intentions of hurting civilians. In response, Ford clarified that the principle of double effect is not a mathematical formula but "a practical formula which synthesizes an immense amount of moral experience, and serves as an efficient guide in perplexing cases." It is open to abuse, however, and must therefore be applied carefully in challenging cases by an experienced moralist.[10]

Discussing the conditions necessary to apply the principle of double effect, Ford argued that the principle will not allow the use of obliteration bombing. Regarding the element of intention, for example, Ford cites in his article statistics and quotes from military and national leaders to prove that civilian casualties and destruction of civilian homes were directly intended in the case of obliteration bombing. The magnitude of destruction caused could not be considered incidental and unintentional. Ford cites the case of the use of precision bombing in Rome to preserve religious monuments and avoid adverse public reactions. In the case of Rome, the Allies had a clear intention to limit destruction. In the case of the Allied bombing of the German cities of Hamburg and Berlin, there was no intent to limit damage, hence the use of the term "obliteration bombing." The Allies directly intended

[9] James T. Bretzke, *Handbook of Roman Catholic Moral Terms* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013) 72 -73.

[10] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 289-90.

to destroy non-military targets in Germany, which included civilian residential areas.

Regarding the condition of a proportionately grave reason that can justify obliteration bombing, Ford questions the belief that obliteration bombing can shorten the war and is thus a military necessity. Ford reveals that when Britain first adopted obliteration bombing as a war strategy, it was on an experimental basis, and it was not sure whether it would work. Ford cites the opinion of some military planners that such a bombing policy will only strengthen the bitterness and resistance of the German people against the Allies, as shown by the British during the German bombing of cities in the United Kingdom during the war. Instead of shortening the war, the policy of obliteration bombing may lengthen it by inciting resistance among the bombed German civilians. Ford concludes that the real and immediate evil effect caused by obliteration bombing (civilian deaths and destruction of cities) cannot be justified by a speculative and doubtful good effect (shortening of the war). There is no proportionate reason to warrant the use of the principle of double effect to justify obliteration bombing.[11]

Ford also points out that even if obliteration bombing shortens the war, its continued use in this war will legitimize its use in future wars, even by the enemies of the allies. If obliteration bombing is recognized as a legitimate means of war, this will lead to the recognition of a total war policy, where distinctions between combatant and noncombatant will be erased. In the long run, therefore, the continued use of obliteration bombing can lead to worse atrocities in the future, with the development of more destructive weapons and technology.[12]

Ford concludes his article by stating, "obliteration bombing is an immoral attack on the rights of the innocent." Obliteration bombing is also immoral "because no proportionate reason can justify the evil done; and to make it legitimate would soon lead the world to the immoral barbarity of total war."

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[11] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 298-301.

[12] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 303-5.

In summary, Ford's condemnation of the policy of obliteration bombing rests on the following reasons: a) the policy violates the natural law rights of noncombatants which exempts them from direct intentional attacks, b) the policy does not fulfill the conditions for an application of the principle of double effect, c) the policy will legitimate worse atrocities against civilians in the future.

II. Economic Sanctions

Societies in conflict have imposed economic sanctions for centuries. The oldest form of economic sanction used in war is the siege. In a siege, an enemy force restricts a community's economy by creating shortages of necessities such as food, water, and fuel. The first to suffer are the most vulnerable members of the community, namely the elderly, the children, the sick, and the injured. It is hoped that the civilian suffering caused by the siege would force the leaders of the community to surrender to the enemy forces. The suffering of noncombatants is directly intended and even desired so that the political or military goal of the siege may be achieved.[13] Modern-day examples of sieges that cause the deaths of thousands of civilians in targeted cities are the sieges of Leningrad (1941-1944) and Sarajevo (1992 – 1996).

Present-day economic sanctions, used as tools of coercion against countries, can be likened to sieges. Economic sanctions can be defined as:

> The use of economic capacity by one international actor, be it a state or international organization, or by a group of such actors, against another international actor or group of actors, with the intention of (a) punishing the latter for a breach of a certain rule or (b) preventing it from infringing a rule which the party applying the sanctions deems important.[14]

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[13] Joy Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy: The Ethics of Economic Sanctions," *Ethics and International Affairs* 13 (1999): 123-142.

[14] Makio Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 7.

Economic sanctions are applied not for economic benefit but to attain a political goal by forcing the targeted party to alter its behavior or policy.

All economic sanctions involved attempts to cripple or harm a state's economy. There are different methods of applying economic sanctions, such as (a) restrictions on the flow of goods, (b) restrictions on the flow of services, (c) restrictions on the flow of money, and (d) control of markets themselves to reduce or nullify a targeted state's chances of accessing them.[15]

Restrictions on the flow of goods can lead to export and import embargoes. Export embargoes prevent a targeted state from importing materials and supplies that it needs for industrial production, military build-up, or feeding its population. An example of an export embargo is the grain embargo imposed by the United States on the Soviet Union in 1980, in response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.[16] Import embargoes prevent the targeted state from selling its goods, thus reducing its foreign exchange earnings and reducing its ability to import necessary supplies. An example of an import embargo is the total trade embargo that the United States imposed on Cuba in the 1960s and continues to the present. In the context of sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, the European Union has imposed an import ban on Russian oil as a non-military response to weaken Russia's wartime economy.

Restricting the flow of services involves cutting off transportation and communication links between the imposing state and the targeted state. For example, most NATO countries suspended commercial flights to and from the Soviet Union after the Russians downed a Korean airliner in 1983. Restrictions on the flow of money include suspending loans, freezing assets, delaying financial aid, and other monetary measures that can reduce a targeted state's ability to purchase goods.[17] For example, the European Union has frozen the assets of

[15] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* ,16.

[16] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* ,17-18.

[17] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* , 20-22.

Russia within the EU borders to prevent Russia from using these assets to fund its invasion of Ukraine.

Even if limited economic sanctions are used on a state, their effects can be severe on the population if a crucial good is involved, such as oil, grains, medicine, or capital. Some may argue that economic sanctions can be a peaceful option to military action against a state. Unlike military weapons that can kill combatants instantly, economic sanctions are a non-violent means of dealing with specific states. However, certain economic sanctions can be very destructive to a country's economy and can cause grave suffering to civilian populations. If the economic sanction is total, it can function as a "weapon of mass destruction" with genocidal effects.[18]

One example of sanctions that gravely affected a civilian population is the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations in 1990, immediately after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions included a ban on all trade with Iraq, including food trade. This fact is significant when one considers that Iraq imported approximately 70% of its food before the war.[19] The sanctions continued to be imposed on Iraq even after the end of the Gulf War in 1991. A UNICEF-recognized report by the Iraqi Ministry of Health reveals that a total of 878,856 children have died between 1990 and August 1997 due to sanctions, 338,149 of whom are children below five years of age.[20] A UNICEF survey in 1998 showed that 58% of children below five suffered from malnutrition.[21] Despite some adjustments to the sanctions that allow some medicine and food to enter Iraq, delays and inadequate supplies have led to severe deprivation of health care and nutrition for the majority of Iraqi citizens. The inability of Iraq to

[18] Geoff Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions: Legal Remedy or Genocidal Tool?* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 7.

[19] Thomas G. Weiss et al, ed., *Political Gain and Civilian Pain* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp. 100 -1.

[20] Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions*, 177.

[21] Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions*, 176.

repair its damaged water and sanitation facilities due to the effect of sanctions has led to contaminated water and outbreaks of infectious diseases. The lack of even basic medical supplies has caused these diseases to result in many deaths.[22] The bishops of the United States and John Paul II called for an end to or at least a radical reduction of economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, which have caused so much suffering to ordinary Iraqi citizens.[23]

The Church does not object to all forms of economic sanctions. It is recognized as a valuable tool in international relations for correcting the behavior of certain governments. Some sanctions have limited effect on civilian populations, such as a ban on the sale of ammunition and military equipment to a targeted government or an import ban on luxury goods targeting the country's elite. However, church leaders also recognize that certain economic sanctions, when used indiscriminately, can cause grave suffering to the poor and vulnerable of a targeted country. Economic sanctions must be prudently applied to minimize unnecessary suffering. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, stated that "some economic sanctions end up penalizing entire populations, including children, the elderly, and the sick (#51)." The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states the following:

> *Sanctions, in the forms prescribed by the contemporary international order, seek to correct the behavior of the government of a country that violates the rules of peaceful and ordered international coexistence or that practices serious forms of oppression with regard to its population.* The purpose of these sanctions must be clearly defined and the measures adopted must from time to time be objectively evaluated by the competent bodies of the international community as to their effectiveness and their real impact on the civilian population. *The true objective of such measures is open to the way to negotiation and dialogue. Sanctions must never be used as a means for the direct punishment of an entire population*: it is not licit that entire populations, and above all their most vulnerable members, be made to suffer because of such

[22] Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions*, 121-2.

[23] US Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB), "Statement on Economic Sanctions Against Iraq," November 15, 1999, https://www.usccb.org/resources/statement-economic-sanctions-against-iraq-november-15-1999 (Accessed December 21, 2025).

> sanctions. *Economic sanctions in particular are an instrument to be used with great discernment and must be subjected to strict legal and ethical criteria.*[1066] An *economic embargo* must be of limited duration and cannot be justified when the resulting effects are indiscriminate. (#507)[24]

III. Comparing Obliteration Bombing and Economic Sanctions

A comparison between economic sanctions and obliteration bombing using John Ford's process of argumentation can help critique the morality of certain gravely harmful economic sanctions. In the case of obliteration bombing, Ford had tried to establish that the majority of the population of a nation enjoys natural law immunity from repression because they are noncombatants. Ford emphasizes the need for drawing distinctions between combatants and noncombatants. The problem with the practice of obliteration bombing is that it ignores this distinction and kills indiscriminately.

In the same way, economic sanctions on basic goods and services, when imposed on a nation, affect every member of the nation's population. In fact, economic sanctions tend to affect the weakest and most vulnerable in society adversely. For example, a grain embargo will undoubtedly affect all citizens who depend on grain for sustenance. Still, it would be the poor who would feel the deprivation first, because the rich would have the extra financial means to buy and stockpile the precious commodity when it becomes expensive and scarce. In the same way, an import embargo on a nation's cash crop, such as sugar, would hurt sugar field workers first, as their wages and livelihoods would be immediately affected by a drop in sugar sales. In contrast, sugar traders and landowners have the means to shift to more profitable businesses.

In one sense, economic sanctions are a lesser evil than obliteration bombing. With economic sanctions, some members of the population

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[24] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Documents, 2005, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/ justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html (accessed December 23, 2025).

may have a better chance of survival than others, while obliteration bombing kills indiscriminately. In another sense, certain economic sanctions are similar to obliteration bombing because they purposely intend to make the civilian population suffer. There is a clear intent to impose burdens on a civilian population, even if the sanctions' primary target is the policies of government leaders. The wartime distinction between combatant and noncombatant is analogously ignored in the imposition of economic sanctions. While most sanctions are meant to coerce a nation's government toward certain political decisions or behavior, the entire nation's population feels the sanctions' effects. The effects of economic sanctions that target basic goods or services disregard the distinction between the guilty and the innocent.

Ford responds to the argument for military necessity as a proportionate reason for obliteration bombing by showing that there is no proportionate reason, given the uncertainty of success in such bombing in shortening the war and saving soldiers' lives. The possibility of shortening the war through obliteration bombing was at most speculative, while the death and destruction caused by the bombing was real and immediate. This imbalance between an uncertain good and an immediate evil showed a lack of proportionate reason. In the same way, broadly applied economic sanctions against a nation cannot be justified by a proportionate reason, given many factors that can limit their effectiveness despite the immediate suffering they can cause a nation's population.

For example, a sanctioned nation can be aided by trade with countries not subject to the sanctions. This shift in trading partners can help mitigate the effects of sanctions imposed by the sanctioning nation. A sanctioned state may actually present a commercial opportunity for other countries willing to exploit it. The fewer countries that are willing to trade with a nation, the greater the commercial possibilities for a government willing to trade with the sanctioned nation. For example, when the U.S. sought to persuade its allies to impose a grain embargo on Russia, Canada and Argentina declined to participate and continued to trade grain. They argued that the situation in Afghanistan was not severe enough to justify collective economic sanctions. These two

countries may also have wanted to take advantage of the commercial benefits of the situation or at least safeguard present and future trade relations with Russia.[25] Similarly, the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine are countered by the willingness of China and India to maintain strong trade relations with Russia.

A sanctioned nation can restructure its economy to survive the sanctions imposed on it. A targeted nation may begin stockpiling necessary goods, shift trading partners, increase domestic production, and increase self-sufficiency by reallocating resources from export industries to import-substitution industries. Once the sanctioned nation can economically adjust to the sanctions, continued or new sanctions would have minimal effect on the economy. If sanctions do not produce immediate results, their effectiveness diminishes over time, and their chances of success become less likely.[26] For example, Cuba and North Korea have managed to survive despite the numerous sanctions imposed on these countries.

Many economists and historians hold that sanctions have generally been politically ineffectual. The first large-scale study of the effectiveness of economic sanctions in the twentieth century, published in 1985, found that sanctions succeeded in only one-third of the cases in which they were imposed. Thus, while there is little likelihood that economic sanctions will achieve their intended goals, there is a high probability that they will harm the most vulnerable members of a sanctioned nation's population.[27] A more recent study on the effectiveness of economic sanctions, published in 2024, found that sanctions were successful only 26% of the time in influencing policy change in governments.

The comparison between the uncertain success of economic sanctions and the inevitable suffering of civilian populations reveals

[25] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?*, 61-2.

[26] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?*, 86-7.

[27] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 135.

a lack of proportionate reason for the use of economic sanctions. Just as obliteration bombing cannot justify military necessity as a proportionate reason because of the imbalance between uncertain success and inevitable suffering, economic sanctions cannot appeal to a proportionate reason due to the many possibilities of failure and the uneven results of sanctions, as shown by historical data.

In the case of obliteration bombing, an argument was made that bombing can be allowed by the principle of double effect if the death of civilians is not intended directly by the bombers. Ford rejects this argument in view of the fact that the very nature and purpose of obliteration bombing presume a direct intention to target civilians. In the case of economic sanctions, an argument can be made that the sanctions were not directed at civilians but at the sanctioned nation's leaders. The countries imposing the sanctions are not causing the harm; rather, it is the targeted nation's leaders who have not complied with the imposing nation's demands.[28] This argument seeks to absolve the imposing nation of moral responsibility for the suffering inflicted on the targeted nation. This argument ignores the fact that those who suffer most under economic sanctions are not the political elites but the weakest members of society. Those most affected are those who have no choice in the matter, and while the imposing nations have a choice in what kind or degree of sanctions they can impose, which can either limit or maximize the suffering of the population. To choose to embargo food does not mean merely targeting political leaders, but targeting all those who need food. An oil embargo does not mean simply a strike against a political leader; it means an attack on all aspects of life that require oil as fuel. By nature, certain economic sanctions target an entire nation's population. It would be intellectually dishonest for the imposing nation to claim to intend only a limited target within the targeted nation (e.g., a political leader or party) when the sanctions are designed to affect the entire nation. If the sanctions are designed to cause indiscriminate suffering, then the evil effects of the sanctions are directly intended, and therefore, the principle of double effect is not applicable.

[28] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 132.

In the case of obliteration bombing, Ford anticipated the dangers of worse atrocities against noncombatants if the policy of obliteration bombing went unchallenged. Similarly, the continued use of economic sanctions as a tool of coercion in achieving political goals could lead to abuse. Sanctions are specifically designed to be used by more economically developed nations against nations with weak or dependent economies. The effectiveness of sanctions depends on the extent to which a targeted nation's economy depends on imports.[29] There is a danger that sanctions will be used opportunistically by powerful nations.[30]

The ease with which larger nations can impose sanctions at minimal cost to themselves can lead to the danger of using economic sanctions for non-political reasons, such as making a symbolic statement or as punishment. In the case of using sanctions to "send a message," an ethical problem arises, as the mode of communication entails the suffering of the most vulnerable citizens of the targeted nation. Human beings are reduced to means to an end, and human suffering is turned into a device of communication. The inherent dignity and value of persons are violated. This use of sanctions cannot be morally justified because of its utilitarian attitude to persons.[31]

When economic sanctions are used as punishment, there is a danger of equating political and economic strength with moral authority. When sanctions are used as punishment, the sanctioned nation is branded by the imposing nation as a "bad" nation.[32] This label falls not only on the targeted nation's political leaders but also on its citizens living within and outside the nation. Sanctions as punishment can cause not only economic suffering, but they can also encourage an attitude of suspicion, acts of discrimination, and even violent attacks on ordinary citizens of the targeted nation whenever they interact

[29] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 135-6.

[30] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 137.

[31] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 138-9.

[32] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 139.

with other nationalities. Even if the punishment stems from political or military action or policy primarily involving the targeted nation's leaders, every citizen feels its effects. If the suffering of the citizenry is the intended effect so that a punished government would feel pressure to step down or change policies, then, in that case, the same ethical problem of the utilitarian use of persons becomes present. The suffering of the innocent is used as a tool to punish the guilty. This objectification of persons cannot be morally justified.

In summary, the same moral reasoning that led John Ford to condemn obliteration bombing as immoral can be applied to the condemnation of certain economic sanctions that gravely affect general populations. Similar to obliteration bombing, economic sanctions on basic goods and services: a) are by designed to cause direct suffering to a majority of citizens, without any distinctions between innocent and guilty, b) are used with the direct intention of causing large scale human suffering, c) cause immediate suffering while uncertain of success due to various factors, and therefore the principle of double effect cannot be applied due to a lack of a proportionate reason, d) are open to abuse and can lead to worse applications in the future. Though non-violent compared to obliteration bombing, certain economic sanctions can be considered weapons of mass destruction against weak economies and are also instruments of repression against the innocent. The imposition of broad economic sanctions on basic goods and services needed by a civilian population deserves serious critique not only from the Church but also from political leaders and citizens worldwide.

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THE *COLLOQUY* IN ST. IGNATIUS' *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* AS AN *I-THOU* ENCOUNTER WITH MARY, JESUS, AND GOD THE FATHER IN SEEKING FOR WHAT WE DESIRE

Thomas Sherman, SJ

Abstract. In the *Spiritual Exercises* (henceforth *SpEx*) of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the *Colloquy* is a conversation between the exercitant (the one engaged in the *SpEx*) and the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in which the persons addressed are asked to help the exercitant obtain what s/he desires from God. Placed at the conclusion of practically all the meditations and contemplations throughout the *SpEx*, the Ignatian Colloquy can be considered of crucial importance in the *SpEx* and the summit of Ignatian prayer. Yet as important as the Ignatian Colloquy is in the *SpEx*, putting the *Colloquy* into practice by fully entering into conversation with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father can be challenging, for as we all know from experience, attentively listening to and conversing with another person demands particular effort and intention. As a way of helping us in listening to and responding to the persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy*, that they might aid us in obtaining what we desire, we consider the thought of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber on the subject of addressing another person as *You* from an *I-You* attitude.

***Keywords*:** Ignatian Colloquy; *I and Thou*; personal encounter; conversation

In his classic work *I and Thou*, Buber famously describes an encounter with another person as our *You*. In such an encounter, according to Buber, we become aware of that person not as an *It* (a mere *object* for us in getting what we want) but rather as *You* – a unique mystery worthy of our undivided attention. Applied to the Ignatian Colloquy, addressing and conversing with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father as our *You* in the way Buber suggests may help us in addressing and conversing with the persons so that we can effectively obtain from them the graces we seek. With this in mind, I propose in this article that we follow Buber in considering the Ignatian *Colloquy* as an *I-Thou* encounter with Mary, Jesus, and the Father. To do this, I begin with an introduction to the Ignatian *Colloquy* as presented by St.Ignatius in the *SpEx* with a brief overview of Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. I then compare Buber's description of *I-You* relations in addressing and conversing with each other and compare such conversations with St. Ignatius' description of the colloquies with Mary, Jesus, and God the Father in the *SpEx*. Finally, I examine Buber's description of a personal encounter with God as our eternal *You* and compare this description with how the exercitant in the *SpEx* can become aware of the eternal *You* in addressing and conversing with the persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy*.[1]

1. The Ignatian *Colloquy* and Martin Buber's *I and Thou*

The Ignatian *Colloquy*

The *Colloquy* in the *SpEx* is understood as a "spiritual exercise," that is, an *activity* like making an examination of conscience, entering into a meditation, or contemplation, or vocal or mental prayer or any

[1] This article is a revised and rewritten version of my "The Spirit of the Colloquy in St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* and Martin Buber's *I and Thou*" in *Ignaziana revisita di ricerca teologica* no. 35, (2023) 52-67 and my "The Attitude of Reverence in the Ignatian Colloquies of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, in *Hekima Journal of Theology* no. 69 (December 2024). A part of this article is reprinted with permission from *Hekima Review* 69 (2024). All rights reserved.

other activity that can aid the exercitant [the one making the retreat] in being free of inordinate attachments so as to seek and find the will of God in a choice of a way of life.[2]

More specifically,

> a colloquy, properly so called, means speaking as one friend speaks with another, or a servant with a master, at times asking him for some favor, at other times accusing himself of something badly done, or sharing personal concerns and asking advice about them (*SpEx* 54)[3]

In the colloquy as a conversation, the persons addressed are Jesus or the Father, or the Trinity, or in sequence the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father. In this conversation

> …one should talk over motives and present petitions according to circumstance. S/he may be tempted or may enjoy consolation, may desire to have this virtue or another, to be disposed in this way or that, or may seek to grieve or rejoice according to the matter being contemplated. Finally, s/he should ask for what is more earnestly desired with regard to some particular interest. (*SpEx* 199)

In the *SpEx*, the colloquy is usually made at the conclusion of some meditation or contemplation and marks the culmination or the culminating moment of that spiritual exercise as the exercitant is to strive to address *directly* the *persons* of Mary, Jesus, the Father, or the Trinity.[4]

Speaking directly to the person or persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy* involves moving beyond merely meditating on a particular scene by acts of the imagination or intellect by stepping forth to actually *address and speak* to the person. For example, at *SpEx* 53 the exercitant is invited not simply to *imagine* and *behold* Jesus before us on the Cross, *reflect* on

[2] The first (as well as the twenty-first) of the *Introductory Observations* at the beginning of the *SpEx*.

[3] Michael Ivens' translation, from his *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1998), 53. As Ivens notes, the colloquy is characterized "by a personal and spontaneous quality of conversation between friends."

[4] Ibid.

what he has done, is doing, and will do for Christ, but is instructed to actually *speak* with Christ, *asking* how it is that as our Creator, He has become man and suffered for us. And after conversing with Him in this way, the exercitant is to close by *praying* the *Our Father*.

Similarly in the colloquy at *SpEx* 61, in considering who God is against whom one has sinned and the reaction of creation and all the saints to one's sin, the exercitant is instructed to *extol* the mercy of God our Lord by *pouring out* his thoughts to Him and *giving thanks* that up to this moment God has given him life, and by *resolving* with his grace to amend his life. He is then to close by *praying* the *Our Father*.

Again, in the first *Colloquy* at the end of the Meditation on the Two Standards (*SpEx* 147) after imagining Satan and the Lord and reflecting over the significance of their different messages the exercitant is instructed to *address* our Lady, *asking* her to obtain from her Son and Lord the grace to be received under His standard in the highest spiritual poverty, even in actual poverty, to bear insults and wrongs to imitate Him the better, closing with praying a *Hail Mary*. In the second colloquy, the exercitant is to *ask* Jesus her Son to obtain for us these same favors from the Father, saying the *Anima Christi,* and in the third colloquy to *beg* the Father for the same graces, closing with an *Our Father*.

Further, in addressing the persons about poverty, should the exercitant feel an attachment opposed to actual poverty and seek to overcome this, she is encouraged in the Note following the meditation of the Three Classes of Men (*SpEx* 157) to *beg* Our Lord in the colloquies to choose her to serve the Lord in actual poverty, *insisting* that this is what she desires, *begging* and *pleading* for this – provided that it be for the Lord's service and praise.

In the same manner, in the Note to the Three Kinds of Humility (*SpEx* 168) with respect to the third degree of humility, the exercitant should *beg* our Lord in the colloquies that the Lord may choose him to serve Him in the third degree of humility so as to imitate and serve Him more closely – provided this be to His equal or greater praise and service.

In these examples, the colloquy as conversation with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the as Father or the Trinity demands from the exercitant an effort beyond acts of the imagination and intellect in clearly articulating what it is that is desired and in offering that desire to the persons while listening for their response.

The same invitation to exercise greater generosity toward the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father appears in the colloquies following meditations and contemplations in the Third and Fourth Weeks. Finally, in the *Contemplation to Attain the Love of God,* the exercitant, after reflecting on all that God has done for him as well as on how God dwells in, works, and labors for him, is to conclude by offering the Lord the *Suscipe,* entering into a colloquy that concludes in praying the *Our Father*.

While each meditation and contemplation in the *SpEx* is a spiritual exercise in itself, the colloquy is clearly the culmination of this exercise in which the exercitant endeavors to meet God in addressing and conversing with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and, finally, the Father. The Ignatian Colloquy, so understood and practiced, can be considered the summit of Ignatian prayer in seeking, finding, and carrying out the will of God in a choice of life.

But given the Colloquy's importance in the *SpEx*, how is the exercitant to prepare properly for the colloquy?

In his *Additional Directions* at *SpEx* 75.3, Ignatius gives some instructions as to how to enter into prayer:

> I will stand for the space of an *Our Father,* or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me…Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.[5]

These instructions refer to entering into prayer, not specifically into the Colloquy. However, to the extent that the exercitant is being

[5] Louis Puhl translation from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, a translation based on Studies in the language of the Autograph (1951) (Chicago: Loyola Press).

directed to prepare to *address* God, these instructions are pertinent for preparing to enter into the *Colloquy*.

In the *Introductory Observations* (*SpEx* 3), we read:

> In all the Spiritual Exercises which follow, we make use of the acts of intellect in reasoning, and of the acts of will in manifesting our love. However, we must observe that when in acts of will we address God our Lord or His saints either vocally or mentally, greater reverence is required on our part than when we use the intellect in reasoning.

Addressing and conversing with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in the Ignatian Colloquy requires of the exercitant not just acts of intellect but acts of will in a loving reverence for the persons addressed so that they might intercede for me and/or grant me the grace I seek. As this personal commitment in addressing and conversing with each of the persons is inspired by the presence and action of God's Spirit,[6] the Ignatian Colloquy can be understood as this divinely graced relationship between the exercitant and the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father, a relationship which enables the exercitant to ask for and receive the grace sought for from the persons.

Martin Buber's *I and Thou*

One way we might more fully dispose ourselves to the grace of God in addressing the person of Mary. Jesus and the Father in the Ignatian Colloquy is to consider our relationship with the persons as an *I-Thou* encounter as described by Martin Buber in his classic work *I and Thou*.[7] In the following, we shall consider addressing and conversing

[6] While the person of the Spirit is rarely mentioned explicitly in the *SpEx*, His presence and influence are acknowledged throughout: e.g. *SpEx* 102, 106-109, in the process of the Election *SpEx* 69-189, cf. Ivens (trans.), *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 77, and most notably for our concern in this paper as the personal bond in the relationship between Christ and His Church, *SpEx* 365, the same bond between the exercitant and the persons addressed in the *Colloquy*.

[7] Martin Buber, *I and Thou and Afterword*, translation by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Touchstone 1996), 53. This will be the translation used throughout the paper.

with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in an *I-Thou* encounter with them.

According to Buber, each of us is a subject (an *I*) in relation to the world and others in the world. *How* we relate to the world and others in the world depends on our taking one of two basic attitudes.[8] One attitude, which he calls "*I-You*" is the way *I* relate to the world and others in the world as real and of value in and of themselves apart from me and my own concerns, while the other attitude, which he calls *I-It*, is the way *I* can approach the world and others simply as an object of my own particular concerns. When I *address* another out of an *I-You* attitude, I address that other as my "*You*" and when this attitude and address are mutual, we share an *I-You* relation with each other.[9] However, should I address the other from an *I-It* attitude I am in effect treating that other as an *It* - a mere object of a limited concern or project of mine.[10] When one or both of us address each other as an *It* out of an *I-It* attitude, we cannot enter into the spirit of an *I-You*

[8] According to Buber, there is no world of appearance, there is only the world – which appears twofold to us according to our twofold attitude, cf. Buber, *I and Thou* 125.

[9] Cf. Buber, *I and Thou*, 89. Speaking the primal word *"You"* in dialogue for Buber is not a *description* of the partner but an act of intending (*Meinen*) the reality of the partner. Later, Buber explains that the term *You* points to the reality intended, or "to something in reality that had not or had too little been seen" cf. Martin Buber, "Replies to My Critics," in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, 689-744, Ed. Paul. Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (Chicago, IL: Open Court Press, 1967), 693.

[10] In a later work commenting on *I and Thou*, Buber makes this explicit "What I mean is that when a man presents himself to the 'world' or in general to others, when he takes up an 'attitude,' when he 'speaks a primal word,' it is either the one or the other – and that he actualizes either the one or the other. But I do not mean at all that the life of man or even only his 'inner life' represents a continuity of such attitudes, such 'speakings' such actualizations. In the one moment he is over against another as such, sees him as present and relates to him thus. In the other moment he sees everything else collected around him and from time to time singles out, observes, explores, applies, uses. Both the moments are included in the dynamic of a lived life." Cf. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 699.

relation. This twofold attitude and address determine not only how I relate to others but how I understand myself – either as the *I* of a *person* in an *I-You* relation or as an *ego* with respect to my object in an *I-It* relation.[11]

While Buber recognizes three spheres of possible *I-You* relations, relations with things in nature, with other human beings, and with God,[12] he concentrates on human and divine *I-You* relations,[13] relations in which the partners, human and divine, can address each other as *You*. In considering both human and divine, *I-You* Buber recognizes that in addressing God as our eternal *You,* we depend on our experience of an *I-You* relation with our fellow human beings as *You*, for

> only [in this human relation] does the word, formed in language, encounter its reply[14] so that] the relation to the human being is the proper metaphor for the relation to God – as genuine address is here accorded a genuine answer.[15]

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[11] Buber, *I and Thou*, 111-112. Buber's analysis of this twofold attitude and especially his valorization of the *I-You* attitude has been controversial, cf. Michael Zank, "Martin Buber," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (*online 2020) and most notably perhaps Walter Kaufmann, "Buber's Failures and Triumph," 1-24, Steven Katz, "A Critical Review of Martin Buber's Epistemology of I-Thou" 89-121 and Bernhard Casper's "Franz Rosenzweig's Criticism in Buber's I and Thou," in *Martin Buber A Centenary Volume*, ed. Haim Gordon and Jochanan. Bloch (Ben Gurion University of the Negev: KTAV Publishing House, 1984), 90-120. Katz also offers a sustained criticism of Buber in Steven Katz, "Dialogue and Revelation in the Thought of Martin Buber," *Religious Studies* 14 (1978): 57-68.

[12] Including possible *I-You* relations with forms of art, cf. Buber, *I and Thou*, 60-61.

[13] In his *Afterword* written year after *I and Thou*, Buber states that his "most essential concern" in the work was the central significance of the close association of the relation to God with the relation to one's fellow man. Cf. Buber, *Afterword*, 169.

[14] Buber, *I and Thou*, 151.

[15] Buber, *I and Thou*, 151. In addition to being the proper metaphor for the relation to God, Buber later added that our human relations with each other are essentially similar to our relations with God in that both relations involve a

In the following, we follow Buber in his description of some basic characteristics of a human *I-You* relation and then consider how these characteristics might be incorporated in the Ignatian Colloquy in our addressing the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in seeking from them what we desire.

2. Human *I-You* Relations and the Ignatian *Colloquy*

In the First Part of *I and Thou,* Buber describes a number of basic characteristics of human *I-You* relations in which the partners address each other as *You*. We will list and describe these characteristics and then compare them with the exercitant's relation with the persons he or she addresses in the Ignatian *Colloquy*.

The first characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations is that in such relations, the partners treat each other as a person (*person*)[16] in addressing each other as *You* with the *whole* of their being.[17] This is in contrast to an *I-It* relation in which the partners withhold a part of themselves in treating each other as an object (*It*) from a limited *ego* (*eingewesen*) concern they may have.[18]

In the Ignatian *Colloquy*, the exercitant addresses and enters into conversation with the persons of Mary, Jesus, or the Father or the Trinity of divine persons. For the exercitant to address the persons in the *Colloquy* with the whole of his or her being, will require approaching them with proper respect. This respect will demand much more from the exercitant than mere mental acts of intellect in thinking of

turning to the other as a *You* and both find their fulfillment in actual reciprocity, Cf. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 694.

[16] For Buber speaking, *"You"* to the other out of an *I-You* attitude is not a *description* but an act of intending (*Meinen*) the other as a reality in himself. In a later work, Buber explains that speaking the word *You points* to a reality that transcends myself, cf. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 693.

[17] Buber, *I and Thou,* 54, 89.

[18] Buber, *I and Thou*, 112-115. In treating the partner in the conversation simply as an object of my own perspective I limit myself to an ego among other egos.

and imagining the persons he or she is to address. It will require, as Ignatius reminds us in the *Introductory Observations* (*SpEx* 3), an act of will in approaching the persons with special *reverence* for who they are in themselves (cf. *SpEx* 75.3). Such reverence for the inherent dignity of the persons addressed in the *Colloquy* can only be the fruit of grace received after prayerful preparation. Addressing the persons of Mary, Jesus, and God the Father with the reverence each deserves would be to address them with the whole of the exercitant's being as *You*, according to Buber's first characteristic of *I-You* relations.

The second basic characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations is that the partners in this relation do not seek to have or *possess* each other in the experience (*Gebrauchen*) or use (*Erfahren*) each other from an *I-It* attitude,[19] but rather they desire to be *with* each other in an *I-You relation* (*Beziehung*).[20]

As applied to the Ignatian *Colloquy*, if the exercitant is to address and converse with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father as *You* according to this second characteristic of an *I-You* relation, he or she must approach the persons from a desire to meet and converse with them rather than simply to obtain something from them. For to approach the persons (even with reverence) solely from a desire to obtain from them what the exercitant seeks would be for the exercitant to treat them as an object (*It*) of the exercitant's own *ego* concerns – however noble those concerns may be!

The third characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations is a mutual awareness of each other as *You*, an awareness that is *immediate*

[19] "Experience" (*Erfahrung*) founds the world of It. Buber plays on the etymological root of the term in *fahren* "to travel." To travel is to experience only the surface of life, whereas real intimacy is possible only through prolonged dwelling with the other. Buber uses the term *erlebnis*, from *leben*, "to live;" *I and Thou*, 70 to express the *I-You* relation signifying authentic human living, *I and Thou* 59, 60, cf. Robert Wood, *Martin Buber's Ontology* (Evanston Northwestern Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, 1969), 40.

[20] Buber, *I and Thou*, 56.

or *unmediated* (*Unmittelbare*),[21] without any motive other than simply encountering each other as *You*.[22]

This third characteristic of human *I-You* relations for Buber will further challenge the exercitant. For in the Ignatian *Colloquy,* if the exercitant addresses Mary, Jesus, or the Father in order that they respond to his/her appeal to obtain a grace or favor from them, the exercitant must consider his or her *motivation* in making this appeal. In approaching the persons in the colloquy to obtain anything (even an important grace) from them, is the exercitant seeking something *other* than what concerns the persons themselves? If so, the exercitant is not really seeking to address the persons themselves immediately in an unmediated way but rather is using them as a *means* for the object s/he seeks. If the exercitant desires to address the persons immediately in the *Colloquy* as *You* s/he will have to seek what the persons themselves seek. And what the persons of Mary, Jesus, and God the Father desire is simply the *glory of God*: that God may be known and loved as God deserves. Here, the importance of Ignatian right intention is crucial. Right intention is the graced attitude received from carefully following Ignatius' instructions before entering into the *Colloquy* (as before entering any prayer), of begging God for the grace that "all my intentions, actions, and operations be directed to His praise and service" (*SpEx*46). If what the exercitant seeks in addressing the persons is to obtain what s/he seeks so as to glorify God in His praise and service, what is being sought for in addressing the persons is not being sought for as a *means* to an end but is one with the end itself: the glory of God. In sharing the same desire that the persons themselves have, the glory of God, the exercitant can address the persons *immediately* as *You,* and they can address him or her in the same way. Thus, the exercitant in the Ignatian Colloquy can be understood in an analogous way to fulfill Buber's third characteristic of *I-You* relations: the mutual awareness of each of the partners as *You* that is *immediate* or *unmediated* without any motive other than simply encountering each other as *You*.

[21] Buber, *I and Thou*, 65-67.

[22] Buber, *I and Thou*, 62, 63.

A fourth characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations is that in *addressing* each other as *You,* the partners in the relation become aware of their *presence* (*Gegenwart*) to each other here and now.[23] This awareness of mutual presence in their *I-You* relation is in contrast to an *I-It* relation in which the partners treat each other as objects (*It*) of memory based on past experience of one another or as objects of a future anticipation of each other based on their memory of the past.[24]

This fourth characteristic of human *I-You* relations can be realized in the Ignatian *Colloquy* when the persons of Mary, Jesus, or God the Father are addressed by the exercitant in faith and reverence. For when the exercitant addresses the persons in faith as *You,* s/he becomes aware of the persons' real presence here and now. This is in contrast to the exercitant merely *thinking about* or *imagining* the persons from a memory of them based on hearing what *others* have experienced, or from reading the Bible, or from theological study. For Buber, we can address each other as *You* only in an *I-You* relation, and we can become aware of the presence of each other only in addressing and being addressed by each other directly. Analogously, in the Ignatian *Colloquy*, if the exercitant relies not on supernatural faith in addressing the person but simply on a memory of the persons acquired from some other source, s/he will not be aware of their presence here and now. Sincerely addressing the persons in reverent faith (and listening for their response) enables the exercitant to be aware of their presence as *You*.

A fifth characteristic Buber sees in *I-You* human relations is the awareness of the *exclusiveness* of the *You* in the partners' mutual address.

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[23] Buber, *I and Thou*, 63, cf. 58. This difference between presence (*Präesenz*) and object especially marks the real boundary between *You* and *It*, Buber, *I and Thou* 63-64.

[24] The *I* of the basic word *I-You* directly confronts (*Gegenüber*) the *You*; the *I* of *I-It* rather surrounds itself with a multitude of contents (*Inhalten*) with a past but no present. Objectification reduces the present to the past in the sense that the uniqueness we meet is considered only in terms of what it has in common with other things encountered in the past, the other becomes object of experience and future anticipation of the other is based on past experience of the other as object, cf. Wood, *Martin Buber's Ontology*, 54.

By exclusiveness (*Ausschließlichkeit*), Buber means that in addressing each other as *You,* the person addressed "fills the firmament" of the one addressing him or her in such a way as to *include* the addressor's own self-awareness as well as an awareness of others around him.[25] It is only when the partners step out of an *I-You* relation by taking an *I-It* attitude to each other that their awareness of themselves and others becomes limited to an *aspect* of the other as a mere object of an egocentric concern - an object limited to spatial, temporal, and causal dimensions locatable in a system of physical coordinates.[26]

In the Ignatian *Colloquy*, one might say that when the exercitant addresses Mary, Jesus, or the Father (or the Trinity) as *You* his or her awareness of the person addressed can also be understood as "filling the firmament" in such a way as to include an awareness of the world and others in the awareness of that person. More profoundly, though, when the exercitant's ultimate concern in addressing one of the persons is God's glory, the exercitant's awareness of the person addressed

[25] Buber, *I and Thou*, 59, 126, cf. 66, 67. Buber likens this exclusiveness to prayer for, "as prayer is not in time but time in prayer and as the sacrifice not in space but space in the sacrifice", so in addressing each other as *You* we no longer find ourselves in time or space but we experience time and space in our awareness of each other. We shall see though, that this exclusivity is limited by the duration of the presence of the *You*, cf. Buber, *I and Thou*, 126, 127 and by the introduction of another *You*, cf. *I and Thou* 148.

[26] Buber, *I and Thou*, 60, 81. Steven Katz, in his article, "Dialogue and Revelation in the Thought of Martin Buber," *Religious Studies* 14, (1978): 58-67 criticizes Buber for completely separating *I-Thou* relations and *I-It*. But with respect to specifically *I-You* human relations, while Buber does separate the two as attitudes, his understanding of the I-You attitude in human relations can. *pace* Katz, *include* an awareness of the objective dimension to the human You - though not as *separate* from the You, cf. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 711. This *I-You* inclusion of the objective can be seen in Buber's description of community life in which the drive to experience and use is objectifying only when my relations with others in the community are no longer *I-You* relations. The economic will to profit and the political will to power can be natural and legitimate when tied to the will to human relations (*Beziehungswillen*) and carried by it, cf. Buber, *I and Thou*, 97. Indeed, community life in the spirit requires the It world – but only as properly ordered to the Spirit, cf. *I and Thou*, 99, 100.

in the Ignatian *Colloquy* will include a desire for the real good of all human beings. In this way, the Ignatian *Colloquy* can be understood to fulfill Buber's fifth characteristic of a human *I-You* relations in a faith-transcendent way.

The sixth characteristic of the human *I-You* relationship for Buber is a reciprocity (*Gegenseitigheit*) in speaking *You* to each other.[27] Buber sees this reciprocity as an encounter (*Begegnung*) in mutual election and electing, passivity and activity at once.[28] This reciprocity in the encounter is a *conversation* as a genuine *dialogue*.

In the Ignatian *Colloquy*, this reciprocity in dialogue can be seen in the encouragement the exercitant receives to address and converse with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father or with the Trinity as with a *friend*. A conversation *with* friends cannot be a monologue in which one friend does all the talking, but is rather a mutual activity of two speaking with and listening to each other. Such interaction in speaking with and listening to each other will demand of the exercitant not only his gift of self in sharing with the persons what he desires to obtain from them, but also in periods of silence when he or she will actively listen to how the persons may respond. Conversation between the exercitant and the persons he or she addresses in the *Colloquy* will be a genuine dialogue which will demand of the exercitant their whole self, both in speaking and listening.

A seventh characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations is that of a relation based on dispositions of *belief*, *will*, and *grace* - belief (*Glauben*) in the partners' separate individual identity,[29] their will (*willen*)

[27] Buber, *I and Thou*, 67, 84.

[28] Buber, *I and Thou*, 62, cf. 124, 125.

[29] What Buber understood as *belief* in *I and Thou* in his later work *Distance and Relation* becomes the awareness of a primal setting at a distance, the first of a twofold principle of human life of which will is the second, cf. "Distance and Relation" in Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman*, translated and edited with an introduction by Maurice Friedman (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 59-71, and Appendix II: A Tentative Answer" in Buber's "Autobiographical Fragments" in The Philosophy of Martin Buber *The Philosophy*

to address each other as *You,* and the grace (*Gnaden*) of being addressed by each other as *You*.[30]

If *I-You* human relations for Buber consist in the partners' mutual dispositions of *belief*, *will*, and a reliance on *grace*, a certain analogy can be seen to these dispositions in the Ignatian *Colloquy* in the exercitant's addressing the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father. For by addressing and conversing with the person or persons with supernatural faith, the exercitant *believes* in their reality and *wills* to address and converse with them, trusting in the *grace* of their response to prayer. These dispositions of belief and will in addressing the persons and the grace of being addressed by them in the Ignatian Colloquy are believed to be effects of the Holy Spirit as God's response to the exercitant's asking for divine assistance in the preparatory prayer Ignatius asks of every exercitant to make (cf. *SpEx* 46).

An eighth characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations, a characteristic which flows from the reciprocity of their inter-action, is what he understands as the *spirit* (*Geist*) between the two persons. For Buber, "spirit" is understood as both the word spoken *between I* and *You*,[31] as well as the silence the partners share in listening to each other.[32]

While Ignatius does not explicitly name the Holy Spirit in the *SpEx*, the presence and action of the Spirit are presumed throughout the *Exercises* and especially in the *Colloquy*.[33] This eighth characteristic

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of Martin Buber, Library of Living Philosophers Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York: Open Court, 1967), 35, and in Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 691.

[30] Buber, *I and Thou*, 62, cf. 109.

[31] Buber, *I and Thou*, 89. In a later work, Buber describes "the between" in a genuine dialogue as that reality shared by the partners which is nevertheless neither their physical presence in speaking and gesturing nor the psychic phenomena they experience within themselves, cf. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 706-707.

[32] Buber, *I and Thou*, 89.

[33] Cf. Footnote 5., and cf. Ivens (trans.), *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises,* 26, 30, 31, 32, 43, 54, 65, 76, 77, 88, 205-209, 211.

of human *I-You* relations for Buber can be understood analogously in the Ignatian Colloquy as the presence and action of the Holy Spirit between the exercitant and the person or persons addressed. The Holy Spirit unites the exercitant and person addressed when the exercitant intends to address the person in order to give glory to God as voiced in the preparatory prayer (*SpEx* 46) and in the reverence shown to the persons in addressing them (*SpEx* 3, 75.3).

The ninth characteristic of human *I-You* relations for Buber is that the word '*You'* spoken between the partners arises from an innate *longing* for *I-You* relations. Buber describes this longing as a desire for an *innate You* – what he calls the *a priori* of all relation.[34] According to Buber, this fundamental innate human desire for a relation with *You* is actualized in each finite *You* encountered[35] , but is fully actualized only in relation with the *eternal You*,[36] that *You* that, unlike any finite *You,* cannot be an *It*.[37]

[34] Buber, *I and Thou*, 78, 79. Buber believes that the development of the child's soul in its prenatal life in the womb is connected with this longing for the *You*, as an innate drive for contact with another being which appears originally in tactile contact followed by optical contact from which the drive for reciprocity and tenderness appears. While his description of an innate You as an *a priori* of all relation realized in the *You* we encounter, cf. *I and Thou*, 79 makes use of recognizably Kantian terminology, what he means by this description need not be construed as referring to anything more than the natural human desire for personal relations with others, a desire that is rooted in human rationality and so present as a natural *potential* in the human infant – a potential which is subsequently actualized in his relations with others throughout his life. But for another interpretation and critical evaluation of Buber's philosophical dependence on Kant's epistemology in *I and Thou*, cf. Steven Katz, "A Critical Review of Martin Buber's Epistemology of I and Thou," in *Martin Buber: A Centenary Volume*, ed. Haim Gordon and Jochanan Bloch (Ben-Gurion University of Negev: KTAV Publishing, 1984), 89-99 and Steven Katz, "Lawrence Perlman's Buber's Anti-Kantianism: A Reply," *Association of Jewish Studies*, Spring (1990) Vol. 15. 1 109-117.

[35] Buber, *I and Thou*, 78.

[36] Buber, *I and Thou*, 128.

[37] Buber, *I and Thou*, 123.

Buber's description of this *You* as *innate* describes for him the fundamental human longing for a relationship which finds its ultimate fulfillment in addressing and conversing with the eternal *You*. This understanding of the innate *You* in all of us can be seen analogously in the Ignatian *Colloquy*, specifically when the persons of Jesus and God the Father are addressed. For in the exercitant's address to Jesus and/or the Father as God, an innate human longing of the heart can be supposed, a longing expressed by St. Augustine in his *Confessions* in his prayer "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."[38] The exercitant in addressing Jesus and then the Father can be understood as an actualization of this deep human longing to rest in a relationship with God. This resting in God in addressing Jesus or the Father can be understood as an actualization of an innate God-given desire analogous to what Buber understands as the actualization of our innate human desire for the eternal *You*.

The tenth characteristic of human *I-You* relations is what Buber calls the *transience* or evanescence (*Vergänglichkeit*) of the partners' awareness of their *You*.[39] The awareness of the human *You* alternates between actuality and latency (*Latenz*) [40] as our intention to actively encounter the *You* in each other is prone to fade into an objectivizing gaze, which reduces our *You* into an *It*.[41] This loss of actual encounter between the partners is not permanent nor irreversible, but rather latent

[38] St. Augustine, *Confessions* I, 4.

[39] Buber, *I and Thou*, 146, 147.

[40] Buber, *I and Thou*, 147, 68-69, 84-85. By "*Latenz*" as opposed to actuality, Buber might be understood as referring to a state of soul akin to an Aristotelian habit or fixed disposition formed as a result of repeated action, cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1.

[41] Buber, *I and Thou* 147, 68-69. Genuine contemplation, for example, never lasts long; the natural being that only now revealed itself in the mystery of reciprocity has again become describable, analyzable, classifiable, *I and Thou* 68. The inherent limitation of the *You* in the world seems to be reciprocal in Buber's understanding as based on the physical dimension of beings in the world. *I* am limited and so *I* cannot sustain my *I-You* attitude to you and you yourself as limited are susceptible to my reducing *You* to an *It* for me.

insofar as the intention to actively encounter the *You* in each other can be renewed again and again.[42]

An analogous dynamic between actuality and latency can be seen in the exercitant's relation with the persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy*. Actually addressing, conversing, and attentively listening to the persons in the *Colloquy* requires effort. While the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father are always present to the exercitant, the exercitant, due to personal weakness or the inevitable distractions suffered in prayer, cannot always be actually present to the persons in addressing and listening to them as they deserve. But if the exercitant sincerely desires to address the persons as they deserve, the periods of time in which s/he is unable to actually address them out of human weakness can be understood as a period of "latency" during which the exercitant remains open and receptive to God's grace to be renewed in actually addressing the persons as they deserve.

The final characteristic for Buber of human *I-You* relations is that in addressing each other as *You*, the human partners are aware of God as their *eternal You*.

> In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every You we address the eternal You.[43]

We will explore this awareness of an eternal *You* in human *I-You* relations more in detail below, but at this point it could be pointed out that this ultimate characteristic for Buber of human *I-You* relations may be understood as realized in the Ignatian Colloquy in the exercitant's awareness of the enabling grace of God in his or her addressing the persons of Mary. Jesus, and God the Father, and in responding to them.

This final characteristic of human *I-You* relations serves as an introduction to Buber's description of God as this eternal *You* in the Third Part of *I and Thou.* In examining in some detail how, for Buber,

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[42] Buber, *I and Thou*, 84.

[43] Buber, *I and Thou* 57, 84.

an *I-You* human relation can open us to an awareness of this eternal *You* we can come to appreciate how, in an analogous way, the exercitant in the Ignatian *Colloquy* becomes aware of God as his or her eternal *You* in addressing and conversing with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and God the Father in the Ignatian *Colloquy*.

3. God as our Eternal *You* in *I-You* Relations and the Ignatian *Colloquy*

Addressing God as our Eternal *You* in *I-You* Relations[44]

In the First Part of *I and Thou,* Buber described the main characteristics of human *I-You* relations. The final characteristic of such *I-You* relations was that the *You* we address in addressing each other provides us with some access to God as the eternal *You*. In the Third Part of *I and Thou,* Buber treats in some detail this awareness of the eternal *You.*

At the beginning of the Third Part of *I and Thou*, Buber maintains that "extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal You. Every single You is a glimpse of that.[45] This image of extending lines intersecting in the eternal *You* has puzzled Buber's commentators.[46] Despite this, Buber insists that a glimpse of the eternal *You* is possible for "through (*Durch*) every single You the basic word addresses the eternal You."[47]

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[44] Cf. My article "Addressing and Being Addressed by God in Martin Buber's *I and Thou*," *Landas* 35:1 (2023): 29-67.

[45] Buber, *I and Thou*, 123.

[46] Cf. Yehoshua Amir, "The Finite Thou and the Eternal Thou in the Work of Martin Buber" in *Martin Buber A Centenary Volume*, ed. Haim Gordon and Jochanan Bloch (Ben Gurion University of the Negev: KTAV Publishing House, 1984), 83.

[47] Buber, *I and Thou*, 126.

The finite *You* in human *I-You* relations appears in some way to *mediate* the eternal *You* as providing the occasion for inevitably addressing the eternal *You*:

> Through every single *You*… the innate You is actualized each time without ever being perfected. It attains its perfection solely in the immediate relationship to the You that, in accordance with its nature, cannot become an It.[48]

Besides addressing God as our eternal *You through* a human *You,* Buber also recognizes the possibility of direct unmediated access to the eternal *You* in prayer and sacrifice: "In prayer and sacrifice we step before the countenance of the eternal You and pour ourselves out to God, acting on God without exacting anything from God."[49]

This eternal *You* for Buber is understood as the *Creator* whom we address as being ourselves part of creation: "Creation – happens to us… We participate in it, we encounter the creator, offer ourselves to him, helpers, and companions."[50]

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[48] Buber, *I and Thou*, 126.

[49] Buber, *I and Thou*, 130, 131. Here Buber does admit that our innate *You* can impel us to seek the eternal *You*, even in solitude apart from any human *I-You* relations – as long as in that desire in solitude does not involve a rejection of human *I-You* relations, cf. Buber, *I and Thou* 152, cf. 155. In his later works Buber acknowledges the actuality of a direct relation to God apart from a relation to human beings though he insists that this relation to God must find its complement in the essential relation to man, cf. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 710.

[50] Buber, *I and Thou*, 130. In a later work while Buber admits that the fundamental importance of creation and all its implications are established by his faith, cf. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 702, he tries to understand the act of creation in such a way that does not threaten his belief in the *mutuality* of an *I-You* relationship with God – as seen for example in his prayer "let your will be done – through me whom you need." *I and Thou* 131 and in a later work he writes "I believe not merely in the creative act in the beginning but also in the creation at all times, in which man has a share as God's comrade in the work of creation." Buber, "Replies to My Critics," 714.

Thus, the awareness of God as our eternal *You* - whether as mediated by a human *You* or as unmediated in prayer and sacrifice - presupposes for Buber a faith acceptance of the revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures as Creator and Redeemer. This faith acceptance requires *belief*, *will*, and *grace* - *belief* in the reality and otherness of God, the *will* to address God as *You,* and the acceptance of the *grace* of God's *revelation* (*Offenbarung*) in which

> Man receives, and what he receives is not a content but a presence, a presence as strength. This presence and strength include three elements…first, the whole abundance of actual reciprocity…second, the inexpressible confirmation of meaning…third, the meaning not of «another life» but of this our life…of this our world.[51]

God reveals Himself as the eternal *You* in the *I-You* relation as a life-transforming *presence* that cannot be possessed as an object, a feeling, an *It*, an Idol.[52] The inspired response to this revelation of divine presence is not to try to hold on to the revelation but to go forth for

> When you are sent forth, God remains present for you; whoever walks in his mission always has God before him…of course, he cannot attend to God, but he can converse with him. Bending back, on the other hand, turns God into an object.[53]

Addressing the Persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy* as our *You*

Buber then presupposes his Hebrew faith in God as a Creating Providence when God is addressed as our eternal *You* in prayer and sacrifice, or when we address and are addressed by each other as *You* in an *I-You* relation. In turning to the Ignatian Colloquy in the *SpEx,* the exercitant's Christian faith enables him or her to have an awareness of the eternal *You* as *Triune* in addressing and conversing specifically with the persons of Jesus and the Father.

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[51] Buber, *I and Thou*, 158-159.

[52] Cf. Buber, *I and Thou*, 129-130, 152, 153-155, 160-168.

[53] Buber, *I and Thou*, 164-165.

We have noted that the Ignatian *Colloquy* requires of the exercitant a supernatural faith in the preparatory prayer to God and a due reverence for the persons to be addressed and conversed with. And following Buber's description of the dialogue partners in human *I-You* relations in the First Part of his *I and Thou* we have suggested that if the exercitant in the Ignatian Colloquy strives to address and converse with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and God the Father in seeking what he or she desires from them, he or she must be primarily concerned with the persons themselves in addressing them directly and that this address will require the whole of the exercitant's being, not desiring to possess or in any way to control the persons but rather to meet them in the present moment of the address, believing in their real presence, conversing with them in the Spirit as a mutual give and take of speaking and listening. And as we have noted, these are but some of the ways Buber's description of human *I-You* relations can help us appreciate the Ignatian Colloquy as an *I-You* relation with the persons of Mary. Jesus, and God the Father.

However, comparing Buber's description of God as our eternal *You* with how the exercitant encounters the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in the Ignatian Colloquy will involve acknowledging the similarities and differences between the Buberian approach to God and the Ignatian.

First, let us note some similarities between the two approaches to God. In their approach to God, both Buber and the exercitant in the Ignatian *Colloquy* presuppose a faith acceptance of what God has revealed of Himself in their respective faith traditions. Further, for both, their approach to God is believed to be inspired by God. Buber's description of addressing God as our eternal *You* arises from what he believes is an innate desire to address a *You* that cannot find satisfaction except in addressing the *eternal You.* This innate desire for the eternal *You* in Buber finds its counterpart in the Ignatian *Colloquy* in the faith of the exercitant who addresses the persons of Mary, Jesus, and God the Father from an innate desire classically articulated by St. Augustine in the *Confessions* his prayer "You have made us for Yourself O Lord,

and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."[54] For both Buber and the exercitant in the Ignatian Colloquy, this desire to address God is innate, that is, inspired by God.

But faith and divine inspiration are not enough for either Buber or for the exercitant in the Ignatian *Colloquy*. For Buber to become aware of God as our eternal *You* - whether in prayer, sacrifice, or in our human relations - requires our taking an *I-You* attitude to whomever we address, an attitude which, among other things, requires a commitment of the *whole* of our being to the one whom we address. Analogously, the Ignatian *Colloquy* requires of the exercitant not merely supernatural faith and religious reverence in addressing the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in faith, but a whole-hearted personal commitment to the persons themselves.

Yet despite these evident and deep similarities, there are important differences between these two ways of addressing God. The most basic of course is the difference in the faith understanding of God. For Buber, the eternal *You* is the *one* Holy God of Israel. For the Christian exercitant, on the other hand, in finally addressing God the Father in the Colloquy with the Father, God is addressed in union with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. In the Ignatian *Colloquy*, then, God is finally addressed by the exercitant as the eternal *You* as *one and Triune*.[55] This difference between Buber and the Ignatian *Colloquy* in addressing God is basic and is rooted in their different faiths.

The second important difference in the two ways of addressing God is the significance of the divine name for each. While for both Buber and the exercitant in the Ignatian *Colloquy*, the name of God

[54] *Confessions* I, 4, in *St. Augustine Confessions*, translated by Henry Chadwick (London: Oxford World Classics, 2009).

[55] In the *Colloquy* (*SpEx* 109) following the Contemplation of the Incarnation and the Nativity it appears that the exercitant can address the Three Persons together. With respect to the addressing the Trinity in addressing the Father in the *SpEx*, cf. Ivens (trans.), *Understanding the Spritual Exercises*, 54, and, in general, the Trinity throughout the *SpEx*, cf. Ivens, (trans.), *Understanding the Spritual Exercises*, 26, 30, 43, 54, 67, 76-77, 93, 172, 178.

is sacred and of utmost religious significance, there is a difference between the two in the significance of the divine name for addressing God. For Buber, what is crucial in addressing God as our eternal *You* is *not* the divine name itself, for

> Men have addressed their eternal You by many names. When they sang of what they had thus named, they still meant You: the first myths were hymns of praise. Then the names entered into the It-language; men felt impelled more and more to think of and to talk about their eternal You as an It. But all the names of God remain hallowed – because they have been used not only to speak *of* God but also to speak *to* him.[56]

It is the *I-You attitude* rather than the divine name that is crucial for Buber, not only in *addressing* the living God but in *receiving* the divine response as a revealing *presence,* as Buber states: "Man receives and what he receives is not a content but a presence."[57]

This emphasis on the *I-You attitude* rather than on the divinely revealed name is rooted in Buber's fear of the all too human desire "to *have* God continually in space and time,"[58] to *define* God[59] or to otherwise *possess* the eternal *You* as an *It* - an *object* of *faith* or of *cult* which *substitutes* for the wholly uncontrollable divine presence. This substitution for the divine presence is, for Buber, the *degeneration* of religion.[60]

> Degeneration of religions means the degeneration of prayer in them: the relational power in them is buried more and more by objecthood,

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[56] Buber, *I and Thou*, 123.

[57] Buber, *I and Thou*, 157, 158.

[58] Buber, *I and Thou*, 161.

[59] Buber, *I and Thou*, 159-160.

[60] Buber, *I and Thou*, 162. For Buber's understanding faith, cf. Maurice Friedman, "Martin Buber's View of Biblical Faith," *Journal of Bible and Religion* XXII (1954): 3-13 and his development in that understanding, cf. Lorenz Wachinger, "Buber's Concept of Faith as a Criticism of Christianity," in *Martin Buber: A Centenary Volume*, ed. Haim Gordon and Jochanan. Bloch (Ben Gurion University of the Negev: KTAV Publishing House, 1984), 437-455.

> and they find it ever more difficult to say You with their whole undivided being.[61]

In the Ignatian *Colloquy*, on the other hand, the exercitant's invoking the names of the persons by addressing them in faith and due reverence is of crucial importance. As the names of each of the persons are divinely revealed, the exercitant believes that by addressing the persons by their revealed names in obedient faith and reverence, he or she is addressing the persons so named, is addressing them in their profoundest reality, even transcending his or her faith grasp. By invoking the names of the persons in addressing them, the exercitant thereby affirms the Biblical understanding of the name as expressing the very *reality* of the person named. In invoking the name of the person addressed in obedient faith, the exercitant can be confident that s/he truly *knows* and is *known* by that person.[62] This supreme importance of the name in addressing the persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy* is also apparent in the instructions given to the exercitant when concluding each of the colloquies where the exercitant is instructed to offer a special prayer to each person calling on the name of the person – Mary in the *Hail Mary*, Jesus, in the *Anima Christi* and ultimately God the Father in the *Our Father*.

Yet Buber's concern for the human tendency to misuse the name of God should be of concern for the exercitant as well in addressing the persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy*. Invoking the names of the persons without *due reverence* would *not* be to address them as who they are in themselves – that is, in their *holiness*. Indeed, it might be said that to invoke the names of the persons in the Ignatian *Colloquy* without due reverence would be, in effect, to treat the persons as if they were but the *idols* of exercitant's fantasy or whim. On the other hand, if the

[61] Buber, *I and Thou*, 167. In his later works, Buber develops a distinction between faith as *trust* and faith as confident *assurance* in dogmatic content as the basis for the distinction he sees between two types of faith: the personal trust (*emuna*) of early Israel, and the dogmatic faith (*pistis*) of Pauline Christianity, cf. Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 7-12, 170-174.

[62] E.g., cf. 1 Cor 13.12. Of course, in this life, the exercitant in the Ignatian *Colloquy* can come to know and be known by God by faith not by sight.

exercitant can by grace invoke the name of the person out of due reverence, the exercitant can be confident in faith that he is addressing the person as they are in themselves, respecting them as *You* with an *I-You* attitude.

While Buber does recognize that God can be directly addressed as *You* in prayer and sacrifice, for the most part, he emphasizes throughout *I and Thou* that we address God as our eternal *You* in addressing each other as our human *You*. In the Ignatian *Colloquy,* on the other hand, the emphasis is not on the exercitant's addressing other exercitants as *You* but rather on the exercitant's direct address of God as *You* in his direct address to Jesus and then in his direct address to God the Father. In the Ignatian *Colloquy*, in other words, with respect to Jesus and the Father, God can be addressed directly without necessarily having to address a merely human *You*. This does not mean, of course, that for Ignatius the exercitant in directly addressing God is thereby *excluding* a *concern* for his or her fellow human beings. For in directly addressing Jesus as God or God the Father in the Ignatian *Colloquy,* the exercitant must share Jesus' and God the Father's concern for the salvation of all human beings. Indeed, in properly addressing Mary, Jesus, and God the Father in the Ignatian Colloquy with the reverence each deserves, the exercitant can be said to be *one* with the person addressed in a shared concern for the Glory of God in the salvation of all men and women.

In fact, addressing the person of Mary in the Ignatian *Colloquy* comes closest to Buber's own understanding of addressing the eternal *You* in addressing a human *You*. As a human being, the quality of our address to her as *You* enables us to address God as our eternal *You* through her. Yet Mary, as the Mother of Jesus, is the Mother of God and so the Mother of the exercitant in faith. For the exercitant, addressing Mary is not like addressing any other human being, as she has a special relationship with Jesus, her son, and through Jesus to God the Father. Addressing her as God's Mother and the exercitant's own Mother in faith and asking her intercession with her Son for what the exercitant seeks is addressing a human *You* who is uniquely related to God and who, in her intercession as Mother of Jesus and

of the exercitant, can uniquely provide the exercitant access to God as the eternal *You*.

Summary in Conclusion

In the Ignatian *Colloquy*, we enter into a relationship with Mary, Jesus, and God the Father, asking them to obtain for us what we seek, which must ultimately be the glory of God in finding and doing the will of God in our lives. As a way of helping us do this, we have considered the Ignatian *Colloquy* as an *I-Thou* encounter with Mary, Jesus, and the Father by considering Martin Buber's description of an *I-You* relation between human beings and with God as our eternal *You* in his classic work *I and Thou*. Our argument has been that Buber's description of the *I-You* attitude in a personal encounter with the human and divine *You* in our lives can provide us with an appreciation of the Ignatian *Colloquy* as an *I-Thou* encounter with Mary, Jesus, and God the Father as a way of helping us in seeking what we desire from them.

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THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE: FROM THE EARLY CHURCH TO THE 19TH CENTURY

Arnaud Touré, PIME

Abstract. This article is drawn from a broader thesis devoted to the Societies of Apostolic Life and presents a synthesized version of Part One, entitled "*Historical Profile: From Antiquity to the Second Vatican Council.*" Using the criteria articulated in canon 673 §1 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law—namely, life in common under the governance of superiors according to an approved constitution, and the absence of the three public vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty—the study seeks to reconstruct the historical development of Societies of Apostolic Life.

Beginning with the biblical and early Christian experience, the article traces the emergence and evolution of the principal Societies of Apostolic Life chronologically, alongside several lesser-known foundations. Particular attention is given to the historical contexts and concrete ecclesial circumstances that shaped their distinctive juridical configurations. The analysis highlights how these epochal contingencies contributed to the gradual crystallization of specific forms of apostolic life, which were later codified as *societates sive clericorum sive laicorum* in the 1917 Code and subsequently as Societies of Apostolic Life in the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

***Keywords*:** Constitutions; juridical form; Society of Apostolic Life; *Societates sive clericorum sive laicorum*; vows

Introduction

A careful observation of the Church shows a heteroclite assembly composed of men, women, children, and adults gathered in various states of life. In addition to individual believers, there are also groups within the Church that come together in communities and associations. Among them are the societies of apostolic life. They are part of the architecture of the Church and more specifically of the Code of Canon Law that clearly states that:

> Societies of apostolic life resemble institutes of consecrated life; their members, without religious vows, pursue the apostolic purpose proper to the society and, leading a life in common as brothers or sisters according to their proper manner of life, strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions.[1]

The *Annuario Pontificio*[2] lists around 50 societies of apostolic life of pontifical right, both male and female.

The present article aims to study their evolution from a historical perspective, presenting the historical context and the reasons why they took on a different form, which subsequently led to what is now called the society of apostolic life. In this regard, the criteria of can. 673 §1 CIC 17 is used, since CIC 17 had the merit of grouping them for the first time under a single terminology. The criteria of can. 673 §1 CIC 17 are essentially two: living in common under the governance of superiors and the absence of the three usual public vows.

1. Prehistory of the Apostolic Life

1.1 Jesus and the First Christian Communities

The historical profile of societies of apostolic life necessarily begins with a prehistoric background. Two things must be taken

[1] Can. 731 §1.

[2] *Annuario Pontificio 2021*, 1406-1416; 1626-1627.

into consideration: life in common and the diversity of status among Christians. The biblical icon to which they could be linked is the style Jesus adopted with his disciples. It is a communal lifestyle dedicated to the apostolate without recourse to any legal constraints. Jesus gathered around him a community of apostles with whom he shared his life, without this being preceded or conditioned by any particular legal bond.[3] They all devoted themselves essentially to preaching the kingdom of God. Subsequently, this lifestyle is found in the early Christian communities led by the apostles and, after them, by their successors. The same life in common is found with a certain consistency in the first two centuries of the Church. It is interesting to note that community life and the apostolate did not change the status of those involved.

If the example of life in common, with dedication to apostolic activities, is relevant to the prehistory of societies of apostolic life, further elements to be considered are the structure and organization of the Church as desired by its founder. From the beginning, the early Christian communities were quite heterogeneous, with various ministries and states of life. Experiences of life in common for greater evangelical perfection, as well as for a specific apostolic purpose, were frequent in them. However, this did not change their state of life or legal status. If at the beginning of the Church there were states of life such as clerics, virgins, widows, and so on, it cannot be said that such a life in common for a specific apostolate constituted a state of life in itself.

1.2 Community Life of the Clergy

Another prehistoric background of the societies of apostolic life is the experiences of life in common among the clergy promoted from ancient times until the end of the first millennium. The legitimacy of

[3] The Bible considers various bonds such as covenants, oaths, and vows. Cf. John L. McKenzie, *Dizionario biblico*, edited by Bruno Maggioni (Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 1981), 39; 445; 1047. As a further example, it is reported that in the Essene sect, candidates had to take solemn oaths. Cf. Flavio Giuseppe, *La guerra giudaica*, edited by Giuseppe Ricciotti (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1963), lib. 2, cap. 8, vers. 7.

such a statement is based on the fact that the main elements of societies of life in common without vows of canon 673, CIC 17, are identical to those of life in common of the clergy that we find, for example, with Eusebius, Augustine, Gaudentius, Gregory the Great, and so on.

As bishop of Vercelli, Eusebius' first concern was preaching among the pagans and rural populations. This evangelization required a clergy prepared to assist the bishop. Consequently, he set himself two objectives: adequate preparation of his priests through the study and meditation of scripture and their sanctification through a life of prayer, chastity, and poverty. To achieve this goal, he conceived of a communal life for the clergy that would later be called *the episcopal coenobium*. From certain documents,[4] it can be inferred that it was a mixture of clerical and monastic life, in which the monastic character was intended to support the personal lives of the clergy, enabling them to be more effective in their pastoral work.

When he became bishop, Augustine gathered the clergy of the diocese in the bishop's house to live in common with them. He named this new foundation *monasterium clericorum*. In addition to the clerical status and the apostolate, one of the characteristic elements of the *monasterium clericorum* was the fact that no one was to own anything of their own, but everything was put in common and then distributed according to the needs of each individual.

Following the model established by Eusebius and Augustine, there was an expansion of community life among the clergy in various particular churches. Many other bishops, such as Fulgenzio of Ruspe, Caesarius of Arles, and Zeno of Verona, adopted the practice of communal life with their clergy.

The institution of life in common spread to England under the initiative of St. Gregory the Great. Having sent missionaries to convert

[4] It is essentially a letter from Saint Ambrose to the Church of Vercelli dated 396. Cf. Ambrose, *Epistola 63, Patrologia Latina* 16 (hereafter PL). In addition, there are several sermons by unknown authors. Cf. *Sermo* 20, *Ad S. martyris*, PL 57; Sermo 21, *Dum ad obsequia*, PL 57; *Sermo* 22, *Licet me fratres*, PL 57; *Sermo* 23, *Quamquam dilectissimi*, PL 57.

the English, he issued a decree requiring the bishop and clergy to live in common and share their possessions, as in the early Church.[5] Over time, this peculiar initiative from a few bishops began to take on a much more binding legal dimension through episcopal or conciliar laws that established the obligation for secular clerics to live in common. From the sixth century onwards, the various councils that addressed the issue indicated life in common as the lifestyle of the clergy.[6]

Around the seventh and eighth centuries, life in common for the clergy began to experience a period of progressive decline. Reform in this area came about with the reform of Chrodegang through the *Regula canonicorum*. This rule established a life in common centered on the divine office, communal meals, and shared sleeping quarters, as well as mutual charity and the assiduous practice of spiritual life.[7] The principle of life in common promoted by Chrodegang was taken up and made almost mandatory by the Council of Verneuil.[8]

The canonesses provide another example worth mentioning. The term canonesses derives from the word canon in the feminine form,[9] Basically, they were women who lived in common like nuns and who, in some churches, devoted themselves to the divine office. However, they were different from the nuns. Basically, the nuns took their vows according to the rule of St. Benedict and lived according to that rule, while the canonesses were those who "*pleniter canonice vivant.*"[10]

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[5] Bede the Venerable, *Historia Ecclesia Gentis Anglorum*, lib. 1, cap. 27.

[6] Joseph Deroux, *La vie commune du clergé séculier* (Nîmes: Éditions Notre-Dame, 1937) 30, note 25.

[7] Chrodegang, *Regula canonicorum*, 313-332.

[8] Council of Verneuil (755), can. 11, in J.D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 12, 582. Hereafter Mansi.

[9] Basil the Great, *De vera virginitate, Patrologia Graecae* 30 (hereafter PG), 796.

[10] Council of Magonza (813), can. 13, Mansi 14, 68-69.

2. *Societates ante litteram*

2.1 Beguines and Beghards

Beguines were women, and Beghards were men. Their names refer to the followers of *beguinism*, a movement that, according to ancient sources, arose in the diocese of Liège during the 12th century. The era in which it was born was marked by great economic, cultural, and scientific change. The downside was the collapse of much of the religious fervor, which urgently required reform. The monastic renewal initiated by various monasteries was the gathering around them of various communities of the faithful animated by the desire for Christian perfection. The attempt by religious orders and the secular clergy to organize all these Christians gave rise to certain movements, including the Beguines.

Eager to fully live out the evangelical continence that was one of their fundamental characteristics, they gathered in small houses of communal living called beguinages. Beguinism was also an option for people who had decided to leave their family home with the desire to observe continence but could not live with the severity of monasteries, or could not find a place in them due to the large number of vocations. Some people still wanted to devote themselves to charitable works and pursue evangelical perfection without having to submit to any monastic rules[11]. The Beguines lived together in small houses near churches, chapels, and hospitals, leading a life in common without religious vows. They also had the option of living alone while maintaining a bond of charity with the other members of the community. The Beguines were not required to live in seclusion like nuns, but they had to remain within the beguinage.[12]

[11] A. Mens, "Beghine, begardi, beghinaggi," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, directed by Guerrino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca, vol. 1 (Rome: Edizione Paoline, 1974), 1168-1169.

[12] Zeger Bernard Van Espen, *Jus Ecclesiasticum universum*, I, 743-747.

One of the most significant differences between them and religious life was the fact that the members did not take vows. They committed themselves to chastity and obedience to ecclesiastical authorities for as long as they lived in the beguinage.

2.2 Brethren of the Common Life

The brothers and sisters of the common life are closely linked to the *devotio moderna*, a spiritual movement that originated and spread throughout the 15th century in the Netherlands, Germany, and almost all of Europe. They wanted to make the evangelical counsels accessible to those who could not or did not want to enter a monastery. Their main characteristic was their desire to detach themselves from the world through a devout life in common and apostolic work. However, they lived in ordinary houses, forming small communities composed of clerics and individual laypeople with equal rights and duties. They led a life of prayer, study, and work. There were no religious vows or obligation of stability; therefore, one could leave whenever one wanted. Throughout their time living in community, they had to observe chastity and poverty, placing their possessions at the community's disposal.

The livelihoods of the brothers and sisters living in community were ensured by the proceeds of their work and by the sharing of goods.[13]

2.3 Oblates of the Monastery of Tor de' Specchi

The monastery of Tor de' Specchi is a unique foundation. Its origins recall the figure of Saint Frances of Rome. The history of the Oblates began when Francesca made her Benedictine oblation together with some of her Roman friends, who, although they wanted to be united by their love for Jesus, could not leave the world to retire to a monastery.

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[13] M. Dortel-Claudot and G. Rocca, "Sorelle della vita comune," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, compiled by Guerrino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca, vol. 8 (Rome: Edizione Paoline, 1974), 1927.

The formula used for the oblation was a reworking of St. Benedict's formula. Instead of the word *profiteor* used by monks, the Oblates used the verb to offer: *offero,*[14] that is, they intended to participate in the merits and suffrages of the monastic congregation without the desire to bind themselves.[15]

This initial group was given the name Oblates of Saint Mary, the nucleus of the future congregation of the Oblates of Tor de' Specchi. This led to the creation of secular oblates, essentially associations of women who, to live their faith more intensely, devoted themselves to spiritual and temporal works of mercy while remaining with their families. A further development occurred when, at the request of some widows in the group, it was decided to adopt a communal lifestyle. However, unlike monasteries, which were the only recognized form of communal life for women at that time, these communities had a very flexible organization and were free from legal bonds. Unlike monastic life, it did not require cloistered seclusion or solemn vows. In addition, they had the distinction of living in the city, unlike traditional monasteries. However, a significant change occurred in 1947, when their assembly requested that they be placed among religious institutes, given that the 1917 code had recognized institutes of simple vows. Therefore, in 1958, they were recognized as a religious congregation of pontifical right with special dependence on the Holy See.[16]

3. Birth and Development of Societies of Apostolic Life

Given the disappearance of the institute founded during the Middle Ages, as well as the transformation of the remaining ones into religious institutes, it is in the modern era, and especially in the

[14] P. Lugano, "L'istituzione delle oblate," *Rivista storica benedettina* 14 (1923): 274-275.

[15] L. Ponzileoni, *Vita di S. Francesca Romana*, 116-117.

[16] M.B. Rivaldi, "Oblate del monastero di Tor de' Specchi," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, compiled by Guerrino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca, vol. 6 (Rome: Edizione Paoline, 1980), 586.

societies of priests founded around the 16th century, that we must look to determine the moment of the birth of societies of apostolic life.

In fact, the modern era has been marked by the emergence of many societies of secular clerics that still exist today and constitute a large part of the current societies of apostolic life. They can essentially be divided into two large groups: on the one hand, the institutes of secular clerics that arose from the 16th century onwards, with the Oratory of St. Philip Neri as their precursor. On the other hand, there are the institutes linked to the creation of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and the renewal of the Church's missionary activity. The precursor in this field is the Paris Foreign Missions Society, whose model also gave rise to various national, regional, or rite-specific missionary institutes.

3.1 Modern era

3.1.1 The Oratory of St. Philip Neri and the French Societies of Apostolic Life

From a chronological point of view and in light of the criteria of the 1917 Code of canon law, the Confederation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri is the first officially established society of apostolic life that survives to this day. Based on its model, many other institutes were founded.

The Confederation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, whose members are called Oratorians, is intrinsically linked to the work and, above all, to the spirituality of St. Philip Neri, even though, certainly out of humility, he always defended himself against being considered its founder.[17]

The apostolic work of Philip was influenced by the particular economic and social context of Rome: economic misery, vices of

[17] A. Cistellini, "Oratoriani," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, compiled by Guerrino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca, vol. 6 (Rome: Edizione Paoline, 1980), 764.

all kinds, and counter-testimony from the clergy. Philip's goal was to invite the Roman people to conversion and to rekindle their zeal for the spiritual life by making the mysteries of the Christian life accessible to them. In addition to his dedication to the ministry of confession, he began to set aside moments for spiritual dialogue, meditation, and prayer in his small room. These moments of encounter were, in a way, the seed of the future oratory, which in turn would be the nucleus from which the Confederation of the Oratory[18] would arise.

From the outset, Philip had no intention of creating a new institute. However, some of his friends wished to embrace the priestly life in the service of the Oratory. Added to this was the fact that he established a community life for some priests in charge of a parish entrusted to him: the Oratorian community from which the new institute would emerge a few years later. With the papal bull *Copiosus in misericordia*, Gregory XII established the institute in 1575, naming it the Congregation of the Oratory of Secular Clerics and recognizing Filippo Neri as its provost.[19]

Through the Congregation of the Oratory, Philip wanted an exemplary type of cleric in the secular clergy, but without harsh religious mortification or the total renunciation of material goods. His wish, therefore, was that his spiritual sons remain in the secular clergy without vows or promises, which is why he always refused vows in the institute.

One of the fundamental characteristics of the institute is the total autonomy of the houses among themselves. Although they share the spirituality and charism of St. Philip Neri, the newly founded houses are independent from the older ones. They maintain only a spiritual bond with them. They are houses *sui iuris* that enjoy full self-determination.

In the chronological order of birth, the second society that presents the characteristics of a society of apostolic life is the Oratory of France. It was canonically erected on May 8, 1613, with the papal

[18] The Confederation of the Oratory derives its name from the place designated for orison (prayer). Cf. Oratorio di San Filippo Neri, *Costituzioni*, n. 1.

[19] ACOR, *Collectanea vetustiorum ac fundamentalium*, 12-13.

bolla *Sacrosanctae romanae Ecclesiae*.[20] The Oratory was founded on the initiative of Pierre de Bérulle, a priest of the secular clergy who had noticed that the higher clergy, although educated, were for the most part without sincere vocation but rather attached to privileges and careerism, and therefore without apostolic zeal. The lower clergy, on the other hand, had received no serious training. In addition, many clerics led unedifying and scandalous lives. Added to this was the fact that many bishops still hesitated to implement the recommendations of the Council of Trent regarding the formation of the clergy. Inspired by the Council of Trent, he wanted an institute capable of restoring and glorifying the very idea of the Catholic priesthood; an institute that would work to restore the priestly order to the fullness of holiness, without which it cannot healthily fulfill its divine mission.

Like St. Philip Neri a few years earlier, he did not want to create a new religious congregation whose members would be bound by religious vows. He simply wanted a society of secular priests united by their priestly commitments and submission to the bishop in their apostolate. Although he wanted the institute to be highly centralized under the responsibility of the superior on whom all the other houses depended, the members would not be bound by religious vows or similar constraints. The only bonds they will have will be those of the priesthood. They therefore remain secular priests and not regular priests. The community life that distinguishes them is not an end in itself but rather a means, an aid in view of their apostolate.

Another society of apostolic life is the Congregation of the Mission, whose members are usually called Vincentians or Lazarists. It was founded by St. Vincent de Paul. For Vincent, the material and spiritual poverty of people could not be remedied without concrete material aid to the poor and religious instruction for the people. This instruction required prior and adequate training for the clergy in accordance with the guidelines of the recent Council of Trent. The Congregation of the Mission would be the instrument for its

[20] Paul V, *constitution Sacrosanctae romanae Ecclesiae*, 10 May 1613.

implementation. The main purpose of the institute was rural missions.[21] In addition to this, there was also the preaching of spiritual exercises to ordinands.

The institute was founded as an organized group of secular priests with the clear intention of not being a religious institute.[22] It was presented as a mission.[23] Therefore, at the outset, the element considered most significant in conferring identity on the new institute was not the communal life of the secular clerics but their missionary activity.

Always on the back of the reforms initiated by the Council of Trent, the Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice, commonly known as the Sulpicians, was founded by Jean-Jacques Olier in the seventeenth century. In starting the institute, Olier had behind him not only the experience of Vincent de Paul, whose conferences and missions he attended. His fundamental intuition was, above all, indebted to the plan conceived by Father Condren, director of the Oratory of France. Condren had gathered some of his spiritual sons, including Olier, with the intention, although not entirely clear at the time, of training them to serve as the foundation and direction of seminaries.[24]

Together with two other friends, Olier began a communal life. Shortly afterwards, they were joined by a few seminarians. Thus began the communal life that would become the Sulpicians' essential characteristic. At the request of the parish priest of Saint Sulpice, this group of priests was entrusted with the pastoral care of the parish;

[21] Luigi Mezzadri and Jose M. Román, *Storia della Congregazione della Missione*, vol. I (Rome: Edizione CLV, 1992), 113.

[22] Vincent De Paul, *Corrispondenze*, XIII, 205.

[23] A term commonly used to refer to any apostolic activity that, by its nature, depended on the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, even in so-called Catholic countries. Cf. Mezzadri and Roman, *Storia della Congregazione della Missione*, 62.

[24] Pierre Pourrat, *Jean-Jacques Olier, fondateur de Saint-Sulpice* (Paris : E. Flammarion, 1932), 95.

from there, the name *Priests of Saint Sulpice* was given to the members of the future institute. From the very beginning, they rejected the idea of religious vows and the establishment of the community as a religious congregation, preferring to be bound by ties of charity.[25] They were therefore not to be tied to a religious house and, above all, they were not to claim to be a separate entity distinct from the secular clergy.[26] The only solemn vows were those of baptism and priesthood, while the spirit was clerical. Since the members of the community were to train people called to be part of the secular clergy, the idea of a religious congregation would have been completely inappropriate. Finally, if we consider the bishops' apprehension towards congregations beyond their control, it is easier to understand why Olier rejected the idea of a religious congregation.

Pius IX's decree attributed to the society the nature of a congregation of priests with the character of a society without vows.

The Congregation of Jesus and Mary, also known as the Eudists, was founded by a priest named Jean Eudes, a former member of the Oratory of France. He was convinced that the primary vocation of every priest is to aspire intensely to a holy life. The appropriate place to realize this ideal, according to him, was the Oratory founded a few years earlier by Pierre de Bérulle.

His first pastoral experiences were marked by many charitable activities, but above all by popular missions. It was during these missions that Jean Eudes noticed certain difficulties, whose attempted solutions would be the real motivations behind the founding of the Eudists. These difficulties were fundamentally the mediocre and scandalous lives of many priests.[27] To remedy this, he began to hold formation and sharing meetings exclusively for priests. This soon changed the spiritual lives of many priests, with equally happy results at the pastoral level. Jean Eudes thus understood that the success of the missions and

[25] Jean Monval, *Les sulpiciens* (Paris : Grasset, 1934), 34.

[26] Monval, *Les sulpiciens*, 48.

[27] Jean Eudes, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 9, (Paris: P. Lethiellieux, 1906), 7.

the conversion of the people inevitably depended on the clergy's prior conversion. He felt invested in the mission of reforming the secular clergy in accordance with what had been requested by the Council of Trent some time before. Moreover, this pious desire was in deep harmony with his vocation as a member of the Oratory.

However, his project met with much resistance within his own community, the Oratory, so he decided to leave and, with other diocesan priests, found a society of secular priests in which he could truly live his Oratorian vocation, namely, the formation of candidates for the priesthood.

The primary intention, namely the creation and direction of seminaries, was accompanied by another purpose: pastoral activity, especially missions. The institute's purpose will be the effective criterion for determining its legal form. From the outset, the institute defined itself as purely priestly and secular, and the religious state was completely excluded.[28] No obligation beyond what was required by the priesthood was imposed on the members.

3.1.2 Italian Societies of Apostolic Life

After the experience of the 17th century, which gave rise to the societies studied above, it was not until the 19th century that new experiences of life in common without vows, especially dedicated to the apostolate, emerged. Due to the similarity of the context, the intention was almost the same as that pursued by St. Philip Neri, namely, the need for a religious and moral renewal of Christian life. The urgency of this renewal was felt and demanded most strongly in Rome, given the historical events: the French Revolution, the birth of modern states with the consequent protest against the temporal power of the Roman Pontiff, and the financial difficulties faced by the papacy. The

[28] Eudes, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 9, 141.

consequence of all this was a profound change in the Church, marked by a drastic decline in faith, devotion, and religious practice.[29]

Added to this was the fact that one of the consequences of both the French Revolution and Napoleonic policy was the suppression of many religious orders with solemn vows, especially contemplative ones, because they were considered socially useless. Those spared were essentially those whose apostolate was considered socially useful. Furthermore, within the Church itself, the non-religious form of the institutes was very welcome to the bishops, who were often wary of religious institutes and their exemptions.[30]

One of the first attempts at restoration in the face of the crisis described above came from Gaspare del Bufalo, a Roman priest and founder of the Institute of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, which originated in the League of Evangelical Workers. The latter was an association of secular priests who lived together under a rule and devoted themselves to popular missions. Gaspare joined the association but soon wanted to go far beyond the initial purpose. In fact, he wanted the popular missions to be aimed not only at the laity but also at clerics, as well as the expansion of activities outside the diocese of Rome. After the founder of the Workers of the Gospel was appointed bishop and then left, Gaspare became the main figure of reference, with the freedom to implement his ideas for the group's configuration.[31] The first canonical characteristic given to him was that of being an apostolic and communal nucleus of the secular clergy, following the example of St. Philip Neri. They were secular clerics who, although living together for a specific apostolate, still depended

[29] Karl Bihlmeyer and Hermann Tuechle, *Storia della Chiesa: L'epica moderna*, vol. 4 (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1973), 194.

[30] Eutimio Sastre Santos, *La vita religiosa nella storia della Chiesa e della società* (Milan: Àncora, 1997), 801.

[31] Mario Brotini, *Inizio ed evoluzione giuridica della Congregazione dei Missionari del Preziosissimo Sangue* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 2001), 22.

on their bishop of origin for incardination.[32] In addition to the clerics, there were also lay people, the so-called serving brothers or coadjutors. They were essentially laypeople who were not directly involved in the institute's apostolate but lived their apostolic involvement indirectly through material service to the institute's clerics.

About two decades after the founding of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the Society of the Catholic Apostolate was established in Rome, whose members are usually called Pallottines, in reference to their founder, Vincent Pallotti. Moved by the missionary spirit that permeated the Church under the pontificate of Gregory XVI, he designed a plan for universal apostolate based on three points: a pious institution of Catholic apostolate to spread the faith among non-Catholics, an apostolate to preserve, revive, and increase the faith among Catholics, and an institution of universal charity dedicated to works of spiritual and corporal mercy[33]. Thus, the Pious Society of the Catholic Apostolate was born, which promptly engaged in various activities: aid to the poor in Rome, foreign missions, organizing preaching, conducting spiritual exercises, etc.

One of the notable characteristics of this Pious Society was its openness to all. It was, in fact, characterized by the sacred union between clergy and laity, secular and regular clergy, ecclesiastical hierarchy, and lay faithful of both sexes.[34] Pallotti's initial intention was not to create a new regular order but to reinvigorate the apostolate of the Church with the participation of all Christian faithful of any state or social condition. It was the group that lived in community with Pallotti that would eventually become the congregation of priests and brothers of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate; it was mainly composed of members of the secular clergy.[35]

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[32] Missionaries of the Precious Blood (CPPS), *Regolamenti*, I, 278-300.

[33] Giovanni Hettenkofer, *Propositi ed aspirazioni del ven. Vincenzo Pallotti* (Rome, 1922), 281.

[34] Vincenzo Pallotti, *Opere Complete*, IV, 346.

[35] Pallotti, *Opere Complete*, III, 83.

A clarification regarding the organization of the society came in 1846 with the rule of the congregation of priests and coadjutor brothers of the Catholic Apostolate. Vincent distinguished between a congregation and a society. The congregation was the central nucleus responsible for guiding the whole society, with its members living in a community. The society, on the other hand, was the second layer, composed of the faithful who assisted the congregation. For Vincent Pallotti, there was unity between the priesthood of the regulars and that of the seculars. This is why he did not want vows but only promises. Furthermore, he believed that the members should serve as a point of union between the secular and regular clergy. Precisely for this reason, the clerics belonging to it should in no way be called regular clerics, but priests of the Congregation of the Catholic Apostolate. These priests also had the particularity of living in a community under a rule.[36] This was another element that distinguished them profoundly from ordinary secular clerics. Pallotti, therefore, never wanted his institute to be a religious congregation. Nor did he want it to be merely secular. It was essentially a cross between regular life and secular life, hence the form and legal configuration he gave it.

3.2 Period of Missionary Expansion

One context that undoubtedly favored the birth and development of societies of apostolic life was the period of missionary expansion. This period was marked by the birth of the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, which was certainly a key factor.

In fact, it was born out of a desire to free the missions from the colonialist label, to preserve their strictly ecclesial and evangelizing dimensions, and to promote the emergence of a native clergy and the progressive establishment of a local hierarchy. From the outset, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith showed its preference for missionaries belonging to the secular clergy rather than to traditional religious orders, which prevailed over other missionaries, thanks to the numerous privileges and powers they enjoyed. The climate

[36] Pallotti, *Opere Complete*, VII, 4-5.

thus outlined could only pave the way and encourage the foundation of societies of secular clerics dedicated to missionary activity.

The pioneers in this field were the *Missions Etrangères de Paris*, whose nature and legal configuration were of paramount importance as they served as a reference point for subsequent missionary societies. After the failure of various Italian attempts to found an institute of secular clerics dedicated to the missions, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide turned to France to seek the political and financial support necessary to start an institute capable of responding appropriately to its directives on missionary activity. The foundation of the *Missions Etrangères de Paris* fits into this context.

The project was mainly carried out by the French priests Francesco Pallu and Lambert de la Motte, who began by founding a seminary to prepare priests for the mission by all appropriate means. In 1664, the seminary was confirmed by the papal legate.[37] With it, a new type of institute composed of bishops and secular clerics began, whose purpose was the apostolate in mission territories. The society also has the distinction of giving great importance to lay people from its inception.[38] From the outset, the institute did not consider itself an order or a religious congregation, but a society of secular clerics who, in response to the desire of the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* to involve the secular clergy more closely in the work of missionary evangelization, dedicated themselves to the mission in those territories under the direct authority of *Propaganda Fide*. This secular form was then confirmed in the society's first regulations, drawn up in 1700, which would essentially guide the society for many years. The society was directly dependent on the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide and, in the missions,* under the responsibility of the local bishops.

In Italy, the missionary work of the secular clergy is carried out by the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) under

[37] Archives Missions Étrangères de Paris, vol. 166, 264.

[38] Louis Baudiment, *Francois Pallu - Principal Fondateur de la Societe des Missions Etrangeres* (1626-1684) (Paris : Beauchesne, 1934), 73.

the impetus of the popes and some members of the Italian Church who helped to increase interest in missionary work among Italian Catholics and awareness among the clergy of the need to play a more active role in evangelization. PIME is the result of the merger of two previous seminaries for foreign missions. As indicated in the current constitutions of PIME, these are the Seminary for Foreign Missions in Milan and the Seminary of Saints Peter and Paul for Foreign Missions in Rome.

The former was born out of Pius IX's desire to see the long-awaited seminary for training young priests for foreign missions established in Lombardy. This project was initiated by Angelo Ramazzotti and then continued by Giuseppe Marinoni, a Milanese diocesan priest. The first members were already priests and clerics. From the outset, there was also a presence of lay people, who would later participate in the first expeditions.[39] In approving the Seminary, the bishops of Lombardy all committed themselves to making it an institute of secular clerics, in which its members retained their incardination in their own dioceses even as they exercised their missionary apostolate under the responsibility of the seminary.

The second seminary is the Pontifical Roman Seminary of Saints Peter and Paul for the Missions, founded by Pietro Avanzini, a Roman priest.[40] Unlike the Lombard seminary, the seminary in Rome already had internationality as its initial purpose and was exclusively clerical.[41] Following the example of the Lombard seminary, the founder wanted to avoid at all costs the seminary in Rome becoming a religious congregation.

Subsequently, the two aforementioned seminaries felt the need to unite. In fact, at that time, there were many colleges for missions in

[39] Piero Gheddo, *PIME: 150 anni di missione* (Bologna: EMI, 2000), 58.

[40] A. Bassan, "Il PIME – Monsignore Pietro Avanzini," *Il Vincolo* 151 (1986): 195-199.

[41] Daniele Mazza, *Le radici romane del Pime. Il pontificio seminario romano per le missioni* 1871-1926 (Bologna: EMI, 2008), 33.

Italy and few young people who wanted to become missionaries, so there was a need to join forces and create a national missionary institute modeled on the Foreign Missions of Paris. The union took place on May 23, 1926, with a *motu proprio* from Pius XI.[42]

In addition to the aforementioned societies, there were also the Society of African Missions, founded by the Frenchman Melchior de Marion Brésillac, and the Missionaries of Africa, founded by Cardinal Lavigerie. In both cases, the founders' idea was to create seminaries for diocesan clergy who were going to serve in the mission countries, especially in Africa. Although they lived in communities, they did not take religious vows.

Many other national and ritual missionary institutes were founded later. Among them are for example the *Instituto Español de Misiones Extranjeras*, the Quebec Foreign Mission Society, the Portuguese Missionary Society, the Missionaries of Guadalupe from Mexico, the Korean Missionary Society, the Missionary Society of the Philippines, the Missionary Society of Saint Paul founded by the Nigerian Episcopal Conference, and the Missionary Society of St. Thomas the Apostle in India which is an expression of the missionary revival of the Syro-Malabar Church.

4. Some Feminine Societies of Apostolic Life

Somewhat rare and little known, at least in terms of their canonical form, which is often confused with religious institutes, women's societies of apostolic life are a clear example of the dynamism of canon law in terms of the organization of states of life. The 2019 *Annuario Pontificio* lists a dozen, the largest of which is the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.

[42] Pius IX, *Cum catholica ecclesia*, March 26, 1860, Documents, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/it/documents/breve-cum-catholica-ecclesia-26-marzo-1860.html, 21 June 1874.

4.1 The Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul

The institute was born from the collaboration between Vincent and Louise de Marillac. The first nucleus was formed by a few girls from the countryside who had come to Paris driven by the desire to serve the poor.[43] The idea then emerged to gather them all together in one place rather than leaving them scattered. Vincent entrusted them to Louise, who lived in a house where they went to live. Thus began their life together.

The initial plan was not to found a new institute but to bring them together to make their service to the poor more effective. Some of them were also allowed to take private vows to be renewed each year, a practice that was very rare at the time. In fact, they led a life somewhat similar to that of religious women, although they were not legally recognized as such.

The initial commitment to assisting the poor was soon joined by the education of girls in the countryside and the care of orphans, the elderly, etc.

The need to ensure a more stable and binding legal framework that would guarantee the community's homogeneity and stability without becoming a religious institute led to the search for a solution that straddled the lay and canonical religious life of the time. In fact, under the law in force at the time, a female religious institute was synonymous with a cloistered life. Since apostolic activity was the primary and essential objective of the community and required the girls to go out constantly, it was impossible to take the form of a religious institute.

Upon approval, the institute was placed under the direct guidance of Vincent and, after him, under the direction of the superiors of the Congregation of the Mission, who would therefore be its superiors. Thus, for the first time in the Church in modern times, an institute with a unique characteristic was born: women living in common without a cloister and mainly engaged in apostolic activities. Vincent's opinion on this matter was unequivocal: they are not religious but rather like

[43] Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (FCSVP), *Genèse de la Compagnie*, 4.

seculars, and they carry out their activities under the direction of the parish priest of the place where they are.[44]

4.2 Some Recently Founded Feminine Societies of Apostolic Life

Caritas Socialis is a society of apostolic life founded in 1919 in Vienna.[45] Its origins go back to Hildegard Burjan. Having moved to Vienna for work, she came into contact with the serious social problems in that city. She therefore began working in social work, committing herself to improving the working conditions of female domestic workers. As time went by, she realized that all these social problems could not be solved with temporary solutions alone. Rather, it was necessary to find people who would commit themselves permanently to works of charity. However, certain situations of social hardship were difficult for priests or religious to access. In other words, being a cleric or a nun was a barrier to accessing certain environments. What was needed were true missionaries of the people who, relying on an ecclesial structure of community life and supported by the evangelical counsels, could move anywhere without external restrictions on dress or seclusion.[46] Hildegard Burjan wanted to create an apostolic community that, through its loose structures, would enable a social apostolate. With the bishop of Vienna's agreement, she founded the *Caritas Socialis* association. To meet the need for stronger commitment without compromising flexibility, promises were established in the regulations revised upon incorporation in 1922.

Another feminine society of apostolic life is the Society of the Heart of Jesus,[47] established as an institute of common life without vows under diocesan law on September 15, 1945. The society was

[44] FCSVP, *Genèse de la Compagnie*, 13.

[45] Caritas Socialis, *Grundbestimmungen der Gemeinschaft Apostolischen Lebens Caritas Socialis*, 1.

[46] Irmgard Burjan-Domanig, *Una donna di azione sociale: Ildegarda Burjan* (Milan: Ancora, 1963), 50.

[47] Society of the Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, n. 58.

founded by the Jesuit Francesco Biró, who realized how poor the religious education of not only girls but also Hungarian women was, and that something had to be done about it. He had the idea of enlisting the help of women to take on the apostolic activities he had in mind. To organize the various activities, Francesco Biró wanted some women to live in the community and others to have the option of living alone or with their families, while still working in the spirit of the institute. The next step was the taking of vows by the first members on January 1, 1921. The desire not to be hindered by the structures of religious institutes, combined with the presence of people who, although members of the institute, lived with their families, led the institute towards a form of community life without religious vows.

There are many other feminine societies of apostolic life, such as *Seraphische Liebeswerk Solothurn,* founded in 1924 in Switzerland, and the Sisters of Social Service, founded in 1923 in Budapest.

4.3 The Uniqueness of the *Dominicaines du Saint-Esprit*

The Dominican Sisters of the Holy Spirit are a society of apostolic life founded in France. They were founded by the diocesan priest and Dominican tertiary Victor-Alain Berto. The institute originated from a group of young teachers who took over the management of an orphanage created by the founder. Among them were two who had long nurtured a deep desire to consecrate themselves to God. They therefore drew up a rule of life that they followed privately. In addition, some of them had become Dominican tertiaries and had taken a vow of sacred virginity. Subsequently, in order to better organize their common life, they decided to adopt a rule of life. The general idea was to restore in France a non-religious form of Dominican life characterized by the pursuit of evangelical perfection, life in common, and only the vow of chastity.[48] With the consent of the bishop of Vannes, they were established as a fraternity of women associated with the Dominican Order; a sodality proper to that Order. The sodality is not a religious

[48] Sodalite Des Vierges Dominicaines Du Saint Esprit (ADSE), *pièce* nº II. 1, art. 4.

congregation, and its members are not religious, but rather imitate St. Catherine of Siena.

The first statutes insisted that they were not religious but led a life that could be called *virginal* according to an ancient custom in the Church and that tended towards evangelical perfection. The only vow required was that of private chastity, which was taken secretly.

With the creation of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, the sodality was established as a society of apostolic life of the Dominican Third Order, with the possibility of using the liturgical books of 1962 and the 1965 missal.[49] They are therefore a society of apostolic life that, in accordance with Dominican spirituality, first and foremost observes the contemplative life. The apostolate is exercised mainly in schools, in conjunction with other educational and teaching activities: catechism, conferences, libraries, etc.

Conclusion

The historical profile of apostolic societies is best understood by first considering their prehistory. The biblical icon to which they could be linked is the style adopted by Jesus with his disciples, that is, community life dedicated to the apostolate without recourse to any bond. Subsequently, this lifestyle is found in the early Christian communities led by the apostles and, after them, by their successors.

The various experiences of life in common among the clergy from ancient times until the end of the first millennium are also helpful in understanding the prehistoric background.

In the Middle Ages, new forms of communal living without vows began to emerge, almost all of them promoted by lay people. Although all these realities have now disappeared, it does not seem wrong to consider them the true ancestors of societies of apostolic life. The modern era, considered by some authors to be the precise moment of the birth of societies of apostolic life, saw the emergence of many

[49] ADSE, *pièce* nº 0, 6.

societies of secular clerics that still exist today and constitute a large part of the current societies of apostolic life. They can essentially be divided into two large groups: The institutes of secular clerics founded from the 16th century onwards, whose precursor was the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and the missionary institutes whose precursor is the *Missions étrangères de Paris,* from whose model various national, regional, or specifically rite-related missionary institutes were also born.

As for women's institutes, there was no desire to completely exclude religious life, to which there was, all the same, a real attraction. Rather, there was a need to escape the rigidity of the rules (especially cloistered life) then in force for consecrated women, to be able to better exercise their apostolate.



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REGNOCENTRIC YOUTH MINISTRY: A PASTORAL-PEDAGOGICAL URGENCY IN THE ASIAN MILIEU

Jerome Vallabaraj, SDB and Antony Christy Lourdunathan, SDB

Abstract. A multi-faith and multi-cultural Asian milieu, where Christians are still a minority, requires that all young people, irrespective of their faith, be considered part of the Christian Youth Ministry. Such a perspective necessitates that Youth Ministry be solidly founded on Christian faith and yet has the ability to strive for the fullness of life of all youth, including those of other faiths, without infringing on their right to choose and evolve their own way of life, defining for themselves the vital principles that govern their life. Notwithstanding the ongoing theological reflection and progress made in Pastoral Theology in the centuries gone by, Christian Youth Ministry in the Asian milieu seems to still be holding on to an overly Ecclesiocentric perspective. Heeding the invitation of Pope Francis that "all the young, without exception, are in God's heart and thus in the Church's heart" (*Christus Vivit* n. 235), this paper invites the reader to refocus on the central theme of Jesus' public ministry: the proclamation of the Reign of God to all. The challenge outlined here is for the Church to transcend an institutional auto-referentiality and to embody Jesus' proclamation of the Reign of God and thus nurture a Youth Ministry that is above all, missionary, pastoral, and a witness to the world - one that can be rightfully called, Regnocentric Youth Ministry.

Keywords: Asian youth milieu; Reign of God; Regnocentric Youth Ministry; Religious Pluralism

Asian Youth[1] Milieu[2] Today

Asia hosts the largest cohort of young people (nearly 60%)[3] in the world, and their lives are shaped by rapid economic change, digital transformation, demographic shifts, and contested political terrains within Postmodern landscape not so much as theories, but more as the air they breathe. The lives of young people in Asia are at the intersection of longstanding continuity and rapid change. With a lopsided share of the global youth population and enormous internal diversity, Asian youth experience pressures and opportunities that vary by subregions, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and urban–rural location. While some contexts demonstrate resilient upward mobility and digital opportunity, others reveal persistent unemployment, social exclusion, and political exclusion.

This section presents an analysis of the Asian youth milieu across four nested levels — personal, interpersonal, socio-religious and spiritual, and political, to illustrate patterns, pressures, and potentials. Drawing on recent empirical reports, peer-reviewed studies, and policy

[1] Our understanding of the term "youth" corresponds to the following three criteria simultaneously: 1) those in terms of age between 18 and 28; 2) those who are in the process of *acquiring certain independence* in terms of finance, habitat, intellectual ability and decision making and 3) those *not having made a definite life-choice* such as marriage, priestly or consecrated life or secular single life, etc.

[2] The word "milieu" holds for us a broad meaning of a human environ with its own structures and organizations of life and relationship. It is many things simultaneously – *a physical and geographical space*, wherein actions that have a bearing on every aspect of life takes place; *an environment* which consists of complex of situations within which the growth and development of the individuals, society and culture take place; a *natural human community* wherein the process of socialization takes place; it is a *texture of human relationships* that possesses certain unique characteristics and it is a *socially and politically organized community*. See, Jerome Vallabaraj and Sivy Koroth, *Empowering through Animation – A Pastoral-Pedagogical Paradigm of Youth Ministry* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2010), 45-46.

[3] https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/08/south-asia-youth-rewriting-its-growth-story/ (accessed: 28 August 2025).

analyses,[4] the section synthesizes trends at these four levels. Each level interacts with others: for example, personal mental health can be influenced by labour-market precarity (social level) and parent-child expectations (interpersonal level), and political mobilization is both an expression of personal convictions and a response to social grievances.

1.1. Personal Level: Identity, Aspirations, Mental Health, and Challenges

With regard to Identity negotiation**,** Asian youth navigate multiple identity frames — familial and religious commitments, national/political identities, and globalized cultural identities shaped by media. The tension between filial, communal expectations and emergent individual autonomy is acute in many East and South Asian settings. Asian youth often struggle to negotiate between traditional values and modern influences. Confucian filial piety in East Asia, caste and communal identity in South Asia, and religious obligations in the Middle East and Southeast Asia play defining roles. At the same time, globalization and digital culture expose them to individualistic ideals and a consumeristic mindset that threatens to reshape self-understanding.

As regards the Education and Aspirations, education becomes a dominant axis since academic excellence is tied to family honour and

[4] Sources for this section are: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Youth Report," in https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf? (accessed: 06 June 2025); UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report, 2023," in ww.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/ www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2024_escap-report-population-development-17.pdf? (accessed: 06 June 2025); World Bank Group, "Jobs in East Asia and Pacific: Pathways to Prosperity, Brief April 18 2025" in https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eap/brief/jobs-in-east-asia-and-pacific-pathways-to-prosperity? (accessed: 06 June 2025); International Labour Organization, "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024," in https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/global-employment-trends-youth-2024? (accessed: 05 September 2025); UNESCO, "Youth 2023: Progress Report 2023," in https://www.unesco.org/ sdg4education2030/en/knowledge-hub/youth2030-progress-report-2023? pgs. 21-23 (accessed: 05 September 2025).

economic mobility. However, there exists intense pressure that can lead to stress, mental health issues, and in some cases even to youth suicides.[5] Education becomes frequently the primary axis around which individual aspirations revolve; however, credential inflation and weak absorptive capacity in labour markets produce disenchantment among graduates. For example, several Asian countries report significant rates of educated youth unemployment.[6] A high incidence of the National Eligibility Entrance Test among young women. (e.g., intense college entrance competition in parts of East Asia) and unmitigated job uncertainty contribute to elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among youth.

Mental health concerns among youth have risen globally, and in Asia, they are attributable to academic pressure, economic uncertainty, and social media pressures and anxieties. Concerning psychological and spiritual struggles, rapid urbanization and digital saturation often leave youth facing loneliness, identity crises, and disorientation. Yet, spirituality – whether expressed through traditional religions, new spiritual movements, or mindfulness practices – remains a resource for resilience.

1.2. Interpersonal Level: Family, Friendship, and Digital Relations

The family remains a central axis of youth socialization in Asian societies, but intergenerational tensions are rising as young people adopt

[5] "A new study points out that although suicide rates for Asian men have increased 72% and for women 125% over the past 25 years:" See, NBC News, "More Asian young people are dying by suicide – and some subgroups are faring worse than others," https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/asian-american-youth-increase-suicide-rcna167592 (accessed: 23 September 2025).

[6] "The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a massive disruption of labor markets, with disproportionate impacts on youth employment. Job loss among youth was projected not only to continue throughout 2020, but to also double the unemployment rates among youth:" See, Uniter Nations, "Factsheet: Youth employment trends in Asia and the Pacific Regions," in chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/YW3%20Factsheet-eng.pdf (accessed: 23 September 2025).

different values, relationship expectations, and career priorities. Norms of arranged marriage, authority of elders, and expectations about filial duty continue to cause frictions in many contexts, especially in those instances when youth press for autonomy. However, intergenerational gaps are bound to be skyward as long as young people pursue modern lifestyles that challenge traditional gender roles, conservative marriage goals, or mediocre career choices.

Peers, as part of youth subcultures (like fandoms,[7] online and other creative communities), offer alternative sources of identity and support. Importantly, online friendships have become a vital resource for many youth who feel isolated in their immediate context. Friendship networks, both offline and online, have become crucial for Asian youth identity. Digital media expand these networks globally, yet the trend also augments cyberbullying, online radicalization, and addictive behaviours.

Concerning gender and interpersonal dynamics, the changing roles of women and the rising consciousness of LGBTQ+ highlight the subsisting tensions between cultural conservatism and emerging right claims. These interpersonal negotiations often test the social norms around marriage, sexuality, and gender dynamics.

Social media, now up throttled by the advanced digital mediation, proves a double-edged sword: while it enables political mobilization and identity formation, it can also aggravate mental-health problems and spread misinformation. The role of social media platforms in organizing protests (e.g., anti-CAA mobilizations of 2019 in India,[8] the Sri Lankan Youth Unrest of 2022, the Bangladesh Youth protests of

[7] It is a popular term that refers to a community of passionate fans who are dedicated to a specific team, person, TV show, movie, or other forms of entertainment.

[8] Anuksha Bhilwar, "Social Media and Protest: A Case Study on Anti CAA Protests in Asia," delivered during the 3rd International Conference on Advanced Research in Social Sciences, 11-14 March 2021, Oxford – United Kingdom, in https://www.dpublication.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/16-225.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com (accessed: 06 September 2025). CAA denotes Citizenship Amendment Act. See also Swetasree Ghosh Roy, "Social Media,

2024, the Nepalese Gen Z protests of 2025[9]) and their part in shaping youth discourse are well evidenced.

1.3. Social Level: Economy and Culture

High youth unemployment in countries in Asia, like the Philippines, contrasts with overwork cultures in Japan and South Korea.[10] Added to this, many Asian youth migrate for jobs, leading to both economic opportunity and family separation. With regard to economy and employment, it can be observed that the structural barriers to decent jobs, such as the skill mismatches, the phenomenon of automation, and the shrinking share of 'quality' manufacturing jobs, are key socio-economic challenges for the youth across Asia. The World Bank and ILO[11] highlight persistent youth unemployment pockets even where national growth appears robust.

Cultural conception among youth demonstrates intense hybridization: local traditions blend with global cultural flows (K-pop, anime, online content), changing the so-called cultural tastes and identity repertoires. This hybridity supports innovation and promotes new forms of social belonging, giving rise to both empowerment and cultural fragmentation.

Youth and civil Unrest in Asia: A New Rebel's Dilemma," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics,* 10/2 (2025): 97-112.

[9] Eathen Teekah, "2025 Nepalese Gen Z Protests," in https://www.britannica.com/event/2025-Nepalese-Gen-Z-Protests (accessed: 23 September 2025).

[10] "Karoshi syndrome, also known as 'death by overwork,' has been a topic of study and concern in Japan since the 1980s. World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) joint unveiled that in 2021, approximately 750.000 deaths due to Karoshi syndrome globally." See Haitham Ahmed Al-Madhagi, "Unveiling the Global Surge: Unravelling the Factors Fuelling the Spread of Karoshi Syndrome," in https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov /articles/PMC10746923/ (accessed: 23 September 2025).

[11] International Labour Organization, "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024," in https://www.ilo.org/sites/ default/files/2024-08/GET_2024_ExecSum_EN_0.pdf (accessed: 10 June 2025).

1.4. Religious and Spiritual Milieu

Throughout the millennia, Asia has been characterized by its quest for the divine and for its lofty ethical principles. Many of the world's major religions have had their origins and have been nurtured in Asia. A remarkable spiritual sensitivity permeates the Asian worldview, its life, and its societies. Youth are continually called to interact with the youth of other faiths and traditions.

Religion continues to be a powerful force in Asia, offering identity, moral frameworks, and community. For youth, however, there is often a movement from institutional religion to personalized spirituality, creating new expressions of faith. Although religion remains a robust organizing force in many Asian societies, the younger generations increasingly display individualized patterns of faith or spiritual seeking, challenging the traditional congregational forms and erstwhile faith practices.[12]

The religious and spiritual milieu of Asian youth reflects the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, faith and secularism, community and individuality. Their spirituality is less about rigid institutional affiliation and more about navigating personal meaning, social identity, and an improvised sense of belonging in an interconnected and increasingly globalized world.[13]

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[12] Pew Research data from 2024 shows that young adults in East Asia (Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) and Vietnam are less likely to be religiously affiliated than older generations, with younger people being significantly more likely to identify as religiously unaffiliated or to have switched from their childhood religion to no religion. See, Isabel Ong, "East Asians Leave Childhood Religion Most in World, but Remain Spiritual," in https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/06/pew-east-asia-christians-buddhists-korea-hong-kong-taiwan/#:~:text=Pew%20found%20that%20adults%20with,adviser%20to%20the%20Pew%20report (accessed: 23 September 2025).

[13] Jayeel Cornelio, "Youth and Religion in East and Southeast Asia," in https://www.academia.edu/12880080/ Youth_and_religion_in_East_and_Southeast_Asia (accessed 29 August 2025).

1.5. Political Level: Participation, Protest, and Policy

Asian youth seem to be growing increasingly vocal in their political choices. From the Indonesian youth protest of 1996[14] to the most recent Gen Z protests in Nepal (already referred to), young people in Asia have emerged as drivers of change. Youth involvement ranges from formal mechanisms (youth councils, party youth wings) to informal/digital activism and street protests. Young people often rely on networks and digital tools to organize rapidly, which can circumvent traditional gatekeepers.

Authoritarian regimes, censorship policies, and age-based exclusions often prevent youth from fully exercising political agency and getting them on their feet against the systems. Although there is an observed policy trend among the governments in Asia to promote youth empowerment through education, entrepreneurship, and digital skills programs, still obvious gaps remain between policy rhetoric and actual youth inclusion/empowerment. Multilateral initiatives (like UN Youth2030) and national youth policies exist, but effective inclusion requires a much effective bridging, with opportunities for appropriate employment, mental-health services, and meaningful civic engagement.[15]

In conclusion, Asian youth constitute a dynamic, heterogeneous, and pivotal demographic. Hence, a holistic understanding of Asian Youth requires acknowledging these multilayered realities and responding through integrated approaches in ministry, policy-making, and pastoral accompaniment.

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[14] Human Rights Watch, "Indonesia Election monitoring and human rights," in https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996 /Indonesi1.html (accessed: 23 September 2025).

[15] United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, "Anticipating Risks and Uncertainties for Asia and the Pacific – 2023 Updated Key Risks Report" in www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-06/undp-rbap-key_risks_report-2023.pdf? (accessed: 15 June 2025).

Some Key Characteristics of Asian Youth Today

Keeping in mind the milieu of Asian youth across the five key levels (personal, interpersonal, social, religious/spiritual, and political) and taking into account cultural, technological, and religious dimensions, recognizing that Asia is diverse and experiences vary across regions, we present some key characteristics of Asian youth today.

- *Family-Oriented but Individualistic*: Loyalty to family remains a strong value across Asian societies; youth often support and live with extended families. However, individualistic aspirations (career choices, lifestyle, marriage decisions) keep growing, most times causing generational conflicts.

- *Educationally Driven Yet Pressured*: Education is highly valued across Asia as a pathway to success, social mobility, and a factor of family honour. Youth face intense competition, exam pressures, and high expectations from family and society. While many excel academically, this pressure often contributes to stress, anxiety, and mental health concerns.

- *Economically Ambitious but Unequal*: Many youth aspire for financial stability, career success, and entrepreneurship, influenced by rapid economic growth in Asia. At the same time, economic inequality, unemployment, and precarious labour conditions affect a significant portion of youth, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

- *Digital Natives and Tech-dependence*: Most Asian youth are deeply immersed in the digital world, heavily reliant on smartphones, social media, and online platforms. They are influenced by global trends (for instance, K-pop, anime, esports, influencers, etc.) but also shape regional ones (Facebook or Instagram communities and others). Digital connectivity fosters creativity, networking, and entrepreneurial ventures, but at the same time, exposes them to cyberbullying, digital addiction, and misinformation.

- ❖ *Socio-Political Awareness and Control Mechanisms*: Young people in Asia are increasingly vocal about issues such as climate change, gender equality, democracy, human rights, and corruption. They use social media as a tool for activism and collective mobilization. However, in numerous contexts, there is a felt prevalence of restrictions on free speech, political activism, and rights-based participation.

- ❖ *Global-Minded yet Rooted in the Local Traditions*: Exposure to global culture through technology, travel, and media creates a cosmopolitan outlook in the youth. However, many still retain strong connections to the local and traditional family values, community ties, and cultural heritage. They personify what is defined as "Glocal" in their very worldview.

- ❖ *Resilient and Adaptive*: Asian youth show resilience in the face of social, political, and environmental challenges. They adapt quickly to change, blending tradition with modernity, and local values with global trends. Their flexibility makes them agents of cultural innovations and social transformation.

- ❖ *Religious and Spiritual Search*: Religion still continues to play a strong role in the identity of many Asian youth, though secular world vision and religious pluralism are also on the rise. Some youth maintain traditional religious practices, while others explore new forms of spirituality, interfaith dialogue, or even religious indifference as a means to greater humanity. The youth often struggle to reconcile faith and religiosity with modern scientific, technological, and socio-economic realities.

These youth characteristics demand that the Catholic Church and Christian communities establish a unifying and underlying foundation that can facilitate a ministry that pertains to all, recognizing that Catholic youth themselves are a minority in most of the Asian countries. This outlook demands greater strength and tougher commitment to mission, making the Christian or Catholic youth realise their identity of being the "leaven in the dough" (Mt 13: 33-35). Let us begin with understanding the original identity and experience of the Christian call.

A Digression from Regnocentric to Ecclesiocentric Ministry[16]

It can be gathered from the pages of the New Testament, that the first-generation followers of Jesus had a very strong sense of the mission, i.e., a sense of being called or chosen and being sent to make known the joy of belonging to the Reign, to serve and to transform the world with compassion and love following a renewed and radical command that Jesus gave: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (Jn 13: 34). The central reality was how this "as I have loved you" was concretised – namely, in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus who continued to live in the faith community and through the community, invited everyone to enter into the experience of the Reign of God.[17]

With the conversion of the Roman emperor in CE 313, when Christianity became the official religion of the empire, the mission tended to lose much of its emphasis; unity became the key concern, given the size of the community. A strong sense of commitment to commonality was stressed. Standard structures helped to diminish discord, strife, and dissension. By law, the Christian community was associated with the empire. This development resulted in the setting aside of the emphasis on mission and the rise of the Christendom culture.[18]

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[16] Several parts of this paper are adapted from Jerome Vallabaraj – Sivy Korath, *Empowering Through Animation – A Pastoral-Pedagogical Paradigm of Youth Ministry* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2010), 63-79.

[17] See John Gnanapiragasam and Felix Wilfred (Eds.), *Being Church in Asia,* Manila, Claretian Publications, 1994, 13.

[18] For more details see James A. Coriden and William W. Bassett, *The Once and Future Church: A Communion of Freedom* (New York, Alba House, 1971); Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1991); Humphrey D. F. Kitto, "Shifting Paradigms in Youth Ministry," in Pete Ward (Ed.), *The Church and Youth Ministry, Oxford, Lynx Communications,* 1995, 21-33.

The mission culture brought about the Regnocentric ministry and theology, while Christendom tended to focus on the Ecclesiocentric ministry and theology.

In Ecclesiocentric theology, the four fundamental aspects of the theology of mission were placed in the following order of importance: Church, Mission, Proclamation, and Reign of God.[19] In other words, the mission was defined by the Church.[20] But the documents of Vatican II, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (*EN*), as well as the encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (*RM*), all indicate a clear reconfiguration of the relationships among these four fundamental elements. All these documents place the theme of the Reign of God immediately after speaking of Jesus as the Saviour and Redeemer. *Redemptoris Missio* (in No. 13) affirms that "the proclamation and establishment of God's Kingdom are the purposes of His (Jesus') mission." It is the mission that defines the Church. The Church, as John Paul II puts it, is "effectively and concretely at the service of the Kingdom" (*RM* n. 20). Mission involves bearing witness to the Reign of God and its values. True, the Church is not merely the instrument, but also the symbol, the realization of the Reign of God. Proclamation becomes a fundamental and primary element by which the Church seeks to bring about the Reign of God. Though proclamation is commonly understood as the verbal announcement of the Good News, written and/or oral, an attentive reading of the document *Ecclesia in Asia* (*EAs*) shows no exclusive emphasis on the use of words or doctrinal formulas to communicate this Good News. On the contrary, it indicates that proclamation can be carried out through a variety of approaches. These approaches can range from stories, parables, symbols, personal contacts, forms of asceticism, i.e.,

[19] Peter C. Phan, "Proclamation of the Reign of God as Mission of the Church: What for, to Who, by Whom, with Whom, and How," Unpublished paper, delivered at the Conference and Annual Meeting of the United States Catholic Mission Association, 2001, Memphis, Tennessee, in https://paperzz.com/doc/8105082/proclamation-of-the-reign-of-god-as-mission-of-the (accessed: 09 September 2025).

[20] Peter C. Phan, "Proclamation of the Reign of God."

detachment, renunciation, simplicity. And, above all, silent witness and holiness of Christian life still remain an excellent way of proclaiming Jesus and His message.[21] Already in 1985, the Bishops' Institute for Inter-religious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in its Final Statement clearly indicated this same perception: "That the Reign of God is the very reason for the being of the Church. The Church exists in and for the Kingdom […]. That the Church is an instrument for the actualization of the Kingdom."[22]

If the mission of the Church is to proclaim and bring about the Reign of God, then every ministry, including Youth Ministry, is for the Reign of God. If the mission of the Church is to the world, then the mission of Youth Ministry also needs to move towards the world of the youth. This move is based on the conviction that the Holy Spirit is the "principal agent of mission" and that the Spirit directs the mission of the Church to be present and to be active in every time and place. "The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals, but also society and history, peoples and cultures and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history" (*RM* n. 28).

Exigency to Move Towards Regnocentric Paradigm

A rapid overview of the documents of the Church and that of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) confirms this

[21] John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Asia,* Apostolic Exhorations, https://www.vatican.va/content/ john-paul-ii/en/apost_ exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html (accessed: 12 January 2019), 20-23 and 42.

[22] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference – Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs, "Final Statement of the Second Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs on the theology of dialogue," Pattaya, Thailand, 17-22 November 1985 in Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arevalo (Eds.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1970 to 1991,* Vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), pg. 252.

Regnocentric paradigm[23] as the foundation of being Church in the world and especially Church in Asia.[24]

The mission of Jesus Christ here on earth is fundamentally grounded in the everlasting love of the Trinity. The Incarnational theology enables one to comprehend the power and presence of Jesus as a permanent part of human life. The ultimate purpose of Jesus' earthly mission is to proclaim and manifest God's Reign here on earth. Motivated by God's will to save everyone through his definite intervention and thus lead all persons to partake in the fullness of communion between him and the Father in their Spirit of love, Jesus inaugurated this Reign of God. He manifested this Reign of God through a love that liberates, heals, and renews. A process of liberation highlights the situation of negative or oppressive factors, of unfreedom, of various limitations and restraints. While healing denotes a restoration to the original state or self, renewal invites the individual to deal with the scars caused by the hurts, the damage left behind by the hurt. Jesus, by liberating, healing, and renewing, invites individuals to enter into personal relationships. Entering into a personal relationship requires the setting aside of fear and making a choice to be on the part of Jesus. Setting aside fear on its part requires putting away four fundamental manifestations of fear: fear of rejection, fear of pain, fear of failure, and fear of death. One can discern the manner in which Jesus confronted these four expressions of fear throughout

[23] Avery Dulles affirms that there is an integral connection between an image and model. When an image is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one's theoretical understanding of a reality, it becomes what is today called a 'model'. A model rises to the status of a paradigm when it has proved successful in solving a great variety of problems and is expected to be an appropriate tool for unravelling anomalies as yet unsolved. See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Garden City, 1978), 27-33.

[24] Some parts of this section have been published in Jerome Vallabaraj, *Empowering the Young Towards Fullness of Life*, (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2003), 59-60.

his public ministry.[25] But in Jesus' teaching and proclamation, one also notes that "liberation is not merely *from* something, but also *for* something else."[26] It is also more than wholeness, which "is a static image. It indicates a structure of balance between various elements."[27] But Jesus also proclaimed that the Reign of God through a love that liberates, heals, renews, and leads one to grow towards fullness.

Notwithstanding some negative and ambiguous implications, at times attached to the term *Reign of God*, many prefer to use this term in the absence of a more appropriate expression to indicate the rich, comprehensive, and multiple meanings that this traditional symbol carries. In the context of the different schools of thought and lengthy discussions that centre on the theme Reign of God, a certain emerging consensus can be discerned.

The Reign of God is a symbol of the active presence and sovereignty of God

> over all creation and history, heaven and earth, now and always […]. (It) evokes both God's intentions for and God's activity in history; it symbolises God's intentions of peace and justice, love and freedom, wholeness and fullness of life for all, and for the well-being of creation, and it symbolises that God is active in partnership with human agency to effect these universal intentions […]. The reign of God is first and always a gift that comes by the grace and power of God […]. God has called humankind into a covenant that requires us to live toward the realization of God's reign. What God wills *to* us - fullness of life for all - is God's will *for* us, that is, the rule by which we are responsible to live. The reign of God is both gift and responsibility, promise and command.[28]

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[25] Don Kimball, *Power and Presence. A Theology of Relationships* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 64-103.

[26] Michael Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness. Searching for an Integral Spirituality, Lectures in Memory of Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadass* (1932-1990), Bangalore, NBCLC, 1994, 2.

[27] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 2.

[28] Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith. A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education & Pastoral Ministry* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 16. All other

This Reign of God in Christian faith is envisaged in terms of "already begun," in that it has been definitively initiated in Jesus the Christ, and as "coming now." Every time people fulfil God's will, this Reign becomes a reality; while it is 'not yet' in that its complete fulfilment will be radically new at the end of time. Through the saving and life-giving event of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, God empowers individuals to choose to live free *from* the power of sin in all its forms, *for* the values of God's Reign and *towards fullness of life*.

In his mission on earth, Jesus made it clear that all people are welcome to live and participate in God's Reign by practising the radical law of love – loving God by loving one's neighbour as one loves oneself. Jesus also made it clear to His disciples that such a call for the radical law of love manifests a covenantal partnership with God in Jesus, with one another, and the disciples' willingness to follow Jesus' way of life and to live in right relationship with God, others, selves, and all creation.

Thus, the Reign of God in Jesus becomes a symbol of both "hope and command, promise and responsibility."

- ❖ At the personal level, the Reign of God in Jesus is realised in authentic love and care for the self which "is marked by inner peace, realization of one's dignity and worth, recognition and development of one's gifts, by a sense of hope and joy in life, a satisfying of what one needs, physically, socially, and aesthetically" for the fullness of life.

- ❖ At the interpersonal level, such a Reign of God in Jesus demands of individuals "a lifelong conversion of deepening relationship with God and of turning toward one's neighbour with all that love requires (justice, peace, respect, etc.)."

- ❖ In the social and political realm, the Reign of God in Jesus means that Christians and Christian faith communities "should publicly reflect its realization in their lives and ecclesial structures and participate as a 'public church' in society that helps effect its eminently social values of life for all." God's Reign in Jesus

quotes in this section are taken from page 17 of the same source.

> is an invitation for a true partnership which involves active participation in realising this promise within and through human history.

The personal, interpersonal, and socio-political ramifications of the Reign of God become the paradigm towards the transformation of the Asian youth realities presented earlier.

Refocusing on a Regnocentric Vision

The central theme of Jesus' public ministry was the proclamation of the Reign of God. This reign, marked by love, mercy, justice, and reconciliation, provides the foundation for Christian discipleship and mission. The Synoptic Gospels consistently attest that Jesus announced and embodied this reign through his teaching, parables, miracles, and table fellowship. Yet, in the history of Christian thought, the Reign was often conflated with the institutional Church, leading to an Ecclesiocentric emphasis that sometimes obscured the broader eschatological and transformative vision of God's reign.

The 20th century, particularly through the *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Council, witnessed a renewed theological focus on the 'Reign of God'. *Lumen Gentium (LG)* in no. 48 envisages the Church as the "Universal Sacrament of salvation." As 'Sacrament of the Reign,' the Church is not identified with the Reign of God, but "constitutes here on earth the seed and the beginning of the Reign of God" (See also RM 18-20). It is "in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men" (LG 1). It is a 'sign,' therefore an announcement and germinal presence of the grandiose project of God for humanity that we call 'God's Reign.'"[29] The Church constitutes a providential, historical mediation, not by closing within itself its borders for the realization of this project, but as "messianic people" who give witness and proclaim to the world the advent and the promise of the Reign and at the same time bringing forth the first fruits of such a Reign. Karl Rahner states that the Church "is

[29] "The Church is its sign. In the Church we find the visible manifestation of the project that God is silently carrying out throughout the world." Puebla 227.

the sacrament of salvation for a world, which in effect means that in its greater part it is saved by the grace of God beyond the institutional aspect of the church."[30]

Thus, the first and fundamental indication is that the ecclesial praxis does not have as its goal the Church itself or its self-preservation or affirmation in the world, but envisages itself in terms of a plan that transcends and determines its meaning: the spreading and augmenting of the *Reign of God and its values* in history. It is here that the Christian community finds the ultimate meaning of its own efforts, that is, to ensure the advance of the values of the Reign: communion with God and with humans, fraternity, liberty, peace, happiness, and life.

'*In the world and for the world* ': Such a perspective presupposes a renewed vision of the *relationship between the Church and the world*. The world (the history of humanity) ought not to be thought of either in opposition to or as inimical to the plan of God's Reign, nor simply as the place to bring about salvation proclaimed, but as the *true place for the realization of the Reign* in the measure in which it affirms the inspirations of the Spirit. The Church, as part of the world and at its service, declares itself as "the servant of humanity"[31] and "goes forward together with humanity and experiences the same earthly lot which the world does. She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family" (GS 40).

Gaudium et Spes situates the Church's mission within the joys and hopes of humanity, aligning it with Reign and affirms in no. 45 thus: "While helping the world and receiving many benefits from it, the Church has a single intention: that God's kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass." The Council documents describe the Church not as an end in itself but as

[30] Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), 77.

[31] Paul VI, *Concluding Discourse of the Second Vatican Council*, 7 December 1965, in http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6closin.htm (accessed: 15 October 2018).

a sacrament and servant of the Reign. This shift gave rise to a Regnocentric orientation in pastoral theology, which continues to inform evangelization, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and socio-political engagement in the contemporary world. This shift was further ratified by Pope Francis, calling for a Church that goes forth and affirms that "The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace, and dignity.[32]

We are living in the era of New Evangelisation today. We are aware that ever since John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio,* the term "new evangelization" has become part of Catholic vocabulary. It encapsulates at least three levels of significance – that the Gospel be shared with those baptized Catholics whose lives are disconnected from the Church; that our efforts of evangelisation over all be characterised by a new ardour of reaching out, new methods of building relationships and new expressions of communicating the Gospel; thirdly, that it becomes a paradigm for all pastoral activity, one that links *mission* and *communion* in all arenas of evangelisation.[33] Hence, the call to the new evangelization is a call for the baptized members of the Church to deepen their faith and reach out to other Christians and the entire humanity, in deep need of a new encounter with Christ. In modern times, this means re-proposing the Gospel to people in countries and cultures heavily influenced by secularization. It comes forth strongly as a Regnocentric vision of the Christian mission today.

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[32] Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelium Gaudium on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, 180-181, Apostolic Exhortations, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed: 04 September 2025).

[33] John McGrath, "Befriending Context and Tradition: Evangelization and Catholic Schools," in *The Australasian Catholic Record* 89 (2012) 3: 283–298, in p. 285.

5.1. Regnocentric Vision Leads towards Fullness of Life for All

In this complex economic, political, socio-cultural, multi-faith context, it is important to acknowledge the inner search that lies within each person. The present condition is perceived as one of poverty, oppression, or non-freedom. Some search for health, others search for wealth, and still others search for peace or happiness. This search normally begins with the desire to liberate oneself from all that enslaves the person, be it in the economic, social, political, moral, or spiritual sphere. But liberation or "integral liberation" here tends to emphasize only one aspect, and normally denotes a negative perspective, a "liberating from."

Others search for "wholeness," which refers to the integration and completion of what is divided or multiple or partial.[34] Although the term is more positive, yet it tends to become a

> static image, a structure of balance among various elements. A visual image of such wholeness is the *mandala*. A *mandala* is a balanced geometric pattern constructed with circles, squares, and triangles […] that helps in integrating and unifying the mind and the attention, which are normally drawn or pulled in different directions. Though it is inclusive, it has no dynamism […]. It does not necessarily indicate life.[35]

It only underlines the multiplicity and difference that promote integration in wholeness.

The more attractive term "fullness," even though it too can be contrasted to emptiness or limitation, evokes images that are more attractive and assume greater significance and meaning in a multi-faith and multi-cultural context. To a considerable section of Asian tradition, Fullness, the Ultimate Reality, is the symbol of the ultimate mystery. Fullness manifests life and creativity. By sharing its abundance in creation, the Ultimate Reality does not lose anything either by giving or by creating.

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[34] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 2.

[35] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 2

> The multiplicity and the variety of creation are seen not as division and fragmentation, but richness rooted in a unity that is fullness […]. It is the mystery of God in all things and all things in God. It is fullness that is inclusive and transcendent. It is the vision of the *advaita* – of non-duality – that is one and many or, from another point of view, neither one nor many.[36]

Further, Fullness denotes not merely life but the abundance of it, in its newness, continuity, and creativity. It becomes a symbol of unity and sharing.

A similar image of life and fullness is also evoked in the Christian Scriptures and Tradition. In fact, the entire Christian revelation is the story of God's design to share the fullness of God's essence with human beings and an invitation to human beings to participate in this fullness of life. The first three chapters of Genesis speak of God's decision to create humankind in God's own image and likeness. By means of diverse literary forms, the Scripture reveals the ultimate vocation of human beings, namely, that God, the creator and saviour, wants humankind to participate in God's fullness of life and for this reason, offers and invites human beings to a special relationship as sons/daughters and with each other in brotherhood and sisterhood. The Old Testament narrates the story of a people who, despite their long story of repeated betrayal and unfaithfulness, sought liberation and fullness of life symbolized in a human way in their quest for a land of their own. The prophets kept constantly challenging and calling them back to true life.

At the appointed time, God sent God's only son, Jesus, the Christ. In Jesus of Nazareth, "we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). He gave a new commandment, the commandment of love: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). He also established a new community that is open and inclusive – a community of freedom, fellowship and justice to proclaim the good news of the Reign of God. All His teachings, cures, and miracles are signs and symbols of His desire to offer fullness of life. Finally, Jesus offered Himself in sacrifice

[36] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness* 3.

to reconcile all things in unity. By His resurrection, He overcame death and sin and offered humankind once more the possibility of sharing in the fullness of life.

5.2. Purpose of Regnocentric Ministry

Right from the first moment of his public appearance, Jesus intended to teach people how to live for the Reign of God with love and compassion, peace and justice, holiness and freedom. His ultimate goal was that all might come to fullness of life – here and hereafter in eternity.[37] "I came that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10).

The Reign of God throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament is "a profoundly social symbol or, perhaps, more accurately, a spiritual symbol that demands social engagement and responsibilities,"[38] Hence, the Church is a sacrament of the Reign of God in the world. This demands that the Church be "an effective sign that causes to happen what it signifies."[39] The great commandment of love, the ultimate law of God's reign, demands love of God and self, which cannot come to fruition apart from love of neighbour; and love of neighbour is a social endeavour.

By proclaiming the Reign of God and instituting a radical law of love, Jesus personified a *fullness-of-life-for-all*[40] value system or ethics. This ideal of *fullness-of-life-for-all* unites love of God, that of the neighbour, and of the self, and is lived with all one's mind, heart, and strength, with no restrictions or barriers as to who one's neighbour is.

Within Jesus' total commitment to the Reign of God, the New Testament highlights his special concern for the poor, oppressed, and

[37] Thomas Groome, *Educating for Life. A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent* (Texas: Harper & Row Publishers, 1998), 38.

[38] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 178.

[39] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 179.

[40] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 305.

marginalised. In this manner, Jesus becomes a countersign for the evil and oppression in his social context. In the beatitudes, he declared that the Reign of God belongs to the poor and to those who work for justice and peace (cf. Mt 5:1-9).

> Such justice demands unqualified commitment to the dignity and sacredness of every person; working for the common good; honesty in one's dealings with neighbours and groups; actively helping to create social structures that distribute fairly society's resources and promote the rights and responsibilities of all; bringing to every level and arena of life a deep commitment to the full liberation of humankind and the integrity of God's creation, with special favour for those most in need.[41]

Once again, Jesus declared that "people will come from east and west, from north and south and will eat in the kingdom of God" (Lk 13:29). He points out that the Reign of God includes not only the universality of God's love, but also the universality of God's will for the salvation of all people.[42]

> Being Catholic entails an abiding love for all people with commitment to their welfare, rights, and justice. It welcomes diversity, is open to learn from other traditions, and lies in solidarity with all humankind as brother and sister […] free of discrimination and sectarian sentiment and welcomes 'the stranger' with outreach, especially the most in need.[43]

This Reign of God can be spoken of as "already begun," as "coming now," and as "not yet" fulfilled. In Jesus Christ, this Reign of God has already been definitively initiated; it is "coming now" as individuals and groups seek to do God's will, and it is "not yet" in that its fulfilment will be radically new at the end of time. The Reign of God is both transcendent and immanent.

> The Reign of God transcends the Church already now insofar as God is sharing God's life and love even now outside the Church […]. As immanent it manifests itself in the efforts of people to build up a

[41] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 378.

[42] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 395-422.

[43] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 413.

> community of love, freedom, and fellowship in history […]. While in one sense the fullness is in the future when the whole universe will be gathered together, and God will be all in all, in another sense the fullness is already now, but at a trans-historical level.[44]

Thus, we see that the Reign of God is for all categories of persons, great and small, rich and poor, healthy and sick, near and far, Jews and others, men and women, righteous and sinners, rulers and subjects, individuals and groups. He [Jesus] is available to all. He is interested in the needs of every person, body, and soul. Accordingly, it becomes evident that the purpose of Jesus proclaiming the Reign of God was that all may have life and have it to the full, i.e., *fullness-of- life-for-all*.

Fullness-of-life-for-all has its foundations in the fullness of God and has to be achieved or grown into since fullness in life is not given. Life with its limitations, divisions, and fragmentations forced on individuals and society by the abuse of freedom at all levels demands a process of integration if growth towards *fullness-of-life-for-all* is to be promoted. Such integration needs to take place at two levels: at the personal level it is an integration, that is, a net-work of relationships of self with creation, the body, the emotions, the mind, the spirit, the other and God; at the community level, it is an integration through dialogue and building of community, human and Christian which is at the service of the human community.[45] The Christian community's Regnocentric ministry towards fullness of life for all is clearly manifested in the four mediations or signs: service (*diakonia*), communion (*koinonia*), witness (*martyria*), and celebration (*leitourgia*).[46]

Right from their first meeting in Manila and at various other General Plenary Assemblies, the concern of FABC has always been centred on life and the desire to offer a better and fuller life. Recalling

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[44] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 81-82.

[45] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 62-89.

[46] Emilio Alberich and Jerome Vallabaraj, *Communicating a faith that transforms, A Handbook of Fundamental Catechetics* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2004), 34-42.

briefly the extraordinary story of the FABC, the Final Statement of the Sixth Plenary Assembly states:

> It is the story of a listener attentive to the perils of life, to the visions of life, to the celebratory songs of life, and who wants to share the singular wealth one has, which is the memory of the person named Jesus, who is for us the Way, the Truth, and the Life.[47]

Asians are not only searching for a better economic, social, and political life, but, for the greater majority, life itself.

This search for life is permeated with a holistic vision that is the "fruit of integral development, the authentic development of the whole person and of every person."[48] The great commandment of love is realised through a life that seeks to recreate communion with God and the neighbours. Serving life by recreating communion demands solidarity with suffering humanity, demands a resolve to liberate our societies from whatever oppresses and degrades human life and creation. Serving life by recreating communion also becomes a symbol of hope and enables everyone to realise that "life still pulsates and flows, life is a promise that is being realised and will be fulfilled in Jesus and His Spirit."[49]

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[47] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs, "Final Statement of the Seconds Bishops Institute of Interreligious Affairs on the theology of dialogue," Pattaya, Thailand, 17-22 November 1985 in Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arevalo (Eds.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1970 to 1991,* Vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), pg. 252.

[48] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Sixth Plenary Assembly, "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life," Final Statement of the Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly, January 10-19, 1995, Manila, Philippines in Franz-Josef Eilers (Ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1992 to 1996,* Vol. 2 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), pg. 3.

[49] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Sixth Plenary Assembly, "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today," 4-5.

Regnocentric Youth Ministry in the Asian Milieu

The ongoing theological reflection and progress notwithstanding, Christian Youth Ministry in the Asian milieu seems to be rooted in an overly Ecclesiocentric perspective, deriving from the so-called Christian society. Examples of this can still be seen in the thinking and writings expressed in many books dealing with Youth Ministry, which advocate the two major fields of Youth Ministry: fellowship or communion and mission or outreach.[50] In Catholic Youth Ministry, the above-mentioned two fields are often identified with the two principal goals of Youth Ministry: catechesis and evangelization/re-evangelization. A rapid look at the Youth Ministry scenario seems to illustrate this. Youth Ministry practised by the Church is, more often than not, restricted or geared to the young who come into the Church or its pertaining premises, and generally does not take into consideration the thousands who do not enter those premises. In many cases, even what is done for those outside seems to be from the perspective of their potential membership in the Church.

Certain assumptions underlie the above approach. It implies that the whole of society is basically Christian; that the young perceive religion as being of fundamental importance; that the young seek adequate solutions to their problems within the Church or from the Church, etc.; and that the Church's Youth Ministry has nothing to do with the rest of society and its young people. Can such assumptions be sustained? Isn't it high time for Youth Ministry to bring about a paradigm shift from the overly Ecclesiocentric to the Regnocentric perspective?

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[50] See Pete Ward, *Youthwork and the Mission of God – Framework for Relational Outreach* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1997). Again, Tim Neufeld, "Postmodern Model of Youth Ministry," *Direction* 31/2: 194-205 (2002). Or again, Arthur David Canales *Models & Methods for Youth & Young Adult Ministry* (California: Wipf and Stock, 2018). The author presents four models of Youth and Young adult ministry. They are Biblical-hermeneutic model, the servant-leadership model, liberation model and the Christian Discipleship model.

If the fundamental task and final goal of the Church is "Proclamation of the Reign of God in the world and for the world"[51], the actualization of the Reign of God is made visible here and now in its four fundamental signs/mediations. Reign of God in its *ecclesial visibility*

- *is realized* in love and service of persons (sign of *Diakonia*);
- *is lived* in fraternity and in communion (sign of *Koinonia*);
- *is proclaimed* in the salvific proclamation of the Gospel (sign of *Martyria*)
- *is celebrated* in the celebrative and liberating rites and rituals of the Christian celebrations (sign of *Leitourgia*).

These four signs/mediations are so intimately linked to each other that no one sign/mediation guarantees authenticity and exactitude if isolated from the other three. The harmonious and integral presence of these four signs/mediations becomes the criterion for the proclamation of Regnocentric ministry and for discernment of Christian and ecclesial authenticity.[52]

The Church realises concretely the proclamation of the Reign of God in certain actions that promote the dynamism of its mission.

- ✓ *Missionary Action*: It is the first step in the holistic process of proclamation of the Reign of God that is directed towards non-believers or those indifferent to religion. This takes on different forms: presence, service, dialogue, witness, all leading to explicit announcing of the Gospel;
- ✓ *Catechumenal Action*: It comprises all those actions directed to those who wish to be Christians or to those who want to take up again the path of following Christ through the rites of initiation:

[51] Jerome Vallabaraj and Antony Christy Lourdunathan, *Cultivating a Faith that Transforms* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2023), 31.

[52] Vallabaraj and Lourdunathan, *Cultivating a Faith that Transforms,* 31-36.

reception, accompaniment, catechesis, rites and sacraments of initiation, mystagogy. The catechumenal action is an essential function that expresses the motherhood of the Church (DC 61-65).

- ✓ *Pastoral Action*: It is the known environment of action "*ad intra*" of the Christian community wherein the traditional functions are exercised: cult, celebrations, sacraments, preaching, catechesis, community life, ministry of various types and to various believers, service of charity, etc.

There is a gradation here which becomes complete only with an additional stage of "presence and action in the world," that describes the ideal dynamism of the ecclesial action in its concrete historical realization.

- ✓ *Presence and Action in the World*: This oft-neglected stage merits particular attention. It is the ecclesial action that results in the realization of witnessing concretely to the gospel in society: human promotion, social and political action, educative and cultural action, promotion of peace, ecological engagement, and so on. They are environments where the Christians, through their presence, are called to move beyond their own Christian environment to be at the service of the Reign of God in the world.

6.1. Situating Youth Ministry within the Regnocentric Paradigm

Within the Regnocentric paradigm, Youth ministry is *always pastoral* since it is most often, commonly, and primarily situated *within the pastoral action* of the Christian community. Through Church's pastoral action "young people will be able to discover the personal love of the Father and the companionship of Jesus Christ and to live out this season of life particularly 'suited to the great ideals, to generous forms of heroism, to the coherent demands of thought and action" (*DC* n. 244). Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit* (*ChV*) encourages the Christian "communities to examine, respectfully and seriously, the situation of

their young people, in order to find the most fitting ways of providing them with pastoral care" (n. 103). Again, he affirms "that every form of pastoral activity, formation and spirituality should be seen in the light of our Christian vocation" (n. 254).

Regnocentric Youth Ministry is *always missionary*. Pope Francis affirms that if the Christian community "can hear what the Spirit is saying to us, we have to realize that youth ministry is always missionary" (*ChV* n. 240, emphasis added). In ChV, the Holy Father continues to uphold that the

> Synod called for the development of a youth ministry capable of being inclusive, with room for all kinds of young people, to show that we are a Church with open doors. Nor does one have to accept fully all the teachings of the Church to take part in certain of our activities for young people. It is enough to have an open mind towards all those who have the desire and willingness to be encountered by God's revealed truth. If we can hear what the Spirit is saying to us, we have to realize that youth ministry is always missionary (n. 234).

Regnocentric Youth Ministry is *presence in the world*. Pope Francis insists that legitimate room should also be made for

> all those who have other visions of life, who belong to other religions or who distance themselves from religion altogether. All the young, without exception, are in God's heart and thus in the Church's heart. We recognize frankly that this statement on our lips does not always find real expression in our pastoral actions: *often we remain closed in our environments*, where their voice does not penetrate, or else we dedicate ourselves to less demanding and more enjoyable activities, suppressing that healthy pastoral restlessness that would urge us to move out from our supposed security. The Gospel also asks us to be daring, and we want to be so, without presumption and without proselytizing, testifying to the love of the Lord and stretching out our hands to all the young people in the world (*ChV* n. 235, emphasis added).

If the Church's educative ministry, health ministry, and social ministries are open to all, irrespective of race, religion, and caste, why does the Church continue to close its Youth Ministry predominantly only for Catholic youth?

6.2. Defining Youth Ministry from Regnocentric Paradigm

Youth Ministry, therefore, needs to shift its horizon from a narrow perception of ministering to the young who come into our environment to a wider and holistic perspective of *fullness-of-life-for-all*. It is only in this wider and holistic perspective that the Church can become a sacrament of the Reign of God for all people, especially for the youth. Regnocentric Youth Ministry, founded on *fullness-of- life-for-all,* lays emphasis on developing right relationships with one's own self, with others, with society, with the entire creation, and above all with the author of life and creation under whatever form one may understand or believe. The *fullness-of-life-for-all* paradigm offers all young people, irrespective of their creed or religion, a future, a meaning, an identity, and a sense of belonging, since these are the fundamental life-yearnings and explorations of all young people. This unfolding and realization of right relationships within oneself, with the neighbours, and with the cosmos, lead to the summit experience of harmony with God. If spirituality is understood as "one's way of life"[53] and defined as "that which is believed to be the vital principle or animating force within living beings,"[54] then this holistic goal *fullness-of-life-for-all* can become the spirituality of Regnocentric Youth Ministry and the universal, all-encompassing vision of Youth Ministry in an ever-increasing multi-faith and multi-cultural context of the world. Hence, our proposed definition of Regnocentric Youth Ministry:

> *Youth Ministry is the name that refers to the entire gamut of actions by which the Christian community, animated by the Holy Spirit, empowers the young to become agent-subjects in relationship*[55] *and to advance towards fullness-of-life-for-all*[56] *through*

[53] Groome, *Educating,* 330.

[54] Mark Springer and Cheryl Smith, *The Seven Principles of Effective Youth Ministry. A Handbook for Spiritual Growth* (California, Resource Publications, Inc., 1995), 94.

[55] I borrow this term from Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 8-9.

[56] The expressions "towards fullness" and "for life for all" are two phrases utilised respectively by Michael Amaladoss and Thomas Groome. '*Towards fullness*' used by Amaladoss highlights the process. Cf. Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness. Searching For an Integral Spirituality. Lectures in Memory of Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadass*

> *the ever-changing concrete life situations, thus contributing to building up in the world, the Reign of God, proclaimed, manifested and inaugurated, in and by Jesus Christ.*

Thus, Youth Ministry is a ministry rendered by the Christian community in fulfillment of its inherent mission, rooted in the call, the commissioning, and the identity as a Christian community. Such a ministry is an expression of the unique and singular commitment of the Christian community, at the service of the Reign of God in the world and for the world. Empowering the young signifies "to give them a voice and a call to responsibility and accountability with regard to the issues that affect them, their future and the world."[57] The compound phrase *agent-subjects in relationship* indicates how the young are to be both challenged and formed by Youth Ministry. Thomas Groome uses

> the term *subject* to signify the intrinsic value of persons *qua* persons, a meaning heightened when we think of subject in contrast to object, the latter always being something of a qualified value. I preface it with *agent* to emphasize the originating and historically responsible dimension of human 'subjectivity;' '*agent* subjects' are to be consciously aware, reflective, discerning, and responsible people. *Agent* as a modifier of *subject* also helps to avoid the possible connotation of the latter as a position of subordination, as in 'subject to.' I use agent-subjects *in relationship* to indicate that the authentic 'being' of people is always realized 'in relationship' with others in time and place.[58]

(1932-1990) 1993 (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1994). While *'for life for all'* is an expression of Thomas Groome who summarises the personal-cum-social purpose of education, ministry and evangelisation. According to Groome the purpose of all education is to become fully alive human beings who contribute to a society of the common good. See also Thomas Groome, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent,* Texas, Thomas More, Allen, 1998.

[57] Jerome Vallabaraj, "Youth Ministry in Asia. National Youth Pastoral Plan: Salient Features and an Appraisal," in Anthony Francis-Vincent (Ed.), *Seguire i percorsi dello Spirito – Studi in onore del prof. Mario Midali* (Rome: LAS, 1999), 189.

[58] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 8-9. It is also in this perspective I will interchange this expression with another term "protagonist."

"Fullness is the symbol of ultimate mystery."[59] *To advance towards fullness* "indicates an effort to become free, to become aware of our being, to experience our life as God's,[60] since fullness is breaking down the wall of egoism that keeps the individuals separate and obstructs the discovery and experience of our union with God, others, and the world. Jesus evokes the image of life and fullness when he says: "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (Jn10:10). "From his fullness we have all received" (Jn 1:16). Thus *fullness-of-life-for-all* emphasises the need to develop right relationships - with oneself, with others, with the society, with creation; and above all, with the author of life and the entire creation! To *advance towards fullness* requires the young to realise the God-given gifts of their life and the world around them, inviting them to destroy everything that impedes this search for fullness. This ought to be the rationale of every ministry, formation, education, and animation. *Ever changing life situations* refers to the continual rediscovery of God's love, goodness, and gift on the part of the young. Hence, Youth Ministry invites the young to assume in a consistent fashion the ordinary aspects of life; to accept the challenges, questions and tensions of growth; to strive towards gathering life's fragments into a unity realised as a human vocation; to overcome the ambiguities present in daily experience; to leaven every option with love: all this is part of the process necessary for discovering and loving daily, concrete life-situations as a new reality in which God's Reign is realized (*GS* n. 40).

6.3. Foundations for a Regnocentric Youth Ministry

A multi-faith and multi-cultural situation requires that Youth Ministry be solidly founded on the Christian faith and yet have the ability to offer life to others without infringing on their right to decide and to evolve their own way of life and the vital principles that govern their life.

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[59] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 3.

[60] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness,* 4.

An anthropology (*Humanitas Anthropology)*[61] which proposes that Youth Ministry perceive and cultivate youth as persons, and promote "an abiding spirit of affirmation, appreciation, and celebration of life and of human beings".[62] Such a vision requires the youth ministers to have an enduring commitment to the whole person, and they perceive the young as true protagonists or agent-subjects who foster rights and responsibilities.

Youth Ministry is also called upon to tap the youth's attitude toward life in the world *(Sacramental Cosmology*). This requires that youth ministers "personally cultivate a sacramental consciousness – a sense of the 'more in the midst' – and a spirit of contemplation toward life."[63] This perspective implies that the youth ministers encourage the young to look for meaning and for 'the more' in life and to promote imagination and aesthetic gifts, and to build up the ecological consciousness of being stewards of creation.

The promotion of a *"Community of Persons" Sociology* highlights the need of the youth ministers to "be committed public servants who educate in ways that promote the 'common good'"[64] by fostering cooperation and partnership among all learners.

The appreciation of *History's Legacy of Tradition* invites all youth ministers to evolve an educative agenda that is "humanizing, available to all, and lays the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic foundations needed for every vocation."[65] This invites the youth ministers "to grow as educated and cultured participants in life" and demands a

[61] Thomas Groome, in his book "Educating for Life," reminds every one that an essential partnership must be present if we are to educate all persons, especially the young. Here his thoughts and ideas are applied and adapted to youth ministry.

[62] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 428; See also 67-115.

[63] Groome, *Educating for Life,* 428; See also 118-168.

[64] Groome, *Educating for Life,* 428; See also 171-212.

[65] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 429.

dual responsibility "to conserve the most humanising traditions and to draw new life from them."[66]

A *Wisdom Epistemology* invites youth ministers "to a deep passion for truth – to pursue it, to live it, to teach it. Their teaching should reflect commitment to the 'whole truth:' cognitive, relational, and moral."[67]

A *Personal Spirituality* invites the youth ministers to care for their own personal spiritual life and to see their vocation as a spiritual commitment of enabling the young "to live into the mystery and depths of life, to become 'fully alive' to the glory of God."[68]

Living in a context where poverty, injustice, and oppression are prevalent, the youth ministers are invited to a *personal passion for justice, which* is to be marked by right relationships with persons, with the environment, and with all the elements in one's teachings.[69]

Living in a pluri-faith context, *Catholicity* invites youth ministers to a universal consciousness and to strive to help them to be "leading-learners," fostering in the young "openness of mind and heart, by stimulating curiosity, and by helping them prepare for lifelong learning."[70]

Conclusion: Regnocentric Youth Ministry — Unity in Pluralism

The Asian Bishops gathered at Manila in 1970, described the Asian continent and the Church as the continent and Church of the

[66] Groome, *Educating for Life,* 429; See also 215-265.

[67] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 429; See also 267-318.

[68] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 42; See also 319-357.

[69] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 359-392.

[70] Groome, *Educating for Life*, 429; See also 395-423.

Poor and the Young.[71] Being a minority and widely scattered, the Asian Church also faces the "stark choice of either becoming closed enclaves servicing their own internal needs or of bravely opening up to the real needs and deepest aspirations of the wider society."[72] The Fifth General Assembly of the FABC, in its journey towards the third millennium and reflecting on the new way of being and becoming Church in Asia, stated:

> The Church in Asia will have to be a *communion of communities* […] It is a *participatory* Church […] it is a Church that faithfully and lovingly *witnesses* to the Risen Lord and reaches out to people of other faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all […]. It is a leaven of transformation in this world and serves as a *prophetic* sign daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come.[73]

Again, in its General Assembly at Samphran (2000) in the year of the Great Jubilee, the Church in Asia committed itself to a renewal towards a mission of love and service "in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, in union with all our Christian brothers and

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[71] Asian Bishops' Meeting, "Message and Resolutions," Manila, in Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arevalo (Eds.), *For All the People of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991*, Vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), pg. 4.

[72] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Office of Evangelization, "Consultation of Asian Local Churches and Mission *Ad Gentes:* A New Way of Being Church-in-Mission in Asia," 14-17 September 2000, Hong Kong, in Frans-Josef Eilers, (Ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1997 to 2001,* Vol. 3 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002), pg. 222.

[73] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium, Statement of the Fifth Plenary Assembly," 27 July 1990, Bandung, Indonesia, in Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arevalo (Eds.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991,* Vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), pg. 287-288.

sisters, and by joining hands with all men and women of Asia of many different faiths."[74]

In this renewed mission of love and service, among its five primary pastoral concerns, the FABC, in its Seventh General Assembly, identified youth as people to whom the Church in Asia needs especially to direct its mission of love and concern, and as those who are equally partners in that mission.

> Youth are the reality of today, not only the hope of tomorrow. They are a source of energy and vitality in society and in the Church. At the same time, they are the most vulnerable and are victimised by structures of exploitation in our world […]. Youth of all backgrounds, urban and rural, poor and rich, educated and uneducated, employed and unemployed, the organized and unorganized, are all being tossed about by the waves of contemporary culture.[75]

Thus, the Church is called to minister to all youth.

Such ministering to youth in a multi-faith context often leads one to conceive of Youth Ministry in a dichotomous manner – on the one hand, as ministry to the Christian youth and on the other, ministry to the youth of other faith traditions. Looking at Youth Ministry from an *Advaitic* perspective may enable us to overcome this misconception.

> *A* + *dvaita* means 'not-two.' It denies duality. It is an affirmation of unity in pluralism that is not monistic. It does not explain anything. It just points to the complexity of reality. To understand how what we perceive as being two things are not-two we have to look at reality. Depending on each reality, the advaitic relationship may be more or less integrative.[76]

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[74] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, *"A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service, Final Statement of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences,"* January 3-12, 2000, Samphan, Thailand in Franz-Josef Eilers (Ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1997 to 2001,* Vol. 3 (Quezon City, Claretian Publications, 2002), pg. 3.

[75] Franz-Josef Eilers (Ed.), For All the Peoples of Asia, pg. 9.

[76] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness,* 45-46.

Just like in a human person, the soul and the body are not two different things. They are two and yet not-two. "Differentiation can never be a separation."[77] Ministry to Christian youth and youth of other faith traditions, thus, ought not to be considered as separation but has to be perceived as unity in pluralism since *fullness-of-life-for-all* becomes the goal in both situations. Pluralism in Youth Ministry is not relativization of ministry since "where there is pluralism that is co-dependent, every unit is obviously limited."[78] Instead, pluralism in Youth Ministry becomes an enrichment. It suggests that different ways of perceiving ministry to the young in a multi-faith context enable one to comprehend Youth Ministry in a fuller and richer manner. In addition, the concept of pluralism corroborates the concept of relatedness. God alone is absolute and full, and all others are related to God. Thus, relatedness in Youth Ministry, in terms of interrelatedness, shows the way to fullness.[79] Relatedness of persons also brings out the dimension of freedom, freedom to be in communion with others and God. "Communion among persons is life, loving and sharing that finds expression as the fullness of joy – *ananda* – the joy of living, the joy of loving, the joy of creating and the joy of communion."[80]

Hence, in a multi-faith context, ministering to the young with the goal of sustaining the young towards fullness of life for all implies life-giving.

> It is dynamic and creative. Creation need not mean producing something, but just increasing the quality of life and relationships […]. Given our limitations, a move towards fullness is a move towards authentic freedom through awareness, experience, transformation and creation. Fullness then is not the immobility of monistic self-sufficiency, but the

[77] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness,* 47.

[78] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness,* 48.

[79] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness,* 48-49; Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Office of Theological Concerns, "Methodology: Asian Christian Theology," Kathmandu, Nepal, May 2000, in Franz-Josef Eilers (Ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Documents from 1997 to 2001,* Vol. 3 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002), 332-338.

[80] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness,* 49.

> participation in the fullness of life and communion that has its root in the Trinity itself.[81]

It is such a Youth Ministry that the Church in Asia is called upon to uphold and develop. Regnocentric Youth Ministry reclaims the centrality of the Reign of God in Christian life and mission. It challenges the Church to transcend institutional self-referentiality and to embody God's reign through justice, love, reconciliation, and ecological care. Rooted in the Gospel and renewed by contemporary theological reflection, Regnocentric Youth Ministry offers a holistic vision for fullness of life for all in the 21st century, a vision that is missionary, inclusive, transformative, and generative.

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[81] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness* 52.

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BOOK REVIEW

"THE TEARS OF THINGS:" PROPHETIC WISDOM FOR AN AGE OF OUTRAGE

Carmen Lourdes Valdés

Author: Richard Rohr, OFM, New York Times bestselling author of *"The Universal Christ."*

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About the Author

Richard Rohr is a Franciscan Friar who clearly explains the charismatic gift of Francis of Assisi and his cosmic understanding of the universe. Rohr is a globally renowned figure in the field of theology and spirituality. He has written over 30 books, most famous of which are: "Falling Upward," "The Universal Christ," "The Divine Dance," "Breathing Under Water," and "Everything is Sacred." He founded the *Center for Action and Contemplation* in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a non-profit organization dedicated to, as stated on its cover, introducing "seekers to the contemplative Christian path of transformation." Richard Rohr created and became famous for his program on *Men's Spirituality*. Besides being one of the *New York Times bestsellers*, he has appeared on *Oprah's Super Soul Sunday*, *Brené Brown's Podcasts,* and *On Being with Krista Tippett*.

Introduction

"The Tears of Things" is a balm for those who are confused and are trying to understand the challenges and conflicts of our technological age, even as we are mired in the violence of wars, chaotic political systems, and the devastation we have imposed on our planet. Where then is our healing? Where can we find a way through to the light of justice and peace? Yes, we are listening to "the cries of the earth" and "the cries of the poor" ("*Laudato Si'*"). The journey is hopeful but extraordinarily tough. Rohr looks to the growth path of the prophets in the Old and New Testaments to find some answers. Perhaps, it is in Ezekiel 3:2-3 as quoted by Rohr, "he gave me the scroll to eat…I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey."

Why the Title

The title leaves everyone wondering - what does it mean? Rohr explains that the title comes from Virgil's mythical yet truth-filled epic. He puts his hero, *Aeneas,* standing stunned before a mural of the Trojan War … Aeneas gazes at his friends and countrymen dead and drenched in their own blood. Virgil portrays it not as victory or defeat, but a heart-wrenching image that results from outrageous anger and injustice. Virgil says in Latin, "*lacrimae rerum.*" The tragedy of war and injustice can only bring tears. "Seamus Heaney translates it, 'There are tears at the heart of things.'" (Rohr, p. 3) Aren't we there now? Most of us are silently in tears as we see our world everywhere and globally ravaged by what we have done to each other and to our earth. Humanity is at a crossroads. The rapid pace of social media and our dilemma of true and false news only magnifies it. Where do we go from here?

A Deeper Look at Rohr's Analysis

First, he divides the prophets starting from Moses and ending with Jesus into two major groups: the "Unfinished Prophets" and those who came to "maturity" as prophets. Under the first group, he names "Elijah, Jonah, and John the Baptizer." In the Second group, he puts full emphasis on Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Job (although Job is a literary figure, he still depicts a complete prophetic cycle). The "unfinished" prophets are those who do not finish what he calls "The Path of

Prophets." Rohr pinpoints the process. Prophets go from anger at the injustices, at the hard-hearted and stubbornness of God's people. The prophet knows their behavior will lead to their destruction and suffering. Here is where the prophet grieves in "tears" of pain. Finally, the prophet emerges with compassion and love. Rohr feels that the first group is stymied in their anger. The second group pursues their mission till tears lead to love.

Thus, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Job (at least in the text) do break down in humble "tears" flowing in their hearts. They transform their pain and proclaim a God who redeems and brings new life to his people in love. Rohr believes that the prophets only learn empathy and grace when they become vulnerable before God and allow God to be a loving God. Rohr also brings in the other prophets as adjuncts to the message, each in their own way. Hosea, for example, is the prophet who exemplifies God's redeeming love to his people, who are basically harsh in their relationship with God.

In this way, Rohr gives us an answer to the punishing God of the Old Testament texts. He says it was not God who changed, it was the prophet who finally sees God from a different perspective – God is, in fact, and always shall be a God of Love; we just do not see it. He concentrates one Chapter (Rohr, pp. 142-159) exemplifying this truth, "It All Comes Down to Love."

"Order, Disorder, and Reorder"

As a foundation for analysis of the prophets, Rohr uses the format he often refers to in his analysis of religious history. He sees events in a progress of "order" disintegrating into "disorder," both social, religious, and political, but finally reemerges into a new "reordering." Although this framework is useful in comprehending our conflicting world issues, some may find it uncomfortable because it simplifies what are extremely complex happenings. However, it does serve its purpose, at least as a starting point, especially now in the 21st Century, with the emergence of Artificial Intelligence, it does help to clarify and give a platform for discussion.

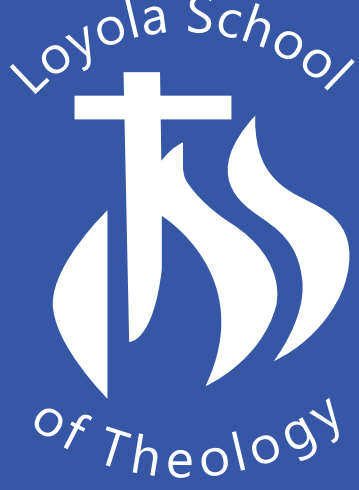
The time has come for all Christians to come forth with a prophetic stance. Jeremiah and Isaiah give us a roadmap. Rohr throws a light on them for us to comprehend our own role. Yes, we should be angry, but we cannot stay there. Violence only begets further violence. As Pope Francis says in his *Laudato Si'*, we must feel the suffering of others and, yes, we will enter into the field of "tears" … As long as we hold fast to the truth, God is always a God of love. Isaiah 65:17 tells us there will be a "new Heaven and a New Earth" … it will come with Jesus … so, with Paul, we can proclaim:

> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

Conclusion

In an age when the tribal or social ego is rampant and dominant, Rohr's critical analysis of the Prophets is spot on. In almost all countries today, the tribal self-centeredness keeps each population captive behind the bars of their entitlement. How do we get through and see where God is in all this? Rohr reviews each Prophet and shows us who we can turn to see a path across the separateness of duality to the other shore of non-duality, where all is ONE. He demonstrates how each Prophet has a role to play in understanding that, finally, our God is God of Love and has never been anything less. Prophets point to the "north star" lighting our way home to the God who created us … "I have drawn you with loving-kindness." (Jeremiah 31:3) "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

About the Reviewer: **Carmen Lourdes Valdés** is an Associate Professor and Lecturer at Loyola School of Theology. She is President of "Sacred Springs Dialogue Institute of Spirituality and Sustainability," the ecological arm of LST. As such, Carmen directs/co-directs Ignatian Retreats on *Laudato Si'* for "Ecological Conversion." Carmen does extensive Spiritual Direction and Counseling for people of all ages, especially those in leadership positions. She is a Board Member of "Breaking Free Foundation," a healing home for abused women in Tanay.


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