LOYOLA PAPERS

Special Commemorative Issue



FABC50
General Conference

Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia

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BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYNTHESIS PAPERS

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Last November 2020, the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) celebrated the golden anniversary of its quiet beginnings when some 180 bishops from all over Asia gathered in Manila on the occasion of Paul VI's visit to various Asian countries in 1970. Since then, like the proverbial seed in the Gospel, it has been growing quietly as well, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (cf. Mk 4: 26-29), to gather the bishops' conferences in this vast and diverse continent under its shade. Like Paul we can only say: "God has been making it grow" (1 Cor 3: 6).

Due to the pandemic, however, the celebrations had to be deferred until global situations have already improved. Hence, it was only in August 20 of this year that the festivities were opened with the theme "FABC 50: Journeying together as peoples of Asia," taking its inspiration from the passage on the visit of the wise men – from the East: "...and they went a different way" (Mt 2:12). The highlight of the commemoration will be the much-anticipated FABC 50 General Conference to be held on October 12-30, 2022 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Yet as Providence would have it, aside from falling on the anniversary of the FABC's official establishment in 1972, our celebration this year comes at a very opportune time, within our ongoing celebration of the Synod on Synodality. Indeed it was the spirit of Synodality that inspired the bishops of Asia to establish the FABC, a mere five years after Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops as a permanent organ in the Church. Now, the awareness has begun to set in that synodality is not

just one of the many features of the Church, but rather, as Pope Francis says, it is "the path which God expects of the Church of the third millennium." This image of the pilgrim people of God, so dear to the Second Vatican Council and so close to the experience of many Asians, is beautifully captured in the theme itself.

At the same time, the attention of the Church seems to turn now in a very special way to Asia, where the Church has been undergoing significant growth as well as crucial challenges in these past decades. In the recent Consistory, for instance, six of the 21 new cardinals appointed by Pope Francis are either residing or working in Asia, including those from countries with a minority Christian population like Mongolia and Singapore, and a South Korean prelate appointed to head the Dicastery for the Clergy. Even the Church's current mission chief, the Pro-Prefect of the Section for Evangelization of the newly-reengineered Dicastery for Evangelization is himself an Asian, LST's very own Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, who has been handpicked by the Holy Father as his legate to the FABC 50 General Conference.

These are indeed auspicious times – a *kairos* of grace – for the Church here in Asia.

In this spirit, *Loyola Papers* humbly offers this special commemorative issue in celebration of this important milestone, remembering in a very special way the many professors and graduates of Loyola School of Theology who have played a significant role in the FABC. We would like to honor, in particular, the invaluable legacy of our first Dean and later on first President, Rev. Fr. Catalino G. Arévalo, SJ, who was there, right from the beginning, as the secretary of the 1970 meeting of the Asian bishops with Pope Paul VI in Manila. He was also the main author of the final document "Evangelization

in Modern Day Asia" of the first FABC Plenary Assembly held in 1974 that was destined to chart the theological and pastoral trajectory of the Federation for the years to come. He then went on to serve as FABC's main theological adviser, heading its "Theological Advisory Commission" (TAC) for more than a decade. In 2009, he was given an Award of Recognition during the 9th FABC Plenary Assembly held in Manila, with the citation referring to him as "The Father of Asian Theology." Looking back fondly to the FABC involvement of our students and professors in a 2015 speech, Fr. Arevalo would exuberantly repeat: "LST was there... LST was really there..."

With this very meager tribute, we therefore hope, not only to give honor to our great forebears, but to also recommit ourselves as a School of Theology to the service of the Church, particularly of the local Churches here in Asia, and in a special way to the FABC. The various papers, written by our students and friends, expound on various aspects of what it means to journey together as peoples of Asia today, with many of their insights mined and elaborated from the rich treasury which is the FABC documents. Coming from their own experiences in the pastoral field, they strive to integrate their learnings from their study of theology as they seek new and better ways of serving the local Churches here in Asia.

In "FABC@50: Renewing the Clergy of Asia," **Most Rev. Mylo Hubert C. Vergara** who is head of the FABC's Office of Clergy (FABC-OC) shares his experiences of working with and for the FABC in this important area, giving us a picture of how an FABC office operates. The seminars organized and papers produced, as he says, "reveal how the FABC-OC has been true to its mission to renew and empower clergy in the Asian context to deal with the contemporary challenges in

their priestly life and ministry." He also identifies a number of vital prospects that the FABC-OC is currently aiming at towards the renewal of clergy in Asia as well as to respond to pressing issues such as the clergy abuse crisis.

Meanwhile, **Fr. Milton Joseph Rozario**'s "The Catholic Church in Bangladesh and Its Mission of Integral Evangelization as Envisioned by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* and the FABC Documents" contextualizes the theology of mission as found in the Scriptures, in Vatican II, in the teachings of recent popes and the documents of FABC in the present situation of the local Church in Bangladesh, with its unique features and challenges. In this bold and thought-provoking article, he acknowledges how some of our churches may still be operating based on outdated notions and models of mission which may not be appropriate anymore and as such are ineffective in our particular contexts today here in Asia with its plurality of cultures, religions and social conditions. Hence, the call to renewal as expressed especially in *Evangelii Gaudium* and the FABC documents.

Advocating the crafting of inculturated catechisms, **Fr. William M. Parde, Jr.** in "The FABC Vision of Inculturation and the Pedagogical Renewal of Catechesis in the Philippines," calls for a pedagogy of faith that is built, not from the desks of catechetical authorities but from the ground. In this process of renewal, made necessary by changing times and circumstances, he finds a rallying point and guiding principle in the FABC's call for inculturation understood as "dialogue." At the same time, he identifies a number of continuing challenges that hinder this process, including a notion and methodology of inculturation which can be "unilateral and a kind of an imposition on the receiving culture which possesses its own customs and practices." He then proposes "dialogic integration"

as a practical application of FABC's inculturation principle in pedagogical renewal and elaborates a number of concrete ways on how to apply this in the catechetical ministry.

Kenneth Z. Vergara's "Shepherding the Migrant Filipinos: Recounting Radio Veritas Asia's Filipino Service Operation (1990-2018)" provides a glimpse into the vital ministry of social communication, which has been a key pastoral priority for the FABC. Indeed, the station itself actually precedes the establishment of the FABC by only more than a year, while sharing the same objective of bringing the Gospel to the peoples of Asia. Focusing in particular on the station's outreach to Filipino migrants that was initiated in 1990, this paper chronicles some of the achievements of the Filipino service operation that embody the missionary commitment of the people behind this important apostolate, which, albeit already discontinued, continues to provide a helpful model for us today.

Fr. Hoan Chinh Tran SJ's "The FABC Vision of Dialogue as an Appropriate Approach for the Catholic Church in Vietnam in Its Mission of Evangelization Today" sees the path of dialogue as a way to bridge the gap between the Catholic Church and the State in Vietnam created by centuries of colonization and conflict and resurging every now and then in the form of tensions with the Communist government despite the steady growth of the local Church in the country. Digging deep into the FABC documents for its rich insights on the theology of dialogue, he proposes it as a viable approach characterized by three foundational elements: embracing dialogue not only as a methodology but as an approach or overall disposition, maintaining a humble attitude of receptivity and openness, and trusting in the immanence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In "Catholic Families in Asia: Living the Eucharist as Domestic Church of the Poor," **Maria Elisa A. Borja** begins by noting how some Asian families may consider the Sunday Eucharist as "simply fulfilling a weekly obligation without any connection to their daily life." As such, she derives and develops important insights from FABC documents in order to "help Catholic families in Asia reflect on parts of the Eucharistic celebration and apply it to their family's purpose as domestic church of the Poor." The result is an interesting presentation of the different parts of the Mass in a manner both pedagogical and mystagogical, while at the same time bringing out the distinct Asian connection. This article also turns out to be of special relevance as we transition from online Masses back to in-person Masses, especially in this liminal time when the Sunday precept is not yet strictly imposed and many need to rediscover the value of communal worship.

Sr. Antonetta Pereira, FMM's "The FABC Vision of Youth as Evangelizers in Asia, Particularly in the Archdiocese of Goa, India" comes from her own experience of doing youth apostolate in Goa and explores avenues to engage the youth in the new evangelization as a particular way of actualizing FABC's vision of "a new way of being Church." Here she focuses on three important themes prominent in the FABC documents: *communio* Ecclesiology, evangelization; and participation. Interestingly, these very themes more or less coincide with the so-called "pillars" of a Synodal Church highlighted by the ongoing Synod on Synodality: communion, participation and mission. By exploring the implications of these themes on youth ministry, she charts a path that is at once aligned not only with the FABC vision but also with the vision of a synodal Church.

Last but not least, **Charles Bertille**'s "FABC Theology of the Laity and Its Relevance for Forming Leaders in Asia's Local Churches" imparts the experience of the Institute of Formation-Fondacio (IFF) in Asia and how this young adult formation program that mainly targets college students and young professionals embodies FABC's "new way of being Church" as well as the Council's spirit of *aggiornamento*. "Designed as one pedagogy of Christian life," the IFF modules promote an "eco-system of charism, vocation, and ministry," which it also refers to in a lovely manner as an "ecosystem of grace" among all the baptized.

In this issue, we are also pleased to feature three synthesis papers. The first one, from the philosophy section, is **Angelo B. Balsita, FMVD**'s "On Education Today: A Thought Experiment." Taking the Kantian notion of education as a starting point, he calls for a rethinking of today's higher education system which can be overly focused on knowledge and skills acquisition to the neglect of character formation. An educator himself, he comes up with a preliminary sketch of what he terms as a "discipleship model," built primarily on interpersonal relationship and focusing on moral education.

We also have **Joseph Wong Shun Yip, SJ**'s "Into the Deep: Navigating from Loneliness to Infinity" where he imparts to us his philosophical enterprise, done against the backdrop of the global pandemic, that occasioned a personal struggle with loneliness. This experience leads him to a humbling but liberating insight: "I am always like the blind men appraising the elephant in the Asian parable. To know is to understand things in context."

Finally, from the ambit of theology, we have **Aloysious Lubega, SJ**'s "Finding the Trinity in All Things: A Reflection on the Practical Implications of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Life." Chosen as the Valedictorian of LST's Class of 2022, Lubega takes up no less than one of the most complex doctrines of Christian faith, which he admits is "fundamental to Christianity yet, at the same time, a tough doctrine to explain." Moving away expressly from a very intellectual approach to a more affective if not holistic approach, he highlights the connection of this central doctrine to other important doctrines of the faith as well as some practical applications of the doctrine in Christian life.

* * *

Since 1965, Loyola School of Theology has done its utmost to faithfully live out its vision-mission: "to form priests, theologians, and pastoral ministers who effectively respond to the ecclesial, spiritual, and social concerns of an increasingly missionary Church in Asia." As one of the seven English-speaking faculties of theology in the world administered by the Society of Jesus, LST is proud to be the most international theological faculty in the whole of Asia with a current enrollment of 489 seminarians, priests, lay, and religious students (307 Filipinos or 62.78 % and 182 international students or 37.22 %) representing 78 religious congregations, 36 dioceses, and 34 countries around the world.

In a meeting held on November 23-25, 2009, the school embraced in an explicit way its so-called "Asian mandate," stating that "located as we are in the Philippines within Southeast Asia, our ministry of theological formation at LST must reflect this international and global dimension of Jesuit mission." As such, LST is wholeheartedly committed

to continually developing its *Asian Theological Program,* missioned by the Jesuit Conference of Asia and the Pacific "to provide theological education with a more deliberate international and Asian focus."

In light of this, it is our fervent hope that this modest collection of academic papers would somehow reflect the continuing commitment of our students and faculty in LST to do theology in the Asian context. Someday, when people look back at the next fifty years of FABC, may they still be able to say, like Fr. Arévalo did: "LST was there... LST was really there..." ever in the service of the peoples of Asia. As we celebrate FABC 50, we join the Church in this beloved continent that we all call home in singing to Almighty God our hymn of gratitude:

We thank and praise You for the birth of FABC over fifty years ago. By divine providence and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Bishops from Asia met and formed the FABC. May the FABC continue to be steadfast in its mission of love and service for Your beloved people in this vast continent of Asia.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo

ARTICLES

FABC @ 50:
Renewing the Clergy of Asia

Most Rev. Mylo Hubert C. Vergara, D.D.

In 2011, I was invited to be part of a panel discussion at a seminar for bishops of Asia held in Thailand. I was asked to share my experience of shepherding the priests of my diocese to the participant-bishops of that gathering. Little did I know that I was being eyed to be a bishop-member of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences - Office of Clergy (FABC-OC). At that time, I was the Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Seminaries of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and was already involved in organizing the renewal programs for seminary formators of diocesan seminaries in the Philippines. With some persuasion from Orlando Cardinal Quevedo, Archbishop-Emeritus of Cotabato, who was then the Secretary-General of the FABC, I accepted the invitation and the appointment to become a member of the FABC-OC. From then on, my journey of being part of renewing the clergy of Asia unfolded until I became its Chairman in 2016. I chaired the office for two consecutive terms as allowed by the FABC statutes but was extended for another year until the end of 2022 due to the postponement of the FABC 50 General Conference that will take place on October 12-30, 2022.

A Brief History and the Nature of the FABC-OC[1]

Attuned to the clarion call of the Second Vatican Council for an *aggiornamento* which means keeping the Church

1 The contents of this section were summarized from a file dated 27 June 2007 turned over by Fr. Lawrence Pinto, MSIJ the first Executive Secretary (2004-2012) of the FABC-OC.

up-to-date, the FABC was established in 1970. In line with this call, and with the desire to be *ecclesia semper reformanda*, that is, "the church must always be reformed", particularly for the bishops and priests of Asia, St. John Paul II asserted: "To serve the Church as Christ intends, Bishops and priests need a solid and continuing formation, which should provide opportunities for human, spiritual, and pastoral renewal, as well as courses on theology, spirituality and the human sciences."[2] This paved the way for organizing the FABC-OC.

The FABC-OC was created in June 2004 and began to function actively after the 8th Plenary Assembly of the FABC held in Seoul, South Korea in August 2004. Its main objective is to help bishops, priest-formators, and other clergy to deal with contemporary issues affecting their life and ministry through seminars, consultations, and conferences. The first chairman of the office was the late Most Rev. Peter Fernando, D.D., the Archbishop-Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Madurai, India. The second chairman became Most Rev. Vianney Fernando, D.D., Bishop-Emeritus of the Diocese of Kandy, Sri Lanka. I have been the current Chairman of the office since January 2016 and will end my term by December 2022. The incoming Chairman by January 1, 2023 will be Most Rev. Udumala Bala, D.D., Bishop of Warangal, India.

> Through the years, since its establishment, the FABC-OC was able to craft its vision and mission statements to define where it wants to go and what it wants to achieve to be a vessel of renewal for the clergy of Asia. Its vision statement is as follows:
>
> The FABC-OC will ardently strive to offer its facilitative efforts 1) to help priests to progressively know, love,

2 St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia,* 6 November 1999. Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html (accessed 11 July 2022), no. 43.

> and live the priesthood of Jesus Christ in the contexts of their own particular culture or nation of Asia; 2) to assist the national commissions of clergy (of a particular national bishops' conference) as well as the diocesan bishops in enriching, empowering and deepening the communion between bishops and priests, between priests themselves and priests and the faithful; 3) to help priests to deepen their priestly commitment as diocesan priests. It will also make efforts to provide assistance to formators in the area of formation of seminarians (organizing seminars for formators), especially to ensure the formation of seminarians in the human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral facets of their training for the priesthood, and also plan for on-going formation of priests.
>
> From this vision statement flows the following mission statement:
>
> This mission statement refers to the execution of the Vision of the Office of Clergy. Having become aware of the present world scenario of human life, including priestly life, which is progressively impacted by the negative effects of fundamentalism, media, cultural confusion, and hedonism, this office intends to protect the lives of priests in Asia. Priests today need sources of empowerment to withstand the ill effects of the present fast-changing world to live a healthy priestly life in order to dedicate themselves to the mission of the Lord.

The above vision and mission statements have given a direction for the FABC-OC to provide episcopal conferences with programs and activities to deepen the spirituality and commitment of bishops, seminary formators, and many diocesan priests in their ministry and life so as to respond to the "new way" of being Church in Asia.

Seminars Organized in Retrospect[3]

Since its inception in 2004, the FABC-OC has been able to organize formation seminars and consultations for the clergy of Asia. Some consecrated persons and lay people also attended particular seminars and networked with some FABC Offices. The following is a rundown of the themes, objectives, dates, venues, and attendance of the seminars organized in the past years.

1. Theme: Human Formation of Priests

Objectives:

a) to help clarify the identity of the priest;

b) to enhance the ministry and life of priests;

c) to help priests meet the challenges encountered in present-day Asia in keeping with the dignity and demands of the priesthood.

Dates: May 14-19, 2006

Venue: The Salesian Retreat House, Hua Hin, Thailand

Attendance: 74 Participants—4 Bishops, 66 Priests, 2 Sisters, and 2 Lay Volunteers

2. Theme: Caring for Priests, Especially Those with Difficulties

Objectives:

a) to help Bishops to reflect on the identity and vision of the priesthood in the Asian context;

b) to help them identify obstacles that priests face in their life and ministry;

c) to help them further to care for priests in their difficulties with regard to their relationships with their

3 The contents of this section were summarized from a file dated 28 August 2019 files turned over by Fr. Philip Lazatin, SDB the second Executive Secretary (2013-2021) of the FABC-OC.

own self, with the faithful and other people, with their bishops, and with God Himself.

Dates: August 27-31, 2007

Venue: Redemptorist Retreat House, Pattaya, Thailand

Attendance: 90 Participants—1 Cardinal, 84 Archbishops and Bishops, 4 Priests, and 1 Lay Person

3. Theme: Asian Vocations Symposium – "Asian Vocations Today" (in partnership with the FABC - Office of Consecrated Life)

Objectives:

a) to be more aware of the situation of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life in Asia and explore future perspectives;

b) to understand motivations for priestly and religious vocations in the Asian context in the light of freedom, radicality, and sacrifice;

c) to rediscover the family as a seedbed of vocations;

d) to reflect on the need for a holistic and integrated formation of priests and religious.

Dates: October 22-27, 2007

Venue: Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Center Samphran, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 150 Participants—Bishops, Clergy, Religious, and Laity from sixteen countries

4. Theme: The Catholic Priesthood – A Challenge of the Modern World

Objectives:

a) to help bishops to reflect on the identity and vision of the priest in the Asian context;

b) to help bishops to identify obstacles that priests face in their life and ministry;

c) to help bishops to care for priests in their difficulties concerning their relationships with the faithful, other people, bishops and priests, and God himself.

Dates: May 17-22, 2008

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 83 participants—5 Archbishops and Bishops, and 78 Priests from 10 countries

5. Theme: Caring for Priests: A Need of the Hour

Objectives: Please refer to the objectives in no. 4.

Dates: September 8-14, 2008

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 90 Priests, Archbishops, and Bishops from 10 countries

6. Theme: Paradigm Shift in the Mission and Ministry of the Priest in Asia

Objectives:

a) to help priests face the challenges of the ever-changing society of the modern world;

b) to search for relevant spiritual formation for priests of Asia;

c) to strengthen the spiritual life of priests.

Dates: May 10-15, 2010

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 90 participants—6 Archbishops and Bishops from 10 countries

7. Theme: Spiritual Formation of Priests

Objectives:

a) to help priests face the challenges of the ever-changing society of the modern world;

b) to search for relevant spiritual formation for priests of Asia;

c) to strengthen the spiritual life of priests.

Dates: November 14-19, 2010

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 79 Participants—76 Priests, and 3 Bishops from 9 countries

8. Theme: Bishop as Father, Brother, and Friend of Priests

Objectives:

a) to discuss and reflect deeply on the ministry and mission of the bishop as the shepherd of his flock, with the collaboration of priests;

b) to enhance his awareness of his sanctity in order to be an example to his priests and the faithful of his diocese;

c) to help reflect deeply on his significant role as the father, brother, and friend of his priests and as a servant-leader in Christ.

Dates: May 16-21, 2011

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 45 Archbishops and Bishops from 8 countries

9. Theme: The Impact of Pedophilia Crisis on the Church in Asia

Objectives:

a) to make bishops and formators aware of the gravity of pedophilia on the Church in Asia;

b) to explore the possibilities of remedial measures for pedophilia-affected persons and organize programs to train skilled personnel to handle possible pedophilia-crisis in the future;

c) to prepare guidelines for church leaders, formators, and those in charge of children's organizations for the protection of children in particular.

Dates: November 14-19, 2011

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 65 participants—1 Cardinal, 9 Archbishops and Bishops, 54 Seminary Formators, and 2 Lay persons from 7 countries

10. Theme: Contemporary Challenges in Living Priestly Celibacy in the Context of the Present-Day Crisis in the Church in Asia

Objectives:

a) to help bishops, formators, and priests to reflect on how postmodern culture and moral relativism in the modern world affect priestly celibacy;

b) to help bishops and formators to become more deeply aware of their responsibility to ensure that seminarians are guided and directed to grow psychosexually during their formation towards a healthy future for a celibate priesthood;

c) to help priests meet the challenges of the present world in keeping with priestly celibacy and to maintain the dignity of the priesthood.

Dates: May 14-19, 2012

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 91 Participants—1 Cardinal, 7 Archbishops and Bishops, and 83 Priests-Formators from 7 countries

11. Theme: Formation of Positive, Integral, Effective and Humanly Well-Developed Priests for the Continent of Asia

Objectives:

a) to identify the positive aspects of human formation in seminaries;

b) to equip formators to help seminarians become humanly integrated persons;

c) to assure the Church in Asia of well-motivated, emotionally mature, humanly, and spiritually well-developed priests with a strong sense of commitment to the Church and her mission.

Dates: May 6-11, 2013

Venue: Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance: 91 Participants—11 Archbishops and Bishops, and 80 Seminary Formators from 10 countries

12. Theme: Proclaiming the Joy of the Gospel as Renewed Evangelizers in Asia

Objectives:

a) to understand what 'new evangelization' means in an Asian context;

b) to equip bishops and priests involved in priestly formation with insights and guidelines regarding the relevance, perspectives, and challenges of the 'new evangelization';

c) to identify, explore, and understand the pastoral challenges of 'new evangelization' in shepherding parish communities in Asia;

d) to face the challenges faced by priests in shepherding and proclaiming the gospel in new media.

Dates: November 10-15, 2014

Venue: Redemptorists Center in Pattaya, Thailand

Attendance: 103 Participants—2 Cardinals, 19 Archbishops and Bishops, 72 Priests, 2 Deacons, and 7 Lay persons from 11 countries

13. Theme: Shepherding Families in Asia: Contemporary Challenges and Responses (in partnership with the FABC-Office of Laity and Family)

Objectives:

a) to understand current challenges from specifically Asian perspectives on marriage and family life that are contrary to genuine Christian teaching;

b) to empower bishops and priests with insights, means, and guidelines in strengthening and safeguarding the sanctity of marriage and family life;

c) to motivate the participants to identify, explore, and devise pastoral plans to promote and strengthen good Christian families after the example of the Holy Family in Nazareth, sustained by the Trinitarian relationships.

Dates: May 16 – 20, 2016

Venue: The Salesian Retreat House, Hua Hin, Thailand

Attendance: 99 Participants—14 Archbishops and Bishops, 24 Priests, 2 Religious nuns, and 59 Lay Leaders from 14 countries

14. Theme: Seminar-Workshop on The Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults: The Accountability of Bishops in Asia

Objectives:

a) to brief the bishops of Asia on the current global situation of clergy sexual abuse of minors and how it is handled by the Church;

b) to highlight the significant canonical procedures on matters of sexual abuse of minors, especially on the accountability of bishops;

c) to draw out from the participant-bishops significant questions about handling sexual abuse cases;

d) to respond to these questions not only through the eyes of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) but also through the sharing of cases from the participant bishops;

e) to assist episcopal conferences of Asia (for those who have none) to map out their own protocol/procedures aligned with the CDF guidelines.

Dates: May 15 – 19, 2017

Venue: The Salesian Retreat House, Hua Hin, Thailand

Attendance: 62 Participants—mostly Bishops and a few priest delegates from 11 countries

15. Theme: Consultation of Selected Participants Involved in Assisting Priests in Difficulty in Asia

Objectives:

a) to let professionals share their own experiences in caring for priests in distress;

b) to share the best practices that they follow at the center where they work;

c) to propose the kind of action needed in dealing with priests having special difficulties based on their experiences;

d) to come up with proposals that are to be presented to the Central Committee of the FABC.

Dates: July 23-25, 2018

Venue: Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Center, Sampran, Thailand.

Attendance: 12 Participants—2 Bishops, 9 Priests, and 1 Lay (from the Pontifical Office of the Protection of Minors)

16. Theme: Pastoral Perspectives on Accompaniment of Families in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia* (in partnership with the FABC-Office of Laity and Family)

Objectives:

a) to deepen our insights and understanding of the previous seminar (May 2016) "Shepherding Families in Asia: Contemporary challenges and responses for Bishops, Priests, and Lay Leaders," with minds enlightened by the XI FABC Plenary Assembly deliberations and FABC study sessions;

b) to reflect on the fruits gained in the light of *Amoris Laetitia;*

c) to learn some pastoral skills in accompanying families.

Dates: November 19-23, 2018

Venue: Redemptorist Center Pattaya, Thailand

Attendance: 63 Participants—1 Cardinal, 4 Bishops, 20 Priests, and 37 Lay Leaders from 10 countries

17. Theme: Awakening Climate Change Concerns in Seminaries (in partnership with the FABC-Office of Human Development)

Objectives:

a) to equip bishops and priests involved in priestly formation with insights and guidelines regarding the situation, history, relevance, perspectives, and challenges of climate change;

b) to identify, explore, and understand the pastoral challenges of climate change in shepherding parish communities in Asia guided by *Laudato Si;*

c) to help them share best practices and devise means of inculcating conviction and responsibility for the care of Mother Earth among future pastors;

d) to face the challenges faced by bishops and formators in accompanying young candidates in the process of becoming good shepherds and stewards of creation.

Dates: November 18-22, 2019

Venue: Salesian Center of Spirituality, Hua Hin, Thailand (Live Streamed via Facebook with the participation of thousands of netizens)

Attendance: 40 Participants: 6 Bishops, 26 Priests, 1 Religious lay Brother, and 7 Lay Persons from 10 countries

These seminars organized in the past years concretely reveal how the FABC-OC has been true to its mission to renew and empower clergy in the Asian context to deal with the contemporary challenges in their priestly life and ministry.

From these seminars, five FABC Papers were produced, namely: 1) Caring for Priests, Especially for Those with Difficulties (no. 122, 2007); 2) Asian Vocations Symposium: "Asian Vocations Today" (no. 123, 2007); 3) The Contemporary Challenges in Living Priestly Celibacy in the Context of the Present Day Crisis in the Church in Asia (no. 137, 2012); 4) Shepherding Families in Asia: Contemporary Challenges and Responses for Bishops, Priests, and Lay Leaders (no. 157, 2016); 5) Awakening Climate Change Concerns in Seminaries: For Bishops and Seminary Formators of Priests in Asia (no. 162, 2018).[4]

4 The FABC Papers has been a project of the FABC to disseminate the fruits of symposia, seminars, plenary assemblies, and even speeches of the past popes who have visited Asia. The series of papers have been circulated in print over the past years and have been helpful for students of theology in their research and dissertation writing. They can also be downloaded in the FABC website. Cf. FABC Papers, FABC Archive, http://www.fabc.org/ offices/csec/ocsec_fabc_papers.html (accessed 11 July 2022).

Oswald Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, India and first and former President of the FABC,[5] once quipped that the most attended seminars organized by the FABC are those conducted by the FABC-OC. This indicates the desire of many bishops and priests to be updated about the current trends and topics that affect their ministry in the Asian context.

Prospects Beyond 50

Looking forward to the next fifty years and beyond, what can we expect from the FABC-OC?

If not for the pandemic, a seminar would have been held in partnership with the FABC Office of Laity and Family with the theme: "Contemporary Pastoral Approaches in the Accompaniment of Asian Youth in the Light of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: For Bishops, Priests, Formators, and Lay Leaders". The objectives of this seminar were already outlined as follows: a) to understand the current situation and challenges in youth ministry from specifically an Asian perspective in the light of *Christus Vivit*, b) to empower bishops and priests with insights, means, and guidelines in accompanying and empowering youth to be proactive apostles, c) to help participants identify, explore, and devise pastoral plans to promote and strengthen youth ministry in families, parishes, giving special attention to social media as the youths' new playground. This future seminar on youth ministry would attract bishops and priests as they stir and animate youth people who serve in their parishes and dioceses.

5 Before 2013, the main person heading the FABC was called a Secretary General. However, during the 2012 Tenth FABC Plenary Assembly held in Vietnam, further amendments of the FABC Statutes were approved by the Holy See. One of them is to call the head of the FABC a President.

Currently, a partnership between the FABC and the Catholic Safeguarding Institute, Inc. (CSI) is being forged through the FABC-OC. In a virtual meeting initiated by the FABC-OC with the CSI held on 4 June 2022, Dr. Gabriel Dy-Liacco, President of CSI and also a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, shared the following:

> The Catholic Safeguarding Institute (CSI) partners with stakeholders in the safeguarding mission of the Church. The aim of such partnerships is to implement the safeguarding mission of the Church, which Pope Francis has identified as "the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, which is an integral part of the Gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to proclaim throughout the world". These partnerships include collaboration in any of the following four mission tasks: safeguarding formation, development of a safe environment system, theological and pastoral reflection, research, and consultation, and are formalized through Memoranda of Agreement.[6]

Given the serious mandate of Pope Francis to counter abuses of clergy against minors and vulnerable persons, the partnership will ensure basic and advanced education for clergy on this aspect. The FABC-OC can tap the CSI to offer week-long formation modules like the Basic Orientation Seminar of Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Persons for bishops and priests of Asia.[7]

Moreover, customized seminars on specific points in the New Book VI of the Code of Canon Law instituted in January 2021 can also be organized to inform and update the clergy of Asia. The New Book VI introduced new criminal offenses

6 Pope Francis, Apostolic letter issued *motu proprio* on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, 19 March 2019.

7 For more information on CSI, cf. https://www.catholicsafeguarding.net

and has better defined other offenses already provided for by the Code, punishing them with different penalties. Among others, new offenses and penalties have been introduced in the area of financial and economic matters for clerics. The New Book VI also included crimes and penalties reserved to the CDF like child abuse, not only by clerics but also non-clerical religious and by lay people who occupy certain roles in the Church, as well as any such behavior with adults but committed with violence or abuse of authority.[8]

Finally, as we approach the Continental Phase of the Synod on Synodality initiated by Pope Francis that will take place from September 2022 to March 2023, we are just excited to find out the results of the listening process from the National Consultations done in the episcopal conferences of Asia. One can just foresee burning issues like priestly lifestyle, effectiveness, relevance, social communications, and the like that have to be dealt with in the ministry of bishops and priests in their service to the peripheries.

The FABC 50 General Conference that will gather around 150 bishops all over Asia will reflect on new pathways that the Church in this continent needs to consider as urgent in order to respond to "the signs of the times" beyond two decades of the new millennium. Fifteen emerging realities have been identified for pastoral reflection and action, namely: global pandemic, globalization, climate emergency, digitalization, urbanization, migrants and refugees, the transformation of cultures, youth, gender issues, family values, indigenous peoples, human dignity, and a transforming church. Given these realities, strikingly, one of the prospects for consideration

8 Holy See, *New Book VI of the Code of Canon Law,* 1 June 2021, Holy See Press Office, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/ pubblico/2021/06/01/210601b.html (accessed 13 July 2022).

is for the FABC to offer Asian bishops and episcopal conferences more platforms for the formation of bishops themselves to be "Apostles of Listening" in their respective ecclesiastical territories as they journey with the people they shepherd in the spirit of synodality.[9]

9 Cf. FABC Papers, *FABC 50 General Conference Guide Document,* 29 November 2020, FABC Archive, http://www.fabc.org/offices/csec/ocsec_fabc_papers.html (accessed 13 July 2022).

The Catholic Church in Bangladesh and its Mission of Integral Evangelization as Envisioned by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* and the FABC Documents

Milton Joseph Rozario

Introduction

The Catholic Church in Bangladesh (CCB) is a missionary "little flock" striving to give a living witness to Jesus Christ in obedience to his command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20). In spite of the many challenges that it faces as a local Church, it follows the path of renewed missionary evangelization in the life of the Church described by Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium when he said that "each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel" *(Evangelii Gaudium 20).*

Following this vision of Pope Francis, integral evangelization in Bangladesh presupposes a thorough understanding of the theology of mission and evangelization. This article explores the biblical foundations and meaning as well as the Church's renewed understanding of mission and evangelization as expressed by the Second Vatican Council, the recent popes, and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

(FABC). In summary, it identifies the principal elements of a contemporary understanding of integral evangelization and its potential application to the CCB.

Biblical Foundations of Mission

The common understanding of mission is the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations for human transformation and salvation as a way to advance the Reign of God. Its Latin root (*mittere*) corresponds to the word "send" in English; mission is also a Scriptural term. Biblical scholarship relates "mission" and "sending" to the equivalent Hebrew term *Shalach* and *Apostello* in both the Septuagint and Greek New Testament.[1]

The biblical foundation for the universal mission of the Church has been investigated by two prominent scholars, Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller. They note that "Mission is the God-given call to appreciate and share one's religious experience and insights, first within one's own community and tradition, and then with people and communities of other cultural, social, and religious traditions."[2] The Bible not only contains a rich idea of mission but also lays the foundation for the mission.

Old Testament

In the introduction of the book, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission,* Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller state that "the explicit mandate to bring the message of salvation to the ends of the earth is, of course, found only in the New Testament. But the roots of the Church's mission go deeper, even beyond the history of Jesus and the early Church. The

1 Joy Thomas, "The Evolution of the Concept of Mission in the Bible," *SEDOS Bulletin* 26:8 (September 1994): 239.

2 Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 3.

taproot of the Church's universal mission can be traced within the Old Testament."[3] Since the mission is *Missio Dei*, God himself is a missionary. He crosses the frontiers towards the world in creation with his Word and Spirit (Gen 1:2-3). However, the chosen people of Yahweh, the Israelites, were not sent across geographical, religious, or ethnic boundaries.[4] There is no indication of preachers being sent to a foreign land to proclaim the salvation of God. Israel was a rather ethnocentric people. They tended to be centripetal or inward (Gen 12:2-3, 9:25-27; Deut 7:1-2, 6-8) because they considered themselves a single elect people and never felt the need to include the non-elect for salvation.[5]

On the other hand, the prophets (2 Chr 24:19; Jer 7:25; Is 6:8f) would later affirm the idea that the Gentiles are part of the saving plan of God. In line with this, they felt the call of Yahweh, who was sending them on the mission. Thus, they became "missionaries," by their vocation of hearing and spreading the Word of God by preaching and writing, speaking boldly for the poor, and exercising God's justice on behalf of his people.[6] In the songs of the Suffering Servant, God said: "I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Is 49:6).

The Old Testament, however, does not contain "mission" in the sense of "sending" and going out to preach. The mission of Israel was centripetal[7] since Israel was not called to go to the nations on the mission, though the nations were permitted to come to Israel. "So, if there is a true missionary in the Old

3 Senior and Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations for Mission,* 2.

4 David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 17.

5 Senior and Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations for Mission,* 10.

6 Is 61:1 indicates "the anointed of God" as one sent by God to proclaim the good news to the poor.

7 Thomas, "Concept of Mission in the Bible," 241.

Testament, it is God himself who will, as his eschatological deed *par excellence,* bring the nations to Jerusalem to worship him there together with his covenant people."[8] Nonetheless, "mission" itself belongs to salvation history. "The action of God in the Old Alliance is essentially promise; what Israel experienced with God in history is open to the final fulfillment which is realized in Christ in the New Testament."[9]

New Testament

Born in an Israelite context and climate, Jesus takes upon himself the full realization of God's missionary plan in terms of the authentic Old Testament tradition.[10] The Old Testament is vital for understanding the mission in the New Testament, which is about the mission of Jesus and of the Church. By his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus overcomes all national, religious, ethnic, and geographical boundaries, paving the way for the universal mission.[11] Thus, the person and ministry of Jesus become the cornerstone of the Christian mission for every time and place.

Jesus declared that he was sent by the Father on mission (Jn 10:3). Likewise, he sent his disciples as the Father had sent him (Jn 20:21); he sent the twelve like sheep among wolves (Mt 10:16; Lk 10:3); and he sent the seventy-two disciples into all towns and places that he himself would visit (Lk 10:1). Evidently, Jesus' own mission in the world becomes the ultimate basis for the mission of the disciples (Jn 17:18).

Looking at his public ministry, however, it seems that Jesus continued the centripetal missionary orientation of Israel. He

8 Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 19.

9 Karl Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction* (Druck: Steyle Press, 1987), 57.

10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 20.

11 Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 20.

is not, at first, a missionary to the Gentiles, for as he himself declared, he is sent by the Father primarily for "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). In a similar way, he limits the mission of the apostles to Israel (Mt 2:1-12; Jn 4:1-42; Acts 8:36). Nevertheless, Jesus' words and actions had a witness value among the Gentiles, and the miracles he performed extended to the Gentiles too (Mt 8:5-13; 15:21-22; Mk 7:24-30). Furthermore, the proclamation of God's reign, in particular, brings about eschatological salvation to all nations, including the Gentiles (Mt 8:10-11; 11:20-24; 25:31-32). Still, this universal vision of mission was fully understood and practiced by the disciples only after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Therefore, from an initially centripetal notion of Israel in the Old Testament, the mission shifted significantly to a more centrifugal notion in the New Testament. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, and especially in light of the descent of the Holy Spirit, Christ's mission was carried on by the early Christian community in a manner that would become totally universal.

The mission is accomplished through evangelization. In the New Testament, evangelization is about witnessing, teaching, preaching, proclaiming, baptizing, and much more.[12] From this, it can be understood that from the beginning, the Church was always aspiring to add newness to the task of evangelization. The New Testament is a book of mission and Jesus is the very first evangelizer.[13] A solid biblical foundation is necessary to get the proper meaning and theological understanding of mission and evangelization.

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12 Jacques Dupuis, "Evangelization and Mission," in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology,* edited by Rene Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad Publication Company, 1994), 279.

13 Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 18.

Biblical Meaning of Evangelization

Evangelization is a relatively new word. The word "evangelization" is not found in the New Testament; however, *euangelion*, meaning "gospel" or "good news," occurs 72 times, 54 of which are in the Pauline corpus, and carries a wide range of meanings: the whole Christian message (Mk 1:1); the good news of Jesus (2 Cor 4:4); it is meant for all (Mk 13:10; 16:15); it is a revelation of God (Gal 1:11-12) which is to be believed (Mk 1:15) and proclaimed (1 Cor 9:14, 16, 18,). One must risk all for the Gospel (Mk 8:35; Rom 1:16), serve it (Rom 1:1, 15:16), and defend it (Phil 1:7, 16). *Euangelion* is the good news of truth (Gal 2:5, 14), of hope (Col 1:23), of peace (Eph 6:15), of immortality (2 Tim 1:10), of the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:1ff; 2 Tim 2:8), and of salvation (Eph 1:13). In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis also cites several New Testament passages that speak of joy and the Good News: rejoice (Lk 1:28, 47, 10:21, Jn 20:20, Acts 8:39, 16:34), joy (cf. Lk 1:41, Jn 3:29, 15:11, 16:20, Acts 8:8, 13:52).[14]

In light of this, evangelization can be "an all-inclusive term used to describe the entire range of activities by which the Church proclaims and communicates to the world the saving message of Jesus Christ."[15] This term, deriving from the Greek word *euangelion* (good news or gospel), denotes the entire process of making the good news known. Based on its biblical notion, the evangelizing mission of the Church cannot be reduced only to explicit proclamation but must be considered holistically, including proclamation, teaching,

14 James Kroeger, "New Evangelization Today: Exploring Key Themes and Asian Links," *Landas* 28:2 (2014): 79.

15 *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia,* s.v. "Evangelization," edited by Peter Stravinskas (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1991), 376.

baptism, witness, human promotion and liberation, and interreligious dialogue.

Meanwhile, the Greek word *euangelistos* means one who announces good news. Originally, the term referred to those who proclaimed the Gospel in apostolic days. For instance, Saint Paul called Timothy an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5).[16] Its modern terminological usage, however, is of Protestant origin in the nineteenth century and refers to the attempt to re-proclaim the Gospel to the Catholic population of southern Europe with the aim of converting them to Protestantism. Thus, the Catholic Church was reluctant to use the term for a long while. The Second Vatican Council, and especially Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* would make the term popular in the Catholic milieu.[17]

Church's Vision of Missionary Evangelization in the Vatican II Era

Vatican Council II Documents

One important goal of the Second Vatican Council was to open the Catholic Church to the whole world. Pope John XXIII wanted to "open the window" of the almost 2,000-year-old Church to the rapid changes happening in the modern world. This evangelizing and missionary emphasis is palpable in the council's final documents. Clearly, a unique shift has taken place in the Church's understanding of mission.

16 *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia,* s.v. "Evangelization," 376.

17 Karl Muller, "Missiology: An Introduction," in *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology,* edited by Sebastian Karotemprel and others (Pasay City, Metro Manila: Paulines Publications, 1996), 29.

Lumen Gentium sees the origin of the Church in the Trinity: "The Church has been seen as a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (LG 4). Participation through Baptism in the very life of the Trinity makes the Church "missionary by its very nature" (*Ad Gentes* 2, *Nostra Aetate* 2, and *Redemptoris Missio* 1, 4, 32, and 46, *Evangelii Gaudium* 179). This powerful emphasis on the Church's missionary nature as rooted in the Trinity also appears in the Decree on Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*. Reading the Council's documents from a missiological/ecclesiological perspective reveals just how central the mission was to the Council and its vision of the Church.[18]

The documents of Vatican II speak of evangelization in a variety of contexts: it is especially the bishops' task to promote evangelization by the faithful (cf. CD 6); it is associated with the mission of the laity (cf. AA 2, 6, 20, 26; LG 35); priests are to learn the methods of evangelization (cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 19); the Eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization (cf. PO 5). The Decree on Mission (AG) is expectedly full of references: "the specific purpose of missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church" (AG 6); "the Church has the obligation and the sacred right to evangelize" (AG 7); catechists have an important task to evangelize (AG 17), as do the laity (AG 21); the call to evangelize arises from a charism of the Spirit (23); various roles are fulfilled by missionary institutes (AG 27), by the *Propaganda Fidei* (AG 29), by the People of God (AG 35, 36), by bishops and priests (AG 38), by religious institutes (AG 40), and by young Churches (LG 17).[19]

18 Stephen Bevans, "Mission as the Nature of the Church: Developments in Catholic Ecclesiology," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 21:3 (December, 2014): 184.

19 James Kroeger, "To Live Is to Evangelize: Recent Popes and Integral Evangelization," *Landas* 16:1 (2002): 83.

From all of these, it can be deduced that evangelizing mission is the work of the Holy Trinity extended to the Church, that is, to all the baptized everywhere and at any time in the world.

Pope Paul VI

Seeing the urgent need for evangelization, the 1974 Synod of Bishops reflected on "Evangelization of the Modern World." The post-apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), authored by Paul VI, is the product of the Synod of Bishops which became the *Magna Carta* for Catholic evangelization. Without a doubt, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is one of the important ecclesial documents of the post-Vatican II era. The term "evangelization" was used in the Catholic Church through *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. As a witness to the enduring relevance of this landmark document, Pope Francis has quoted it thirteen times in his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Pope John Paul II

Saint Pope John Paul II (canonized April 27, 2014) is widely acclaimed as a missionary Pope whose pontificate extended over 26 years (1978-2005). James Kroeger notes that under this Pontiff's leadership, the papal ministry became primarily focused on evangelization and mission as he traveled to numerous countries, strengthened local Christian communities, encountered the followers of other religions, spoke on the social teaching of the Church, and so on.[20]

According to him, the missionary task is for all the faithful: "Since they are members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity" (RM 2, 77). In *Ecclesia in Asia,* he also expressed that

20 James Kroeger, "Saint John Paul II and *Redemptoris Missio,*" *East Asian Pastoral Review* 52:1 (2015): 26.

the evangelizing mission of the Church can be accomplished only in obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who is the primary agent of the mission. Committed to being a genuine sign and instrument of the Spirit's action amidst the complex realities of Asia, the Church must discern, in all the diverse circumstances of the continent, the Spirit's call to witness to Jesus, the savior, in new and effective ways (cf. EA 18).

Pope Benedict XVI

In his message for World Mission Day in October 2011, Pope Benedict XVI noted that the Church has the urgent duty to proclaim the Gospel in new situations that require a correspondingly new evangelization. He stated clearly the scope of the mission of evangelization: The universal mission involves all, everywhere, and always.[21] Quoting John Paul II's *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI 40), he anticipated that the new evangelization must rekindle three elements in Christians: the impetus of the origins of mission, a new missionary approach that involves all the members of the People of God, and a new apostolic outreach (New Evangelization *Lineamenta*, 24).

Pope Francis

Pope Francis brought fresh air into the Church's missionary work through his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, which he addressed to all Christians. In this document, the Pope invites all Christians "to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by joy" (EG 1) and underlined that "the heart of its message will always be the same: the God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ" (EG 11). He re-emphasizes the imperative of evangelization

21 Kroeger, "New Evangelization Today," 77.

for every baptized person, as previously affirmed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi:* All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization (cf. EG 19-24, 120). Thus, in continuity with his predecessors, he ushered in a new phase of evangelization.

Missionary activity today is a real challenge for the Church. Still, it must remain foremost as missionary pastoral ministry, which is a source of immense joy for the entire people of God. Missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church's activity (cf. EG 15). Evangelization is not an isolated individual work but rather a communitarian activity. As such, while the mission is accepted by every baptized, it is always accomplished as a community. Therefore, communion and mission are interconnected. An evangelizing community acts by word and deed to touch and transform human lives. Pope Francis insists that evangelizers must have the "smell of the sheep" (EG 24) and underscores the involvement of evangelizers in people's lives.[22]

In this way, Pope Francis invites us to consider the life of the Church and her mission through the lens of missionary evangelization and to use that perspective to assess our ministries and activities today. All the integral elements of evangelization are also present in *Evangelii Gaudium* to bring transformation within the Church and the world with the joy of the Gospel.

FABC Perspectives on Evangelization

From its very beginnings, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has been committed to evangelization from an Asian perspective. The first Plenary Assembly in 1974 had its theme: "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia." Its

22 Matthew, "*Evangelii Gaudium*: Pope Francis' *Magna Carta*."

deliberations and final statement reveal the urgency of the task of proclaiming Jesus to the Asian continent. The mission aims to share the Christian faith with our Asian brothers and sisters in answer to their many quests. Evangelization also seeks to offer dignity, freedom, and communion to all peoples (*For All the Peoples of Asia* I, 13). Moreover, "new evangelization" reflects on the new contexts, namely, the task of evangelizing consciences and cultures which challenge the Church today.[23]

Likewise, the special Synod on Asia held in Rome in 1998 with the theme, "Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia, " explored this concept. It was an occasion to articulate the struggles and hopes of the Asian Church. Archbishop Tagle observed that the FABC's reflections gained recognition from the universal Church as the Synod endorsed the evangelizing perspectives of the FABC. The FABC reflections on evangelization were re-echoed in some of the 59 final propositions made by the Special Synod on Asia (1998):

> The need for an Asian approach to Church, theology, mission, etc. Acceptance of the triple dialogue with cultures, religions and the poor as a way of mission. The FABC focus on a "New way of Being Church" as a "communion of communities." Restraining from applying a uniform pattern of evangelization in Asia, yet, stressing on the centrality of Jesus as a savior. Emphasis on authentic witnessing and spirituality for evangelization. The missionary and evangelizing role of the laity with special focus on women, family, and the youth.[24]

23 Herve Carrier, "Evangelization and Mission," in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology,* edited by Rene Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad Publication Company, 1994), 286.

24 The Synod of Bishops for Asia, "The Synod's Propositions," in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries,* edited by Peter Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 140-165.

The mission of the Asian Church is to proclaim Christ. The vision is to give abundant life to her people (Jn 10:10) in Asia's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious context. The Church of Asia seeks to respond to this call of new evangelization as a "whole People of God; the clergy and laity, as it acknowledges the unique role of the laity in evangelization,"[25] through the witness of lives in harmony with the message they preach (cf. EA 42).

The FABC's proclamation thrust is done through a triple dialogue: with religions, cultures, and the poor (FAPA I, 280). In line with the document on evangelization, *Evangelii Gaudium*, it identifies four clusters of crucial challenges: a) *Mission mindset* means to be transformed with a missionary focus and need to create awareness that we are permanently in a state of mission; b) *Mission-in-dialogue* challenges to accept, respect, and encounter other faith traditions as well as dialogue with the Church for mutual enrichment; c) *Formation of the laity,* especially children and youth; d) *Networking* among minority Churches to share effective ministries of mission (cf. FAPA 6, 144-145). At the same time, the FABC explores opportunities to implement in Asia the missionary vision of *Evangelii Gaudium*, from which the universal and local Church has received a fresh impetus for the renewal of the Church and the world by means of evangelization.

A Paradigm Shift

From here, we can appreciate how Vatican II signaled a paradigm shift in the theology of mission and evangelization. Theologians have contributed much in the field to eventually articulate a vision of mission and integral

25 The Synod of Bishops for Asia, "Message of the Synod of Bishops for Asia," in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries,* edited by Peter Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 166-172.

evangelization that embraces all people in the salvific plan of God. Looking through this paradigm shift in the theology of mission and evangelization, one can see how the focus of mission has shifted from "the missions" to "mission," from a Christomonistic understanding of salvation history to a more Trinitarian one, from the Church to the Reign of God, and from the implanting of the Church to integral evangelization.

Five Principal Elements of Integral Evangelization

1. Christian Presence and Witness of Life

The witness of the Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of integral evangelization (cf. RM 42; EN 21, 41 EG 13, 121, 174). Today too, people also prefer to listen to witnesses: they thirst for authenticity and call for evangelizers to speak of a God they know and are familiar with as if they were seeing him (cf. EG 150). Here and now, especially where we are a "little flock" (Lk12:32), the Lord's disciples are called to live as a community that is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16). We are called to bear witness to a constantly new way of living together in fidelity to the Gospel (cf. EG 92).

2. Commitment to Social Development and Human Liberation

A genuine service to humanity for harmonious coexistence is also essential to the evangelizing activities of the Church based on a mutual commitment to social development and human liberation. Observing the current reality of human society, Pope Francis dedicated the fourth chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* to this social dimension, which consists of four parts: communal and societal implication of the *kerygma*,

the inclusion of the poor in society, the common good, and peace in society, and dialogue as a contribution to peace. In line with this, he said that "… if the social dimension is not properly brought out, there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization" (EG 176).

3. Interreligious Dialogue

Any effort initiated to establish and foster mutual understanding among peoples of different faiths on the basis of common grounds is called interfaith dialogue: a heartening sign of human fraternity and a promise of world peace and harmony. Pope Francis identifies dialogue as one of the elements of integral evangelization (EG 238). To promote full human development and the common good, he underlines three key areas for dialogue: (a) dialogue with states (cf. EG 240-241); (b) dialogue with society—including dialogue with cultures and the sciences (cf. EG 242-243); and (c) dialogue with other believers (cf. EG 244-258). The latter refers to interreligious dialogue—especially with Jews and Muslims—and dialogue with those who "do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition, yet seek truth, goodness, and beauty" (EG 257).

In the Asian context, looking back at the First FABC Plenary Assembly, Amaladoss comments that the Asian Bishops saw the mission as a dialogue with the threefold realities of Asia, namely its rich cultures, its ancient and great religions, and the poor: inculturation, interreligious dialogue,

and liberation.[26] For the FABC, dialogue is clearly "an integral part of evangelization" (BIMA II, 14).[27]

Dialogue with Cultures

Dialogue with cultures, as an essential component of missionary evangelization in the Church, can be understood as the process of inculturation. Pope Francis affirms: "Through inculturation, the Church introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community, for every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived" (EG 116). Asia is a cradle of many diverse cultures that contribute much to the richness of the Universal Church.

Indeed, as Christianity dwindles in traditionally Christian countries, it also thrives today in new frontiers, including some parts of Asia.

Dialogue with Religions

Asia is a religiously pluralistic continent where other religions are usually more dominant than Christianity. The mission is urgent and crucial in Asia. Dialogue with peoples of other faiths is indispensable for coexistence and fulfills the missionary plan of God. Dialogue with religions implies interreligious dialogue or interfaith dialogue. It means: "all the positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions" (DP 9).

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26 Michael Amaladoss, "The Challenges of Mission Today," in *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium,* edited by William Jenkinson and Helene O'Sullivan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 362.

27 FAPA I, 100.

Pope Francis asserts that "Evangelization and interreligious dialogue, far from being opposed, mutually support and nourish one another…. In this dialogue, ever friendly and sincere, attention must always be paid to the essential bond between dialogue and proclamation, which leads the Church to maintain and intensify her relationship with Non-Christians" (EG 251). "Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities" (EG 250).

In Asia, where less than three percent of the population is Christian, the Church actively promotes interfaith relations. "It is therefore important for the Church in Asia to provide suitable models of interreligious dialogue—evangelization in dialogue and dialogue for evangelization—and suitable training for those involved" (EA 31).

4. Explicit Gospel Proclamation and Catechesis

Proclamation is always the primary concern in the missionary evangelization of the Church. Kroeger explains proclamation with the following words: "In mission and evangelization today, there is the role of explicit Gospel proclamation and catechesis. This dimension of evangelization includes preaching, catechesis of Christian life, teaching the content of faith; in a word, this means 'telling the Jesus story'."[28] He adds that "through proclamation, Christians themselves are further instructed in their faith; this is the process through which the Christian faith is communicated to the next generation of believers" (cf. RM 44-51; EN 22, 27, 42; EG 3, 12, 24, 110-111, 246).[29]

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* shows the primacy of this element as he states that "there can be no true

28 Kroeger, "*Redemptoris Missio,*" 36.
29 Kroeger, "*Redemptoris Missio,*" 36.

evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord, and without the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work" (EG 110).

5. Liturgical Life, Prayer, and Contemplation

Integral evangelization includes liturgical life, prayer, and contemplation; they are the natural fruit of the proclamation of the Gospel. This implies the continuing growth of the faithful in holiness and spirituality integrated with the scriptures, the sacraments, and prayer life. Spirit-filled evangelization is one that is guided by the Holy Spirit, who comes to renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples (cf. EG 261).

Pope Francis also emphasizes that Spirit-filled evangelizers are people of prayer and deed. In addition, he recommends that without adoration and prayerful encounter with the Word, as well as dialogue with the Lord, our work easily becomes insignificant. Thus, the Church must pray, study the Bible, and spend time in adoration of the Eucharist in order to grow in faith (cf. EG 262). Prayer and contemplation are essential for missionaries as they venture to all the nations to proclaim the Gospel. Through prayer-sacramental-liturgical worship, the Church is granted God's abundant love and grace. The love and grace push the Church to participate in God's mission, evangelize the world, and share the Trinitarian love with all creation.

Implementation of Integral Evangelization in Bangladesh

Thus far, we have identified the five key elements of integral evangelization based on its biblical foundations articulated by the Second Vatican Council, by recent popes, and by the FABC. We will now strive to apply what we have drawn

out in this paper as we see to connect doctrine and experience and integrate theological insights and pastoral praxis in the particular context of the Church in Asia, specifically of the Local Church in Bangladesh.

Renewal of Integral Evangelization in the Local Church

Renewal of faith brings about renewal in mission and integral evangelization in the Church. To renew is to return to the source and embark with freshness and innovation by studying the signs of the times. It also enriches mission and integral evangelization. The letter to the Romans calls for renewal: "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, pleasing and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

Cardinal Tagle explains the New Testament root of renewal: "We learn that the renewal of the world and of humanity is a gift that has already been offered by the Triune God, thanks to the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The renewal of the world and humanity is the fruit of *missio Dei*" (*FABC Papers 91* [2000], 4). Following the Trinitarian theology of mission and renewal found in Vatican II, Pope Francis states that: "Whenever we make an effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelization is always new" (EG 11). Hence, renewal in integral evangelization will bring about a corresponding transformation in the local Church and society.

Through the years, the CCB has been engaged in evangelization based on an older concept of the Church's mission.

This older concept was often restricted to "explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life" as constitutive of the mission. Other aspects, such as social justice, interfaith dialogue, peace-building, education and health care, life witness, etc., were "preparatory" to evangelization.[30] Thus, it appears that approaches to mission and evangelization taken by the Church in Bangladesh are frequently and largely focused on preaching and catechesis, baptism of converts, and the administration of sacraments.

The CCB continued to practice the three elements of integral evangelization: presence and witness of life, explicit Gospel proclamation and catechesis, and liturgical life, prayer, and contemplation. Likewise, it has also carried out noteworthy elements of human development and liberation like education as well as medical and charitable work, but only as preparatory areas for evangelization. Meanwhile, the inter-religious dialogue aspect was neglected and often ignored by pastors. Therefore, in addition to the older vision and evangelization strategies, the local Church in Bangladesh today needs a paradigm shift to renew herself with a new, holistic and integral view of evangelization, with a corresponding updating in terms of approaches and activities. To promote this and make efforts on the mission and integral evangelization, the CCB must engage in self-renewal in accordance with the documents of Vatican II, EN, DM, RM, DP, and the missionary vision of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Transformation among the Agents of Evangelization

The People of God are all agents of evangelization in the contemporary world. They are composed of professionals (bishops, priests, religious men and women, catechists,

30 James Kroeger, "The Mission Vision of Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi,*" *Vidyajyoti* 78 (2014): 52.

religious educators) and non-professional workers of the mission. In light of this, it is impossible to truly attain integral evangelization without genuine transformation among the agents of evangelization first. While it is the bishop's role to promote, to direct, to coordinate missionary activity" (AG 30), the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the entire People of God. All are invited to a deep interior renewal, so having an awareness of their own responsibility for spreading the Gospel, they may contribute to the work of mission among the nations (cf. AG 35).

Pope Francis affirms the Trinitarian foundation of mission and evangelization and notes that "Jesus is the 'first and greatest evangelizer.' Therefore, in every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who calls us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit" (EG 12). He adds that "All the baptized … are agents of evangelization…. Every Christian is a missionary … [who has] encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus; we no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries,' but always 'missionary disciples'" (EG 120). All the baptized need to be renewed in their self-understanding as agents of evangelization.

Courageous Christian Presence and Witness

The Risen Lord said to his disciples, "You are witnesses of these things" (Lk 24:48) and he added, "And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning" (Jn 15:27). Christian presence and witness are the first and irreplaceable form of evangelization. Today, people prefer to listen to witnesses: they thirst for authenticity and call for evangelizers to speak of a God they themselves know and are familiar with as if they were seeing him (cf. EG 150).

The CCB is a witnessing community. To live as a Christian, one has to be a courageous witness to the Gospel. One of the pastoral priorities identified in the PPCB (1985) is formation, and one goal of formation is witness of life, especially given the multi-cultural-religious reality in the country. Formation leads to witness of life. There are many ways to proclaim the Good News to the people of Bangladesh, but the CCB chooses the method of "witness of life — silent proclamation in announcing the Good News of Christ."[31] This method is both sound and efficacious and the beginning of all evangelization (cf. EN 21).

Pastoral Workers for Explicit Proclamation

The explicit proclamation of the Gospel is the fourth and central dimension of integral evangelization. Proclamation is always a main concern in the missionary evangelization of the Church. This explicit proclamation is both verbal and non-verbal. Among Christians, explicit verbal proclamation is more effective, while among people of other religions, non-verbal proclamation is possible through attraction but not proselytizing (cf. EG 15). An attractive Christian living presence is the way of Jesus Christ to offer salvation to all.

Pastoral workers are the primary and professional agents of explicit proclamation. They are responsible for the effective communication of the Good News, first to Christians and afterward to all people in Bangladesh. It is definitely very challenging for them in the context of Bangladesh, where the majority of the population is composed of followers of other religions. Christians are only a tiny group of people among the poor and large population where injustice is all around. At times, they also tend to stay in their comfort zone. Facing the

31 Marcello Storgato, "Remarks on the Church Vis-à-vis Her Mission and Bangladesh Society," *Prodipon* 9:1-2 (1986): 109.

challenging situation, they need an encounter with the Lord Jesus to be renewed and steadfast in the proclamation. They need to go out to the peripheries as Pope Francis directs: "I prefer a Church [pastoral workers] 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 clinging to its security" (EG 49).

Dialogue in a Multi-Cultural and Religious Context

The third dimension of integral evangelization is "Interreligious Dialogue." Dialogue is an important and necessary attitude on all levels in the Church today. To carry out the mission of evangelization, local Churches have to identify situations where they are called to respond to the invitation of God through prophetic dialogue with the poor, with people of different cultures, as well as those of other religious traditions. In this sense, the "triple-dialogue" advocated by the FABC in Asia is truly relevant to the particular context of the local Church in Bangladesh. "In the Asian situation, the three paths of mission, namely, proclamation, dialogue, and human promotion, are fulfilled in the 'triple dialogue' with cultures, religions and the poor" (*FABC Papers 90* [2000], 4). James Kroeger notes: "No evangelization will be lasting and fruitful if it does not travel the path of this threefold dialogue."[32]

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis emphasizes dialogue as an element of integral evangelization. For him, "dialogue is much more than the communication of a truth. It arises from the enjoyment of speaking, and it enriches those who express their love for one another through the medium of words" (EG 142). Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue. It is

32 James Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publication, 1994), 68.

one of the most applicable and suitable elements of evangelization in the context of Bangladesh. Despite the many challenges confronting it, the CCB has to engage in evangelizing dialogue with cultures and religious traditions by keeping its eyes fixed on Jesus.

Promotion of Unity, Peace and Justice

"Human Development and Liberation" is the second dimension of integral evangelization. The social dimension of evangelization is a large concern in the universal and local Church. Both spiritual and social aspects of human life constantly seek total human development and liberation. In a world marred by division, war, injustice, oppression, misery, people are hungry for unity, peace, harmony, and justice. As such, the people of Bangladesh have been persistently fighting against the evils of its current society. The Church is in the world and for the world, it shares with humanity its historical condition. Therefore, the Church seeks to enter the world and participate in the service of society to transform the world.

With a renewed spirit for effective evangelization in the service of humanity, the CCB needs to form people's social and apostolic conscience, namely, to practice the social doctrine of the Church. Pope Paul IV (EN), Pope John Paul II (RM), and Pope Francis (EG) all recognized the social dimension of evangelization and have given guidance for the transformation of humanity and society through their teachings. Pope Francis has dedicated chapter IV of *Evangelii Gaudium* to the social dimension of evangelization. Among these social aspects, the promotion of unity, peace and justice is urgently needed in the world and certainly necessary in the situation of Bangladesh.

Although the CCB has many achievements and is very active in the social dimension of evangelization, this is not sufficient in comparison to the large population of Bangladesh. Therefore, all Christians on the personal and community level also need to engage in "social" missionary evangelization.

Inclusion of the Poor in Human Liberation

Integral evangelization of the Church will never be complete if poor people are excluded from the schema of the mission. The poor have always been included and are considered in the scripture and teaching of the Church because the salvific plan of God is to liberate and redeem humanity. Jesus proclaims his mission to bring Good News to the poor and oppressed (Lk 4:16-21). Following the Word of God from the very beginning, the Church hears the cry of the poor and continuously strives to be the shelter of the poor in her missionary journey so that the mission of Jesus might be accomplished for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Based on the renewed teaching of Vatican II and recent Popes (Paul IV, John Paul II, and Francis), the Church has emphasized human development and liberation from poverty and all oppressive situations. A major part of the mission is the social dimension of evangelization that remarkably points to the inclusion of the poor. For Pope Francis, "Inclusion of the Poor in Society" is one of the four parts of the social dimension of evangelization, which he elaborates at length in *Evangelii Gaudium* (cf. EG 186-208).

The CCB is a community of the poor. At the same time, she works from her very existence for the poor to liberate them from all oppressive structures. In 1985 the CBCB identified "preferential love for the poor" as one of the priorities

in its pastoral plan. At present, the CCB continues the work of human liberation among the poor, regardless of religion.

Necessity of Care for the Environment

Care for the Environment is a vital issue in the world as well as in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the countries most affected by climate change and global warming. This country has been called the "ground zero" of climate change. Both human life and nature in Bangladesh are under an alarming threat of damnation. The whole country has been suffering from floods, drought, cyclones, storms, salinity intrusion, and extreme temperatures each year. This is a clear warning to have special care for creation. Scripture says that God made the heavens and the earth, and it was good (cf. Gen 1:1-31). Humans are commanded to care for God's creation (cf. Gen 2:15). Recognizing the love of God, both in and for creation, all people have the duty to love and care for the world as God loves and cares for all his creation (cf. Mt 6:25-34).

Unfortunately, while all people in Bangladesh are victims of climate change, few are aware and conscious of the need to love and care for creation. In many ways, people, knowingly or not, participate in the destruction of nature, e.g., deforestation, pollution, soil degradation, erosion, and so on. Thus, the ecological issue is indeed a challenge in Bangladesh and the Catholic Church can play an important role in restoring our common home.

Social Communication and Contemporary Evangelization

Social communication is one of the pivotal factors in today's world through which people relate to one another. In this age of globalization, the influence and necessity of social

communication are extremely strong; without it, the exchange of education and information is almost impossible. People have benefited from this in their individual, family, and social life. The very purpose of communication is to create unity, harmony, union, and an understanding community. No one can remain closed up in oneself. Communication brings the meaning and connection that we need as social beings.

In line with this, the basic charism of the Church is to be a missionary, to communicate with Jesus who is the Father's communication to the world. Communication is a basic medium for evangelization to carry the message of Christ to the whole universe until the end of time, leading to its eternal fulfillment.[33] Thus, to enhance the work of evangelization in Bangladesh, the Church has to develop its mass media and social communication systems. In the country, many people still lack access to contemporary social communication. Christians have to become channels of communication by networking in the mission of evangelization. Therefore, training is essential for Christians to be skillful in using the modern tools of communication and discerning against various forms of deceit and manipulation rampant today, such as fake news. For instance, it would be desirable to establish a communication and media center in every diocese in Bangladesh.

Liturgical Life, Prayer, Contemplation, and Holiness

The last dimension of integral evangelization is "Liturgical Life, Prayer, and Contemplation." These three are the natural result of explicit Gospel proclamation and are essential to the

33 Joseph Nycy, "Social Communication and Evangelization," Unpublished paper, (Mawlai, Shillong: Sacred Heart Theological College, March 2015), https://dannysteve.wordpress.com/2015/06/05/social-communication-and-evangelization/ (accessed July 11, 2018).

mission. The new converts need to be nourished constantly by God's grace and love which is given through prayer and sacramental-liturgical life. A prayerful liturgical and contemplative life leads both the evangelizers and the converts into a mature, spiritual, and holy life in Christ. It also sparks a zealous fire for the faithful to devote themselves to the continuation of Christ's mission of evangelization, which is to lead humanity to holiness. As Jesus says, "Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 6:16). Without holiness or perfection of life, the mission of evangelization becomes meaningless and separated from the salvific plan of God.

Since Christianity came to Bangladesh soil, liturgical life, prayer, contemplation, and holiness have been a usual part of the missionary activities of the CCB. Unfortunately, it often follows a pre-Vatican II style. Prayers frequently appear to be oral recitation, sacramental practices stress *ex opere operato* and lack transforming effects for the moral life of the People of God. Likewise, liturgy, at times, seems to be a routine and mechanical performance that lacks dynamism and indigenization. To address these problems, the CCB needs to promote a renewal of prayer, contemplative life, and sacramental-liturgical reform.

In line with this, the integration of Catholic feasts and celebrations with Bangladeshi traditional festivals and rites can be an innovative opportunity for sacramental-liturgical reform. The CCB has to go through these spiritual exercises to implement integral evangelization, and by doing so, she can transform her current challenges and difficulties into evangelizing power and pastoral inspiration in order to progress in genuine transformation that will lead to a dynamic missionary local Church in Bangladesh.

Pope Francis' Missionary Vision in *Evangelii Gaudium*

Going deep into the very moving document, *Evangelii Gaudium*, one can affirm that the "missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church's activity…. We need to move 'from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry'" (EG 15). Evangelization is the central theme of the apostolic exhortation, encompassing all other themes in the universal and local Church. As Pope Francis emphatically exhorts us, "Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'" (EG 25).

Firstly, the multifaceted "culture of encounter" with Lord Jesus Christ (cf. EG 1, 3) is a significant and convincing insight for integral evangelization. As Pope Francis notes, "If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: 'We have found the Messiah!'" (Jn 1:41; EG 120). Secondly, a unique and pivotal insight of his is the baptismal missionary discipleship (cf. EG 24, 40, 50, 120, 173) of the Christian faithful who are all entrusted with missionary responsibility. Missionary discipleship will inspire the Church and motivate the laity to become more involved in the Church's mission because "missionary disciples accompany missionary disciples" (EG 173). Thirdly, the proclamation of the Gospel with joy is a powerful learning experience in this age of scientific and technological advancement. Evangelizers must be courageous, committed, genuine, honest, and joyful to counteract many individual and social evils as they seek to establish the Kingdom of God. Lastly, Pope Francis' vision for the renewal and transformation of the Church and society is a brave insight.

In this sense, the key missionary insights in *EG* are certainly relevant to the Church in Asia and to the local Church and society of Bangladesh in particular. This document is kindred with the FABC's "ground up" or "emerging from below" pastoral-missionary praxis.[34] The triple-dialogue of the FABC receives attention in *EG*. In view of these insights, the Catholic Church in Bangladesh should foster missionary outreach with the help of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of Mary, the Mother and Star of Evangelization.

The Catholic Church in Bangladesh and Integral Evangelization

Bangladesh is a vast and fertile mission field where the CCB can implement all elements of integral evangelization in order to bear much fruit. Although it may be "small" in relation to the population of the country and considering the difficult challenges that it confronts, the renewal of its efforts in terms of mission and evangelization bears much promise in the service of God's Kingdom, like the proverbial mustard seed in the Gospel. This innovative vision of evangelization incredibly widens the scope of mission and evangelization. Integral evangelization is a total and practical approach for the CCB to bring salvation to all the people of Bangladesh.

Conclusion

The documents of Vatican II, the recent Popes, and the FABC from an Asian perspective all hold a sound and renewed concept of the missionary nature of the Church with all her

34 James Kroeger, "Always Alert to God's Signs: Exploring the Vision of *Evangelii Gaudium*," in *Evangelii Gaudium: Voices of the Universal Church,* edited by Klaus Kramer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon City, Philippines: Claret Publishing Group, 2015), 94.

members as evangelizers (cf. AG 2). For Pope Francis, all baptized members are "missionary disciples" by virtue of their baptism. These are further developed in *Evangelii Gaudium* in its Trinitarian, Christological, Pneumatological, Ecclesial, and Missiological aspects. Nevertheless, these insights need action in order to empower and engage all members of the Church for integral evangelization.

The foundation of faith enables the faithful to proclaim the Gospel with joy. Considering the life of faith and mission, it can be said that there is much hope and many possibilities for the "little flock" of Bangladesh. Under the dedicated leadership of its shepherds, the Church has progressed in many ways. Today, the CCB continues to strengthen the faith of her people and enables them to translate that faith into action. The growth and maturity of the Church are obvious in her commitments and missionary-pastoral ministries. Nonetheless, there are also many avenues and opportunities for growth and renewal in the various aspects of evangelization.

The FABC Vision of Inculturation and the Pedagogical Renewal of Catechesis in the Philippines

William M. Parde, Jr.

In 1977, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), in its position paper on the Synod's theme, *Catechesis in Our Time*, stated an ideal that all catechetical undertakings should aim at when it states:

> Finally, we strongly suggest that catechists should accentuate the movement towards total conversion of the whole man, the dynamism towards personal union with God which the Holy Spirit sustains in all those who accept that Jesus is Christ, the eternal Son of God made man, and an outpouring of the effects of this union through Christian witness.[1]

More than four decades have passed, and numerous initiatives have been done and have achieved a certain level of progress in the catechetical apostolate. But the sheer enormity of the task pointed out by the bishops requires a constant effort to find new and distinctive ways to make it happen—as many as the voices of the thousands of catechists who articulate the faith, based on their experience and interpretation, to varied audiences. The importance of an updated pedagogy cannot be overemphasized since it has for its subject God's revelation itself—something dynamic and alive.

As *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) notes, "Throughout sacred history, especially in the Gospel, God Himself used a pedagogy

1 CBCP, "CBCP Position Paper On the Synod Theme Catechesis In Our Time," (Baguio City, July 13, 1977), http://cbcponline.net/cbcp-position-paper-on-the-synod-theme-catechetics-in-our-time/ (accessed on 13 April 2020).

that must continue to be a model for the pedagogy of faith" (CT 58). Pedagogical renewal, then, cannot be a one-time endeavor, but it has to go with the so-called "signs of the times" (GS 4). Catechesis at the service of Church's ministry of the Word pays attention to the nuances and unfolding of life, events and circumstances that may alter how it carries out its goals and purposes. Education in the faith has to use a tool, an approach or even a personality that may facilitate its job of communicating, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the truths of the Christian Faith.

Recent years have produced inculturated catechisms that have been expertly prepared by catechetical authorities based on how they see things from their desks. Inculturation may be best experienced when done on the ground as *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, considered as the "Charter of Inculturation," declares, "…what matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way, as it were, by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots)…" (EV 20).

Renewing a Catechetical Method

Since the time of the introduction of Christianity in the Philippines, there have been varying efforts to introduce and make the Christian Faith part of the daily life of Filipinos. Many of these initiatives have been preserved up to the contemporary period. The bell was an important part of the daily routine as it is rung for the Angelus, for daily Mass, for announcing that somebody is dying or has just died, for important occasions and many others. This type of "catechesis" is what they call *Bajo las campanas* (MCF-NCDP 399). Life itself is full of Christian practices that are educating them in the ways of the faith like the celebration of fiestas and other festivals, the statues or images of Jesus, Mary and the

Saints in home altars; the celebration of the seasons of Lent and Easter, Advent and Christmas; the seasonal *Flores de Mayo*, *Santacruzan,* and the *Pasyong Mahal*; and other devotional practices. To a great extent, this method has captured the imagination and consciousness of Filipino converts. The missionaries taught them the faith by memorizing the *Doctrina Cristiana* (MCF-NCDP 399) which perhaps was foreign to their understanding and experience as many of their unchristian, native beliefs were not "enlightened" by it. They tended to mix Christianity with their indigenous beliefs and cultural practices in what was to be called "folk Catholicism." The missionaries, however, were successful in instilling in them the value of being resigned to what God wills (*kalooban ng Diyos*), that God is in-charge (*bahala na ang Diyos*) and that God is merciful (*may awa ang Diyos*). All these things happened within the context of family, Church and community.

After more than four centuries, there are inevitable changes in the template of the family and society, even in the countryside, where life is more laidback compared to highly urbanized centers. The once successful pedagogy implemented by the missionaries, which was "orderly, logical and experiential" (cf. MCF-NCDP 399) may no longer be, for the most part, as effective as before. In recent years, there is much emphasis on human experience that is illustrated in methodologies, such as "Christian Communities Program (CCP), the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, the Human Evocative Approach (HEAP), and other variants" (Cf. MCH-NCDP 403). Each of them has served its purposes and has been maintained by some catechetical institutions, depending on the needs and circumstances of the faithful they serve. The focus on engaging in the latest methods from the field of education may be advantageous, but they should be treated

with caution since catechetical instruction is not just one of the human sciences.

Moreover, the focus on human experience makes the Christian truths closer to the level of the catechized, especially as they search for personal meaning and sense of purpose through God's living Word in the Scriptures. Over-concentration on human experience should be avoided so as not to miss the point of the Good News, which takes precedence in catechetical sessions. Thus, in the effort to arrive at a suitable method for a particular catechetical need and audience, there should be a balance between teaching the truths of faith and the desire to be relevant and effective.

The Necessity of Pedagogical Renewal

As stated, times and circumstances have been altered. The Church's mission in Asia and in the world continues to keep abreast of the never-ending narratives and developments that are unfolding every step of the way. These realities primarily affect societal structures, particularly the family and the Church. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, describes them by noting "the proliferation of new religious movements that tend towards fundamentalism; the birth of a materialistic, consumerist and individualistic society; the process of secularization that tends to reduce the faith and the Church to something private and personal; the weakening of the sense of sin; and the increase of relativism that disregards the objective moral norms" (cf. EG 63-64). These phenomena definitely have serious consequences in the Church's exercise of its prophetic role in the world.

In the Philippines, there are many significant changes that are less likely to escape the scrutiny of a keen observer. Filipinos today are more empowered and less likely to just

accept anything without articulating their sentiments. Although there are still some traces of "colonial mentality,"[2] gone are the days when they would act like sponges that absorb what is imposed on them. They are more cognizant of what is happening around them and freely decide, right or wrong, on matters affecting them. The masses, who did not have the opportunity to finish their studies, are often victims of oppression and manipulation of sweet-talking politicians and more often than not, become avid followers of media and entertainment personalities. Confronted with this underlying situation, the Church must present the living Gospel message in a manner that draws people more deeply to the Christian ideals.

Philippine Cultural Trends as Context of Renewal

Contemporary Filipino mindset and way of life[3] may be gleaned from their preferences and values. What the majority chooses and believes in are motivational factors that explain why they live and behave in a certain way. From mere external observation, it is easy to pinpoint a general pattern among Filipinos today, such as the desire to look good, to be physically healthy, to have a decent salary to satisfy their wants and to be able to travel. These inclinations are not exclusively Filipino, but things they may share in common with the rest

2 Considering the fact that Filipinos have been under the Spanish, American and Japanese colonizers, they have a high regard for foreigners, especially the Caucasians. Imported items have a different appeal on them, rather than patronizing Philippine-made goods. Foreign fashion trends and sports capture their imagination.

3 This section wants to zero in on cultural trends that directly affect the lives of Filipinos as they present a more focused and relevant context of pedagogical renewal. The Asian context would be too general for this purpose. The researcher, then, took an article that more or less resonates with contemporary, secular mindset.

of Asia. What makes Filipinos unique is that these longings are expressed alongside the values of family (at its core), optimism, humor, flexibility, hospitality, fellowship, faith and religion. Not everything is lost for the Church's continuing mission of evangelization in the midst of contemporary cultural movements.

Business specialists are rather efficient in reading cultural developments, especially as they study the present-day trends in order to formulate marketing strategies for the realization of their objectives. Any change in the purchasing behavior of consumers would mean either an increase or a decrease of their profits for a particular fiscal year. In 2017, for instance, Chiqui Escareal-Go and Josiah Go, Chairman and CEO respectively of the marketing, training and advocacy firm Mansmith and Fielders Inc., have written about cultural trends that influence how Filipinos behave. In Filipino homes, these are the current observable factors: "the absence of parents and the increasing role of schools in instilling values; the social disorders associated with the increasing absence of parents in the lives of children (drugs, child sex abuse, teen pregnancy, among others); the changing boundaries and sequence of love, marriage, sex and family; the rise in the number of single parents; the growing preference for late marriages and smaller families; the upgraded role of music as surrogate companion; and the rise of single young adults (30 and above) without kids, mortgages and responsibilities."[4] In the past fifty years or so, these realities were not even thought of to be happening in Philippine shores. This is the new normal for many families, not only in urban centers but also in most provinces. The high regard for family remains the same, but unexpected outside

4 Cf. Chiqui Go and Josiah Go, "Cultural Trends Changing How Filipinos Behave" in *Inquirer,* September 1, 2017, https://business.inquirer.net/236089/cultural-trends-changing-filipinos-behave (accessed on May 5, 2020).

forces place it in a more difficult predicament, at least based on the optic of Christian teachings.

In the area of lifestyle trends, the following cultural antecedents are prevalent: "the stressful lifestyle of the working class that leads to lack of sleep; the growing awareness to plan out free time; the choice to buy new gadgets and spend on travel; the frequent trip to the malls as instant escape; the increasing dominance of point-of-purchase activities (packaging, display, sampling, among others); the expansive food knowledge, instead of owning cars, as a sign of sophistication; and the use of visual communication like emojis and memes."[5] Definitely, the desire to wrap oneself by the "good life," to succeed and to be known serves as the driving force. The preferred lifestyle is the new notion of simplicity. They may equate their activities with success, even if many of them are unnecessary. Being preoccupied with so many things—oftentimes stressful—does not translate to being productive. The ultimate goal in Christian life is not success but fruitfulness that is only achieved through Christian self-denial, self-restraint and self-sacrifice. Meaning, depth, and peace are not attained by external trappings but by an intimate relationship with Jesus.

Moving towards the realm of communication and technology, there are notable cultural strands that are evident, namely, "people relying more and more on online applications to keep in touch, such as Line, Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber, among others; the continuing shift of advertising from traditional to digital; the owning of multiple mobile phones; the increasing acceptance of foreign cultures (American music, Korean pop and television shows, Indian yoga, Chinese *feng shui*, Japanese *anime*); the opinions are shaped not just by

5 Cf. Go, "Cultural Trends Changing How Filipinos Behave."

watchdogs, but also by strangers in social media; the emerging consciousness of people to self-organize and to help others in times of natural disasters; the increasing reliance on tech-based solutions to manage personal life and work; the rise of omnichannel that provides customers seamless shopping experience; more online activists and social influencers; and the rise of virtual reality and augmented reality."[6]

An increasing number of hours are spent in the virtual world that does not require personal appearance and good rapport with others. They can freely communicate their thoughts and feelings without leaving the safety of their private spaces. Anything they need from food, clothing, gadgets, etc. is just a click away. And perhaps, they find better educators in Google, Yahoo and other search engines, practically substituting the role of parents and other traditional sources of information. People are becoming more and more very impersonal in contrast with a God who seeks to have an encounter with His creatures.

Engaging in the twenty-first century poses many challenges for effective catechesis; indeed, faith-education needs a lot of imagination and creativity that is sustained and precise. Keeping up with cultural trends implies realignment of efforts, strategies, and objectives. The aim of this effort is to make progress in proposing the Gospel message to dynamic and fast-paced developments in how Filipinos live their lives.

6 Cf. Go, "Cultural Trends Changing How Filipinos Behave."

Inculturation in the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

The term "inculturation"[7] (FAPA I, 6) is reputably first used by the FABC in November 1970 during the Asian Bishops' Meeting[8] in Manila, as there are other authors who claim that it first appeared sometime in 1973 onwards. The documents suggest that the word was first used in the context of the Church in Asia, and it officially appeared in papal documents after three years. From its beginnings, the FABC seems to be liberal in its use of the term as it uses other names[9] for it. James Kroeger articulates this in these words:

> One looks in vain in the FABC literature to find a consistent definition of culture and inculturation. For example, in the early FABC documents, terms like "adaptation," "incarnation," "acculturation," "indigenization," and "inculturation" were often used interchangeably. Yet, this lack of a single term has resulted in a wide variety of descriptions of the inculturation process, some of which border on poetic. While maybe not sociologically or theologically precise, these various descriptions elicit a vision or dream of the mission to be accomplished.[10]

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7 As cited previously, FABC was the first to use the term "inculturation." Some quarters, however, claim that it first appeared in John Paul II's "Catechesi Tradendae" in 1973. Others say that this word came from G.L. Barney, a protestant missionary in New York at about the same year.

8 This was the time when Pope Paul VI came to Manila and met with the Asian Bishops with the desire to form a permanent organization – a development that laid the initial ground for the establishment of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference. Cf. James Kroeger, *Asia's Dynamic Local Churches: Serving Dialogue and Mission* (Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., 2014): 56.

9 At one time, in describing an inculturated local church, the terms used were "incarnate, indigenous, and localized" (cf. FAPA I, 12). In another instance, inculturation is referred to as indigenization which "renders the local church truly present within the life and cultures of our peoples" (cf. FAPA 1, 16).

10 Kroeger, *Asia's Dynamic Local Churches,* 56.

Though there was this glaring inconsistency in the use of the term, FABC clearly knows the task to be accomplished, namely, that of making the Church, introduced by Westerners, take on an identity that fits into the Asian context—a reality that other religions have achieved. Its structure, teachings, sacraments, and practices do not readily assume an Asian touch and color.

In an effort to name this process of making the Church blend with the Asian culture, in 1978, Father Pedro Arrupe, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, laid down a decent working definition of inculturation as follows:

> Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation.'[11]

This landmark description has not only pinpointed the appropriate terminology to be used, but it has also encapsulated the inherent nature of the term—its meaning, process, and goal. The only thing that is lacking in this articulation of what inculturation is all about is its theological foundation which shall establish the parameters in which the process should proceed. Likewise, it concentrates only on what the Christian life and its message can do to a particular culture without taking into account "what the culture can offer to Christianity."[12]

In 1979, a year after Arrupe's definition, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences explains, "Inculturation is not

11 Pedro Arrupe, "Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation," in *Studies in the International Apostolate of the Jesuits* 7 (June 1978): 9.

12 FABC rightfully develops the dialogical aspect of inculturation (cf. FAPA I, 138-139).

a mere adaptation of a ready-made Christianity into a given situation but rather a creative embodiment of the Word in the local Church. This is the basic and fundamental process of inculturation" (FAPA I, 138). It is not a one-size-fits-all Christian faith that immediately harmonizes with the receiving culture but rather an encounter between equal parties that are ready to submit themselves to a painstaking process — stripping both parties to their essentials – in order to arrive at a new creation or way of being.

FABC Vision of Inculturation as Dialogue

Since the 1970's, the FABC has articulated its vision that "the decisive new phenomenon for Christianity in Asia will be the emergence of genuine Christian communities — Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, communicating their own Christ-experience to others … if the Asian Churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future" (cf. FAPA I, 70). With this, it is understandable why the FABC has profoundly developed the theology of the local Church more than any other topic. The Federation stresses that "The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated … a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, and the religions"[13] (FAPA I, 14). It is not a Church coming from above, but a Church that genuinely resonates the "meanings and values, the aspirations, the thoughts and language, the songs and artistry, and even its frailties and failings that aspire to be healed" (cf. FAPA I, 14). In other words, the FABC idea of local church is something that grows from the ground up and not some form of a foreign entity that has sprouted

13 The theology of the local Church is explained extensively in FABC as one of its key themes.

from nowhere. The local Church is "the realization and the enfleshment of the Body of Christ in a given people, a given place and time" (cf. FAPA I, 14). John Paul II confirms this in his writings when he says that the Church must be "an expression of the community's life" (RM 54). Insofar as it dialogues with culture (inculturation), the Church presents herself as an entity that embodies the people's sentiments, experiences, and dreams.

Moreover, inculturation is not a trend that will easily fade, but it is something that is firmly linked with the proclamation of the Christian faith. The FABC traces its theological foundation[14] in the mystery of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery. The FABC explains, "The mystery of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery are at once the foundation and the model for the deep insertion of local Churches in the surrounding cultures, in all aspects of their life, celebration, witness and mission" (FAPA II, 201). On the one hand, the Church's mission "is bound by the same law of incarnation as is implied in the mystery of Christ Himself, which she signifies" (FAPA I, 72). The institutional Church has to carry out her evangelizing mission in specific settings and cultures as this cultural insertion aims to arrive at an expression of faith that is truly reflective of the locality. "Universal in intent, the Church's mission needs to be actualized by becoming incarnate in particular human situations. This is the mystery of the "local Church;" in Asia this is the mystery of the Asian Churches" (FAPA I, 72). Inculturation

14 The same conformity of the Church to her Master is the decisive theological foundation for the inculturation of local Churches. The Son of God became man in Jesus in a particular place at a particular time of history, two thousand years ago in Palestine. Jesus was a Jew, deeply inserted in the culture of his people. The revelation he conveyed of the mystery of God as well as the way he accomplished his messianic and saving mission are steeped in the religious tradition of Israel, even while they fulfill it in an unforeseen manner (FAPA I, 343).

makes present Christ's incarnation in the here and now. In his speech to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Pope John Paul II said, "The term *acculturation*, or *inculturation* may well be a neologism but it expresses one of the elements of the great mystery of the incarnation."[15] Inculturation can trace its conception from the Incarnation in such a way that the Word assumed the flesh just as the Good News is communicated in a specific language and form.[16] The Incarnation becomes the paradigm[17] (cf. AG 10) for the Church's initiative to relate with culture. Without this definite basis, inculturation, with its anthropological roots, cannot be admitted into the realm of pastoral theology where it is properly situated. Likewise, if incarnation — denoting a theology from above — is to be the model for inculturation, then it may appear that "there is an emphasis on the transcendental aspect and view the incarnation of the gospel message as a one-way process and the Gospel itself as a disembodied essence injected into a concrete cultural context."[18]

On the other hand, this theological grounding on the paschal mystery is very important for inculturation, since this process "could remain naively optimistic, or merely a call for a more respectful insertion in a given milieu, making oneself

15 John Paul II, *Address of His Holiness John Paul II to Members of the Pontifical Biblical Com- Commission,* April 26,1979, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul ii/en/speeches/1979/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19790426_pont-com-biblica.html (accessed on April 20, 2020)

16 Mariusai Dhavamony, *A Christian Theology of Inculturation* (Rome: Pontificia Editrice Vaticana, 1988): 95.

17 The Incarnation, the divine-human encounter, is acknowledged as a normative principle, an analogy, a model and a metaphor for the incarnation of the Gospel message and of the Church in various cultures. The similarity is said to be in method and motivation rather than in an identity of the process. (Cf. Anthony, Ecclesial Praxis of Inculturation, 35).

18 Francis-Vincent Anthony, *Ecclesial Praxis of Inculturation: Toward an Empirical-Theological Theory of Inculturizing Praxis* (Vatican City, Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1997), 35.

all things to all people in order to save them in Christ"[19] (cf. 1 Cor 9:22). In other words, the Church's work on inculturation will just remain on the level of theories if it will not address the very heart of humanity and cultures — a movement that will allow purification of cultures and newness of life brought about by the Resurrection.

Specifically, inculturation includes dying and rising to attitudes, values, practices that are not in agreement with the Gospel message,[20] thereby arriving in a "new culture"—something that results from the encounter between the Eurocentric faith and culture or cultures. In this task, both the Church's faith and culture share an equal status in such a way that going through the Paschal way, they preserve their identity and integrity while shedding off what is not admissible to their dialogue patterned after Christ's mystery. Thus, inculturation grounded on the Paschal Mystery is characterized by a transformation that springs from God who rose from the dead. From the dynamic interaction between the Christian faith and culture comes a new being characterized by a unique Christian identity and self-expression. Thus, while belonging to the universal Church, a person lives, nourishes and matures in faith according to his or her own context.

With the FABC insistence on building local churches that is truly reflective of the Asian cultural realities and finding solid theological grounding, its vision of inculturation zeroes in on its dialogical dimension. The FABC notion of inculturation is dialogue — "the only possible avenue, given the multiracial, multilinguistic, multireligious, and multicultural reality of Asia."[21] The FABC vision of inculturation as dialogue

19 Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998): 106-109.

20 Cf. Gerald Arbuckle, Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 171.

21 Kroeger, Asia's Dynamic Local Churches, 60.

is the way to go in the Church's evangelizing mission since up until this contemporary period it can be said that

> … as a social institution the Church is perceived as a foreign body in its colonial origins while the other religions are not. The lingering colonial image survives in its traditional ecclesiastical structures and economic dependence on the west… The Church remains foreign in its lifestyle, in its institutional structure, in its worship, in its western trained leadership and in its theology. Christian rituals often remain formal, neither spontaneous nor particularly Asian. There is a gap between leaders and ordinary believers in the Church: *a fortiori* with members of other faiths (FAPA II, 195).

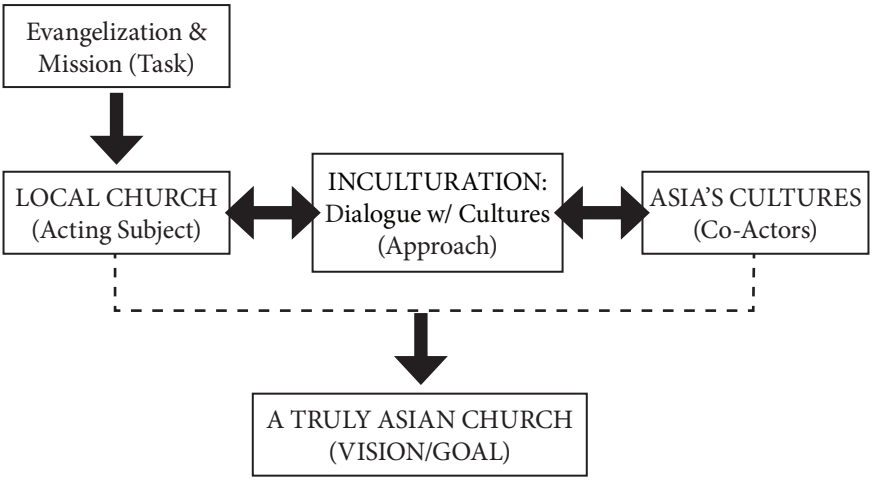
In the Philippines, for instance, where more than 80% of its population are Catholic Christians, majority of them cannot articulate their faith since they are not adequately catechized (cf. MCF-NCDP 57). Overall, FABC observes that "There are many seeds of faith and hope, nevertheless, it still holds true that the Church is often giving a counter-witness to its evangelization with the poor, its lack of concrete involvement in interfaith dialogue and its lack of interest in inculturation" (FAPA II, 196). Envisioning inculturation as dialogical in nature would close the gap between the Christian message and Asia's cultures.

Finally, to wrap up the FABC inculturation through dialogue, the succeeding illustration highlights all the elements at work in this process. Since evangelization is the primary task of the Church, it is always on mission. The local Church is "the acting subject of mission which lives and acts in communion with the universal Church. It is the local church that discerns the best Gospel proclamation, the Church set up, and the values of God's Kingdom to be realized in their place and time" (FAPA I, 281). The local Church is composed of "the people of God in a given milieu — laity, religious

and clergy — which includes the diocese, the parish, the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) and other groups (FAPA I, 281). Considering the complexity of the Asian context, as mentioned previously, the only way for inculturation to prosper is through dialogue; the co-acting subject is the various cultures of Asia. The resulting output in this dialogue between the local Church and Asia's cultures is the realization of the vision of a genuine Asian church. The goal is really to be able to establish an ecclesial community that embodies everything that is Asian — a Church that reflects the hopes and aspirations, the beliefs and values, and the attitudes and customs of the people in Asia.

FABC Vision of Inculturation

(Illustration 1)



The Method of Inculturation in FABC

At the outset, it must be noted that in the documents of the FABC, the word "dialogue" can have various nuances and meanings. It may refer to the triple dialogue with people, cultures and religions. At times, it points to the dialogue between faith and culture. Oftentimes, it refers to

interreligious dialogue. On top of this, the FABC "orientation in one word is dialogue" (FAPA I, xxiv); the "new way of being church" is dialogue (FAPA I, 332); and the model for evangelization is dialogue (FAPA I, 138). One can get caught in these different usages and may use the FABC insights on "dialogue" in a different context.

Dialogue is intrinsic to the very life of the Church and the essential mode of all evangelization (FAPA I, 111). The Church is therefore called to be a community of dialogue. This dialogical model is the new way of being Church (FAPA I, 332). "This dialogical approach is always a two-fold process of dynamic interaction. There is always mutual reinforcement; this means that while the Church influences the people, their cultures and religions, the Church herself is concomitantly being shaped and molded. In a word, the dynamic of inculturation is always at work."[22]

What are some of the characteristics of this process of inculturation by way of dialogue? First, the Word of God made flesh in Jesus is proclaimed and continuously incarnated in the cultures it finds itself in, transforming them through the Holy Spirit and makes them new (cf. FAPA I, 138). This dynamic exchange adopts an ongoing reciprocity that snowballs into a "new culture" that encompasses everything that people represent in a particular context. In other words, inculturation is "a creative embodiment of the Word in the local church which captures the basic and fundamental process of inculturation" (cf. FAPA I, 138).

Second, this inculturation through dialogue receives the Word, not only superficially, but rather makes it the principle of their life, values, attitudes and aspirations as the become the body of Christ in this particular time and space (cf. FAPA

22 Kroeger, Asia's Dynamic Local Churches, 61.

I, 138). This dialogical encounter is understood in its deepest meaning as it comes from the Trinitarian salvific movement — a dialogue accomplished in humility and mutual support to seek together as brothers and sisters, the fullness of Christ (FAPA I, 138-139).

Third, through inculturation, the seeds of the Word, which is now freed from the limited historical embodiments, are discovered hidden in the given cultures and traditions (cf. FAPA I, 138-139; AG 11). The mutual exchange of their discoveries among the local churches will lead to their enrichment as well as that of the universal Church (FAPA I, 139).

Fourth, the community gains a new identity without losing its cultural riches but integrating them in a new whole and becoming the sacrament of God's liberating love active among men (FAPA I, 138). As the Incarnation is fulfilled in the death and resurrection, the Church as the messenger of the Gospel and the given cultures and traditions of the people are purified, healed, and transformed by the saving power of the Gospel (FAPA I, 12, 139; EN 15).

Fifth, the Word remains the principle of unity amidst the enriching process in which the creative Spirit gives its expression and leads to the communion of churches through the unity of faith and sacramental life, co-responsible service, and the unifying leadership of the episcopal college (FAPA I, 138). The locus of these processes are the living Christian communities which are committed to evangelization and thereby entails involvement in the life-situation of the peoples to promote these processes (FAPA I, 139).

Enumerating these five elements of inculturation through dialogue gives a clear direction of the process but not all quarters are in agreement. Some say that "inculturation is unnecessary because other cultures are incompatible with

Christianity … or inculturation is impossible because it endangers the unity of the Church and might damage the very content of revelation" (FAPA I, 139). Furthermore, there are other hindrances to inculturation, namely, over-eagerness to see results, irresponsible experimentation and undue imposition without sufficient preparation of the people" (FAPA I, 139). Fruitful engagement with culture demands docility to the Spirit's guidance, willingness to take risks and profit from mistakes, openness to correction, the motivation to dialogue with others in sincere openness, persevering patience, openness to collaboration, and mutual acceptance (FAPA I, 139). Nothing can be better than possessing a good attitude if there is the desire to make inculturation happen. After all is said and done, it is the Spirit who determines everything.

The Challenges and Progress of Inculturation in the Asian Context

Since the birth of the FABC in the 1970's up to the present, with the countless efforts that have been put together in many parts of Asia on inculturation, one notices the rather slow progress in this endeavor. Reading the FABC profile of Asia and its challenges (cf. FAPA I, xxvii) from its early documents, one feels that the challenges are freshly written for the present. The FABC possesses voluminous materials on the ideals, processes, and goals on how to become a truly Asian Church, but much of the challenge now, as it was before, lies on the interest and dedication of all the stakeholders on the local level since the FABC as a transnational body (FAPA I, xxiv) has overwhelmingly done its job up to this time.

On the Asian level, the FABC Consultation on Evangelization and Inculturation (FAPA III, 215) is one primary document that itemizes the challenges of

inculturation in Asia, though there are sporadic insights here and there on this subject in many of its documents. Still, in this gathering, the participants have reiterated that it is dialogue initiated and guided by the Spirit that shapes the local Church's identity — its being and its mission — as it affirms that the Asian church is a community on mission (FAPA III, 215-216). The said dialogue is not a walk in the park since there are many terminologies and symbolisms that are understandably foreign to the receiving culture.

The abovementioned material echoes the perennial obstacle for inculturation expressed in *Ecclesia in Asia* when it declared that the initiatives to Christian faith is "fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in the light of the beliefs of Asia's great religions, deeply intertwined with cultural values and specific world views" (EA 20). If the level of evangelization defines the Church, then it has to be in constant mission. Inculturation, an essential part of every missionary endeavor, is still confined to the level of concepts and hardly connects with the inhabitants of a certain locality. The presumed superiority of the Christian faith, which, in its present form, has already been immersed into some cultures since its inception, is counterproductive. Without that healthy interaction, inculturation is unilateral and a kind of an imposition on the receiving culture which possesses its own customs and practices.

Disregarding a genuine dialogue with the native culture has huge adverse consequences to the progress of evangelizing mission as seen in poor catechetical instruction, lack of national and regional animating structures and persistent traditional sentiments within the Church (cf. FAPA III, 216). These problematic concerns have cascaded even to the culturally appropriate formation of priests and religious, including

the training of the lay faithful in theology and sacramental participation. The local ordinaries[23] have not done enough in order to facilitate the encounter of the faith with the local culture. Furthermore, equally threatened at this day and age is the integrity of the Asian culture and religiosity by overindulgence to the modern mass media. The danger of taking out people from their communities, which effectively disrupts the work of inculturating the Gospel, seems to be forthcoming with the advent of globalization, the craze over electronic media and the uncritical use of science and technology (cf. FAPA III, 216-217).

Based on these inputs, the challenge of inculturation, which is an essential component of evangelization, is far greater these days because it has to contend, not only with the ins and outs of the native culture, but with the ever-changing landscape of a specific locality. While acknowledging the complexity of any culture, the influence of other surrounding cultures and trends has to be factored in if there has to be some progression in the task of inculturation. At present, much of the "inculturating activity" in the Philippines is found in

23 Sadly, in the actual Philippine context, only very few bishops make inculturation or catechesis a priority in their diocese. The 1983 Code of Canon Law, however, emphatically states that diocesan bishops should give the overall direction of catechesis in their respective dioceses (cf. CCL 775). Clearly, this is not the case. Ideally, the bishops should be able to produce a local catechism, sustain resources, initiate activities, ensure the training of personnel, and establish a catechetical office. Moreover, Canon Law, in its provisions on catechesis (cf. CCL 773-780), significantly deals with inculturation as it mandates a doctrinal or faith formation that is living, manifest and active (cf. CCL 773). It also asserts an ongoing instruction for children, young people and adults that is appropriate to their age and condition (cf. CCL 777). Christian doctrine and all forms of preaching must be adopted to the needs of the time (cf. 769-770). Above all, the continuing catechetical challenges could be significantly addressed if the agents of catechesis — bishops, parish priests, parochial vicars, deacons, seminarians, catechists, parents, etc .— conscientiously embrace the pertinent provisions of the Code whose underlying principle is inculturation.

praiseworthy ecclesial documents, catechetical lessons, and liturgical preaching and symbolism. For this reason, this is an excellent foundation on which future studies could build on.

FABC Inculturation as a Method of Renewal

To date, there are different models of inculturation but in this study, inculturation takes the incarnational model — "just as the Word of God became flesh for us, so does the Gospel get articulated in a specific language and form."[24] But there are still a lot of gray areas as to its scope, process and goals, including identified obstacles like 1) the lack of an actual, step-by-step method and; 2) the absence of a unified and consistent effort from Church authorities to pursue inculturation in their respective ecclesiastical territories; 3) the inadequacy of technical capability to implement inculturation in a given context; and 4) the need to put up structures that would pave the way for a more focused approach to inculturation. If inculturation is considered indispensable, there should be a lead body that manages all initiatives about it. At the most, suffice it to say that this research is just a modest contribution in conjunction with the many scholarly studies on the subject. There is a long way to go for this subject whose importance is presumed, but which often receives inadequate attention.

FABC Methodology

The FABC theological methodology may vary in its elements, but certainly the identification of its chief composition is unanimous. One has to decipher them from its vast documents in order to assert its existence. In fact, in the whole of FABC, there is only one deliberate articulation of its theological methodology, that is, in the "Final Reflections of BISA VII" (cf. FAPA I, 231-232). This methodology begins

24 Cf. Mariusai Dhavamony, *A Christian Theology of Inculturation* (Rome: Pontificia Editrice Vaticana, 1988): 95.

with *exposure-immersion* in which the awareness of the reality of poverty is presented and lived, following the incarnational paradigm. The second stage is *social analysis* that assesses the social, economic, political, cultural and religious dimensions of society. This is supported by a careful discernment of the sign of the times since a mere social analysis is limited as it may be tainted by a spousal of ideology or self-interest. The third stage is the *contemplative dimension* of human development that seeks God's presence and initiative within society. Many times, it is difficult to decipher the hiddenness of God's action in the midst of the experience of poverty. The poor, in their experience of poverty, may teach certain cultural values and religious practices that are necessary for the advancement of spirituality like simplicity, openness and sharing, community awareness and family loyalty. The fourth stage, *Pastoral planning*, seeks to operationalize the previous three stages and works for their sustainability. Prayer cuts across these various stages at it grounds a spirituality that sees that hand of God active among the poor (cf. FAPA I, 231-232).

In the context of evangelization, new efforts to find helpful ways of incarnating the Faith into a local culture are met with certain expectations, even as it follows previously held models. In the case of FABC's theological approach, the starting point is from below, but proceeds to carry it out by following the incarnational paradigm, which is from above.

In contrast to the traditional discursive orientation of classicist theological methodologies which are invariably metaphysical in orientation, they have traditionally focused upon wisdom (*sapientia*) or rational knowledge (*scientia*), and are often detached from the daily living experiences of its target audience, the contextual theological methodology of the FABC is primarily pastoral in orientation, seeking both to be shaped by, as well as to shape daily life experiences in the

multireligious, multiethnic, multilingual and pluricultural Asian *Sitz-im-Leben*. In other words, the starting point of the FABC's contextual theological methodology is not the universal precepts of *lex aeterna* and *lex naturalis*, or abstract metaphysical principles pertaining to God, Revelation and the Christian Gospel, or even conciliar, papal or doctrinal pronouncements, but rather the life experiences of the Asian peoples (*FABC Papers 108:6*).

The appreciation of context, even in catechetical modules, assures some kind of decisiveness and timing in presenting the Gospel message. Undermining socio-religious context means an out-of-sync proclamation of the faith. The situation presumes helpful and not helpful elements as well as an openness to new influences coming from global developments. Presenting a Christian faith that resonates with the realities and sentiments from the ground would have a greater probability of realizing the goal of establishing a truly local Church.

Since this study is more inclined to follow the incarnational model of inculturation and on taking a closer look at the Philippine context, it is inclined to follow Ruben C. Mendoza's concept of FABC methodology that takes "two salient elements: 1) discerning the signs of the times and 2) using the pastoral cycle that consists of four stages such as a) immersion–exposure; b) social analysis; c) contemplative dimension; d) pastoral planning."[25] At first glance, all these items resemble parts of a catechetical method. After all, this study proposes inculturation as a method in catechetical instruction. In fact, this approach was adopted in FABC's new approach to family catechesis, which also used the "Pastoral Spiral" when it states:

25 Ruben Mendoza, "Assuming All That is Asian: Becoming a Truly Local Church in Dialogue," in *Asia Pacific Mission Studies,* 1:1 (2013): 5-26. Mendoza's source is FAPA I, 231-232.

> This method of discernment starts with the analysis of the situation and is followed by reflection-in-faith. In the light of both the situational analysis and the faith-reflection, certain pastoral recommendations or decisions are made at the FABC Plenary Assembly. This third phase (decision-making) was the end of the process. It was left to the Episcopal conferences and their Family Life Commissions to continue the pastoral spiral by going into the planning on how to implement the decisions. Action or implementation then follows. To conclude the pastoral spiral, evaluation is made not only of the result or impact of the action but also of the process of "see–judge–act. Thus: Situation — Reflection in Faith — Decisions and Recommendations – Planning – Action – Evaluation.[26]

Using the pastoral spiral, catechetical instruction, as an ongoing formation in the faith, is firmly grounded in context, no matter how fluid and complex it may be. This present study, however, takes this pastoral spiral or method, together with the signs of the times, as an approach to teaching faith in an actual classroom setting.

FABC Inculturation as Dialogue With Cultures

If there's one word that stands out in the whole of FABC and for everything that it stands for, it is the word "dialogue" (*FABC Papers* 130:5-26). Without dialogue, the Church in Asia, just like elsewhere, will find it hard to express herself meaningfully and substantially against the background of highly complex and fast-paced cultural contexts. Dialogue levels the playing field for all the stakeholders and paves the way for a common ground towards integral human development and spiritual experiences. As provided in this study, dialogue is what characterizes inculturation. FABC declares:

26 Vicente Cajilig, ed., *Family Catechesis: Contextual Challenges* (Manila: FABC–Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy, 2007): 20.

> Dialogue is a primary means and way for inculturation. We discover the seeds of the Word in other religions and we become open to and ready for a process of change. It makes us listen to others so that we can understand how they see us Christians within the context of the Church's message and her structures. Then, the foreignness of the Church becomes less evident in the eyes of persons of other faiths (FAPA I, 142).

Through dialogue, the Christian faith is incarnated and resurrected in a manner that makes it as if it has a new face that is truly reflective of a specific people. Thus, the gap between the Good News that comes from the West is narrowed down, if not truly obliterated, in the process.

"Inculturation like dialogue is not primarily for the purpose of winning people in the Catholic fold, but rather it is one's way of living and witnessing to his faith in the actual context God's providence has implanted him. Genuine inculturation happens when followers of Christ, whether taken as a whole or as individually, proclaim through their lives their love for the faith and their cultural heritage" (FAPA I, 170-171). On the one hand, the authenticity of inculturation may be seen in the integral conversion of the people who have found an expression of Christianity that they can call their own. On the other hand, from the secular standpoint, true inculturation is a process that has improved the faithful's quality of life and the way they live it.

Furthermore, inculturation can never thrive without doing it in a dialogical manner. Taking dialogue out, inculturation will appear as an imposition of a "superior culture" to a locality. Inculturation, then, is far from being a one-way street that seeks its own ends, but rather a two-way traffic that ensures a certain level of reciprocity between the parties involved in order to realize the desired objectives. Dialogue leads to mutual enrichment and shuns away the excesses that

are not in keeping with the Christian ideals. Inculturation as dialogue with cultures works towards the realization of the Church's missionary mandate to propagate God's kingdom.

Inculturation as Dialogue and Integration as Interrelatedness

While inculturation is specifically a dialogue with cultures, integration is a method that proposes the Christian faith in an interrelated and holistic manner. In general, they are both approaches or means so to speak, that are designed to achieve similar objectives, namely, to be able to present the Faith in a manner that is understandable to its recipients. On the one hand, FABC's inculturation as dialogue seeks "to keep a creative balance and interaction among three dimensions, such as the human and spiritual sense of life; a biblical and hope-filled sense of history; and an open and dialogical sense of mystery" (FAPA I, 154). On the other hand, catechetical integration as a method emphasizes the three dimensions of the faith, that is, doctrine, moral and worship. In a wider sense, this study sees a parallel among the dimensions presented under inculturation as dialogue and integration as interrelatedness.

Parallelism Between Dialogue and Integration

(Illustration 2)

FABC's INCULTURATION AS DIALOGUE	INTEGRATION AS INTERRELATEDNESS
Biblical and Hope-filled Sense of History	Doctrine
Human and Spiritual Sense of Life	Moral
Open and Dialogical Sense of Mystery	Worship
*The **Mission Dimension** completes the parallelism between dialogue and integration as they both point to an "incarnational praxis" that emanates from a sound understanding of the faith to its actual enfleshment in daily life.	

The parallelism may be too broad to establish, but inculturation and integration can work hand in hand towards making the Christian Faith closer to the faithful's lived experience. To illustrate their relatedness, biblical and hope-filled sense of history is, first and foremost, doctrine since catechesis has the Scripture and Tradition as its main sources. Second, the moral aspect includes human and spiritual sense of life, since human behavior and interaction involves the spiritual faculties of intellect and will that tell a person whether his/her actions are good or bad. Third, the worship aspect is normally characterized by an open and dialogical attitude toward the Divine. These linkages further strengthen the idea that FABC's vision of inculturation can shed light on the renewal of catechetical pedagogy in the Philippines.

Dialogic Integration: A Contemporary Pedagogy of Faith

This study introduces a new phrase called "dialogic integration" to signify the common ground between FABC's inculturation as dialogue and catechetical integration. The said phrase is being proposed for the purpose of arriving at a contemporary approach to pedagogical renewal of Philippine catechesis. This pedagogy of faith is just one of the many ongoing attempts to discover further effective means to incarnate the Christian Faith in the Filipino cultural setting.

At the Service of Evangelization

Dialogic integration surfaces as another catechetical pedagogy that is basically the result of this research as a response to the challenges of the New Evangelization. It is a combination of two important subjects, that is, dialogue and integration. On the one hand, FABC's dialogue is "understood as intrinsic

to the very life of the Church and the essential mode of all evangelization" (cf. FAPA I, 111). On the other hand, integration is emphasized in the NCDP and the CFC and is commonly used as a methodological approach in catechesis, which is also an indispensable moment in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Catechetical integration brings about the interrelation of the three dimensions of the faith, namely, doctrine, moral, and worship. This presumes that the Gospel message is wholly communicated to the recipients as it touches their heads, hands and hearts. This approach, however, remains highly theoretical and knowledge of the faith remains as a "head knowledge." Without undermining the great and pioneering contribution of the CFC in "inculturating" the Christian Faith, the ready-made integration of every catechetical topic found in its pages would still need to be expressed in some other ways in the actual classroom sessions, considering the highly volatile and dynamic twenty-first century culture. This paper, then, proposes a catechesis that engages in an active dialogue with culture in the here and now, if it has to be called "inculturated catechesis." FABC itself states:

> As part of an ongoing process of accompanying proclamation, the churches in Asia must carry out a dialogue with the cultures in which they are situated in an attempt to take root in and transform their cultural environment. In this way, new expressions of Christian faith can emerge which are at once deeply Christian and at home in the local cultures. Through this process of dialogue, the Church itself is enriched and gains new insights and apostolic impetus. (FAPA I, 103-108).

Inculturated catechesis, then, should always have the element of the "present," or better still, inculturated catechesis is the "present tense of catechesis" in the sense that it is an expression of the faith at this very moment. Far from being a subjective articulation of the Faith, it is a kind of a Gospel

proclamation that enlightens the identity and values of Filipinos, but at the same time, takes cognizance of his actual cultural environment. In fact, inculturation never actually stops as it is a lifetime endeavor. After all, inculturation is not syncretism or the fusion of a foreign belief system and an indigenous culture, but "the presentation and re-expression of the Gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture. This process results in the reinterpretation of both, without being unfaithful to either."[27]

Objectives of Dialogic Integration

Dialogic integration, as a newly coined phrase in this study, is a modest attempt to bring catechetical integration to another level as inspired by FABC vision of inculturation. If it has to be a legitimate pedagogy, it must have certain goals that must be fulfilled in order to measure its progress. Dialogic integration, then, has five fundamental objectives that underlie its operational standard. The list includes the following goals:

1. **To discern the "signs of the times" that are carefully guided by ecclesial antecedents.** Looking at the "signs of the times" on the pastoral–theological–missiological level, one must give an assessment of faith that includes the following: 1) the Word of God; 2) Christian faith and Tradition; 3) the *sensus fidei* of the believing community; 4) the specific guidance of the hierarchical Magisterium; 5) the reality of sin (personal and social) within the world; 6) the centrality of the person of Christ; and 7) the role

27 Aylward Shorter, "Inculturation of African Traditional Religious Values in Christianity," http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/shorter.htm (accessed on April 15, 2020).

of the Holy Spirit.[28] Dialogic integration considers the "signs of the times," not as mere environmental survey of circumstances and happenings, but they should always be enlightened by God's Word, by the Church, by Christ and His Spirit. In other words, the element of faith is always part of the process of discernment for it is the one that gives meaning and direction to any human experience.

2. **To immerse itself to the level of the greater majority for the purpose of discovery and appreciation of the cultural thought, behavior and practices.** Dialogic integration is an exercise of mission that requires "delineating the local Philippine context because it turns out to be cross–cultural, confronting them with a multiplicity of contexts all at the same time."[29] Following the incarnational model, one must be able to capture the peculiarities of the Philippine culture that is replete with sub-cultures and be able to discern ways to genuinely include the Gospel. The multiple cultural contexts make up the collective experience of Filipinos here and abroad. Many times, in actual catechetical classes, it is the catechists who determine the "contexts of students" in their prepared lesson plans. Contexts in dialogic integration are drawn from students in real-time as they are the main stakeholders in the inculturating process. Oftentimes, catechetical outputs are pre-determined by the catechists and hardly make the catechized a part of how specific Christian truths and values should be expressed in a given

28 Cf. James Kroeger, "'Signs of the Times' Theological Method" (A one-page handout that he has given in his FABC Class on November 4, 2019). For a fuller appreciation of the article, kindly refer to the following: James Kroeger, "Always Alert to God's Signs: Exploring the Vision of *Evangelii Gaudium,*" in *Evangelii Gaudium: Voices of the Universal Church,* eds. Klaus Kramer and Klaus Vellguth (Freiburg: Verlag-Herder and Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2015): 85-96

29 Cf. E. Acoba, "A Locus for Doing Theologies" in *Doing Theology in the Philippines,* ed., John Suk (Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature Inc., 2005): 27.

time. Far from sacrificing the intrinsic value of a Christian teaching, dialogic integration deepens the meaning of the doctrine as it is now couched in something they can easily identify with.

3. **To take into account societal problems, issues or trends with the aim of allowing the Gospel to enlighten it and bring about a change of perspective or a conversion.** Catechetical instructions empower the catechized to draw some realizations or convictions that are geared towards personal conversion. Dialogic integration moves towards a change of heart, mindset or attitude based on the ongoing engagement of the Christian faith and culture(s). Without realigning of the self towards the Good News, catechetical sessions are bound to just be one of those secular disciplines in school or whatever the setting may be. The "spiritual enlightenment" that takes place comes from the Holy Spirit who makes the dialogue of Gospel and culture possible. "There is progress from the 'Seeds of the Word' already present in the hearer to the full mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Church must recognize the process of purification and enlightenment in which the Spirit of God opens the mind and heart of the hearer to the obedience of faith."[30] Jesus, the ultimate goal of catechesis, is ever-present because of His Spirit who brings everything to fruition. Any catechetical initiative, without a personal impact on its recipients, becomes inadequate. The catechists are expected to help the catechized draw a personal implication based on the teachings of the faith they have received.

4. **To contemplate and pinpoint the movement of God in the current events and situations of life.** A core theme in

30 Pontifical Council for the Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Manila: CBCP-CIRD, 1991): 70.

Filipino culture is the sense of connectedness, of being part of an intricate network of relationships that includes the visible and the invisible, the human and the spiritual. Their gods are distant and unreachable, unlike the Christian God who reveals himself to His people and is ever-present in Jesus.[31] Christianity answers their longings for a "god" who stays with them. The statues of Mary and the Saints, the celebrations of the Sacraments and other Christian symbols are living reminders of God's abiding presence. Christianity's seasonal celebrations (Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter), for instance, present to them a God who is one with them and accompanies them through life, especially when they need them most. His Word inspires, enlightens and directs them in every situation of life — good or bad. With the postmodern way of life that is complicated and with less time for silence and reflection, most Filipinos need to be guided in order for them to see the hand of God working in their midst. Although they have that deep sense of God, they must be constantly led to Him.

5. **To propose a course of action that takes the faith as the focal point that gives meaning to personal and communal affairs.** For Filipino Catholics, it should be clear that following Jesus means making His teachings, commandments and sacraments operative in their daily lives. All activities and circumstances must be seen in the context of their relationship to Christ. It is faith in Jesus that, among others, strengthens, encourages, forgives, justifies, and corrects His believers. Everything must be done in the context of that faith. Thus, every single event

31 Cf. Melba Magay, "Towards Contextualization from Within: Some Tools and Culture Themes, in *Doing Theology in the Philippines,* (Manila: OMF Literature Inc. and Asian Theological Seminary, 2005): 46-48.

can become a faith-experience. Furthermore, this exercise of faith is not merely personal. It has a communitarian dimension. In fact, growth in faith takes place within the context of the ecclesial community. One's relationship with others in the community is a confirmation of how a believer develops in his faith in Jesus. Faith, then, should be a factor in dialogic integration as it implies the growth of the person, not only in a catechetical way, but more importantly, in the demands of Christian discipleship.

Derived Pedagogical Principles for Catechesis

This study does not claim that these principles are entirely new but rather, a modest enhancement of what has been previously crafted; an articulation of what has been unspoken; or a second look at certain ideas that should have been emphasized. At the most, these pedagogical propositions are the necessary result of this research and could be very well translated into a catechetical pedagogy that may be helpful to catechetical instructions in the school, parish or community setting. The succeeding paragraphs enumerate the said pedagogical theories.

1. **FABC inculturation occasions a catechesis that shapes the local Church, rather than simply emphasizing a personal "mastery" of the faith as its end, which has often been the case.**

While evangelization brings the Good News of the Gospel to all who seek the life-giving message of faith in Jesus Christ, catechesis nourishes, forms and deepens the faith that one has received....[32] It suffices for the present to indicate here

32 Cf. Robert Barron, *Welcome Message at the Website of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,* October 2018, https://www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis (accessed on April 27, 2020).

the continued building up of the local Church as the focus of the task of evangelization today (in which catechesis as an intrinsic component), with dialogue as its essential mode through a more resolute, more creative and yet truly discerning and responsible inculturation (cf. FAPA I, 131). It should be emphasized that catechesis, as part of evangelization, is not an end in itself, but should always be seen with the context of building up the local Church. The students' efforts, for example, to understand and live their faith must be viewed as forming oneself in the faith for the local Church as it fulfills its evangelizing mission. "Catechesis aims to build up the Church and prepare people to live their faith responsibly and maturely."[33]

Catechetical materials must always emphasize not only the personal dimension of catechesis, but more importantly, the communal aspect which prepares its recipients for mission. Generally, people who go to school study well in order to graduate. After completing their studies, they look for jobs, start a family and eventually, build their houses. Catechism classes, when isolated from the sequence of evangelization – catechesis – church – mission, lose its purpose and do not capture the imagination of the catechized. It is like working hard for something without a purpose. A person, who enters a catechetical class, trains himself well in order to grow in the faith and becomes a useful member of the local Church that invites him to share in its mission. Catechesis is doubly significant when it is given and received with the higher goal in mind, that is, the strengthening and shaping of the local Church.

33 Ladislav Nemet, "Inculturation of Catechesis and Spirituality in the Documents of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines," 1-2, https://www.scribd.com/ (accessed on April 25, 2020).

2. **Inculturation in catechesis is more than the prepared "inculturated catechism" by experts in this field since it may lose its relevance after a certain period. It is rather a dialogue between the Gospel and the ever-changing nuances of contemporary lifestyle and the Filipino value system.**

In the documents of the CBCP, catechesis is seen from different perspectives, depending on the context and purpose. Educational catechesis refers to initiatives within the Philippine Church to make individuals believe that Jesus is the Son of God who gives them the chance to have a full life in Him, and thus by educating them, builds the Body of Christ. Another kind is doctrinal catechesis that deals mainly on the orthodoxy of content in union with the universal Church. The CBCP also talks about an inculturational approach that defines catechesis as a process by which Filipino values can be purified, permeated and strengthened by the Gospel and the Gospel values in turn are concretized and lived in Filipino values and patterns of actions.[34] Considering these three descriptions of catechesis in the Philippine setting, the inculturational approach clarifies that inculturation in catechesis is simply beyond a published inculturated catechism. Catechetical inculturation challenges the existing values and ways of doing things of Filipinos as individuals and as a nation.

Thus, there is a need to have a template for inculturated catechesis because it is the only way Filipinos would address the "foreignness" of the Christian faith and be able to convey it in a way that truly expresses their identity and values. Nemet opines that "the different approaches and ideas on catechesis present in the documents of CBCP lead us to the

34 Nemet, "Inculturation of Catechesis and Spirituality," 1-2.

conclusion that for the purpose of achieving an inculturated catechesis in the Philippines, no single definition of catechesis can be acceptable but serves as a model of an inculturated catechesis which must be created."[35] Furthermore, GDC declares, "Inculturation of Faith … means the penetration of the deepest strata of persons and peoples by the Gospel which touches them deeply, 'going to the very center and roots' of their cultures" (GDC 109). It is a never-ending dialogue to find ways to engage contemporary culture with its challenging issues and circumstances. Inculturation in catechesis, then, goes beyond publishing a book, discovering a formula or proposing a model for doing it.

3. **Catechetical integration not only includes Doctrine, Morals and Worship, but it is deepened and made complete by a commitment to Mission.**

   The dialogical aspect of inculturation gives rise to a pastoral dimension in catechesis which moves the catechized to participate in God's saving mission and rather than simply become "classroom disciples." One may argue that the moral dimension, inasmuch as it deals with one's relationship with others and the expectation to practice the derived virtues/values in daily life, is already the mission component. In actual practice, the moral dimensions can still be "head knowledge" since they are the necessary consequence of the doctrine and do not move the catechized to action. If the doctrinal dimension is "Jesus is Lord," then the moral part is "I should obey Him." The worship aspect is "If Jesus is Lord," then "I should worship Him." Still, the concrete action is part of the dynamics of the lesson. With this illustration of actual integration, the moral part is often associated only with skills and attitudes of the individual.

35 Nemet, "Inculturation of Catechesis and Spirituality," 3.

Where does mission come in? The key word is dialogue as E. Javier notes: "Dialogue is the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission because Christian mission is participation in the mission of God, and God's being and action is dialogical. Mission reflects concrete acts."[36] In other words, mission implies a specific pastoral context and method that is not identical with the moral demand that was formulated in the classroom or session hall. If it is to be catechetical inculturation, which presumes a dialogical interaction, then it has to occur between individuals and not be simply relegated to textbook abstraction. Mission is intrinsically the necessary consequence of catechetical abstractions in an educational setting. The movement, as it were, should be from doctrine, moral, and worship to the missionary component that ensures tangible and measurable actions are produced, regardless of how modest they are, for the purpose of promoting the ecclesial community.

4. **The effectiveness of "inculturated catechesis" is not measured by periodic tests, but by performance-based, descriptive evaluation gleaned from how they give witness to the "inculturated faith" resulting from the dialogue between Gospel and culture.**

> In the Philippines, the bulk of catechetical instructions are done within the academic environment of government-run or private schools and of Catholic educational institutions. Oftentimes, students see catechesis as just one of their social science subjects. It is just one of those courses they have to study and receive a grade. Since the catechists are not part of the schools' faculty members who are equipped with updated classroom approaches, students somehow do not take them seriously. Catechists, with their usually

36 Edgar Javier, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2006), 168.

> kind demeanor, give the students the impression that they will always be considerate and helpful.

Catechesis, however, is a special subject because it does not only teach a specific religious content, but it also expects its recipients to act out what they have learned from its lessons. And ideally, by putting into practice their learning, they are gradually transformed and develop closeness to Jesus. Considering the intrinsic value of catechesis and its emphasis on practicing the faith in actual life, assessment through written examination may be misplaced as it would cater again to mere head-knowledge. Strictly speaking, then, faith knowledge and faith practice are the two areas that need assessment. If the evaluation of learning is performance-based, the former is presumed in the latter.

Assessment in catechesis, a non-curricular subject,[37] does not need to follow the regular grading system because its impact on the person is not numerically quantifiable but can be progressively described. When you give eighty-eight or ninety-eight to a person in a catechism class, the said number only takes into account the person's textbook knowledge of the subject. Catechesis expects to see some impact on how its recipients live their lives. The performance-based "grade" is a narrative description of the catechized performance in class and how he relates with his classmates and teachers in school as well as his family at home. Catechists of a parish or diocese can have a one-page, common grading form where there are

37 Students can graduate even without going to a single catechism class, especially in government or non-sectarian schools. In fact, non-Catholics are free to leave the classroom if they are not comfortable during catechetical instructions. Sometimes, principals or administrators, who are Born-Again Christians, do not allow catechists to do catechesis in their schools. Others, however, are inclined to give the catechists the most "unholy" hour of the day when the students are already tired or feel sleepy.

spaces allotted for the description of the catechist, teacher-class adviser and the parent or guardian of the catechized. Whenever a grading period ends, this one-page document that keeps track of the students' conduct is issued.

At the end of the year, there is a four-page narrative that records their progress in knowledge and practice of the faith. It will also reveal the strength of the catechetical program as well as its impact on the lives of students. If the grade is a mere number, it may just be taken as one of the grades they receive in school. It must be admitted that this will require extra work on the part of the catechists, but this a small sacrifice to make for the sake of making catechetical instructions significant and relevant in the school or parish setting. It is high time to push a little bit more in the catechetical apostolate, especially as Filipinos celebrate the fifth centenary of the arrival of the Christian faith in the Philippines. It is a great opportunity to once again revitalize the faith by proposing new ways of expressing it in these fast-changing ways of living and its accompanying circumstances.

Implications for Philippine Catechesis

Having established the objectives of dialogic integration, the proposed method for doing inculturated catechesis based on the FABC thought on inculturation, and having laid down the derived pedagogical principles in the light of said document, this next section carefully projects their implications for catechesis. Definitely, there are a number of things that must be secured. One significant assertion of this study is the fact that inculturation can be used as a method of teaching in a school setting. Presuming that this contention is sound, those involved in the catechetical apostolate have to step up and rise to the challenge. This would mean some adjustments

in the administration, structure, formation and resources of the catechetical apostolate.

Training of Catechists

In the Philippine setting, even if there is a ready-made national training program for catechists, a good number of catechetical centers find it difficult to fulfill them. This is due mainly to financial constraints, lack of competent catechetical trainers or the absence of a catechetical structure that would make possible the formation of catechists. Unfortunately, many bishops assign newly ordained priests or deacons to handle the catechetical ministry in their dioceses. Since they do not have the proper training and experience, the formation of catechists, the production of catechetical materials, and the organization of activities suffer. Many times, one cannot also blame the bishops since they also lack the manpower to fill up all the positions in the diocese. They are forced to assign priests and deacons — sometimes lay persons — to different ministries without the necessary preparation.

Given these perennial problems in the training of catechists, the National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines insists on following the standard training program for aspiring catechists. Thus, the basic catechists' formation program in the Philippines is composed of the following: "1) solid training in doctrine, morals and prayer-worship, based on Scripture and Church teaching; 2) a deeper initiation into a sound Christian philosophy and psychology of the person; 3) educational and leadership skills and techniques; and more importantly, a serious formation in prayer and Christian spirituality" (MCF-NCDP 488). These are the primary elements of the program. Catechetical centers are given the

freehand to add other subjects or activities that may be necessary in their respective localities.

Among the other topics that need to be introduced is a study of the FABC documents, particularly the themes on local Church, mission and evangelization, inculturation, interreligious dialogue and integral human development. As the FABC provides a great overview of the Asian context, the catechists would profit immensely from its insights on the family and the many factors affecting society like poverty, development, peace, injustice, conflict, ecological concerns, youth, and exploitation of women and children. All these topics need to be discussed for a more focused catechetical instruction. If possible, the training of catechists should be held within or near the area of their actual apostolate for a greater grasp of context. Moreover, if catechists have to be adept or at least, well prepared to do inculturated catechesis, they have to be familiar as much as possible with anything that surrounds the life of Filipinos. Being Filipinos themselves is an advantage, but it is not enough since beliefs, attitudes, and circumstances can easily be coated with foreign influences. Considering the fact that the average age of most catechists in the Philippines is between 45-50, there is already a wide age gap between them and their audience who are not even half their age.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the FABC itself has come up with principles and attitudes that are important for designing the training program of catechists. These guidelines include 1) a profound understanding of the respective roles of the clergy and laity in the mission of the Church; 2) the training of catechists should be done locally; 3) not a formation for individuals, but for small groups; 4) refrain from creating "clerical" lay leaders or "mini-priests;" 5) involvement of the

laity in creating training programs for catechists; 6) lectures are not effective means to inculcate new values and attitudes that will enable the would-be catechists to do things, to share, and to create; 7) the collaboration of the parish priest, religious and trainer-catechist are very crucial; 8) prayer, the bible, and the liturgy are presented as sources while methods of Gospel-sharing must be propagated; 9) the mission of the Church moves outwardly to the world and society; 10) the formation of catechists must emphasize personal spirituality and social accountability; 11) the training should give the laity a chance to serve and share with the community what God has blessed them with" (cf. FAPA I, 236).

Over and above these insights, the training of catechists should make them more confident by equipping them also with a sound knowledge of current educational methods and classroom management standards. Knowledge of these things will empower them to confidently use other methods in classroom sessions. It would be easy for them to lose heart if they are not properly acquainted with the things they are to expect in their place of teaching. The more they are equipped with knowledge and skills, the more they become self-assured to facilitate sessions with their students.

Reorientation of the Catechetical Syllabus

Only very few dioceses can produce their own catechetical materials. Some adopt a particular catechetical material taken somewhere else as their basic reference when they do catechesis. Others rely on other dioceses for their references as they catechized the children and young people in academic settings. In the Bicol region, for instance, most of the dioceses use the catechetical syllabus made by the Caceres Catechetical Center for elementary and high school students. Aside from

this, catechists tend to use the same lesson plans for a long time and use the same method they were taught during their training. Introducing a "new" catechetical strategy would entail a lot of effort to orient them about it. This will mean taking them out of something they are very familiar with and bringing them into something they need to devote more time in order to learn and to embrace it as their own. Since it is a method, they need to practice it over and over again to gain a certain level of skill. By doing so, they continue to discover the richness of the living Word of God and the variety of ways it can be proclaimed. There is only one Christianity, but there are hundreds of specific cultures that this universal religion may find itself engaging. Teaching materials may be able to address particular catechetical needs for a time, but in the long run, they have to be adjusted according to the existing catechetical context.

Using the dialogical integration method, three areas need attention in making an updated syllabus, namely, focus, elements and content. First, the focus should shift from integration of doctrine, moral worship that the catechist determines (usually before coming to the classroom) to dialogic integration that allows the students to participate in the formulation of faith lessons, identification of values and challenge to mission. The method of inculturation as dialogue is not so complicated on paper but becomes unnecessarily unsettling when implemented. There may be objections to the capability of catechists to handle such catechetical sessions. Would catechists be able to handle a free-flowing discussion-dialogue in a given class without being rattled by unexpected questions and issues? Would they be able to consistently maintain the primacy of the Gospel message as it actively engages the cultural elements during catechetical sessions? Ultimately, this shift of focus in the conduct of

instructions would require some level of experience and skill on the part of the catechists.

The second shift deals with the structure of catechetical lesson plans. In the Philippines, it generally uses the following template: opening/overview of the topic, lesson objectives, the needed materials (in some cases), context/activity, reading of the Gospel, Christian message or teachings, integration/ synthesis, challenge/assignment and finally, a celebration (usually a prayer or song). Catechists use this kind of lesson development for so long that they know these things like the back of their hands. In using *dialogic integration,* certain elements may change in favor of putting more emphasis on student activity and participation. Without sacrificing the integrity of the faith that purifies and raises the level of the cultural elements, focusing on dialogue would bring about structural changes in the conduct of the lesson. Determining the constituent components of the lesson would depend so much on the principles of dialogic integration described in the previous section. The design of the new lesson plan should provide opportunities for "a free, responsible faith-decisions of people who are converting to the Lord. No one, no matter how skilled or competent he/she may be, can make decisions for others."[38]

Finally, the third shift lies in the content of catechesis. What is crucial in *dialogic integrati*on is the fact that the Christian message must not be lost as it opens itself in dialogue with the not-so-structured, uncharted cultural territory. Catechists may be a bit familiar with the time-tested Filipino values but may find it unsettling to deal with the nuances and complexity of contemporary Filipino culture. Another projected difficulty is how are they going to relate

38 Cf. Gerald Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospels: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 195.

or apply the Gospel message to post-modern realities so that a genuine Christian expression may come to the fore. It is, however, too early to speculate on these things that can be partly solved by actually drawing an actual lesson plan for dialogic integration with all its components — a topic that will not be determined in this particular study. At this point, it is enough to say that catechesis and inculturation complement each other. "On the one hand, as catechesis intends to make people active in the Christian faith in actual daily life and initiates to convey the Good News to different cultures, it comes as something bigger than inculturation. On the other hand, when it comes to inserting the Gospel into cultures and gradually transforming them, catechesis now becomes a tool for inculturation."[39]

Diocesan Catechetical Ministries

This endeavor of introducing a new catechetical strategy called "dialogic integration" means that diocesan catechetical ministries have to reorient their focus and direction in a way that primarily involves their monetary resources, personnel training, and catechetical materials.

First, most diocesan catechetical ministries have meager sources of income that would allow the sustainability of their operations. Most priest-directors or ministers have to raise funds if they plan to work on an activity or a program. Hardly any bishop gives subsidy to the catechetical ministry. However, in some dioceses in Metro Manila, aside from the subsidy they get from the diocesan curia, they are able to provide just remuneration to their catechists. They can surely sustain whatever is required for their catechists to have a good grasp of the enhanced pedagogical approach.

39 Cf. Anthony, *Ecclesial Praxis of Inculturation,* 166.

Second, the catechetical ministries may feel the overwhelming pressure of gathering their catechists for training at designated periods. In the actual field, many volunteer catechists find it hard to go to the assigned formation venues. In the provinces, catechists rely on their parishes for transportation expenses, which sometimes the parish priest could not provide. These are trivial considerations but they get in the way whenever they are asked to attend training sessions. Some can hardly concentrate on what they are studying since they have to think of their families' needs at home. On the training of personnel alone, the catechetical ministries have to plan in a manner that would make the catechists acquire the pedagogical skill within a limited amount of time.

Third, the revision of catechetical materials is another task that requires an enormous effort. Today, the normal lesson plan consists of an Introduction, Context, Reading of the Word of God, Exposition of the Christian Message, Synthesis and Challenge. With the new method, if ever it will be implemented, this usual process of the lesson will be significantly altered — the underlying factors will be that of dialogue and integration (DMW) that will now include the element of mission as an indispensable component. Indeed, there are numerous things to be considered by the catechetical ministries if some form of renewal in catechesis has to be accomplished.

Moreover, presenting a new strategy for inculturated catechesis entails a serious commitment on the part of the catechetical "authorities" in the different dioceses. If there has to be a pedagogical renewal, there must also be a renewal of attitude towards catechesis in the diocese — that it is not optional and insignificant but a serious duty on the part of bishops and priests (cf. CCL 773-780) who should be

the prime movers of all catechetical initiatives in the local churches. Learning to use inculturation as a tool for classroom instruction is certainly labor intensive, but it enhances the experience of Christian life in the different faith communities. Strictly speaking, inculturation cannot be imposed from the outside since it is the lived-experience of a people in a specific time and space. The role of catechetical authorities or experts is to guide the process, but they can never enforce their own biases in the community. The role of theologians and those engaged in pastoral ministry, particularly the catechists, is to provide avenues for the encounter between Gospel and culture. Venues, equipment, consultation with the experts, and updating of formation programs are some possible assistance that pastoral workers or catechist-leaders can provide so that community discernment for the purposes of inculturation can take place. Indeed, the best starting point for inculturation is the lived experience of the community in the diocese.

Conclusion

In this study, a good amount of the author's experiences in actual catechetical work came into play. First-hand experience of what was happening on the ground seemed an advantage as insights from references pertaining to this research came pouring in. Nonetheless, the author accepts that his experiences were somehow subjective and not the standard that must be utilized. The work of the Holy Spirit in catechesis was so pronounced that there was a wide range of stirrings that He initiated and sustained. This research opened up many insights that led to the following three overarching realizations.

1. **Every catechetical method must achieve a balance between human experience and content.**

> "Every adequate catechetical methodology must be grounded explicitly on three bases — Scripture, Tradition, and Human Experience" (NNCDP, 344, 359; 367). This is one of the directives of the national directory that should guide catechetical pedagogy. However, due to an exaggerated preoccupation to make catechesis appealing and relevant to its recipients, the pendulum has often gravitated toward experience rather than Scripture and Church teaching. Certainly, experience is essential in catechesis as "It arouses in man, interests, questions, hopes, anxieties, reflections and judgments which all converge to form a certain desire to transform his existence" (GDC 152). Caution, however, must be exercised since the effort to provide a catechesis that reflects the religious and cultural milieu may produce Christians who are less acquainted with the substance and profundity of Catholic teachings.

The challenge of evangelization to find new ways of expressing the faith is proof enough that methods are taking the edge while the content is presumed. Unlike the *Doctrina Christiana,* the Baltimore Catechism, and other catechisms where content is emphasized, today's drive to present the faith in a way that appeals to the complexity of postmodern life is rather understandable. Faith is not a commodity, but it has to be packaged in a way that captures the imagination of those who will embrace it. Many competing voices plague the mind of an individual groping to survive in a not-so-friendly society. The advantage of faith is that it offers life-changing truths of divine revelation that enable believers to stand on solid ground and navigate their way to the higher kind of life – a life that puts into the proper perspective the harsh realities of life. This is the reality of faith, but the problem of "presentation" remains the same in overlapping contexts.

Many times, catechesis is reduced to an interpretation of experience. Generally, in the mind of most catechists, it is the context that determines the presentation of the catechetical lessons. Their first concern in preparing lesson plans are the stories, situations, or activities that would capture their listeners' attention. Many times, the integrity of the content is not well-discussed, and the students remember more the "context" rather than the message. The students are over-exposed to social media; visuals and colorful illustrations get their attention right away. Indeed, if Christian truths and values are presented in a dry, outdated fashion, catechists would be treading the path of irrelevance. The failure to communicate "content" is also a failure to communicate that God has revealed certain truths that are necessary for humanity's life in the world.

In conclusion, it is very important to create a balance between maintaining the orthodoxy of the doctrine and the manner it is presented to its hearers. Inculturation as dialogue with cultures has a greater chance of attaining this objective because in this process, the Gospel message takes precedence over cultural antecedents while respecting their intrinsic value and purifying their excesses.

2. **An inculturated catechesis goes beyond an "inculturated" catechism.**

> According to Michael Amaladoss, "A genuine process of inculturation needs to give heed to the voice of the people. It needs to consider the sense of the people of God."[40] The different sections of CFC (or any written catechism), for instance, with its priceless contribution and value to Philippine catechesis, have been written by several authors and put together in one coherent whole

40 Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New: Dialogue, Pluralism & Evangelization in Asia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990): 128.

> by a general editor. Is it an *inculturated catechism*?[41] Yes, in a limited sense. It is inculturated in the sense that its various authors, commissioned by the Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education (ECCCE), have projected a Philippine culture based on their perception of it and inserted the Christian message. However, it does not directly come from the community or the recipients. Strictly speaking, "Inculturation is not first and foremost the work of experts, particularly, 'outside' experts, but instead the work of ordinary people, the subjects of local social and cultural contexts."[42] This study asserts that inculturation may be used as a method in catechetical instruction, wherein the religious education teacher or the catechist facilitates the process of Gospel–culture dialogue.

In this context, the role of catechetical authorities is indispensable as they determine, with their extensive knowledge on inculturation, the parameters, principles, and objectives of inculturating process. This also includes the various elements that make up a real-time inculturated catechesis with an actual audience. The process requires a lot of technical knowledge and skill from the catechists. Nevertheless, catechists, or any faith-educator for that matter, will eventually gain familiarity with the process called "inculturated catechesis."

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41 The CCC is the universal catechism but it is not an "inculturated catechism." CCC does not claim "to provide the adaptation of doctrinal presentations and catechetical methods required by the difference of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition among all those to whom it is addressed. Such indispensable adaptations are the responsibility of particular catechisms" (CCC, Prologue, Section VI, 24).

42 Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, "Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today," in *Religious Studies Revie*w, 38:1 (March 2012): 10-12. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1748-0922.2011.01574_2.x (accessed on March 4, 2020).

3. **Dialogue is an indispensable element of any contemporary catechetical pedagogy.**

Dialogue is essential in a multi-layered local culture with multiple influences of thought and lifestyle. There is no way the Christian faith can force its way through the different cultural realities and impose its categories. The way God reveals His truths or the "divine pedagogy" is never done in haste. It is a series of interactions that ultimately leads his creatures back to Him. God's pedagogy is the template for any catechetical pedagogy, according to the General Directory for Catechesis: "Catechesis as communication of divine Revelation is radically inspired by the pedagogy of God, as displayed in Christ and in the Church" (GDC 143). God did not force Himself on his creatures, although He could very well impose the process. For its part, the CCC states that

> The divine plan of Revelation… involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates Himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ (CCC 53).
>
> Jesus, the fullness of revelation, is the center and focus of catechesis.

God's self-communication is not a one-way street but a two-way exchange with His creatures. It is the epitome of dialogue that unfolds in the entire salvation history. This dialogue of all dialogues is meant to be the pattern of communication or proclamation of God's truths, whether evangelization, theology, or catechesis. Every Gospel presentation involves a dialogue that happens in a specific context characterized by diversity and pluralism.

McBrien explains:

> On the one hand, as long as the peculiarly human circumstances where no one has seen God directly, teaching the faith will be defined in a groping, tentative, provisional and halting manner. In this scenario, articulated perceptions, convictions, formulated beliefs, and varying theologies must be trusted as far as possible. On the other hand, there may be differences in the way people express their perceptions of God but everybody is one in the conviction that the God of their theology and of their belief is a real, living God.[43]

Doing a dialogue in view of teaching the faith may not be as easy as it seems, but the common recognition of the one true God may serve as a good starting point. Thus, the dialogical engagement with culture might be intricate and complex but it should move towards the acknowledgment of God as its ultimate end. Every time the dialogical process unfolds, the understanding of the Christian faith advances, the dignity of culture is raised and purified, and God is better known and glorified.

How exactly can this dialogue be carried out in an actual catechetical session? In the first place, out of God's goodness and love, He initiates the dialogue of salvation that must be replicated in the dialogue with people (cf. ES 72-73; GDC 140). Dialogue, in a typical catechetical session, may be classified as one of those strategies in classroom discussion. It invites everyone to be involved and open to a "dialogue of salvation" as if God is directly interacting with the class. Taking inspiration from GDC 150-151, a group of religious educators envisioned how dialogue might look in a classroom setting in the following manner:

> During formal catechesis, dialogue can take many forms and can be used with a large group, small groups,

43 Cf. McBrien, *Faith, Theology and Belief*, 136-137.

> or one-on-one. It can be woven into panel discussions, agree-disagree discussions (physically move to a position on a continuum line), brainstorming, and case studies or current events articles followed by discussion. A skillful catechist can incorporate inductive and deductive reasoning, proclamation of the catechetical message, and the personal experience of the learners.[44]

This is a testament that there can be a lot of creative and intelligent ways in which dialogue can be operationalized in a classroom atmosphere. The fact that dialogue can take place in a classroom further bolsters the method of dialogic integration proposed by this particular study. Indeed, inculturation can be used as a teaching method in catechesis. The concrete model, however, that illustrates the detailed template of the lesson, including all the elements that must be in the lesson, is no longer part of the scope of this research.

44 Suzanne Nelson, Mary Beaudoin, and Rob Maro, Five Core Methodologies for Catechesis in *New Theology Review* (February 2010): 71, https://cathdal.org/5_Methodologies_of_Catechesis.pdf (accessed on March 17, 2020).

Shepherding The Migrant Filipinos: Recounting Radio Veritas Asia's Filipino Service Operation (1990-2018)

Kenneth Z. Vergara

Introduction

Radio Veritas Asia (RVA) is an international non-profit broadcasting media owned and founded by the Association of Asian Catholic Churches in 1969. On its 50th anniversary in 2019, Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle articulated that RVA "had the goals of spreading the truth, driving away illiteracy, and directing the minds of Asian peoples to the true values and meaning of life."[1] Plainly spoken, RVA's main goal is to nurture Christianity in Asia. The soil of Asian culture is different from that of the West, making it hard for the seeds of Christianity to flower, let alone be planted. From this advocacy of the Asian Catholic leaders came a vision that materialized into a continental radio station that is currently overseen by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). Radio Veritas Asia is one of FABC's prevailing milestones in its aspirations of fostering Asian Catholicism. In its mission of Asian evangelism, RVA historically reached out as well to Filipinos, both in the diaspora and in Catholic Philippines.

1 University of Santo Tomas, "Radio Veritas celebrates 50 years of Establishment; Apostolic Nuncio leads Thanksgiving Mass at UST," *University of Santo Tomas,* http://www.ust.edu.ph/radio-veritas-celebrates-50-years-of-establishment-apostolic -nuncio-leads-thanksgiving-mass-at-ust/ (Accessed on March 12, 2021).

Conversion and growth have been vibrant themes in the long history of Christianity in Asia. As far back as the 16th century, fleets with hoisted European flags sailed through the culturally mosaic continent of Asia in its mission of making Christianity known to the other side of the world. From the countless stories of subtle evangelism through secretly sent missionaries up to the outright use of colonialism, it was a mission challenging to fulfill. Nevertheless, moving forward to the 20th century, the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, long envisioned a continental radio station for Asia, an instrument that he believed could penetrate Asia with the dawning of a new industrial revolution.

For a significant period, the Asians were unyielding in accepting Christianity, as in the case of the tiger countries of East Asia. For instance, the Korean Peninsula secluded itself from the 1850s until 1876 to reject the influx of Christianity.[2] One nation, however, welcomed the precepts of Catholicism *en masse*, the Filipinos. The case of the Philippines was different compared to its Asian neighbors. The Spanish imperial fleet's docking in the Philippines not only signified the beginning of the nation's Hispanization under the spheres of colonialism but, along with it, the birth of Christianity.

In the 16th century, the Spanish missionaries saw the opportunity to evangelize the Philippines as their stratified political compositions were tolerant of cultural exchanges. The growth of Catholicism gradually progressed through a period of conversion through the efforts of the religious

2 Young Ick Lew and The Korea Society, *Brief History of Korea: A Bird's Eye View* (New York: The Korea Society, 2000), 18.

orders sent to the Philippines.[3] As described by Ambrose Coleman, "The religious orders planted themselves firmly in the colony, and spread themselves everywhere, winning the natives to Christ, keeping them also in loyal obedience to that great European power by whose means the missionaries had been sent to them."[4] According to James Robertson, the efforts of the religious congregations' mission of conversion were able to create a devout Catholic nation in just over the next century:

It is approximately correct to say that since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the predominant religion of the Philippine Islands (always keeping in mind the Mohammedanism of the Moros of the south and the paganism of the wild peoples) has been the Roman Catholic.[5]

The foundations of Catholicism in the Philippines prevail as exemplary though not indefectible. In Asia, a 1970's publication by the New York Times came up with data that only 2.5% of the Asian population profess the Catholic Faith, 2/3 of which are Filipinos, with a considerable portion of nominal Catholics.[6] In the 1960s, the western world opened a chapter characterized by modernism and liberalism, all of which no

3 The Catholic Church under the Spanish government was not directly under the supervision of the Pope at the time because of the Patronato Real, an agreement giving the Spanish monarchy direct control over the Hispanic Catholic Churches. In exchange for the conversion of the pagans, Spain was given the discretion to act and proselytize without consulting the Holy See. Ramon Stephen B. Aguilos, "Church Realities in the Philippines: 1900-1965," https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/233617.pdf (Accessed on March 12, 2021).

4 Ambrose Coleman O.P., *Friars in the Philippines* (Boston: Marlier, Callanan & Co., 1899), 13.

5 James Alexander Robertson, "Catholicism in the Philippine Islands," *The Catholic Historical Review* 3, no. 4 (1918): 382, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25011532 (Accessed March 12, 2021).

6 Edward B. Fiske, "Catholicism in Asia: Impact Modest," New York Times, Nov. 27, 1970. Accessed on March 12, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/1970/11/27/archives/catholicism-in-asia-impact-modest-catholicism-in -asia-mostly-a.html.

longer fashioned European Christianity. Christianity's once shared power and influence in Europe, the *Fons et Origo* of Asian Christianity, began to decrease drastically.[7]

One of the primary reasons the Church found it necessary to create a continental radio station was the advancement of Asian communism that forbade Christianity to propagate. On this account, Gregoire Pierre Cardinal Agagaianian, the Pro-Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, was sent to the Philippines by Pope Pius XII during the Christmas month of 1958 to preside over the *Conventus Episcoporum Asiae Austro-orientalis* and to address the missionary needs of Asia. The convention of Asian Bishops at the University of Santo Tomas resolved to address the communist threat as attested to in this account:

> To remedy the restrictions on the Word of God and the Church by Communism, they resolved to establish a radio to nourish the Catholics in China, Vietnam, and Korea. The airwaves crossed the boundaries and ministered to the people affected by Communism.[8]

The bishops' desire was to reach out to the whole of Asia by creating a radio station that serves as a "forum for the people of Asian countries to learn from one another's achievements and failures."[9] The radio station was to serve as a center of information, having the capacity to communicate in the different languages of Asia. The establishment of the radio station was crucial for Catholic Philippines as well, especially for those in the diaspora. Hence, the Filipino Service Operation (FSO)

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7 Michael J. Walsh, "The Religious Crisis of the 1960s," *The Catholic Historical Review,* vol. 96, no. 1 (2010): 87, Accessed on March 21, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.0.0611.

8 Claretian Missionaries, "Radio Veritas on its 50th Anniversary," *Claret,* https://www.claret.org /radio-veritas-on-its-50th-anniversary/ (Accessed on July 13, 2022).

9 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia" (Profile, Radio Veritas Asia), 1.

was established within RVA to address the needs of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

This article will trace the formation of Radio Veritas Asia and how this ultimately led to the creation of the Filipino Service Operation. The researcher used primary and secondary sources, including profile reports, organizational research, newspapers, books, credible websites, and oral history, to support the research.

The Formation of Radio Veritas Asia

The Asian Bishops agreed to build and establish the radio station in the Philippines. Apart from being the bastion of Asian Christianity, the country's political climate and geographical location were the fundamental reasons for the choice. The Philippines was a democratic state with respect for religious freedom, and it allowed the establishment of privately-owned radio stations. Since the country is also located centrally in Southeast Asia, Manila was a practical choice.[10]

To actualize the vision, Rufino J. Cardinal Santos led the Asian Bishops to ensure that the envisioned radio station would not remain a dream. As described in a monograph, "The dream posed a big problem considering that the vast project of putting up a radio station is not an easy one."[11] Of the various mass communication platforms available, the bishops had chosen radio as the primary medium of evangelism. Radio was most practical because the development process was less demanding compared to, for example, printed materials.

10 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia: A Historical Perspective" (Research, Radio Veritas Asia Programme Research), 1.

11 Philippine Radio Educational and Information Center, "Radio Veritas: The Station of the Church in the Far East and Southeast Asia," 4.

Also, radio was more convenient for consumers because the platform required simple listening.[12]

Nevertheless, the establishment of the radio station was made possible by bringing together people from different walks of life. Throughout the station's formation were difficulties, from financial challenges to the enduring process of arranging the legal requirements up to the difficult task of building construction and equipment installation. Nevertheless, the station managed to bring its mission to Asia by creating a more extensive network of collaborators committed deeply to the mission of evangelization who were equipped with proficient capabilities.

A Salesian priest, Father Johannes Rauh SDB, formerly a mission procurator for the project, conceived the radio station's name.[13] According to a monograph, when Cardinal Santos asked Father Rauh about a possible name for the station, Rauh replied:

> We all agree that the purpose of this Christian radio station is to preach the truth, bear witness to the truth, and spread a message of truth to all people of goodwill. Would the Latin word *Veritas* (truth) not be an excellent name for the Asian station?[14]

From then on, the name *Radio Veritas* (RV)[15] hovered over Asia as an embodiment of contemporary Christian evange-

12 John A. Lent, "Philippine Radio — History and Problems," https://www.asj.upd.edu.ph /mediabox/archive/ASJ-06-01-1968/lent-philippine-radio-history-problems.pdf (Accessed on June 7, 2021), 44-45.

13 Nestor C. Impelido, *Salesians in the Philippines: Establishment and Development from Delegation to Province, 1951-1963* (Makati: Don Bosco Press, 2007), 117.

14 Remo Bati SDB, *Passing on his Brilliance: Salesian Pioneers in the Philippines,* 1951-1963 (Self-pub., Don Bosco Technical Institution), 213.

15 It was only in 1977 when the station officially assumed the name Radio Veritas Asia. For historical accuracy, parts of this paper discussing the radio station from 1969 to 1976 will address the station as Radio Veritas (RV).

lism. During the inauguration of RV on April 11, 1969, the station broadcasted Pope Paul VI's special message: "That with God's help, the Bishops of Southeast Asia will bring this immensely significant enterprise to full achievement, aided by the unselfish contribution of Clergy and People which we earnestly solicit."[16] The message of the Holy Father summarized the narrative of how RV was built, not only by God's providence but by the hard work of the founders. Unfortunately, RV had to close its overseas operation in 1973 when one of its broken radio transmitters remained unrepaired due to budget constraints[17] A new committee of pastoral leaders was then formed to lead RV in rebuilding the station with a more vital backbone.

In its first establishment, only a few Asian countries were represented, which were also experiencing financial constraints. At the time, RV's management, also known as the Philippine Radio Educational and Information Center (PREIC), was composed of seven Bishops from the Philippines who worked with three non-Filipino bishops from Colombo, Thailand, and Hong Kong, representing the other Asian churches from the central, far east, and southeast.[18] This stood out as one of the dilemmas that weakened the oversight of RV. If RV should return strong with a well-backed vision for the Asian region, it should be supported by an expanded representation of the Asian Churches.

In 1974, a redrafted budget, presented by Fr. Hugo Delbaere CICM and Fr. Jean Desautels SJ, was sent to the Asian churches in the south, far east, and the southeast along

16 "25 Years of Radio Veritas' Activities," *L'Osservatore Romano,* 32-33.

17 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia," 9.

18 Philippine Radio Educational and Information Center, "Radio Veritas: The Station of the Church in the Far East and Southeast Asia," 2.

with a uniform, comprehensive questionnaire as attested to in the following account:

> Early in July, Fr. Desautels sent a questionnaire concerning Radio Veritas Overseas Services to 14 countries in Asia, to Archbishops, Bishops, and other knowledgeable people. Mr. Caesar D'Mello, a Mass Communication graduate of the Ateneo de Manila helped in formulating this questionnaire and further continued to help with the tabulation of the answers.[19]

The questionnaire was created to assess the local churches' level of commitment to the station's restoration. The Asian Bishops were reportedly enthusiastic and confident about their responsibility in funding and active participation in the RV restoration. Three major summits were then held in 1974 with the participation of delegates from Bangkok, Colombo, and Tokyo to discuss commonly agreed regulations. Each of the major summits represented by three Asian blocs outlined formal arrangements that RV would adopt.

The three summits resolved some issues that previously limited RV from fulfilling its mission. The first was collaborative engagement. The concept of RV was initially proposed by the Holy See's Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and not directly by the Asian bishops themselves. There was a subtle concern regarding the level of commitment of the various Asian bishops to the project. The summit in Bangkok resolved the issue by way of a common agreement that RV should and will be a common project of the fraternal churches of Asia.[20]

Secondly, as Father Bernard Dasshi Tang expressed retrospectively, "It is not easy to develop a community with people from different cultures and classes and to deal with bishops,

19 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia," 11.
20 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia," 11.

priests, nuns, and laypeople from different traditions."[21] Asian representatives from South Asia concurred in a summit held in Colombo that in order to be understood and accepted by all Asians, a program policy should minimize cultural barriers and concentrate on what binds Asians together as Christians.[22]

The third significant restructuring agreement was forged in a summit held in Tokyo by the East Asian prelates.[23] While PREIC would still continue as the legal administrative body for RV, the responsibility of the overseas operation would now be fully assumed by the FABC and not just by a few Asian bishops. FABC's assumption of responsibility thereby made RV's projects and programs a collective mission of all the Asian Catholic Churches.

With the success of the three summits held in the different parts of Asia, a momentous occasion followed when in January of 1975, 23 Asian bishops met in the Philippines to discuss how RV could move forward. According to an account,

> This meeting marked the first time in the history of the station when the total concept of the Veritas Apostolate was examined in depth from every possible point of view. The policies and guidelines that evolved during this meeting have guided Radio Veritas to reach its present status and continue to inspire it.[24]

Radio Veritas was originally conceptualized to cater to the population of Asia, excluding the Filipino people, since the Philippines was already a Catholic country. However, it was

21 Bernard Dashssi Tang, interview by author, February 2022, Quezon City, Sent Via Email in author's possession.

22 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia: A Historical Perspective," 6.

23 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia: A Historical Perspective," 6.

24 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia," 11.

decided that a Filipino domestic service would also be established in compensation for the Filipino clergy who exerted considerable effort to create the station in the 1960s.[25] Though still under the office of Radio Veritas, the domestic service was called Radio Veritas Philippines (RVP). When the overseas operation closed in 1973, the Filipino domestic service continued its broadcasts, unaffected by the earlier breakdown of transmitters.

Following the re-establishment of Radio Veritas in 1974, representatives of the FABC and the CBCP met to discuss their respective duties concerning the operations of Radio Veritas, as mentioned in this account:

> … lest the past mistakes and errors which caused the sudden death of RVOverseas in 1973 be forgotten and repeated, the FABC and CBCP decided to enter into a formal agreement. It would, in terms acceptable to the law of the Philippines, present a structure under which the FABC and the CBCP could preserve the ownership and define their own individual authority and responsibility regarding the management and financing of their own respective operation as well as the joint administration and joint financing of the supportive common services and activities.[26]

It was agreed to separate the management and the station operations of the Filipino domestic service from the overseas service for practical reasons. The FABC would take full responsibility for the overseas operation, while the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) would be responsible for the domestic services of the station.[27] Despite

25 James B. Reuter S.J., "The CBCP owns Radio Veritas," *Philippine Journalism Review* (1991): 24.

26 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Agreement Between the FABC and the CBCP on Radio Veritas," 2.

27 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia: A Historical Perspective," 6.

their separation, PREIC would still act as the legal representative of RV for the FABC, and the RVP for the CBCP. The arrangement was to give the Asian Church and the Philippine Church a focused, proactive role in administering each of their assigned operations. Given the financial limitations of the stakeholders in both operations, the separation was intended for both CBCP and FABC to maximize their financial autonomy and responsibility in the functions they were assuming.

In 1977, RV rebranded its name and had since been called Radio Veritas Asia.[28] Later, a group of evaluators was consulted by RVA to assess the needed strategies for the continuous growth of the station. The group recommended that for RVA's growth to be well-coordinated, the institutions of RVA and RVP should merge again while maintaining separate managements under the FABC and CBCP, respectively.[29] RVA enacted this recommendation in 1982, merging once more RVP into RVA. However, RVP and RVA separated again in 1990 when RVP transitioned into a commercial radio station. In contrast, RVA remained a non-profit international broadcasting station. While RVP was now in-charge of evangelism in the Philippines domestically, RVA focused on the wider Asian community.

The Filipino Service Operation

One of the last joint projects by both RVP and RVA before the 1990 transition of RVP was the operation of the FSO. Technically, the Philippine Church was no longer a direct responsibility of RVA since RVP was already set in place for the Philippines. The main responsibility of RVA was to focus

28 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia," 14.

29 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Radio Veritas Asia: A Historical Perspective," 11.

its evangelism on Asia, excluding the Philippines. However, RVA faced a new challenge for the Philippine Church due to the situation of Filipino Catholics in the diaspora. Filipino overseas workers faced the problem of practicing their Catholic faith under the restrictive environment of some non-Christian countries.[30] This ultimately led to the creation of the Filipino Service Operation, an overseas broadcasting service under RVA with migrant Filipinos as the target audience. The operation opened on December 16, 1990.[31] The general and specific objectives of the FSO were as follows:

> General objectives: (1) to reach out and respond meaningfully to the unique needs inherent in the life situations of the migrant workers; (2) to serve as a link between the Middle East and the home country; (3) to sustain and deepen the Christian life of Filipino migrant workers; (4) to inculcate among Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) needed values which are essential in equipping migrant workers for life in foreign lands without their families, uprooted from their culture and faith.
>
> Specific objectives: (1) to give migrant workers the latest updates on developments in the Philippines; (2) to be able to help migrant workers to adapt to a foreign culture; (3) to help OFWs in imbibing a meaningful Christian witnessing in a foreign culture and a foreign faith milieu; (4) to be of assistance to migrant workers who are in a unique position of promoting Christian values, hence, reaffirming and strengthening the OFW's potential of being a missionary overseas.[32]

30 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "The Filipino Service: Reaching out to Filipinos in Diaspora" Program (Report, Radio Veritas Asia), 1.

31 Erlinda G. So & Manuel Bongayan SVD., "Memorandum of Agreement on Pilipino-English Service to the Middle East" (Memorandum of Agreement, January 15, 1991)

32 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Filipino Service: A Program Profile." (Profile Report, Radio Veritas Asia), 3.

These objectives translated into creating relevant radio programs that endeavored to support their Christian faith, keep them culturally rooted as Filipinos, and provide public services for those in need.

Unlike its other language services, RVA launched its FSO for the diasporic Filipinos in the Middle East with no specific allocated funds or studio. Budget allotments for the service were appropriated from the excess funds of the news section.[33] Moreover, RVA appealed for donations to support FSO's operations. With a limited budget purely dependent on excess funds and self-initiated donations, the staff already holding existing workloads in RVA were requested to assume responsibility for the operations of FSO. They were urged to treat their workload as an act of charity and were reminded not to expect additional compensation for their services to the FSO.[34]

After the conclusive separation of RVP and RVA, the workforce of FSO was all left to the care of RVA, reducing the talents that comprised the operation. RVA responded to the reduction by maximizing the resources that it had, as stipulated in a memorandum released by the management:

> Program hosts and producers are responsible for preparing programs for the broadcast; work entails research, scripting, voicing, and coordinating other production-related activities. The broadcast staff will simultaneously serve as the editorial or program committee, together with the OPM… Major decisions concerning programming shall also be collectively decided upon by the group. [35]

33 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "The Filipino Service: A Profile Update" (Profile Report Update 1991), 5.

34 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "The Filipino Service: A profile Update", 5.

35 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "The Filipino Service: A profile Update," 4.

RVA faced all these challenges not by fretting over its limited machinery but by partnering with other organizations. For example, RVA did not possess sufficient hard data that would provide information concerning the widely-distributed OFWs. The difference between FSO and the other Asian language services was that the latter had audiences placed in specific geographical locations. FSO's audience, the OFWs, was scattered across the vast region of Asia. Determining the target audience for marketing, demographic count, and viewership was a problem for FSO.[36] With a limited budget dependent on excess appropriations, RVA did not have the resources to commission a scientific survey to determine the listenership population of the diasporic Filipinos.

Instead of launching its own survey, RVA sought to partner with different non-profit organizations (NGOs) to gain access to their data, as expounded by Suzette Han:

> Despite the odds, the Filipino Service is still hoping that it could undertake some tie-up with an organized NGO that deals with migrants. It will continue to look for ways where the survey could be undertaken on a more massive scale. Further, this activity is hoped to be combined with a vigorous promotion campaign for the broadcast.[37]

RVA also partnered with government agencies such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to determine the number of OFWs in various countries.[38] Eventually, RVA built its audience profile by 2002 as feedback from Filipino migrants started arriving in RVA in the form of

36 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Plans and Recommendations for the Filipino Service Operations" (Recommendation Report, 17 November 2005), 2.

37 Suzette C. Han, "Filipino Service December 16, 1990: 19 Years in Service," 1-2.

38 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Filipino Service: A Program Profile," 9.

emails, text messages, and even physical visits to the station during the vacations of OFW listeners.[39]

A certain Filipino seaman in Hong Kong wrote some feedback to RVA and has expressed his sentiments about the creation of FSO:

> Whatever the purpose for which this station came into being, it is giving us a homely atmosphere on board. Thirty minutes of your company in this limitless sea is enough to fill our hearts with joy. I hope this will continue until the last Filipino seaman is home.[40]

Even after 15 years since it first broadcasted to migrant Filipinos, the FSO operation continued to be understaffed with a budget deficiency and without sufficient means to launch promotional tours to expand its listenership.[41] Nevertheless, in place of promotional tours, RVA engaged in promotional activities by partnering with travel agencies at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). The previously created partnerships of RVA with various NGOs were further tapped by their participation in the organized festivities and programs for migrant Filipino workers. [42] Meanwhile, the OFW population around the world continued to increase and expand and was no longer confined to the regions of Asia.

In 1990, FSO started its service mainly in the Middle East or the western sphere of Asia as an immediate response to the Kuwait invasion. The broadcast was expanded to the Filipinos in the Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, and Russia

39 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Filipino Service: A Program Profile," 10.

40 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Filipino Service: A Program Profile," 17.

41 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Plans and Recommendations for the Filipino Service Operation," 2.

42 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Plans and Recommendations for the Filipino Service Operation," 1.

in the following year. By 1994, the East Asian service of FSO commenced in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea. FSO also reached migrant Filipinos in East Africa, Libya, Italy, the United Kingdom, Greece, Denmark, and North America.[43] RVA partnered with Radio Vaticana in October 2009 to amplify the frequency signals in the Middle East to reach out further to the Filipino diaspora.[44]

RVA's Transition to Online Streaming and Eventual Closure of FSO

Since its establishment in 1969, Radio Veritas Asia has risen above many challenges in the form of social changes and financial difficulties. However, it also experienced new doors opening in the service of the Church in Asia. The introduction of new technologies and evolving new media platforms provided new opportunities for the mission. In 2010, RVA started assimilating its broadcast radio to the new media by computerizing some of its radio programs.[45] In 2018, RVA officially transitioned its radio broadcasting operations into a fully functioning online streaming platform, more suitable to spread the Gospel according to the needs and demands of the milieu. FSO was part of the several language services of RVA to transition to an online platform. After almost 28 years, however, it was closed before the end of 2018, shortly after its transition. According to Father Tang, "The Filipino Language Service of RVA was closed as it was deemed redundant to what Veritas 846 is already doing," adding further that "Veritas 846

43 Private Collection of Radio Veritas Asia, "Filipino Service: A Program Profile," 4.

44 Suzette C. Han, "Filipino Service December 16, 1990: 19 Years in Service," 3.

45 Suzette C. Han, "Filipino Service December 16, 1990: 19 Years in Service," 1.

is at the service for the Filipino audience, and I don't think that the Filipino Service needs to return to RVA."[46]

Conclusion

The history of Radio Veritas Asia and its Filipino Service Operation is undoubtedly part and parcel of the history of the Church in Asia. The situation of Asia's Catholic populations in the 1960s, some of whom were living under repressive regimes, compelled the Catholic Church to establish a continental radio station that would serve the spiritual and human needs of Asian Catholics. Indeed, it was evangelism that built up the beginnings of Catholicism in Asia, and only through evangelism can Asian Catholicism thrive. RVA became Asia's beacon of hope that fostered common compassion, cultural understanding, and collective dialogue, all centering on the values of Christianity.

Throughout the historical development of RVA were countless challenges that almost permanently closed the radio station. Nevertheless, with the dedication and faith of all the people behind the international broadcasting platform, RVA continued not only to be the voice of Asian Christianity but a station that brought Christ to Asians on a global scale. The Filipino Service Operation was instrumental in transforming Filipino migrants into instruments of evangelization who have become missionaries by preaching the faith in deeds and in words in their host countries. Radio Veritas Asia and its Filipino Service Operation will remain among FABC's greatest legacies because it was able to do what Christ commissioned His disciples to do — to bring His love to all nations, no matter the cost.

46 Bernard Dashssi Tang, interview by author, February 2022, Quezon City, Sent Via Email in author's possession.

The FABC Vision of Dialogue as an Appropriate Approach for the Catholic Church in Vietnam in its Mission of Evangelization Today

Hoan Chinh Tran, SJ

Contextual Background

Asia is the world's largest and most populated continent. It includes one-third of the land area of the whole world (17,124,000 square miles) and is home to almost 60% of humanity.[1] It is known for its diversity, contrasts, and contradiction, with rapid economic growth and social change, overwhelming poverty, and cultural and religious pluralism (cf. *FABC Papers* # 81, 31-43). In addition, natural calamities such as earthquakes, floods, typhoons, and diseases are causing significant damage to households, the economy, and the ecosystem. Young people are forced to migrate to cities or abroad in search of better jobs, thus, becoming possible victims of injustice or contributors to the erosion of Asian family values.

Asia is also home to the most influential world religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.[2] In this continent, only 4.5% of the total population are Christians, with the Catholic population a minority at 3% (cf. *FABC Papers* # 131, 1-2). In that context, the people of God in Asia are invited to be missionaries through creative, innovative, dialogical, and

1 James H. Kroeger, "Walking the Path of Dialogue in Asia: Insights from the FABC," *Studia Missionalia* 58 (2009): 45.

2 Kroeger, "Walking the Path of Dialogue," 45-47.

inculturated approaches to the Gospel.[3] This also extends to dialogue with ancient cultures, religions, and philosophical traditions.

After the fall of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975, the country was reunified under a Communist rule. Vietnam facilitated the so-called "socialist-oriented market economy" wherein agricultural collectives, private businesses, and foreign investments were discouraged. Paradoxically, Vietnam has become a capitalist economy behind a Communist façade. Despite these, crucial changes in the political system, like the advancement of religious policies have taken place. However, wounds and divisions still linger as the historic and devastating conflict that left more than three million Vietnamese dead on both sides.

The relationship between Catholics and communists has had a conflictual and complicated history. In the past, Ho Chi Minh perceived the Vietnamese Catholic Church as a threat to national security to the point that he publicly expressed his desire to abolish it completely.[4] Yet, the Catholic-communist relationship has gradually improved since 1980. The Vietnamese communist government continues to discuss with the Vatican for the normalization of diplomatic relations. Meanwhile, a few are aware of the evangelization efforts in Vietnam.[5] While most Vietnamese Catholics have access to religious services, a number would avoid dialogue with the communists and followers of other faiths. Thus, being Church is practiced only at home and in places of worship only.

3 Ibid., 47.

4 Peter C. Phan, "Christianity in Vietnam Today (1975-2013): Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities," International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church, 14:1 (2014): 8-9.

5 UCANews.com Reporter, "Evangelization Efforts Proving Ineffective in Vietnam," *UCANews,* March 9, 2017, https://international.la-croix.com/news/evangelization-efforts-proving-ineffective-in-vietnam/4816 (accessed February 21, 2020).

Conflict Between Vietnamese Catholics and Communists

Vietnam was under French rule for nearly eighty years (1858-1945). Since then, Catholics have become active in various nationalist movements. A wave of anti-French sentiment led to a political agenda of establishing an independent national church. According to Charles Keith, Ho Chi Minh's independent movement (Viet Minh) showed no anti-Catholicism sentiment, but it sharply criticized foreign missionaries and Western influence.[6] Therefore, when the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi was established on September 2, 1945, the Catholics supported the Viet Minh and its new government. On November 4, 1945, the Vietnamese bishops implored spiritual and international support from Pius XII and the peoples of goodwill, respectively.[7] Ho Chi Minh named a few patriotic Catholic activists and well-educated intellectuals to serve in his government. He even invited Le Huu Tu, the new bishop of Phat Diem, to serve as a supreme counselor.

However, in the mindset of the Viet Minh's leaders, Catholicism was still a foreign religion, or a camouflage for external aggression. They viewed "Catholic opposition as a result not of religion in and of itself but of the highly organized, hierarchical structure of the Church, which … allowed European religious and their acolytes to undermine a national government."[8] Opposing religion was not their intent, but they aimed to remove every foreign influence as much as possible.[9]

6 Charles Keith, *Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 219.

7 Keith, *Catholic Vietnam,* 216.

8 Ibid., 230-231.

9 Chu, Lan T, "Catholicism vs. Communism, Continued: The Catholic Church in Vietnam," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies,* 3, no. 1 (2008), 157.

On the contrary, Church officials were more concerned about the consequences of the Viet Minh ideology and its promise to uphold the freedom of religion and establish a national Church.

Ho Chi Minh wanted to establish a state-managed or patriotic Catholic Church in Vietnam. Peter Phan wrote that Ho Chi Minh's primary goal "was to destroy the Vietnamese Catholic Church, which he perceived as a threat to national liberation."[10] In China, the victory of Mao Zedong's communists led to the persecution of the Chinese Catholic Church. The Vietnamese bishops feared that their national government would follow in the same footsteps. Moreover, anti-communism at the Vatican became extremely powerful and particularly affected Vietnamese Catholics.[11]

During the First Indochina War, the Vatican began to support the suppression of Communism in China and Vietnam. On November 10, 1951, the bishops of Indochina issued a pastoral letter and warned that "Communism was inimical to the Catholic faith … [and] it was impossible to be both a Catholic and a communist and that any Catholic joining the Communist Party would be excommunicated."[12] From a formerly patriotic stance, Vietnamese Catholics openly cooperated with the French troops to fight against

10 Phan, "Christianity in Vietnam," 6.

11 Keith, *Catholic Vietnam,* 231.

12 Phi Van Nguyen, "A Secular State for a Religious Nation: The Republic of Vietnam and Religious Nationalism, 1946-1963," *The Journal of Asian Studies,* Volume 77, Issue 3 (2018), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-asian-studies/article/secular-state-for-a-religious-nation-the-republic-of-vietnam-and-religious-nationalism-19461963/6686A381A12183648E76430BC 646BC85/core-reader (accessed June 18, 2020).

the Viet Minh.[13] This led to the estranged relations between Vietnamese Catholics and the Viet Minh nationalists in 1951. Until the end of the decade, all foreign missionaries, including Apostolic delegate John Dooley were forced to leave North Vietnam. Seminaries were forced to close. Any contact between the Northern Catholic Church and the outside world, including the Vatican, was not allowed.[14]

Article 14 (d) of the 1954 Geneva accords provided free movement for those who wished to move north-south or south-north for three hundred days. As a result, more than 810,000 people took the opportunity to move from the North to the non-communist zone south of the seventeenth parallel.[15] Over 75 % of the refugees were Catholics.[16] With North Vietnam in its control, the Communist Party adopted an anti-religious attitude. According to Peter Phan, the government's strategy "to destroy the Vietnamese Catholic Church was threefold: eliminating its leadership, demolishing its structures, and impeding its activities."[17] In 1955, Ho Chi Minh convened Vietnamese Catholic representatives in Hanoi and established the so-called "The Liaison Committee of Catholics for Patriotism and Peace" to control the Church

13 Nguyen Quang Hung. "The Relationship Between Vietnamese Communists and Christians During the Vietnam War." *S-Space of Seoul National University,* http://s-space.snu.ac.kr/bitstream/10371/42712/3/The%20Relationship%20Between%20Vietnamese%20Communists%20and%20Christians%20During%20the%20Vietnam%20War.pdf (accessed on June 10, 2020), 7.

14 Ibid., 16.

15 Robert F. Randle, *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 462–467.

16 Peter Hansen, "Bac Di Cu: Catholic Refugees from the North of Vietnam, and Their Role in the Southern Republic, 1954-1959," *University of Chicago Press,* http://online.ucpress.edu/jvs/article-pdf/4/3/173/185667/vs_2009_4_3_173.pdf, 179.

17 Phan, "Christianity in Vietnam," 6.

and rally Catholics behind governmental policies and projects.[18]

The desire for an independent Church hierarchy was officially achieved on November 24, 1960 when Pope John XIII issued his apostolic constitution *Venerabilium Nostrorum*. However, the Vietnamese Catholic Church has not only lost its influence in society but has also been struggling to re-imagine its identity from the 1960s up to the present. Indeed, due to communist propaganda, Catholicism has been unfairly accused as a "foreign" religion in the country.[19]

In 1960, Vietnamese bishops released a pastoral letter that strongly condemned the communist ideology. They strongly emphasized the impossibility of peaceful coexistence, "as if there could be coexistence between good and evil, honest people and criminals, God and Satan."[20] Consequently, they warned of ex-communication to those who would join or support the Communist Party.

The Vietnamese Church started to show her reconciliatory stance and readiness to collaborate in the1980s. However, the Communist government retained its repressive measures. A case in point is the government's confiscation of properties and the arrest of Jesuit Father Superior Nguyen Cong Doan. To demolish the organizational structures of the Church, the Communist Party established the Committee for the Unification of Patriotic Catholics in 1983. It was motivated to nullify the authority of the Vietnamese Catholic hierarchy by erecting a national patriotic Church with no ties to the Holy See and the universal Church. In 1984, Archbishop Nguyen Kim Dien was barred from pastoral works and put under

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 139.

20 Lan Chu, "Catholicism vs. Communism, Continued: The Catholic Church in Vietnam," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies,* 3, no. 1 (2008): 5

house arrest until his death in 1988.[21] From 1987 to 1988, tensions between the Church and the government increased, especially when the Vatican canonized 117 martyrs on June 19, 1988. The communist government asserted that martyrs had not been killed for their faith but for their collaboration with the French colonizers.[22]

Theology of Dialogue

Dialogue has been defined, understood, and perceived in various ways. It has often been understood narrowly as bilateral and multilateral conversations between parties concerning dividing issues, conflicting interests, and varying claims. It is also "understood as shared communication for mutual understanding, to address divisions or conflicts, or to nurture solidarity for peace and justice or mutual empowerment."[23] According to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, dialogue means "reciprocal communication, leading to a common goal or, at a deeper level, to interpersonal communication."[24] To offer some useful definitions of dialogue and explore and deepen their meaning, this section

21 Tran Thi Lien, "The Challenge for Peacewithin South Vietnam's Catholic Community: A History of Peace Activism," *Peace and Change,* September 23, 2013, https://online library.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/pech.12040, 466-467.

22 J.B. An Dang, "Jubilee of Vietnamese Martyrs Begins", *Asia News,* June 20, 2018, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Jubilee-of-Vietnamese-martyrs-begins-44223.html (accessed June 20, 2020).

23 World Council of Churches, "Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions," January 1, 2004, https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/ecumenical-considerations-for-dialogue-and-relations-with-people-of-other-religions/ (accessed July 14, 2020), n. 18-19.

24 Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," Vatican Archive, May 19, 1991, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/ rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (accessed July 16, 2020), no. 9.

looks at the biblical and theological foundations for dialogue through perspectives of the universal Church, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), and the Vietnamese Catholic Church.

Universal Church Perspectives

Five documents of Vatican II (*Nostra Aetate, Lumen Gentium, Ad Gentes, Gaudium et Spes*, and *Dignitatis Humanae*) contain important elements, theological reflections, and orientations for understanding the Church's role vis-à-vis the world and other religions. According to James Kroeger, some general themes reflect the spirit of openness and common ground for dialogue:

> The need to recognize within religions 'elements of truth and grace' (AG 9), 'treasures which the bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth' (AG 11), 'a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men' (NA 2); recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit (GS 11; AG 4); the presence of treasures of the ascetical and contemplative life (AG 15, 18) and the presence of 'Seeds of the Word' (LG 17; AG 11).[25]

First, *Nostra Aetate*, or the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions states that it is necessary to "lay the foundation for dialogue, for a new system of communication between people of different faiths."[26] The Council has openly acknowledged the presence of positive values in the religious life of individual believers and the traditions from which they belong.[27] *Nostra Aetate* also speaks of "a ray of that Truth which enlightens all" (NA 2).

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25 James Kroeger, *Becoming Local Church* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2003), 91.

26 Miikka Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council* (London: Brill Academic Publisher, 1992), 85.

27 PCID, *Dialogue and Proclamation,* no. 17.

Other Vatican II documents attempt to redefine the missionary means of the Church.[28] *Gaudium et Spes*, or the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, reaffirms that Jesus Christ, through the mystery of his incarnation, death, and resurrection, is at work in each human person in the hopes of bringing about interior renewal:

> This holds true not for Christians only but also for all persons of goodwill in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal mystery (GS 22).

Gaudium et Spes speaks of universal dialogue, which is not merely about issues and projects but about entering into a deeper level of conversation and encounter (cf. GS 23). Dialogue is proof of the Church's solidarity, respect, and love for the entire human family (cf. GS 3), and is to be promoted at the international and national levels in a sincere, prudent, and neutral manner (cf. GS 21, 85). Catholics are invited to initiate and be enthusiastic in entering into dialogue with all peoples of good will (cf. GS 88, cf. AA 14). The dignity of the human person, the human community, and the meaning of human activity lay the foundations for the Church's dialogue with the modern world (GS 40).

In the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity or *Ad Gentes*, this idea of "a ray of truth" is also presented and expressed as the presence of "the seeds of the Word" (AG 11) in which God has sown his elements of goodness, truth, and grace. This recognition by the teaching authority opened the Church's doors to dialogue and collaboration with ecumenical and interfaith counterparts (NA 2; cf. GS 92-93): "Let

28 Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine,* 86.

Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral good found among non-Christians, as well as their social and cultural values" (NA 2). To make dialogue possible, *Christus Dominus,* or the decree on bishops, places in the very nature of the Church the integral elements of clarity, humility, courtesy, prudence, and truth (cf. CD 13).

Pope Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam* was received warmly in Asia. It speaks of a dialogue that is rooted in divine communication. There are four levels to reflect this divine communication imagery: (1) within the Catholic Church itself, (2) with other Christians, (3) with people of other living faiths, and (4) with the world and all its peoples.[29] Furthermore, the pope affirmed the competence of the Church to engage in these matters, "The Church has something to say; the Church has a message to deliver; the Church has a communication to offer" (ES 65). And this quest for dialogue extends to questions that concern the full meaning of human life.

FABC Perspectives

Asia is home to almost 60% of the world's total population. Catholics are a minority at 3%. The minority situation indicates that "being a missionary Church in Asia" demands creative, innovative, dialogical, and inculturated approaches to the Gospel.[30] Therefore, *Ecclesiam Suam* has not only been received but developed to appropriate to the Asian context.

Right from the very beginning, the spirit of openness and dialogue was emphasized during the first meeting of bishops in 1970: "We pledge ourselves to an open, sincere and continuing dialogue with our brothers of other great religions of Asia,

29 James Kroeger, "Exploring Diverse Pathways in Dialogue," *The Missions Newsletter,* Volume 58 (2020): 5.

30 Kroeger, "Walking the Path of Dialogue," 47.

that we may learn from one another how to enrich ourselves spiritually and how to work more effectively together on our common task of total human development."[31] Hence, dialogue is at the forefront of FABC's missionary orientation. This internal activity opposes the popular belief that dialogue is an external methodology and an adaptation. FABC confirmed in its First Plenary Assembly that dialogue is "a new way of being Church" (FAPA I, 332).

The FABC wanted to pursue a programmatic evangelization by building genuine local Churches. It resulted in a "triple dialogue" that has guided Asia's missionary orientation ever since (*FABC Papers* # 130, 5). In 1978, dialogue became a prominent theme of the First Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate.[32] Dialogue has been described as "a witnessing to Christ in word and deed, by reaching out to people in the concrete reality of their daily lives, in their particular cultural context, their own religious traditions, their socio-economic conditions."[33]

Almost simplistically, dialogue may be interpreted using the diagram below:[34]

Local Church (subject)	<<<	**DIALOGUE** (approach)	>>>	**Asia's Peoples, focus on Poor** **Asia's Cultures** **Asia's Religions**

James Kroeger interprets this dialogical approach within a two-fold process of dynamic interaction:

31 "Asian Bishops' Meeting: Message and Resolutions of the Asian Bishops Meeting," November 29, 1970, Manila, Philippines, n. 12 in *FAPA I*, 3-10.

32 "BIMA I: Letter of the First Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate," 27 July 1978, Baguio City, Philippines, *FAPA I*, 93-96.

33 "BIMA I: Letter of the First Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate," n. 5.

34 Kroeger, "The Faith-Culture Dialogue," 82-83.

> There is always mutual reinforcement; this means that while the Church influences the people, their cultures, and religions, the Church herself is concomitantly being shaped and molded. In a word, the dynamic of inculturation is always at work. This operative paradigm of holistic evangelization [the "triple dialogue" approach] is the interpretive key to understanding and appreciating the inculturation process in Asia today. This is how the Church "lives and breathes" in Asia. Here one finds the Holy Spirit at work. This is an authentic reception and continuation of the Second Vatican Council in Asia.[35]

Similarly, in 1987, the FABC produced the *"Theses on Interreligious Dialogue"* wherein dialogue works for integral human life, peace (cf. FABC Papers # 48, 1), and self-actualization (FABC Papers # 48, 7). Towards this achievement, individuals and communities must be willing to let go of prejudices to enter into mutual understanding[36]

Perspectives of the Vietnamese Church

After their historic gathering on May 1, 1980, the Vietnamese bishops proposed dialogue, collaboration, and understanding as a response to the impetus of the Vatican II Council:

> In the plan of redemption for mankind, God took the covenant to gather together a lineage to be his own People. And through this People's history, he has revealed himself and his intention of redemption to the entire mankind. But these People are just an image and preparation for the new People of God, which is brought together by the new covenant that Jesus Christ

35 Ibid., 83.

36 James Kroeger, "An 'Asian' Dialogue Decalogue: Principles of Interreligious Dialogue from Asia's Bishops," *Loyola School of Theology,* https://www.lst.edu/community/article-archives/353-an-qasianq-dialogue-decalogue-j-kroeger-mm/ (accessed July 21, 2020).

> establishes in His holy blood. This new covenant People is the Church of Christ, bringing together all people from every corner and country on earth over time and national boundaries (PL 6).[37]

Moreover, by placing the human person at the center of its contextual theology, the Vietnamese Catholic Church has explicated the Church's relationship with society based on three fundamental realities of human existence: human activity, community, and the centrality of the human person.[38] This person-centered pastoral development is essential to the Vietnamese Church's dialogical engagement with society. By getting involved in peoples' concrete, existential, and historical circumstances, the Vietnamese Church chooses a new direction for its evangelizing mission. The letter calls all Vietnamese Catholics to go forward with and serve the Vietnamese people by contributing effectively to the country's development:

> As the Church in the heart of Vietnam nation, we are determined to stick to the destiny of our homeland, following the national tradition and integrating it in the current life of our country. The Council teaches that "the Church goes forward together with humanity and experiences the same earthly lot which the world does." (GS 40). So we have to go forward together with our people, share the common life with our nation because this homeland is the place where we are called to live as God's children ; this country is the womb carrying us in the process of implementing the vocation as children of God; this nation is the community that God gives us to serve as citizens and members of God's People (PL 9).

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37 The 1980 Pastoral Letter shall be hereafter cited as PL in the in-text citations.

38 P. Hai, "The Contextual Theology of the Vietnamese Episcopal Conference in the 1980 Pastoral Letter," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 48, no. 4 (2011): 334; cf. CBCV, 1980 Pastoral Letter, n. 7; GS 40.

In addition, the bishops also called for the expression of the faith within one's tradition and culture. Faithful to the wisdom of *Lumen Gentium,* the bishops acknowledged their beauty and goodness but urged the Catholics to have a firm grasp of the object of faith (cf. PL 11).

Meanwhile, the history between the Vietnamese Catholic Church and the Communist government clamors for the latter as the fourth priority in the dialogical approach. Towards this, the Catholics were called not to "look the past with the negative complex and judgment" (PL 14) but to look for common ground to help Vietnam toward prosperity, freedom, and happiness (cf. PL 10). Along these lines, the Vietnamese bishops also vowed to respect the autonomy of the State during the 2010 Congress:

> When engaging herself in building the society of this world, the Church "never wants to take the place of the government, but only hopes that through dialogue and mutual respect and collaboration, the Church can participate in the life of the country, in order to serve everybody." That is also a proof of the true beauty of the Gospel, using the expression of Pope Benedict XVI, in his exhortation to all of us, priests, religious and faithful: "By the life founded on charity, honesty, respect for the common good, you should prove that good Catholics are also good citizens."[39]

What the Vietnamese Church Can Learn from the FABC

The Vietnamese Catholic Church may learn from the FABC through an urgent imperative and openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, in Vietnam, only 7% of the total population are Catholics. The Vietnamese Catholic Church should turn

39 CBCV, *The Message of the 2010 Congress,* n.4.

to dialogue as an urgent imperative "due to the perceived 'foreignness' of the Church" (*FABC Papers* # 130, 7). "Foreignness" is described as follows:

As a social institution, the Church is perceived as a foreign body in its colonial origins…. The Church is even sometimes seen as an obstacle or threat to national integration and religious and cultural identity…. The Church remains foreign in its lifestyle, in its institutional structure, in its worship, in its western trained leadership and in its theology (FAPA II, 195-196).

Secondly, dialogue becomes possible if openness is present. This openness is related to recognizing the movements of God's grace, affirming the presence of the seeds of the Word in faith traditions and peoples of goodwill. What dialogue demands, in turn, is a spirit of humility. Openness, receptivity, love, and seeing the face of God in them would help the Vietnamese Catholic Church accept the new way of being Church. The Church is not exclusive, but that which "has to be an embodiment of the Asian vision and values of life, especially interiority, harmony, a holistic and inclusive approach to every area of life" (FAPA III, 8).

Thirdly, John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* emphasizes that "the Holy Spirit is the main agent who makes possible a fruitful dialogue with the cultural and religious values of different people." This is because "the Spirit's presence ensures that the dialogue unfolds in truth, honesty, humanity and respect" (EA 21). On a related note, Vietnamese Catholics must let the Spirit direct them to work for unity and, hopefully, toward national reconciliation.

Dialogue as an Appropriate Approach in Our Evangelizing Mission

Threefold Dialogue Plus One

The triple dialogue is considered the Asian way of evangelization because "no evangelization will be lasting and fruitful if it does not travel the path of this threefold dialogue."[40] This triple dialogue is a model for the missionary activity of the local Churches in Asia, including the local Church in Vietnam.

Dialogue with all People, Especially the Poor

Asia may be rich and diverse in cultures and traditions, but many of its countries still belong in the third world. In Vietnam, the Indochina wars severed society on economic, social, and moral levels. Towards this, the Church in Vietnam is prompted to reaffirm her missionary commitment to become a "Church of the Poor." She must be involved in different pastoral and social activities to eliminate injustice within society:

> The preferential option for the poor, which the Asian context demands from all local Churches, is in deep harmony with the nature of the Church herself as the sacrament of Jesus Christ, who for us became poor and made himself a servant (*FABC Papers* # 92: 30).

For dialogue to be authentic, it requires a humble and loving exchange:

> … the Church truly renewed in and through groups and communities of Christians, especially those formed with and among the poor, truly committed to conversion and commitment to the Gospel, truly given

40 James Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1994), 67-68.

> to the service and the true liberation in full evangelical sense (given in EN) of the poor and the powerless among our peoples, truly dedicated to a presence, witness and self-giving which proclaims in life the Gospel amid the world.[41]

To work for liberation means empowering the poor towards independence. This necessitates awakening their consciousness to unjust structures and helping them realize their God-given dignity and right to self-determination. This resonates well in the Vietnamese bishops' 2011 Pastoral Letter:

> Evangelization also incites the faithful to serve humans more generously, particularly the poor and the abandoned. Dialogue with the poor helps the Church learn the way of looking at Christ, who realizes in the poor the need to be loved and respected rather than mere material things. At the same time, this dialogue also helps the Church discover the new forms of poverty, and be more sensitive to the changes in society so that she may respond appropriately under the prompting of the Holy Spirit…. Christian communities should find a way to love and serve them concretely, accompany them in the trials and difficulties of life, help them realize the joy of faith by being united with the Crucified, and completing what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of His body, the Church.

Hence, the Catholic Church in Vietnam chooses the option for the poor as one of her most fundamental ways to embody the Gospel and witness it as a sign of hope in situations of injustice, hopelessness, and despair.

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41 John Paul II, *Address of His Holiness John Paul II to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate,* Vatican Archive, January 28, 1979, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1979/january/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19790128_messi-co-puebla-episc-latam.html (accessed September 5, 2020).

Interreligious Dialogue

The role and significance of interreligious dialogue in the evangelizing mission of the Vietnamese Church are not yet fully recognized. To be authentically rooted in the Asian soil marked by a wonderful yet complex diversity in religious traditions, Vietnamese Catholics must dialogue with believers of other religions, such as Buddhism (and Caodaism and Hoa Hao), Confucianism, and Taoism. The FABC recommends:

> Religious leaders, social activists, artists, and scholars, as well as communicators from different religions of Asia, must engage in inclusive and sustained dialogues leading toward deeper interreligious understanding. Elaborating the richness of religious experience and underlining common-ness rather than differences will contribute to more profound and more sincere dialogues (FAPA IV, 236).

In interreligious dialogue, both sides need to overcome past prejudices and misunderstandings to learn from the heritage and wisdom of each other's religions and cultures. Christians are invited to keep "an openness of faith to God's universality of grace" (*FABC Papers 90 #*, 11-12). It requires the openness of the heart and mind so that mutual acceptance and respect may ensue. Hence, the Vietnamese Catholic Church must take the initiative to readjust and harvest the fruits of this interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogues are not about exchanges of doctrines but everyday living: "dialogue must take place in daily life by communicating, doing business, trading, and sharing with each other. Religions must be the foundation for people to come close to one another."[42]

Dialogue with Culture

The *Quoc Ngu*, or Vietnam's national writing system, has helped foreign missionaries and local Catholics integrate

42 CBCV, *2001 Pastoral Letter,* no. 13.

Catholic values into national traditions, cultures, and society via dictionaries, literature, poems, dramas, songs, plays, and daily customs.[43] Peter Phan writes,

> From its very beginning, the Christian mission has always sought to incarnate the Good News in the cultures of the peoples it evangelized. It did this not only by translating its sacred text into their languages but also adapting its message to their culture.[44]

However, Vietnamese Catholics were considered traitors to their cultures and tradition due to the conflict between the Catholic faith and ancestral worship. Therefore, to make the Gospel more rooted effectively in Vietnamese culture and tradition, the Vietnamese bishops stressed the importance of inculturation:

> In light of the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Church realizes that inculturation and respect for the indigenous character are intrinsic requirements of our Christian faith. Upon receiving the Gospel, a local Church takes the responsibility of integrating the Gospel values into the culture of her own nation. This process does not eradicate but purifies and enriches the features of our national culture by virtue of the Gospel values, particularly the value of the love "to the end" and "love of enemies."

To achieve a true and dynamic inculturation, Christians must participate and immerse in the dialogue of life (cf. *FABC Papers* # 90:10). Although inculturation is still a big challenge for the local Church in Vietnam, she has made many attempts to integrate the Gospel values into the culture of her own nation through chanting, meditation, Marian devotions,

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43 UCANews Reporter, "Church Praised for Role in Romanization of Vietnamese Script," *Union of Catholic Asian News,* October 30, 2019, https://www.ucanews.com/news/church-praised-for-role-in-romanization-of-vietnamese-script/86428# (accessed September 5, 2020).

44 Peter Phan, *In Our Own Tongues* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 25.

processions, oriental-style Church buildings, ancestral altars, burning incense, death anniversaries, marriage rites, and funeral rites. From the FABC perspective, "dialogue with cultures or inculturation takes place when the local Church lives its faith and the Gospel in terms of the cultures of its peoples, the Church being enriched internally by these cultures and in turn transforming them from within" (FAPA I, 266).

Dialogue with the Communist Government

The Vietnamese Catholic Church sees dialogue with the Communist government as imperative to national reconciliation. In their 1980 Pastoral Letter, the Vietnamese bishops directed the Catholics to remove their anti-communist stance and adopt openness, solidarity, and aspiration for social integration instead. In this way, Catholics should be able to contribute to faithfully building a just society. The same pastoral letter makes mention of the Catholic Church's involvement in numerous social, educational, and charitable works. Even Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI mentioned holistic liberation as imperative to the attainment of justice and peace:

> … the Church invites all her members to be loyally committed to building a just, supportive and fair society. Her intention is certainly not to replace government leaders; she wishes only to be able to play a just role in the nation's life, at the service of the whole people, in a spirit of dialogue and respectful collaboration…. By a life founded on charity, honesty, and respect for the common good, you should prove that good Catholics are also good citizens. [45]

45 Benedict XVI, "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Vietnam on Their *Ad Limina* Visit," Vatican Archive, June 27, 2009, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/june/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090627_ad-limina-viet-nam.html (accessed March 13, 2021).

On the international level, after long and patient discussions, the Vatican has achieved significant steps toward establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam. The Catholic Church and the communist regime can coexist with opposing worldviews and ideologies. The Holy See has had a non-resident pontifical representative to Vietnam since 1975. Since 2007, top leaders of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Vietnamese Government have been going on several trips to the Vatican to enhance mutual understanding. Up to now, both sides have continued to keep in contact.

The road toward full religious freedom and noninterference in the Church's internal affairs remains a long and arduous task. Although the Church and the State are different, both share a common aspiration for liberation, harmony, and building a just society. The Vietnamese Catholics continue to live up to their vocation as good Catholics and citizens that contribute to integral human development. Thus, they will opt to be on the side of dialogue in their evangelizing mission, even if it means engaging with the Communist government almost repetitively.

Conclusion

This paper presented the FABC' s vision of dialogue by exploring its theology and its application to the unique situation of Vietnam. Its triple dialogue scheme appeared to be received well in the Asian context. However, in Vietnam's context, much work has to be done toward achieving religious freedom and integral human development. Furthermore, the author adds "dialogue with the government" as a potential addition so that the long and deep-seated struggle between the Vietnamese Catholic Church and the Communist government would hopefully come to an end.

Catholic Families in Asia: Living The Eucharist As Domestic Church Of The Poor

Maria Elisa A. Borja

Introduction

Often, students have shared the marked contrast between the excitement of their First Holy Communion when they were seven or eight years old and the current dull monotony of going to Sunday Mass with their family as 18–20-year-old young adults. The disinterested feelings towards Mass may not be confined to Catholic teenagers but could very well be a common family experience. Among Catholic families in Asia, some may be tempted to think of the Sunday Mass as simply fulfilling a weekly obligation before eating Sunday family lunch, with no real bearing on their daily life.

As part of their pastoral recommendations, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), in its Ninth Plenary Assembly, prescribed the need for programs of integral catechesis and faith formation regarding the Eucharist with the application to everyday life.[1] At the same time, Catholic families in Asia may see their being a family from a purely secular point of view, without much to do with God's plan for marriage and the family. The FABC's eleventh plenary assembly emphasizes that the Catholic family in Asia is not only a domestic church but a domestic Church of the Poor and, consequently, a missionary

1 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," Ninth Plenary Assembly Final Document, FABC Papers, no. 129 (Manila, Philippines: FABC, 2009), 24, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20paper%20129B.pdf (accessed 11 March 2020).

disciple of Christ.[2] Through the optic of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' plenary assembly documents, "Living the Eucharist in Asia" (FABC IX) and "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy" (FABC XI), this paper will discuss the salient parts of the Mass and their contextual pastoral applications for Catholic families in Asia.

The Context of the FABC

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences is a voluntary association composed of bishops' conferences in Asia, approved by the Holy See.[3] It currently has nineteen full-member conferences, including the Philippines, as well as nine associate members, such as Hong Kong and Uzbekistan.[4] In terms of output, the FABC's highest authority lies with the final statements/documents of each plenary assembly. The plenary assembly is convened every four years with a particular theme that addresses current missionary concerns.

In 2009, the FABC held its Ninth Plenary Assembly (FABC IX) on the Eucharist, entitled "Living the Eucharist in Asia." The final document aimed to present a "useful guide in reflecting and acting on how the Eucharist might be better understood, celebrated, and lived in the context of Asia,"[5] bearing in mind the Asian's search for,

2 "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy," Eleventh FABC Plenary Assembly Final Document, FABC Papers, no. 151 (Colombo, Sri Lanka: FABC, 2016), 17, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20Papers%20151.pdf (accessed 11 March 2020).

3 Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Nature and Functions," *About Us,* http://www.fabc.org/about.html (accessed 11 March 2020).

4 The FABC has nineteen full member conferences and nine associate members. The 19 bishops' conferences are Bangladesh, East Timor, India-CBCI, India-Syro-Malabar, India-Syro-Malankara, India-Latin Rite, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan (Republic of China), Thailand, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste. The nine associate members are Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. See Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Members," http://www.fabc.org/mem.html (accessed 11 March 2020).

5 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 3.

celebration of, and struggle for an authentic life. Undeniably, living the Eucharist comes from believing in it and celebrating it. At the same time, believing and celebrating the Eucharist are rooted in living it out daily. Hence, the document follows this circular methodology of life-belief-celebration-life. In addition, even as the Church in Asia is a Church that exists to dialogue (famous for its triple dialogue: with religions, cultures, and peoples of Asia, especially the poor), so too is the Eucharist about dialogue: the unparalleled experience of God's dialogue with believers and in turn, these believers' response to the dialogue of life and love. In its ninth plenary assembly, the FABC chose to celebrate this liturgical dialogue, using not only the Latin Rite, but also major eastern Eucharistic rites in Asia, such as the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara rites.[6]

6 Ibid., 3-5. Both the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches trace their roots to St. Thomas, the Apostle, who traveled to India to spread the Good News, and was martyred in 52 AD. (They are called Syro, meaning Syrian Christians in India due to the Syrian Rite rather than due to ethnicity, although some would have likewise had ancestors of Syrian blood.) There are three Catholic groups in India: Syro-Malabar Catholics, Syro-Malankara Catholics, and Latin Catholics (who use the Latin Rite of Rome). All three groups are under the pope's authority, and all three Churches may receive communion at each other's liturgies. Whereas most Indian Catholics are under the Roman Rite, the Syro-Malabar Catholics use the East Syrian Rite. Men and women sit separately at different sides of the church, their shoes left outside the church and with prayer rugs strewn all over the church floor. Worship is done facing the East. (This is based on ancient Church tradition that when Jesus returns at His Second Coming, He will come from the East, as seen in Matthew 24,27; and so, they worship Him facing the East to meet Him when He comes). The altar is covered by a red curtain and only opened at the beginning of the Mass, and closed again at the end of the Mass. Aside from the Syro-Malabar Catholics, the Syro-Malankara also use a different rite, the West Syrian Rite, called the Holy Qurbono. Apart from the great emphasis on ritual, gestures, symbols, and much chanting, of the two Indian rites, the Holy Qurbono seems closer to the Latin Rite in form. For more information on the Syro-Malabar Church, see "Syro-Malabar Church," Catholics and Cultures, https://www.catholicsandcultures.org/india/syro-malabar-church (accessed 11 March 2020), and "Syro-Malabar Worship," Catholics and Cultures, https://www.catholicsandcultures.org/india/syro-malabar-church/syro-malabar-worship (accessed 11 March 2020). For information on the Syro-Malankara Rite, see "Syro-Malankara Worship," Catholics and Cultures, https://www.catholicsandcultures.org/india/syro-malankara-church/syro-malankara-worship (accessed 11 March 2020).

The more recent 2016 Eleventh FABC Plenary Assembly on the Catholic Family in Asia builds on previous plenary assemblies, especially the FABC VIII on "The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life." However, it also provides a critical advancement in the treatment of the family consistent with the spirit of the FABC: that the family is rightly called the domestic church of the poor whose mission is mercy.

How does the FABC define the Church of the Poor? It is a Church that identifies with the multitudes of poor who live in Asia. They are not poor in human values, in character, or in abilities that make one human, but poor because they are denied access to material resources necessary for one to live a decent human life. They are oppressed by unjust structures, whether social, economic, or political.[7] The Church commits to dialogue with the poor, beyond works of charity but truly being the Church of the Poor by proclamation, witness, lifestyle, etc. It means speaking up for those who are helpless and marginalized and working towards social justice.[8]

It demands working, not for them merely (in a paternalistic sense), but *with* them, to learn from them (for we have much to learn from them!), their real needs and aspirations, as they are enabled to identify and articulate these, and to strive for their fulfillment, by transforming those structures and situations which keep them in that deprivation and powerlessness.[9]

All Asian Catholics belong to the Church of the Poor. Whether they be materially poor or rich, all must exercise the spirit of evangelical poverty by detaching from material

7 See FABC, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia: Statement and Recommendations of the First Plenary Assembly," in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970-1991,* ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arevalo, vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1992), 15. Hereafter referred to as FAPA I with page number.

8 Ibid., 5.

9 Ibid., 15.

possessions and acknowledging that everything is a gift and that all are totally dependent on God. The call includes a clear commitment to the marginalized and oppressed by being in solidarity with them, to defend their rights and dignity since they cannot defend themselves. What is true for the Church of the Poor in Asia holds true for its most basic unit, the domestic Church.[10] Since the Catholic family in Asia is the *ecclesia domestica,* the Church in the home or the mini-Church, she shares the same mission and identity as the Church of the Poor. She is the missionary disciple who is formed and nurtured by the Church but also sent out to nurture others, especially the ones at the peripheries.[11] Like the bigger Church, hers is a theology of the fringes: to seek out those most in need and minister to them, both *ad intra* (within the family) and *ad extra* (outside of the family). She is to go beyond herself and reach out to others, prioritizing the powerless. Within the family, that would mean the weakest among the members: the sick, the elderly, and the infants. Outside of the family, that would mean the voiceless, the oppressed, and the marginalized. And because the domestic Church is a family, there is strength in her numbers and in her unity, as families reach out to help other families.

Today's domestic Church of the Poor is on a more explicit mission of mercy, like Jesus, and like the bigger Church.[12] Concretely, mercy is forgiveness and total generosity, the way God gives his whole self to humanity, asking nothing in return. It is to release anger, violence, and revenge so that one may live joyfully. It is to bring glad tidings to the poor, bind

10 FABC, "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy," Eleventh Plenary Assembly Final Document, FABC Papers, no. 151 (Colombo, Sri Lanka: FABC, 2017), 4, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20Papers%20151.pdf (accessed 12 February 2020).

11 Ibid., 17.

12 Ibid., 18.

the brokenhearted, set captives free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19), when there are too many who are poor, broken, imprisoned, and oppressed.[13]

Living the Eucharist as a Domestic Church of the Poor

What follows is a discussion of the four major parts of the Mass (Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, The Eucharistic Prayer, and The Rite of Communion) as discussed in FABC IX, and the pastoral application for the family as domestic Church of the Poor using the optic of FABC XI.

Introductory Rites

Under the Introductory Rites, there is the Greeting and the Penitential Rite.

1. **The Greeting: Gathered as a Family of God, A Countersign to Divisions**

With the greeting, all the faithful are gathered as God's family. This loving union as a family of Christians becomes a countersign against the divisions that occur in the world. Such a union begins with God. It is He who makes the first move. It is He who takes the initiative. Because of Him, the family of believers becomes *ekklesia,* the community of brothers and sisters under Father God. The faithful are joined together by the truth that they are all God's children. It is a communion that brings hope and a foretaste of what shall be: communion as one family in heaven. All are called to go

13 Francis, *Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (Misericordiae Vultus),* 11 April 2015, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.pdf (accessed 27 February 2020), nos. 9, 14-15.

beyond themselves and out of their selfishness and see the other as brother and sister.[14]

The Catholic family in Asia is accustomed to gathering together. At the same time, gathering for a meal is likewise relatable because Asian families see meals as not merely for nourishment but as an opportunity to connect with the ones they love.[15] And yet, there is the danger of close family ties deteriorating into "closed" family ties, where loyalty to family may reject or discriminate against outsiders. Being overly inclusive of some, this may exclude others. The Eucharist reminds the domestic Church to expand rather than degenerate into an exclusive and closed unit. Living the Eucharist means that the domestic Church of the Poor must reach out especially to the poor so that no one feels left out or forgotten. As for the meal aspect, there is the danger of foregoing communion and family bonding due to a more individualistic and pragmatic lifestyle that erodes strong communitarian Asian family values. Living the Eucharist would mean union, not division. It would mean expanding the notion of family beyond kin to the spiritual family of believers and the human global family even.

Reflection: Have we confined ourselves to our own little family without regard for others outside this family,especially the marginalized? Have we lost family meal time to bond with family members given to us by God?

2. **The Penitential Rite: Recognizing God, Acknowledging Our Sinfulness**

Coming after the Greeting is the Penitential Rite. It is humbly coming before God and family (brothers and sisters in Christ) to acknowledge sinfulness and the need for God.

14 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 5-6.

15 Ibid., 6.

It is asking each other for prayers because of the shared common brokenness.

The Catholic family in Asia shares the gift of the Asian soul to naturally yearn for God and for life, to value humility and harmony.[16] Yet, Asians have fallen prey to violence, discrimination, and war. Biases and prejudices among Asian cultures, ethnic groups, and religions have led to massacres, the burning of homes, and the dislocation of families. Living the Eucharist would mean greater efforts to work for peace and harmony at the family level through the dialogue of life. This means working with other religions, cultures, and ethnic groups toward peace and justice.[17] Living the Eucharist likewise means seeing what is common among those who may not be like them, and extending mercy to other families, even as they need mercy themselves. [18]

Reflection: Are we able to acknowledge that family members may have different thoughts, perceptions, values, etc., even if we come from the same family? Do we respect the differences in opinion and respect them for what they believe? Do we acknowledge how we need mercy, which is love in action, from our family members, oftentimes undeserving though we may be? And in turn, do we extend mercy to our family members, too, difficult as it may be? Are we able to accept differences in other families and extend that mercy towards them?

Liturgy of the Word

Under the Liturgy of the Word, there are five parts highlighted: Listen to the Story of Jesus, Building a Common

16 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 7.

17 "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy," 8, 20-21.

18 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 7.

Memory, Profession of Faith, Prayers of the Faithful, and Offering of the Gifts.

1. **Listen to the Story of Jesus**

The Liturgy of the Word is an opportunity to listen to the story of Jesus. God speaks first. He reaches out to believers where they are and as they are. The faithful listen to His wisdom, to Jesus in the gospel because only Jesus has the words of eternal life (John 6,68-69).

Listening to God's stories is something Asians can resonate with since they value words a lot. This is evident in the many sacred writings and books found in Asian cultures that are held with much reverence. Yet, even apart from religion, words continue to be important for Asian cultures. People are expected to be true to their word and sincere with their words. In like manner, the Word of God, especially in the Eucharist, fortifies relationship bonds between Christ and His Body, the Church. Be that as it may, there are other words that compete with the life-giving words. They are words that promise a good, easy life, most often luring the youth and the poor. The challenge of living the Eucharist in Asia is for families to live by the true Word that is authentic and life-giving.[19]

Reflection: Do the words family members speak build each other up or tear each other down? Do they edify and make our family members better, or do they make them feel insecure and unhappy? Do our words make them feel unworthy and unloved?

2. **Building a Common Memory: Retelling the Word**

From listening to the Story of Jesus, the invitation to God's family is to build a common memory: an experience held together because all have experienced the goodness of the

19 Ibid., 8-9.

Lord. This telling and retelling of stories is something Asians hold dear as they gather to listen to their own hero epics. On the other hand, Asians are threatened by factors that prevent them from keeping the same memories: less time for family meals, migration, and being victims of armed conflict. Some stories are forbidden from retelling because of dictatorial rule, media censorship and suppression of the freedom of speech, and even the presence of governments who rewrite history books to suit their agenda and as propaganda. The Eucharist challenges God's family to continue retelling the stories, especially the story of the life-giving Word.[20]

Reflection: As a family, do we make time to share our stories and to eat together at least at dinner time? Do we share common experiences as a family so that we would have a common history? Do we work for greater bonding between grandparents and grandchildren so that there is a passing on of all that is beautiful and good – values, aspirations, dreams? Do we make time to especially retell the story of our faith – the Bible and the Gospels – to the bigger human family because they need to hear hope amidst the hopelessness?

3. **Profession of Faith: A Joyful but Risky Act**

From listening to God who has spoken, God's family is now asked to respond by professing the faith shared in common. The Creed is the Church's common memory that binds the faithful together with all the communities of believers who have passed on to the next life. The response of faith is a joyful act but also a risky one in parts of Asia where Christians are openly persecuted. It is in these countries that Asian Christians are a minority. Apart from the challenge of religious intolerance, there exists the reality of complacent, baptized Asians who take their faith for granted and even give

20 Ibid., 9-10.

in to a relativism that rejects the objective basis of faith, or who succumb to practical atheism (where they live as if God did not exist).[21]

Reflection: Does our family discriminate against those who are not Catholic? If we have family members of a different faith, Christian denomination, or if they are atheists, do we highlight our differences or arrogantly push our Faith as the better one or as the one, true Faith and their Faith as false? On the contrary, are we complacent about our Faith, taking it for granted? Do we joyfully witness to the Faith at home or do we keep silent about it? Do we live and act as if God does not exist in our home and in our lives?

4. **Prayers of the Faithful: Imploring God Who Listens**

The Prayers of the Faithful are a united effort to ask God to listen to our yearnings and needs, for we believe that God not only speaks but lovingly listens to us. We pray for the needs of humanity, making them our own. The gift of concern for others is truly Asian. We make sure to take care of each other and speak out for others because we realize the interconnectedness of everyone and everything. However, there are silenced voices in Asia, especially those who are marginalized. The Eucharist calls on us, who are the Church, to speak up for the muted voices since they cannot speak for themselves. It calls us out of our self-imposed deafness that we may bother to love and be our brothers' keeper.[22]

We can apply this to our family as we ask ourselves: Do we take care of each member of the family? Do we speak out against any injustice done to other family members, especially those who cannot speak for themselves, whose voices are silent or muted? Have we become deaf to the needs of

21 Ibid., 11-12.

22 Ibid., 16-17.

our family members because we are wrapped up in our own concerns, distracted by our own addictions (texting, FB, etc.) and vices? Do we play deaf because we do not want to get out of our comfort zone or because it is too much of a hassle?

5. **Offering of the Gifts: Signs of Hope in a World of Injustice**

The gifts we humbly offer in the Offering of the Gifts are signs of hope in a world that fails to be just. The priest prepares the Table of the Body and Blood of Christ. When he prepares the bread and wine, they are a sign that God continues to give life to the world. Asians come together in the Eucharist and realize that our life, our very existence, is a gift. Food is also a gift. Wine is a cause for celebration. What is offered reminds us that we must care for the earth that provides for us. Furthermore, we must cherish the gift of persons and relationships. Instead, we are guilty of sometimes objectifying and instrumentalizing others for our benefit. We put a premium on profit rather than respecting creation and work. In Asia, there are those who do not pay their workers enough and have them work in inhumane conditions. There is also a scandalous gap between the rich and the poor. Businessmen charge exhorbitant prices for goods.

The bread offered dares us to face the stark reality that there are still many who starve and are malnourished. The wine provokes us to reflect on the drunkenness of alcoholic husbands who beat their wives and children. It reminds us of the family debts incurred due to vices. Our offerings from the earth speak to challenge us if caring for the earth has become just another advocacy or worthy cause when originally, God called us to stewardship, to care for creation, especially for future generations.[23]

23 Ibid., 18-20.

Our Asian family can reflect on whether or not we cherish the gifts we have. Do we cherish the gift of family members and the gift of relationships that God has brought into our lives? Are we grateful for the gift of food, that we are granted daily food on our tables and an abundance of resources due to God's goodness and providence? Do our family members pitch in with the chores at home, careful not to overwork any one member, but working together while also having time for rest?

As we eat at the table, does our family also reach out to those who have nothing to eat? Do we stand up against the violence and abuse caused by a drunken family member? Does our family rise above the vices, like gambling, that lead to debt? Is our family a good steward of food and resources, careful not to waste them?

The Eucharistic Prayer

From the Liturgy of the Word, the next section is the Eucharistic Prayer. Subheadings for the Eucharistic Prayer include these two parts: the Institution Narrative and the Communion with the Living and the Dead.

1. **Institution Narrative: From Betrayal to the Sacrifice of Self-Giving and Service**

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the great Thanksgiving prayer of the Church. We recall the Last Supper of Jesus. It is a healing and purifying remembrance, even though it is filled with betrayal and suffering. We remember the meaning of Jesus's death. In our woundedness, we would rather not remember. The Eucharist teaches us to bravely face the painful memories of the past with the hope of God's victory of love in Jesus. For every dark memory in Jesus's life and, consequently, in our own lives, God moves to transform it into something good and beautiful. For the Lord did say, "unless a grain of

wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." (John 12,24) Christ needed to suffer and die for our sake. Otherwise, we would not have been able to become children of God.

Asians know there is hope for those who suffer from bitter memories and betrayal. The challenge of the Eucharist is to not cling to the bitterness of those who have been unjust to us. This can only lead to violence. It is to not cling to the idolatry of youth and beauty by doing all to delay aging and death at all costs. Rather, it is to oppose the death culture of poverty, abortion, domestic violence, illegal drugs, environmental pollution, sex tourism, human trafficking, and the objectification of women and the girl-child. These are truly dark moments for Asia, but God can transform the evil works through us, who are His disciples. For indeed, we are His hands and feet. We bring the good and the beautiful that God wills for our world when we give the gift of self.[24]

As for our Asian family, do we hold on to feelings of bitterness towards those family members who have been unfair to us or who have wronged us and betrayed us? Do we allow ourselves to acknowledge the pain we feel, or do we pretend that we are not hurt by the words and actions of other family members? At the same time, will we also readily let go of the bitter memories to be healed and for family relationships to be restored?

Reflection: Does our Asian family put an exaggerated premium on youth, beauty and the physical? Are we in denial about the fact that our loved ones will age and die one day? And while they are still with us, do we care for them with tenderness and concern?

24 Ibid., 20-23.

2. **Communion with the Living and the Dead**

The Eucharist is a moment when we become Christ's Body together by Jesus's Spirit. We are in communion with the universal Church. This unity goes beyond borders, whether they be ethnic, cultural, economic, or political borders. It is at this point when we remember the dead, especially the saints. Asians know only too well what it means to live in diversity. Asia is the largest and most populous continent in the world. It is a mixture of varied cultures. Neither is the remembrance of our dead far from the Asian heart, for we know that while our beloved dead are not physically present anymore, we shall be united with them one day. Even now, we feel deeply connected with them and believe we can communicate with them.

The challenge of the Eucharist in Asia is not to fall into the trap of division and conflict that may easily arise in such a diverse continent. There are also the unnamed and forgotten who have died as victims of violence in Asia.[25]

Reflection: As an Asian family, do we remember our dead, our beloved family members who have gone before us? Do we pray for them and ask them to pray for us? Do we likewise pray for the unnamed and forgotten, those who have no family to pray for them?

The Rite of Communion

From the Eucharistic Prayer, the Mass proceeds to the Rite of Communion. We receive Jesus' Self-Gift so that we may live in communion with Him. He becomes a part of us, but we also become part of Him, part of His Body.

Subheadings for the Rite of Communion are these four parts: The Lord's Prayer and the Exchange of Peace, Receiving

25 Ibid., 23-24.

Communion, Amen to the Bread of Love, and A Mission to Witness to Jesus.

1. **The Lord's Prayer and the Exchange of Peace: Love is Communion and Peace**

In the Rite of Communion, we find the Lord's Prayer and Exchange of Peace. Love is about communion and peace. When we recite the Lord's Prayer together, we call God Abba because we are adopted sons and daughters in Christ. For the sign of peace, we bless one another with the gift of the Risen Lord. We offer them the love of the Father. This is the love we believe in and celebrate. This is the peace that calls us to reconcile with one another.

Asia's gift of family is an example of communion. The strong Asian family ties are a sign of the Father's love. The challenge of the Eucharist is to conquer the forces that undermine the home in Asia: poverty, war, abusive parents, vices, aggression, rivalry, competition, etc.[26]

Reflection: As an Asian Christian family, how do we bring Christ's peace to our family members? How do we bless one another? This peace is not the peace of this world, a peace that merely maintains the status quo, but the true peace of Christ that authentically restores relationships. Do we protect the peace within our family, robbed by poverty, abusive parents, vices, and sibling rivalry?

2. **Receiving Communion: Superabundant Love**

The peak of the celebration of the Eucharist is the reception of Christ's superabundant love in Communion. We dare to approach God after humbly declaring that we are not worthy. The gift of Christ is more than we deserve. We are not worthy. We are not worthy. We are truly not worthy.

26 Ibid., 24-26.

Asians enjoy an abundance of natural and human resources. Yet, so many live in dire poverty, seeking bread due to the greed of others. Living the Eucharist means standing against the injustice of poverty. We are challenged to provide bread that fills the hunger of the poor but also the Living Bread that satiates the spirit.[27]

Reflection: Does our Asian family reach out together to those who hunger, both physically and spiritually? As catechists and religious educators, we can initiate efforts for our family to volunteer in parish activities that minister to those who have no food and no proper formation or catechesis.

3. **Amen to the Bread of Love: Commitment to Mission**

When we take Christ in communion, we say Amen to the Bread of Life, who is also the Bread of Love. This Amen is part of the send-off, a missionary moment, calling us to bear much fruit. (John 15,16) Yet, we can only do this if we remain in the love of God. (John 15,4) Indeed, the mystery of the mission is this: to abide as we go and go as we abide.

To live the Eucharist in Asia calls for attentive listening. We are to discern where God is sending us and then go there with joy, zeal, and a mission-ready spirit. In Asia, this must include the teeming masses of the poor, the tired, and the lowly. They are faced with a life filled with bad news. We must offer them the Good News of Christ.[28]

In our Asian family, do we reach out beyond our nuclear family or family of origin to bring forth the joy, zeal, and love that we have experienced in our family with all those we meet? Our family has a mission: to spread love and to become a visible sign of Christ's love to the world!

27 Ibid., 26.
28 Ibid., 27.

4. **A Mission to Witness to Jesus**

The Eucharist ends with a mission to witness to Jesus. After gathering as a community, hearing God speak and making it part of our memory, gazing with awe at the hope of creation, remembering the painful memory of Jesus's Self-Gift, and tasting the Bread of Life, we must now witness to what we have seen, heard, and tasted. After every celebration of the Eucharist, it ends with the call to mission. Certainly, in most of Asia, the Church is a minority. Nonetheless, the call is there. Perhaps precisely because we are a little flock in Asia, this makes it even more vital for us who are Christians to share the gift of Jesus and make little ripples of love and hope by our deeds of joy, simplicity, and love. Furthermore, the Eucharist challenges us to seek out those who need our care the most, such as the migrants separated from their families, broken homes, the innocent imprisoned for crimes they did not commit, and people contemplating suicide.[29]

Reflection: As an Asian family, we have much to contribute to the Church and to the world. Do we seek out those who need us to accompany them in their journey, especially students and those within our reach? Do we share the Good News of Christ with them? It is the Eucharist that will empower us to do so.

Conclusion

This paper outlined the guiding principles from the two FABC plenary assembly documents toward an ongoing formation and catechesis of Asian Catholic families. The first part discussed the sad reality of viewing the Eucharist as a forced obligation without relevance to daily living. The second part was about the context, content, and contribution

29 Ibid., 28-29.

of the two plenary assembly documents. The author holds that both the Eucharist and Church of the Poor possess filial or relatable imagery that might help Asian families rediscover their nature, vocation, and mission. The last part was an application of the guiding principles using the parts of the Mass as a framework. Each entry has points for reflection in the hope that Asian Catholic families may remember their calling to 'make disciples' at home, in their ecclesial community, and in the larger society.

The FABC Vision of the Youth as Evangelizers in Asia, Particularly in the Archdiocese of Goa

Sr. Antonetta Pereira, FMM

The year 2013 was celebrated as the year of faith. Connecting evangelization as a witness of faith, Pope Benedict XVI in his World Youth Day message to the youth called upon them to "go and make disciples of all the nations" (Mt 28:19a).[1] The youth were reminded of their mission to evangelize. Time and again different pontiffs have expressed their trust in the capacity of the young to evangelize. However, the enthusiasm and confidence of the pontiffs may have often lacked the necessary resonance at the local levels.

My personal interest in the topic of "youth as evangelizers" emerges from my experience in the youth apostolate in Goa. This study is influenced by the enthusiasm and capacity of the youth, who form the largest population in Asia,[2] coupled with their quest for God and hunger for justice.

Goa is the smallest state on the western coast of India; it has more than 30 beaches on its coastline of 101 kilometers, making it India's capital of beach tourism. Tourism is one of the significant economic contributors as well as a primary perpetrator of evils like prostitution, pedophilia, human trafficking, drug peddling, substance abuse, school dropouts, gambling, gang crimes, and loss of morality and values,

1 Benedict XVI, "Missionaries of New Evangelization," The Pope's Message for World Youth Day 2013, *L'Osservatore Romano* 47:2272 (21 November 2012): 12.

2 S. Koilmani, "Potentialities and Crises of Modern Youth and the Role of the Church," *SEDOS Bulletin* 42:11/12 (2010): 258.

among others. Most of the coastal population is Catholic. Hence, the Catholic youth are the most affected by the lure of pleasure, fast money, and a carefree lifestyle. (cf. SDS 65).[3]

The Archdiocese of Goa has a well-established youth apostolate in every parish under Diocesan Youth Centre. Various programs catering to the formation, fellowship, and social outreach are conducted for the youth. However, such activities targeting the youth seem to fall short of checking the negative influences of the tourism culture. The Good News of Jesus is received by those who attend the Church activities. Hence, the need is to take the message to the same avenues where the "bad news" is invading the lives of the youth. Secondly, the Church-centered activities for the youth betray the fact that the youth are often regarded as the object of the Church's mission and may not be recognized as the subject of evangelization itself. The youth are the Church and hence are missionaries.

So, one may ask, WHY the YOUTH? What purpose do they fulfill? Various purposes may emerge depending on the optic of the viewer. This study focuses on youth for multiple reasons. The primary purpose of this study focuses on the youth as evangelizers based on the vision of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) for the Church in Asia. The FABC has articulated many aspects of its vision of "a new way of being Church," like the triple dialogue, forming an Asian Church, Church as communion, participatory Church, Missionary Church, etc. This study does not deal with all those aspects, yet it does not negate them; rather it suggests youth as evangelizers as another approach. This study concentrates on those aspects pertaining only to the participation and contribution of youth in this endeavor.

3 Archdiocese of Goa, *Statement of the Diocesan Synod 2002* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2002).

Secondly, new evangelization is an inexhaustible topic, especially given the vast and diverse Asian context. Hence, the study looks only at issues pertaining to the youth. As this study tries to correlate theological insights with pastoral applications within the context of the Church in Goa, the study is limited in that it does not take into consideration aspects of being Church in Asia which prevail in various other circumstances.

The study is limited in its scope as it does not explicitly consider evangelization of the non-Catholic youth or the secular realm. The research is also restricted from the point of view of available materials on the topic from the Church in Goa. Given the accepted situation of religious tolerance enjoyed by the Church in Goa and the considerable number of religious men and women, limited efforts have been made in the area of engaging the youth as evangelizers. Hence, some helpful theological and missiological insights and pastoral guidelines presented here may aid the local Church in considering this area so long overlooked as essential to its very mission.

The urgent need is to study, evaluate and revitalize the youth apostolate to engage the youth as evangelizers to one of the new *areopagus*, the youth culture. This article, therefore, seeks an answer to the question: How can the Church in Asia (especially in Goa) engage her youth in the new evangelization to fulfill the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church"? (*FAPA I*, 275)[4]

4 All the references to FABC documents will be generally taken from the five volumes of *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences from 1970-1991* volume I edited by Gaudencio B. Rosales and C. G. Arévalo, volumes II, III, and IV edited by Franz-Josef Eilers and volume V edited by Vimal Tirimanna. The abbreviation FAPA will be used, followed by volume number (e.g. II) and the specific page number(s).

The Church of Asia in all its richness and variety exists as a minority and "foreign" [5] Church yet, witnesses as a leaven in the world to the pluralistic and contrasting factors in Asia. Various articles, books, and the *FABC Papers*[6] give an idea of the situation of the youth in Asia. Like Asia itself, the youth cannot be understood in one simple definition. Akin to their age and era, they represent the technologically advanced, mobile, digital citizens of the world. The historical changes in the world due to globalization and commercialization have affected the youth both positively and negatively. On the positive side, they have become more advanced, more capable global citizens while on the negative side they are often rendered uncommitted, disillusioned, individualistic, and lacking in meaning in life.

The globalized and secularized context of Asia challenges the Church to be truly Asian. The Church is challenged to be present to the different cultures, to the different faith traditions and to the teeming poor of Asia in a new way: by way of an integral dialogue, qualified by participatory processes of engagement, and imbued with prophetic witness which together can be summed up as a "new way of being Church." [7]

The journey of the Church in Goa is traced from the post-colonial period. At a time when the Church was opening up after the Vatican Council II, Goa too was opening up to changes free from colonial rule (Goa was liberated in

5 Thomas Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2003), 12.

6 Since 1976 the FABC Central Secretariat in Hong Kong has published various "resource papers" on a wide variety of themes. Presently (2014), over 139 FABC Papers have been published. James H. Kroeger has prepared and published a comprehensive index of these papers in FAPA IV and FAPA V as a special supplement. All references to the FABC Papers will be noted as *FABC Papers* followed by the number of the paper, year of publication, and page number (e.g. FABC Papers 138 [2012], 56-57, 67).

7 *FABC Papers* 92i (2000), 21.

December 1961). In the post-colonial era, the Church soon plunged itself in the spirit of the Council and entered into the social, political, and cultural life of the people. Devoid of the financial and political privileges of the Portuguese regime, the Church learned to be a prophetic voice in a secular India. However, it can be said that Goa has not yet fully lived to respond to the challenges posed by tourism. Probably low missionary awareness and low lay participation in the mission of the Church seem to hinder the full maturity of the Church of Goa as a *communio*, missionary and participatory Church.[8]

The situation of the youth of Goa is not different from the youth in Asia or other developing countries. Globalization has created a culture of survival of the fittest, leading to migration and unemployment. Another major concern that the Church worries about is the youth affected by the negative influences of unchecked tourism. This research has helped to put the study in the context; the context of the Church of Asia and the Church of Goa, the context of the youth of Goa, and the need for evangelization and involvement of all laity (youth included) in the mission of the Church.

The Need for Youth Evangelizers

Here we are looking for WHY we want the youth as evangelizers. This is answered by exploring three interrelated theological themes: (1) *Communio* Ecclesiology; (2) Evangelization; and (3) Missional Participation. These theological concepts form the backdrop against which the Church of Asia and especially the Church of the Goa lives her pastoral ecclesiality (cf. EA 25, SDS 51).[9] Based on these theological foundations, the Church of Goa has made herself one with the

8 *FABC Papers* 130 (2010), 38.

9 Archdiocese of Goa and Daman, *Statement of the Diocesan Synod 2002* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2002), 16.

lives of her people which is reflected in her various involvements and the Diocesan Pastoral Plan (DPP).[10]

FABC Perspectives on *Communio* Ecclesiology

Introduction to the FABC

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) is an association that emerged from the call of Vatican Council II for a participatory and communal Church. It was a dream of the Asian Bishops to "see the face of an Asia at long last coming to birth as a true community of peoples." (Message of the (ABM) Asian Bishops' Meeting article 12). This dream was conceptualized and presented during the Asian Bishops' Meeting with Pope Paul VI in 1970 in Manila (*FAPA I*, 4). It has given to the Church a vision of a "new way of being Church," and has helped to shape the "ecclesiology and missiology of the Asian Church."[11]

In response to the vision of Vatican Council II, the FABC builds and sustains the *communio* ecclesiology by creating bonds of sharing, communication, and collaboration among the bishops, different conferences, and at other levels of the Church in Asia. It is theological and pastoral in nature.

One of the commitments of FABC is in fulfilling its commitment made to the youth in 1970 ABM (*FAPA I*, 6). It organized the Youth Desk in 1994 under the aegis of the office of the laity. It has consistently made the youth a major pastoral priority.[12] Through the Youth Desk, the FABC

10 Archdiocese of Goa and Daman, *Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2002* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2002).

11 James Kroeger, "Asia's Dynamic, Missionary Local Churches: FABC Perspectives," *Landas* 19:2 (2005): 177.

12 FABC Office of Evangelization, Statement of the Symposium on "Evangelization in the Light of *Ecclesia In Asia*," in *Evangelization in the Light of Asia,* edited by Saturnino Dias (Bangalore, India: Claretian Publication, 2003), 307-320.

responds to the needs and concerns of the youth and youth ministry of Asia. It fosters collaboration and networking amongst youth commissions, particularly in its member episcopal conferences. Thus, it aids the Church of Asia to live in communion and missional participation.

Communio Ecclesiology: FABC Perspectives

The FABC, emerging from the vision of the Second Vatican Council, employs the same idea as that of the Council to describe the Church's nature and mission (*FAPA I,* 55). In the 1980s the FABC began to explore the idea of the Church as communion in various plenary assemblies. The third FABC plenary assembly in Bangkok (1982), stressed the Trinitarian foundation of the Church and her role in building human communities:

> The Church is at its deepest level a *communio (koinônia)* rooted in the life of the Trinity, and thus in its essential reality a sacrament *(mysterium et sacramentum)* of the loving self-communication of God and the graced response of redeemed mankind in faith, hope and love (*FAPA I,* 60).

The *communio* aspect is further enumerated in various reflections of the FABC. The Church is endorsed as a "community of authentic participation and co-responsibility" (FABC III: 7.6), "one with its pastors" (FABC III: *7.7*), and in communion with "other communities of faith," and the universal Church (FABC III: 7.8).[13] This communion is expressed in the Church as "a communion of committed disciples; be they clergy or laity; working for the liberation of Asia" (FABC IV: 4.1.3).[14]

A pivotal point was the fifth FABC plenary assembly in Bandung (1990) which coined the phrase "communion

13 *FABC Papers* 32 (1982), 26.
14 *FABC Papers* 37 (1986), 39.

of communities."[15] It explained that the "new way of being Church" as a "communion of communities" embraces three elements: it is participatory, it is dialogical, and it is prophetic (*FAPA II,* 3). This understanding was reinforced by the sixth FABC plenary assembly (Manila, 1995). It reiterated the need for the Asian Church to move towards a "new way of being Church;" a Church that is committed to becoming a "community of communities" (FABC VI, 3).[16] Dialogue is vital to *communio* ecclesiology as it is through dialogue that the Church is in communion with the context of Asia.[17] During the tenth FABC plenary assembly (2012), it re-committed itself to be a "communion of communities."[18] The growth of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) in Asia is yet another sign of the reception and growth of the *communio* ecclesiology in Asia (*FAPA II*, 107-111 and 137-139). It has been noted that BECs have been the seedbed for co-responsibility and the active participation of the laity in decision-making and action for social transformation.[19]

Repercussions for Youth Ministry

The *communio* ecclesiology signifies that all the baptized are bonded together in Christ, within the Church, and among themselves. It is the core of human existence. Humans are made to be relational beings. This human characteristic is most evident among the youth. Most often they prefer to be

15 Jonathan Tan, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia: The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at the Service of Life in Pluralistic Asia," *Missiology* 33:1 (2005): 73.

16 *FABC Papers* 74 (1995), 82. See: Tan, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia," 74.

17 Peter Phan, "Asian Perspective," in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church,* edited by Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2008), 286.

18 *FABC Papers* 138 (2012), 10.

19 The Bishops' Institute for Lay Apostolate (BILA), first organized by the FABC Office of the Laity in 1984, has been significant in promoting lay empowerment.

in the company of their peers, to belong to a group. Their activities, their preferences, and their dealings all reflect the *communio* aspect in its seminal form. Hence, it would not be a difficult task to expect a communal life from the youth. Depending on the circumstances, they often are a homogenous group by themselves and among themselves. However, the challenge is to incorporate the youth in the larger community of believers to complete the *communio* ecclesiology. The FABC guidelines would aid in this task; its participatory and dialogical approach to the youth would help mutual *koinônia*, participation, sharing, and communication.

FABC Perspectives on Evangelization

Evangelization is the second major theological theme. Evangelization is an ecclesial act (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 60). It is neither in isolation nor is it an individual endeavor. The Second Vatican Council stressed the missionary character of the Church which flows from the dynamic missionary character of God himself. God is a communion-in-mission and hence, the Church imitates God as communion-in-mission.[20]

The FABC has given priority to evangelization from its very beginnings. The first Plenary Assembly in 1974 had the theme: "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia." Its deliberations and final statement reveal the urgency of the task of proclaiming Jesus to the Asian continent. This mission aims to share the Christian faith with Asian brothers and sisters in answer to their many quests. Evangelization also seeks to offer dignity, freedom and communion to all peoples (*FAPA I*, 13). Furthermore, "new evangelization" reflects on the new contexts, namely the task

20 Robert Rivers, "Eucharist and Evangelization: Two Sides of One Reality," *Origins* 35:11 (2005): 190.

of evangelizing consciences and cultures which challenge the Church today.[21]

The Indian Church considers the three issues of new evangelization; ardor, methods, and expression from within its context. Cardinal Gracias, in his opening address in 2012 at a seminar on the new evangelization in Pune, India, specified that the mission of evangelization means "an adequate response to the signs of the times, the needs of the individuals, peoples, sectors and their cultures."[22] The FABC reflections on evangelization were re-echoed in some of the 59 final propositions made by the special synod of Asia (1998):[23]

- The need for an Asian approach to Church, theology, mission, etc.;
- Acceptance of the triple dialogue with cultures, religions, and the poor as a way of mission;
- The FABC focus on a "New Way of Being Church" as a "communion of communities";
- Restraining from applying a uniform pattern of evangelization in Asia, yet, stressing the centrality of Jesus as a Savior;
- Emphasis on authentic witnessing and spirituality for evangelization;
- The missionary and evangelizing role of the laity with special focus on women, family, and the youth.

21 Hervé Carrier, "Evangelization and Mission" in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology,* edited by René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad Publication Company, 1994), 286.

22 Oswald Gracias, "New Evangelization: A Prophetic and Revolutionary Call," in *New Evangelization: Asian Perspectives,* edited by Joy Thomas and Victor Sagayam (Mumbai, India: St. Paul's, 2012), 19-25.

23 The Synod of Bishops for Asia, "The Synod's Propositions," in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries,* edited by Peter Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 140-165.

However, evangelization as proclamation cannot be reduced to the proclamation of the text or the creed and doctrines alone. A proclamation divorced from the realities of life and the context of the recipient would be in the abstract. Therefore, FABC's thrust of proclamation is through the triple dialogue: with religions, cultures, and the poor (*FAPA I*, 280). It is a proclamation in word and action. Though the "proclamation of Jesus Christ is the primary and central element of evangelization" (*FAPA I,* 292), yet, evangelization includes being with people, responding to their needs, being sensitive to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing, and word; These are equally important (cf. *FAPA I*, 280).

Repercussions for Youth Ministry

The Church regards the youth as evangelizers of the young and even of others. As evangelizers, they are sent to proclaim through word and action. By nature, the youth are action-oriented, full of energy, and always on the "go." Hence, the FABC repeatedly calls upon the Church of Asia to recognize the dynamic wealth of the youth and evangelize them to be evangelizers. The advantage of the FABC perspectives on evangelization is that every youth can find a way to be part of the evangelizing mission of the Church. Evangelization encompasses proclamation, dialogue, development, social action, liberation, inculturation, prayer, and many more aspects. The FABC presents evangelization as an achievable and appealing goal to the youth.

FABC Perspectives on Missional Participation

Missional Participation is the third theological concept that explains "why" the youth should be evangelizers. Just like *communio* ecclesiology and evangelization, missional

participation too has its foundation in the theology of the Trinity. Human persons are created in the image and likeness of God which is three persons in partnership and in shared responsibility, whose orientation is outward, and whose shared love spills over and beyond itself. The concept of *perichoresis*, or the mutual indwelling/interpenetration of the three persons in a dynamic, circulating movement, offers rich analogies for human interdependence and relational community.

Participation can also be understood as humanity's ongoing participation in God's theological/metaphysical events and realities, such as creation, exodus, exile, return, incarnation, and Pentecost, and also in the ongoing participation in Christ and the Church. Thus, the mutual interpenetration of God in human history and of humanity in God's plan can be termed as participation-in-mission.

Participation in the mission of Jesus belongs to the nature of being Christian. The FABC asserts that communion with Christ by virtue of Baptism invites all the believers to participate in the triple function of Jesus: priest, prophet, and king. Through its various assemblies, the FABC has emphasized missional participation for a participatory Church.

One can notice a gradual broadening of the concept of missional participation in FABC documents. In the first plenary assembly in 1974 the stress was on the common responsibility for preaching the Gospel as the task was considered to have assumed "an urgency, a necessity, and magnitude unmatched in the history of our faith in this part of the world" (FABC I, 8). The third plenary assembly in 1982 recognized missional participation through ministries. It affirmed the Church as a "community of authentic participation and co-responsibility, where genuine sharing of gifts and responsibilities obtains, where the talents and charisms of each are

accepted and exercised in diverse ministries."[24] It also called the Church to promote "active responsible participation of the laity."[25]

Admitting the lack of incorporation of the laity in the mission of the Church the fourth plenary assembly encouraged the Church to "evaluate the activities and structures that call for and encourage the involvement of the laity in the life of the Church."[26] It also stressed the importance of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) without reducing their status to pragmatic planning organizations.[27] In addition, the fourth FABC plenary assembly emphasized the missional participation of the youth as "evangelizers, messengers, and instruments of God — not only among their peers, but also among their elders and in the wider society."[28]

Later in the Bandung assembly in 1990 (FABC V), the FABC reiterated the participatory view of the fourth plenary assembly when it acknowledged that a participatory Church is one of the means to realize a "new way of being Church" in Asia.

Repercussions for Youth Ministry

The FABC has always expressed its concern for the young people of Asia who form around sixty percent of the population of the continent. In the historic gathering with Pope Paul VI in Manila in 1970, the Asian Bishops were unanimous in stating that "Asia indeed is the Church of the Young," and that the FABC wishes the Church to be worthy of the devotion and hope of the young (*FAPA I* 6). The Youth Desk has come to be organized under the Office of the Laity as an official arm

24 *FABC Papers* 32 (1982), 26.
25 Ibid., 40.
26 *FABC Papers* 47 (1986), 14.
27 Ibid., 16.
28 Ibid., 28.

of FABC.[29] Its main purpose is to support and to respond to the needs and concerns of the youth and youth ministry in Asia and to foster collaboration and networking among youth commissions, particularly of the FABC member Episcopal conferences.

FABC has unfailingly named the youth in the Church in Asia as a major pastoral priority (*FAPA IV,* 256). Yet, greater emphasis has been on the mission to the youth. For example, the ninth FABC plenary assembly in 2009 recommended the Church of Asia to care for the special pastoral needs of the youth, and to listen to them and speak their language (FBC IX, 4.4.4). In 2012, the tenth FABC plenary assembly made recommendations for the faith formation and value education of the young (FABC X, 2). All these illustrate that the young are often at the receiving end. Thus, Joe Mannath asks a valid question: "Do they [youth] have a say in what the whole Church claims to say [to them]?"[30] When they are not participating in the decision-making process of the local Church, they may feel alienated, as Somchai, a youth leader, states.[31]

Following the directives from the universal Church, the FABC suggested a ministry of accompaniment to lead the youth to become committed and zealous evangelizers not only of their peers but also of others (*FAPA IV*, 257). The seventh FABC plenary assembly in 2000 called the Church to journey with the youth and to "see them as resources and not

29 Joy Candelario, "The FABC: Youth Desk Journey an Experience of Emmaus," in *Youth Ministry in Asia: Reliving the Emmaus Story,* edited by Joy Candelario (Rizal, Philippines: FABC-OLF-Youth Desk, 2007), 17-21.

30 Joe Mannath, "Youth Ministry Today: Principles and Ecclesial Dimensions," *Vidyajyoti* 61:5 (1997): 327.

31 Nicholas Somchai, "Youth Involvement in Asian Church," in *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia,* edited by James Kroeger and Peter Phan (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002), 39-41.

as problems" and "to involve them as agents and co-workers of evangelization," in decision-making and not only in the implementation phase (*FAPA III*, 10). Yet, this is not fairly reflected at the local level or even in the main purpose of the FABC Youth Desk. Jerome Vallabaraj notes that a regno-centric youth ministry advocated by the teachings of the Church and the FABC will fulfill the true vision of mission and encourage missional participation of the youth as agents of evangelization.[32]

The Church in Goa towards a "New Way of Being Church"

Having seen the WHY of youth evangelizers, one is gripped with the question HOW? The Church is missionary. The call to new evangelization by the universal Church and the Asian vision of a "new way of being Church" awakens the Church to live her missionary vocation in new and changing situations of society, cultures, politics, economics, and religions. The evolution and the shift in the understanding of mission give a new meaning and purpose to the Church's missionary endeavors. The reality is that the Church who is an evangelizer begins by being evangelized herself (EN 15). Our God is a missionary God who always inspires his people into mission. Therefore, having been sent and evangelized, the Church is inspired to send out evangelizers (cf. EN 15).

To fulfill the vision of a participatory Church, the Church of Goa has tried to strengthen participatory structures at all levels, allowing the laity to participate in the decision-making structures. Some of the structures are the various diocesan bodies, Parish Pastoral Councils, Basic Christian Communities, etc. However, reflecting on the role of youth

32 Jerome Vallabaraj, "Youth Ministry: Beyond the Inside-out and the Outside-in," *Vidyajyoti* 66:7 (2002): 489.

evangelizers, the young feel that they were not adequately represented in the mission of the Church. Hence, there is a felt need to ensure the missional participation of the youth at parish and diocesan levels.

Answers to these questions may help to clarify "How" the Church can be evangelized and be sent out as evangelizers.

- How can the Church envision training of laity (youth) beyond the church-centered apostolates like liturgy, music, Eucharistic ministers, etc.?
- How can the Archdiocese plan a regular program in orienting and training youth for evangelization?
- How can the Church leadership visualize the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church" concerning her ministry to the youth and ministry by the youth in the Archdiocese? What more can be done to concretize this FABC vision?
- How are the youth related to or integrated with the overall pastoral plan of the diocese/parish?

Integrating youth evangelizers into the mission of the Church is not only a daunting task for the Church's leadership, but it is also a major responsibility for the laity to exercise their missional vocation. They have to awake from their passivity, arising from the long period of downplaying the common priesthood of all.

In the course of the research four conclusions have emerged which can be considered relevant and important: The FABC Vision, Youth and Triple Communion, Formation in Mission, and Developing a Relevant Spirituality. A brief look at each of the findings reveals the importance of youth as evangelizers for the Church of Goa.

Youth and Triple Communion

In the face of the numerous challenges to the Church and the youth of Goa, the Church is moved to creatively foster her communion with the youth. Communion with God is the initiation for Christian being and doing (cf. Jn 15:5). It is an experience of communion with Jesus brought about through active participation in the sacraments, liturgy, popular devotions, personal encounter, and the Word of God. For some, these become a once-in-a-life-time event and there seems to be a lack of follow-up or a process to sustain and deepen the experience. The first experience of communion spontaneously leads one to the second level, that is, communion with the wider Church, including the clergy. This clergy-youth communion is something that has to grow from dependency to co-responsibility, from being spectators to actors, and from the role of assistants to collaborators. Thus, communion with God leads to a deeper communion with the world which is the third dimension of the triple communion. The God-experience becomes the starting point of the missionary venture. The goal of the triple communion is a God-experience leading to a commitment to discipleship, community, and mission. It will help to shift the focus from the center to the periphery. Triple communion will also recapture the initial mission of the Church with Christ and his kingdom as the center.

Formation in Mission

This growth to Christian maturity lays a responsibility on the Church for the formation of the youth. The youth have to be formed in mission. This implies that the young should be formed in theory and at the same time, their formation should be practical and oriented towards mission. It is to be

an experience-based formation that helps them to apply their critical and creative thinking to their being and doing as evangelizers in the mission of the Church.

Relevant Spirituality

This makes one think: Why will the youth want to be missionaries? The answer is: Who can convince the youth to be missionaries other than the Spirit of God? Hence, the youth need to be led to and sustained in their quest for God. They should be helped in having a God-experience; hence, there is a need to develop a relevant spirituality. A few examples of capturing spiritualities can be relevant to the quest of the youth: Incarnational Spirituality (becoming one with, crossing boundaries, pitching one's tent), Discipleship Spirituality (staying with and learning from, being sent out, and a partnership of equals), and Kenotic Spirituality (attitude of receiving, bending low, and washing feet). Mission is and should be the outcome of the God-experience of the youth.

Finally, how could we establish the connection between the Church teaching and lived experience, or seek the integration between the theological and the pastoral insights especially those of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) on the participation of the *youth evangelizers* in the evangelizing mission of the Church *in Asia, especially in the archdiocese of Goa*? The influence of the young on society and the Church is recognized and appreciated by Vatican Council II (*AA* 21). This influence, if channeled in the right direction could be a very powerful tool for evangelization. Their large numbers, magnanimous disposition, and talents of head and heart make the youth potential agents of evangelization to their peers and

the larger society.[33] However, they need to be evangelized to be evangelizers (cf. *EN* 13-15).

The youth are not only the hope of the Church of Goa,[34] but they are the Church of today. They form horizontal and vertical communion in the Church as "Body of Christ" and as "People of God." Therefore, as Church, they are sharers in her missional identity (*AG* 2). Hence, the participation of youth in evangelization is not a choice but a responsibility. It is a daunting challenge for the Church of Goa to integrate the youth as evangelizers into her pastoral plan. This research, therefore, takes a general look at the various aspects that can help the Church commit to this challenge and orient the vision for a "new way of being Church."

Insights to Praxis

In the previous two sections, we have seen the Why and How. In this section we see the connection between the theory and the practical; the WHAT of youth evangelizers.

Application of *Communio* Ecclesiology for Youth Evangelizers

In this section, the writer seeks the application of *communio* ecclesiology for youth evangelizers in the Church of Goa. The youth [evangelizers] are the special focus of this research.

The identity and the mission of the Church as communion encompassing *Koinônia* (participation) and communication. Church as communion has been one of the most felicitous

33 James Kroeger, ed. *Exploring the Treasures of Vatican II* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Press, 2011), 116.

34 Filipe Neri Ferrão, *Faith Creates Communion, Strengthens Family, Commissions to Renew Society* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2014), 20.

realizations of Vatican Council II and has been emphasized by the FABC and the Church of Goa. The Church as communion is a web of relationships at various levels. *Communio* ecclesiology is lived at two levels; the visible and the invisible. The visible element is seen in the communion of all people and the invisible element is lived by participating in God's life. This communion which is at various levels is not for itself but has a missional orientation. Thus, the responsibility of the laity/youth is not only to pay and pray but also to play a significant part as a "*communio*" Church in their spheres in the parish, family, places of work and study, and social outreach. They are not to be passive and powerless. Hence, the youth are an important link to this *communio* ecclesiology.

The youth live in a digital, mobile, cybernetic, fast-track world which the Church of Goa has to take into consideration while trying to apply *communio* ecclesiology for youth evangelizers. The elders are often suspicious of the youth because of their so-called non-commitment, unsteadiness, increased mobility, increased connectivity, increased activity, etc. These supposed hindrances to communion could be transformed to the very advantage of evangelization. This is a challenge for the Church. This is a new opportunity knocking at the door of the Church; to enter the new *areopagus* and evangelize it. The Church is challenged to bring back her youth gently into communion, not with herself alone, but primarily into communion with Christ. *Ecclesia in Asia* reminds Church leaders: "If young people are to be effective agents of mission, the Church needs to offer them suitable pastoral care" (*EA* 47). This would include helping the youth to build communion with God, with the clergy, and with society.

Implications of Evangelization for Youth Evangelizers

Their youthfulness, generosity, and their desire for God, elevate the young above their challenges and their problems, making them special for and in the Church.

The circumstances of the life of the youth, their habits of thought and their relationships with their families and others have been radically transformed by the postmodern, fast-changing culture in which they find themselves. Therefore, the standard methods of evangelization through catechism, popular devotions, and ecclesio-centric activities may fail to entice the modern youth to a large extent. The world has so much to offer to them which catches their attention and absorbs them. In comparison, the evangelizing activities of the Church seem to be outdated and uninteresting. Hence, evangelization of the young has to begin in their context, the context of the complex global village, cultural pluralism, and organized religion.

The FABC broaches the often-repeated idea that evangelization today is proclaiming Jesus in a new language and in ways that are comprehensible by different cultures. We speak of youth as a special culture, the new *areopagus*. This culture too needs to be evangelized in new ways which can be done through accompaniment and presence. The youth need and look for accompaniment and guidance from the Church. Even in the age of over-exposure to myriads of social networking sites, they yearn for human contact. The final statement of the fourth FABC plenary assembly confirms the importance of accompaniment.

Full support and acceptance, trust and confidence, presence and availability on the part of other members of God's

people will surely empower the youth to become evangelizers, messengers and instruments of God, not only among their peers, but also among the elders and in their wider society (*FAPA I*, 182).

During the "Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century," it was evident that the bishops were not satisfied by just putting up youth concerns on their agenda but wished to seek ways of reaching out to the different sectors of the youth and foster communion between the different sectors of the youth (*FAPA III,* 38). The Asian bishops exhort the Churches to discern the path of "a new way of being Church" by walking with the young and entering the world from their perspective (*FAPA III*, 38). Today, most of the youth are educated and many of them are even intellectuals and professionals. Some of them are drawn toward spiritual concerns and some are engaged in social activities. Hence, an integral approach to engaging their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional giftedness should be part of the evangelization process of the youth evangelizers. Their evangelization can be tripartite: informative (to cater to their intellectual realm) (*FAPA III,* 29), transformative (for accompanying them on their spiritual journey) (*FAPA III*, 70), and performative (to channel their energy, zeal, and determination for social change).

As early as in 1990 the FABC sounded the call for the youth to become evangelizers of other youth (*FAPA III,* 65). Yet, this is not fairly reflected at the local levels. The FABC calls the Church to journey with youth so that many new horizons of love and service will evolve and the objectives of the youth ministry itself (i.e. fellowship, formation, and service) will be realized. A ministry of accompaniment would lead the youth to become committed and zealous evangelizers not only of their peers but also of others (*FAPA III,* 257).

The new way of journeying with the youth is to see the youth as resources and not as problems; to facilitate their learning from their experiences and not from ready-made answers; to involve the youth more in the decision-making process, and not only to ask them to implement the decisions taken for them by others. To journey with the youth is to reach out to them where they are and not to expect them to come to the animator, not to condemn but to talk to them in the language they understand.[35] The youth are to be recognized as agents and partners in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Replication of Missional Participation for the Youth Evangelizers

The third and final theme is: "Theology of Missional Participation." Inspired by God who participates in human history, the believers are invited to participate in the plan of God. The Church is missionary; hence every member is missionary. This gives ample reason for the missional participation of the youth in the mission of the Church.

The youth are the hope of Asia; they are the mirror of the Asia of today. Their missional participation is expressed through their involvement in the Church as catechists, advocates and workers of social action, Bible leaders, and pastoral and liturgical leaders.[36]

Experience reveals that competent, trained, and committed youth can often make a better impact and can influence winning back the strayed youth to the promise of abundant life. The youth are in a better position to influence by their day-to-day witness in areas of their neighborhood, work,

35 Mannath, "Youth Ministry Today," 329.
36 *FABC Papers* 138, (2012), 25.

schools, and colleges. The FABC document on "Vocation and Mission of the Laity" (1986), recognizes the participation of the youth in the struggle and transformation of society through awakening the consciousness of the people and mobilizing them to work for justice and peace. Being empowered, they can empower their groups, others and societies.[37]

Youth evangelization, however, is not something forced upon the Church and its leadership as something beyond their control. Rather, it is the essential expression of the Church's life and mission.[38] Evangelization is not the prerogative of the leadership alone, as the whole Church is missionary (AG 2). Given the fact that all are called to evangelize, Leo Perera predicted that the youth will be the primary evangelizers of youth, reaching out to their peers in appropriate ways.[39] The Church in India recognizes the missional participation of the youth in evangelization and strives to empower them. The Church of Goa needs evangelized youth as evangelizers of the new evangelization. The youth comprise a substantial population involved in evangelization. The Church needs to replicate this trend to make the missional participation of the youth more vibrant and more visible.

Youth Experiences of Missional Participation

The concept of "youth evangelizers" may seem to be relatively new but, the Vatican Council II had hinted at it and the FABC articulated it in its Bandung plenary assembly in 1990. It called upon the Church to have youth as evangelizers of the young (*FAPA III*, 69). Yet, the journey has not been so smooth for those who have heeded the call. Often the task of evangelization is concealed under the larger umbrella of

37 *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 5-6.
38 *FABC Papers* 33f (1982), 1.
39 *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 12.

youth ministry, hence, there is not much reported on youth evangelization or youth evangelizers *per se*. Hence, this author reflects only on the experiences of two youth ministers; Joy Candelario, a Filipina full-time youth minister in the FABC-OL-YD, and Nicholas Somchai, a youth auditor for the Asian Synod.

Joy Candelario recalls her ministry with the youth as walking with them, listening to them, and teaching them like Jesus at Emmaus.[40] Comparing the Emmaus experience of the disciples as a communion that transformed them with the Asia Youth Day experience, she asserts that the youth too are transformed by the immersion experience.[41] She considers the youth as agents of transformation through networking and collaboration for common concerns like peace, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, issues of faith, and other concerns of the Asian Youth. She attributes the formation of the Ecumenical Asian Students Youth Network (EASY Net) and South Asian Youth Apostolate (SAYA) to the efforts of youth towards transformation and a better society.[42]

Despite all these achievements through the FABC and the forums like Asia Youth Day, Youth Ministers' Meeting, and Regional Youth Assemblies, she laments the absence of celebration of the experiences of the youth. Comparing the Emmaus experience with the Pastoral Spiral methodology of the FABC, she comments that Jesus walked, talked and taught and also celebrated in the Emmaus encounter, while in the pastoral spiral methodology, there is immersion, social analyses, contemplative reflection immediately followed by pastoral planning. It misses out on the element of celebrating

40 Joy Candelario, "Evangelization in Asia Today: Youth Perspectives," *Landas* 19:2 (2005): 218.

41 Ibid., 216.

42 Ibid., 217.

the realizations and reflections before planning.[43] Hence, she recommends that there should be space for integrating the experiences to shape the being of the Church. The vision of a "new way of being Church" demands celebration of life and faith. Life isolated from faith and vise-a-versa would be ineffective. She dreams of empowering the laity and having more youth evangelizers as she feels it is her responsibility to share what she herself had received as a youth; guidance, accompaniment, and animation.[44]

Nicholas Somchai too shares the same reason as Candelario for being in the ministry, namely, giving what he has received. He reflects the sentiments of many of the youth who feel alienated from the Church as they are being left out of the decision-making process and feel that they are often mere objects of the Church's outreach programs.[45] He makes an observation that out of more than 180 Asian bishops present at the Synod, only two or three raised youth concerns. He questions the credibility of any documents that come out regarding the youth in which the youth or their concerns are not sufficiently reflected or heard.[46] His question draws the attention of a critical mind. When the Asian bishops name youth as the major pastoral priority and when the youth population is so copious (around 60 percent), then why is the voice of the youth or concerns regarding the youth not audible? He questions clericalism in youth ministry which often denies the youth animators their rightful place and role; he requests that the youth be helped to belong to the Church. He also observes that the youth representation

43 Ibid., 218.

44 Ibid., 219.

45 Cf. Nicholas Somchai, "Youth Involvement in the Asian Church," in *The Future of the Asian Churches,* edited by James Kroeger and Peter Phan (Quezon City, Philippines: 2000), 39-41.

46 Ibid., 40.

in the Church structures is inadequate and that there are no practical means to "take care of the youth."[47] He also suggests that the FABC recommendation for regular training and development of evangelizing skills of all including the youth should be implemented and reflected in the plans of the local Church (*FAPA IV*, 27).

The conclusion is that both these youth ministers agree that they were helped; hence, they want to serve. This fact confirms the premise that evangelized youth are important agents for evangelizing other youth.

Bridging Youth Evangelizers and Evangelization in Goa

The youth ministry under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India is called the Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM). The ICYM gave a mandate to the youth of the country for three years (2010-2013) with the theme, "Transformed by Faith, Transforming the World." The vision of ICYM is to have enlightened, dedicated, and spirit-filled youth for a better India and world by organizing and empowering the youth that are imbued with a spirit of missionary zeal to become promoters of Gospel values. This mandate seeks to bridge the gap between faith and praxis. What sort of praxis does the Church of Goa experience?

As mentioned earlier, the Goan youth are liable to become prey to unrestrained tourism, sex tourism, drugs, crimes, and trafficking due to an increase in unemployment, migration, and marginalization. They often are pushed into situations where they become antisocial elements and a burden to society. It can be also observed that even though Pope John Paul II reminded the Church of Asia to integrate the youth into her

47 Ibid., 41.

evangelizing mission (cf. EA 47), there still seems to be a gap between the youth as objects of evangelization and youth as subjects of evangelization. There is a visible gap between what is said and what is being done, between evangelization of the youth and evangelization by the youth.

This gap deserves attention. The chasm has to be bridged, not because Vatican Council II states it, nor because the FABC recommends it, nor because the Church of Goa wants it, nor because the needs and situations of the youth and the society demand it. Rather, it is central because God commands it. The vocation of every Christian is to witness. Therefore, it is essential to witness to what God has done in justifying and sanctifying his people. And, this vocation continues into the world as every member, bearing a flame of the Spirit, is sent into the mission field as light, leaven, and salt, to be Christ's apostolic community at work.[48]

It is a fact that the young are capable, talented, and enthusiastic; hence, they are a better choice as evangelizers. The basic fact is that the Triune God is a communion who calls all to participate in his communion and also to invite others. The youth who are significant as evangelizers are called upon to give witness to the *communio*, evangelizing, and participatory ecclesiology in Goa.

Asia today is young and the Church of Asia is young too. The youth, the face of the Church in the world will lead the Church into the twenty-second century. Now is the time for the Church to choose her future. Does it choose to evangelize in the old, sterile ways or does it dare to dream anew with the youth? The Church is the same, the Church of Jesus; the message is the same, the Good News of Jesus, and the world

48 Cf. Guder, "*Missio Dei*: Integrating Theological Formation for Apostolic Vocation," 72.

is the same. What is new is the ardor, the methods, and the expressions of communicating Jesus Christ, his person, and his message. Using Jesus' pedagogy of evangelization, the Church can bridge the gap between what it is and what it is called to be. The pedagogy of Jesus is that of inviting disciples to stay with him, learn from him, and then send them out with authority. Pope Francis challenged the clergy to bridge the gap between the pulpit and the street with these words addressed during the twenty-eighth World Youth Day.

> Let us spare no effort in the formation of our young people…. We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, in our parish or diocesan institutions, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! To go out as ones sent. It is not enough simply to open the door in welcome because they come, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people! Let us urge our young people to go forth. Of course, they will make mistakes, but let us not be afraid! The Apostles made mistakes before us. Let us urge them to go forth. Let us think resolutely about pastoral needs, beginning on the outskirts, with those who are farthest away, with those who do not usually go to church. They are the VIPs who are invited. Go and search for them at the crossroads.[49]

There is an enormous task before the Church. It demands deep faith in God and trust in the responsibility and commitment of the youth evangelizers. It challenges the Church to evaluate, plan, identify personnel and resources, train, network, and use media, to incorporate youth evangelizers.

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49 Pope Francis, "Homily at a Mass with Bishops, Priests, Religious and Seminarians at San Sebastian Cathedral, Rio de Janeiro," in *Apostolic Journey to Rio de Janeiro on the Occasion of the 28th World Youth Day,* 27 October 2013, available from htpp://www.vatican.va/francesco/2013/papa-francesco-gmg-rio-de-janeiro, accessed on 9 November 2014.

"The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father (AG 2)." This pilgrim Church is awakened to live her missional vocation in the new and changing situations of society, culture, politics, economics, and religions. The evolution and the shift in the understanding of mission give a new meaning and purpose to the Church's missionary endeavors. However, it would be fatal to live in the glory of the past or the dreams of the future. The reality is that the Church who is an evangelizer begins by being evangelized herself (EN 15). Hence, the Church of Goa needs to reflect on how it is being evangelized. It is also known that God is a missionary God who always inspires his people unto mission. Therefore, having been sent and evangelized, the Church is inspired to send out evangelizers (cf. EN 15).

Often the mission of the Church seems to be "consumer-oriented," trying to "meet the religious needs of the members." The functioning of the youth ministries often reflects such an attitude. In some instances, it has been noticed that the youth ministry in the parishes is at the whims and fancies of the parish priest or the youth animators who often lack proper training and skills.[50] Sometimes the seminarian or young religious, who themselves often need accompaniment, are asked to accompany the youth. Therefore, a common plan or vision at the diocesan level for youth evangelizers would be of great help. This points to the urgency of training youth evangelizers in the diocese.

Taking a broad view of the realities of the youth and the Church *vis-a-vis* the theological dimensions of communion

50 Cf. *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 12.

ecclesiology, evangelization, and missional participation, the researcher sketches an integrated formation program.

Formation of Youth Evangelizers

The challenge before the Church is not merely that of renewal, or re-tooling, but conversion — the conversion of the Church to its radically simple missional vocation. Since conversion is a work of God's Spirit, the formation of youth evangelizers for missional participation must be done in a posture of patient and confident prayer, for it is a process.

The practical aspects of formation, however, have also to be addressed. Besides training and formation which have been discussed earlier (informative, transformative, performative), there is a need to consider other means required for training of youth evangelizers and ensure the continuity and viability of the project. A saying in the Konkani language warns to plan before commencing: *anturn polleun paiem sodunk zai;* (stretch the legs according to the bedding). Hence, some of these aspects that may require careful planning are discussed here.

Personnel: The Church of Goa may have to plan and invest in training and preparing personnel as formators and youth animators. The pastoral plan of the diocese should have programs for preparing persons for the project. The archdiocese could also plan to tap the available resources from within the religious congregations and the laity in the diocese.

Infrastructure: It is vital to consider physical infrastructure while planning. The diocesan centers, like the Pastoral Center, Catechetical Center, Youth Centers in North and South Goa, Spirituality Center, Family Service Center, and even other centers could be utilized as is already being done for formation and training. Besides, plans could be made to

use the infrastructures of religious congregations and Catholic educational institutions.

Finances: Finance is always a major concern for implementing any project. Plans should be made to raise funds to support the project. Considering evangelization as a priority, every parish should be encouraged to budget for evangelization.

Mission Avenues: There should be standard criteria for the identification of mission exposure avenues for the formation and training programs. Since, the stress is on formation in mission, practical knowledge through missionary exposure for immersion experience should be envisaged. Preferably in the parishes at the border of Goa, or even in the far-flung Dadra and Nagar Haveli or at Daman.

Formation: An integrated formation program should be planned which includes both spiritual and human aspects. Theological formation should form the main content of the program. The young evangelizers should also be equipped with pedagogical skills, analyzing and evaluating tools, methodologies, and various ministerial approaches.

New Mindset: There is a felt need for the leveling of structures from pyramidal to horizontal and the promotion of the circular pattern of participation and leadership. Hence, the Church leadership should plan how to create and adopt such a new mindset to trust and entrust the youth.

Integrating youth evangelizers into the mission of the Church is not only a daunting task for the Church's leadership, but it is also a major responsibility for the laity to exercise their missionary vocation. They have to awake from their passivity, arising from the long period of downplaying the common

priesthood of all.[51] The researcher has some queries addressed to the laity and very specifically to the youth of Goa.

- How can the laity be involved in the evangelizing mission of the Church?
- How can the laity contribute to the formation and evangelization of the youth?
- Instead of lamenting the lack of support and collaboration from the Church and elders, how can the youth contribute to the mission of Jesus?
- What is the role of the youth as evangelizers in the mission of the Church of Goa?
- What more can the youth do to translate the formation they receive into lived experiences of evangelization?
- How can the youth contribute to fulfilling the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church" in Goa?

These questions impel the Church to think about the integration and involvement of the youth in the overall Pastoral Plan of the diocese. This challenge invites the whole Church to witness to evangelization as a *communio* Church through active missionary participation. Deeply embedded patterns of cultural captivity of past practices, attitudes, and theological and ecclesiological traditions often tend to pull the Church two steps back when it tries to take one step forward. Hence, a major concern is to ensure the viability, credibility, and continuity of such an endeavor.

51 Cf. *FABC Papers* 40 (1984), 5.

The FABC's Theology of the Laity and its Relevance to Forming Leaders in Asia's Local Churches[1]

Charles Bertille

The "laity" was one of the fourteen "megatrends" outlined during the Tenth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in December 2012. While the Church of Asia has witnessed significant advances since the Second Vatican Council, internal challenges abide in acknowledging and developing the gifts and charisms of the laity in the functions and tasks required of them by their ministry and apostolate.[2]

As the council mentioned above emphasizes, "They [all the baptized] manifest this special property [*sensus fidei* or sense of the faith]…That discernment…is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of Truth" (*LG,* 12). In other words, by their Baptism and openness to be led by the same Spirit of Truth, the laity possesses the same dignity too and should actively exercise the roles and functions required of their giftedness, even to

1 All references to FABC documents will generally be taken from the four volumes of *For All the Peoples of Asia.* The abbreviation FAPA will be used, followed by the volume number (e.g., 1) and the specific page number(s). The statements of FABC plenary assemblies will have prominence as it is the supreme body of FABC. All the important documents of FABC were published under the following volumes: ed. Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arévalo, *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Documents from 1970 to 1991* (hereafter, FAPA I) (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1992). FAPA II, Documents from 1992 to 1996, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997). FAPA III, Documents from 1997 to 2001, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002). FAPA IV, *Documents from 2002 to 2006,* ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2007).

2 Cf. FAPA I, no. 57.

the extent of decision-making in ecclesial structures that affect them. To reinforce this special property, the FABC calls for the mobilization of the laity by the ordained, religious, and lay leaders who underwent formation themselves.

Thus, to be consistent with FABC's vision of a new way of being Church, the local churches of Asia had to come up with creative means of addressing perennial challenges on laity engagement, such as lack of life models, formation, and the pre-Vatican II mentality.[3]

The Institute of Formation-Fondacio (IFF) in Asia responds to FABC's vision of a new way of being Church through an eleven-month intensive formation for young adults in their early 20s to mid-30s. With college students and young professionals as its target audience, IFF significantly contributes to the giftedness of local churches and communities with its unique approach to formation. IFF has established a basic formation program that is inductive, holistic, Christ-centered, communitarian, and missionary.

With the FABC and IFF's ideals in congruence, the author aims to use the former's Theology of the Laity as a framework to affirm the impact of its core ideals on the latter's basic formation program. Consequently, the author also intends to reflect on the areas of the program that require further institutional and internal developments. By doing so, this study would offer a new way of perceiving charism, vocations, and ministry under one ecosystem of grace. The areas of the formation program that resonated with FABC's teachings are the following: 1) Understanding of Renewal or Vision of New Way of Being Church; 2) Formation of Laity, and the Underlying Vision of the Human Person; 3) Relation

3 Adolfo Nicolas, "The Laity in the Life and Mission of the Church" *East Asian Pastoral Review* 27/3 (1986): 209.

to Local Church or Ecclesiology; 4) Mission and Integral Evangelization; and 5) Method of Approach or Pedagogy. These will be discussed per section below.

FABC – IFF Asia's Understanding of Renewal or Vision of a New Way of Being Church

The FABC adopts Vatican II's *People of God* ecclesial image and its emphasis on the common priesthood as the foundation and springboard for its Theology of the Laity. The laity are called to live and share Christ as accorded by their Christian identity and participate in the integral evangelizing mission of the Church. Holiness, a gift divinely imparted through Baptism and fortified through Confirmation and the Eucharist, is necessary to follow and imitate Christ: "Whoever wants to follow me must take up his cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34).

Thus, in fostering the mission of the laity, the FABC identified three main concepts mainly "communion, collegiality, and co-responsibility" (FAPA I [FABC IV, 1986, art. 45.1-2] 193). Additionally, the collegial body stressed that for the laity to live out their common priesthood after Christ's Paschal Mystery, they must be formed on the "New Way of Being Church in Asia." This spiritual formation is further described as participatory, prophetic, dialoguing, and communitarian.

For their part, Fondacio and IFF Asia actualize Vatican II's spirit of renewal by identifying with the "joys, hope, griefs, and anxieties" (*GS,* 1) of the world. Their spirituality is of communion and mission that aspires to convert, dialogue, develop, and form interfaith and ecumenical relationships. Akin to this spiritual formation is the practice of the "dying of the self" (cf. Fondacio Charter), which is nonetheless a creative and faithful attempt to imitate Christ's Paschal

Mystery. Apparently, this resonates with FABC's spirituality of the *anawim*.

The IFF Asia, in particular, envisions to be "a hub of formation for the laity, for a renewed Asian Church and Society." [4] Through its basic formation program, IFF Asia assists in awakening the seeds planted by the Spirit in everyone baptized. To bring about new vocations and forms of ministries, IFF Asia situates itself in the same lineage and mission as FABC.

FABC – IFF Asia Formation of Laity and Vision of the Human Person

With the vision and background in mind from which it was founded, IFF Asia (and Fondacio) forms disciples and witnesses[5] who would embark on a journey of awareness and discovery of the self, of others, of God, and of the world in general (Fondacio Charter; GS). As catalysts of change in their own local communities (IFF Asia Reports 2006-2009, 2009-2012), they are prodded by Fondacio to believe and seek the potential and goodness in each person. In relation to FABC's aim for promoting a new way of being Church, a review of formation can be carried out in seminaries, religious houses, and lay institutes to see how the essentialities are internalized by those who are being formed (i.e., preachers, formators, and

4 IFF Asia, *Vision Mission: Report 2006 – 2009*.

5 IFF Asia's mission-vision statement conveys that forming a "living community of disciples" is at the heart of the organization.

teachers). [6] To show another similarity between the institute and FABC, a brief discussion of selected FABC plenary assemblies is summarized below.

First Plenary Assembly (1974)

Missionary formation is experiential or inspired by encounters with the Lord in the community. Attentiveness to prayer and contemplation, knowledge of Asian philosophies and ideological currents that attract the youth, skills in social inquiry, understanding of the dynamics of national development, and attainment of new methods and techniques for personal and group formation (FAPA I [FABC I, arts. 30-33] 16-17) were some of the pastoral ideas from the first FABC Plenary Assembly (PA).

Meanwhile, the areas of concern for evangelization include many groups (such as the youth, women, families, indigenous peoples, migrants, and refugees), industries, and various private and public sectors (education, health, media, business, and politics).

Third Plenary Assembly (1982)

Formation requires collaboration. The third FABC PA called for a personal, theological, and pastoral formation

6 Parker Palmer is a writer, teacher, and activist who is a senior associate of the American Association for Higher Education. He writes, "we teach who we are" and invites into a deeper inquiry about education — teaching and learning — that is often overlooked. It is not the "what" question (what subjects shall we teach?) nor the "how" question (what methods and techniques are required?) nor the "why" question (for what purpose and to what ends do we teach?). It is the "who" question: who is the self that teaches? Parker Palmer explores the inner landscape of the teacher's life along three related pathways — intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. Further reading is available at http://www.uua.org/re/teachers/inspiration/15408.shtml (accessed on 03 August, 2013).

that involves a mutual catechesis amongst bishops, priests, religious peoples, and lay people (FAPA I [FABC III, arts. 9-9.4] 57-58). The Asian bishops mentioned in particular, the laity's abilities to form themselves (FAPA I [FABC IV, art. 4.7.2] 194-195). Thus, three levels of formation were outlined: 1) a general formation in the spirit of Vatican II, 2) a formation program for lay volunteers and selected leaders; 3) and ministerial formation for the charismatic individuals in the ecclesial service (FAPA I [FABC IV, art. 4.7.2] 194-195).

Fifth and Seventh Plenary Assemblies (1990 and 2000)

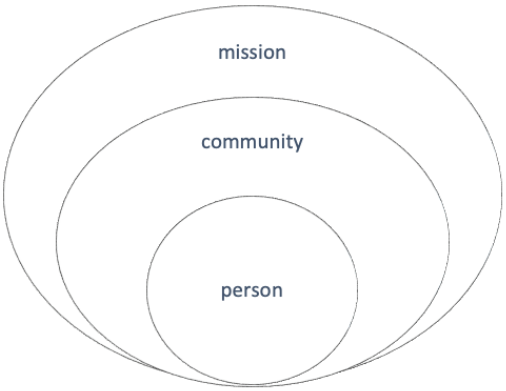
Formation in the social doctrines and of persons of dialogue for the Church and the world necessitates awareness of Asia's social, economic, and religious situations. Formation, in this context, should be sustained, notably when collaborating with competent lay leaders. Otherwise, the vision of a truly Asian Church will not be achieved (FAPA I [FABC V, arts 7.1-7.3.2.3], 284-286).

Sustainability and follow-through in formation of the lay people are consequential to attracting candidates to the ordained and consecrated life.[7] This partnership brings into memory the biblical image of the Church as the Body of Christ — no one exists without the other.

7 Ministry is a concern of the local community. Cyprian demands this right as being of divine origin, i.e. as belonging to the nature of a 'community of God', even against Pope Stephen. Cf. Cyprian, Epist. 67.4; 61.3; 73.7; Epist. 4.5; as quoted by Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry, Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 40.

The Specifics of the Three Stages of Formation as is Practiced

Diagram: The Unfolding and Alignment of the Person, Community, and Mission in Christ



This part shall demonstrate how the FABC principles above are to be applied in the institute. For one, formation entails annual reviews and consultations within local Churches, month-long mission programs, and exposure-immersion to the poor and other faiths. These examples help to make formation more contextual, responsive, and missionary. The formation journey is divided into three stages namely: pre, during, and post-formation stages. In IFF Asia, the intensive formation is aptly called a "basic formation".

The FABC's "helping to emerge" stage in formation is seen in IFF's efforts to prepare students and respond to local bishops' requests to form the young and the laity. The institute has also been sharing tools and human resources (i.e., staff and alumni) to animate camps and ground sessions. Thus, with the help of an established alumni network, this stage is further developed in the coming years by decentralizing parts of the formation program to other countries.

The second stage is a year-long formation at the Manila branch. Here, the students learn objectives, content, and methods that can be applied to their own communities. The last stage in formation is an action-oriented service/internship. This is complemented by annual staff visits and sharing experiences with the alumni and hosts. Scholarships for further studies and internships at IFF Asia are then offered to graduates with a proven track record in leadership and service. The objective is to enable lay workers to grow their gifts and specialize in the fields God willed for them. Furthermore, graduates are also invited to meet the people of the network and join in mission projects and fundraising activities. [8] Through these initiatives, IFF Asia contributes to the emergence of new vocations and ministries.

FABC – IFF Asia Experience of Local Church or Ecclesiology

For this part, the author turns to selected plenary assemblies once more for teachings on an Asian experience of the local Church or ecclesiology.

First Plenary Assembly (1974)

For a truly local and Asian church, it must know its identity and its present realities. As stated in its theology, "the local Church is the realization and the enfleshment of the Body of Christ in a given people, in a given place and time" (FAPA I, [FABC 1, 1974, arts 9-12], 14). This theology connotes that the basis for success is formation over the juridical act: "the local Church is not truly established… until there is a laity worthy of its name" (*AG*, 21).

8 See IFF Asia, *Deepening Discipleship: Laity in Mission: Report 2009-2012* (Quezon City: Fondacio Asia, 2010), 22-25.

Fourth and Fifth Plenary Assemblies (1986 and 1990)

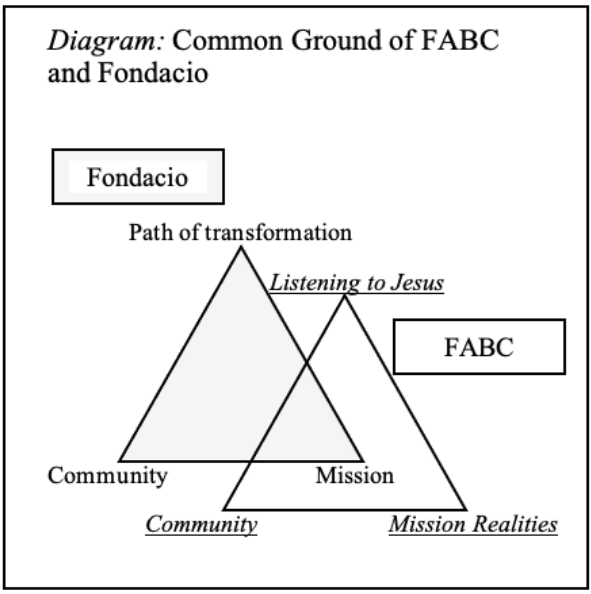
The lay apostolate has been labeled as "parish-oriented, inward-looking, and priest-directed." Hence, a reorientation is called for in which the local Church is not only the parish church but a subject of mission in a given milieu. It becomes a truly local Church if its lay force is reoriented to sharing its talents outside the comforts of a parish (FAPA I, [FABC V, 1990, arts 3.3.1-3], 281). Just as ministries are evolving and pluriform, the Asian bishops affirm that the laity has charisms to exercise publicly (ACMC, 1977).

In the Fondacio Charter, each baptized is recognized for one's co-responsibility and co-creatorship. Incorporating these as one rule in the institute, the students are to wear their communitarian and missionary spirit to become active subjects of faith and mission. Consequently, the spirituality of communion drives them to collaborate with other local Churches, institutions, and industries. Time and resources are spent on their formation to contribute to their own communities effectively.

On a related note, FABC's New Way of Being Church (prophetic, dialoguing, participatory, and communitarian) resonates deeply with the spirituality and vision of the IFF Asia and Fondacio. Staff and members share that they left the security of their jobs in the secular world to serve their brothers and sisters. Similarly, many students are assisted in their local Churches on a full-time basis, while alumni with special charisms are invited to discern and commit to a regular and permanent full-time service. However, the institute is still young, and the mission context across Asia has changed rapidly. Hence, there is a constant need to uncover

the richness of the FABC's theology in the lives of the staff, students, and formation programs.

FABC—IFF Asia Understanding of Mission as Integral Evangelization



In FABC's theology (in unity with Vatican II's), the proclamation of the Reign of God is the highest priority of mission and evangelization of all peoples of Asia. This priority is integrated into a tripartite dialogue with cultures, religions, and the poor in the continent.

The tripartite listening (to Jesus, the community, and mission realities) is similar to Fondacio's path of personal, communal, and missionary transformation in Christ. IFF Asia initiates and forms young adults in this integral formation.

In response to the FABC's living out the triple office of Christ (priest, prophet, and king), Fondacio perceives its mission as promoting the Gospel to contemporaries and forming workers for the Kingdom.

The actualization of Fondacio's mission is reflected in IFF's 2012 report. Accordingly, there was an 88% increase in commitment and involvement of young adults and alumni to their own local Churches. To name a few, they engaged themselves in evangelization, interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, catechetical formation, social development, relief services, advocacy programs, pastoral care for HIV-AIDS patients and migrants, and building basic ecclesial communities (BEC).[9] Thus, in writing, Fondacio's mission receives affirmation from FABC.

FABC—IFF Asia Program Method or Pedagogy

The Asian bishops recommend using the see-judge-act method to evaluate social realities in light of the Gospel and to recommend concrete acts for resolution. This method is inductive, experiential, and pastoral. Furthermore, its distinctive principles evoke historical liberation, integral human development, preferential option for the poor, and bottom-up ecclesiology.[10] Recently, the FABC has set up the ASIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach) under the leadership of the laity office to promote a more participatory Church.

IFF Asia's program thrust and content cover "five fundamental components"[11] aligned to Fondacio's vision of holistic formation and "building blocks."[12] This is to help in the emergence of personhood and discipleship before one's transition to the agency of renewal and mission. The journey is not a linear process but a spiral one. IFF Asia also adopts the

9 See IFF Asia, *Deepening Discipleship,* 67.

10 Peter Hai, "Evaluation of the FABC Theology of the Laity," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 47/3 (2010).

11 Five fundamental components are conducted or designed in module form (human, social, spiritual/theological, pastoral).

12 Building block is the manner in which the topics are structured and linked; starting with those that address the inner life of persons, to those that deal with socio-pastoral skills.

pastoral cycle, promotes exposure-immersion in its modules, and combines it with experiential learning.

The modules, community living, accompaniment, and prayer life are designed as one pedagogy of Christian life. However, IFF Asia will need to deepen its grasp of various formation tools, learn more about theology and spirituality, and promote the engagement of its staff and students with the poor of Asia. This recommendation, in turn, would be IFF Asia's contextualization of discipleship.[13]

Formation for Ministries in Asia

The renewal of the Asian Church and society requires creative responses to "emerging needs that go beyond the confines of Church or parochial apostolate." The FABC mentions ministries for street children, migrants, refugees, marginalized, tribes and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the FABC recommends a multi-directional ministerial growth from liturgical to service of life; parochial to trans-parochial; and intra-ecclesial to extra-ecclesial.[14]

The IFF Asia's (and Fondacio's) response to the New Way of Being Church is to target young adults and professionals and engage them on a path of discipleship. The institute equips them with the personal, pastoral, and professional skills they need to be effective in their respective states of life.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, this study will show the impact of the FABC's Theology of the Laity on IFF Asia's basic formation program for young adults. Formation

13 Schillebeeckx says Christians need to listen in obedience to the suffering of human beings and the seeds of a Christian community, and then perform specific actions in conformity to this 'voice of God.' See *Ministry. Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ,* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 103.

14 FABC Paper 81: "The Spirit at Work in Asia Today," 78-79 (A Document of the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences).

is anchored on a sound and responsive theology to achieve its desired outcomes, especially the realization of God's reign in the missionary Church's various evangelization efforts (FAPA I, [BIMA I, art. 5], 292). The author contends that there is a congruence between IFF Asia's vision with the FABC's New Way of Being Church — both bodies emphasize communion, discipleship, and rootedness in Christ and in Asian realities (BILA IV, 1986). Furthermore, IFF Asia strives towards greater incarnation of discipleship through constant review and evaluation of its program content and methodology.

Other than that, Fondacio strives to assist persons from various walks of life in entering into a living relationship with Christ. The stages of forming the students in the institute do not end with completing the program. Rather, the formation program finds sustenance in the Spirit[15] to reach spiritual maturation and to discover one's vocation. However, Fondacio admits that it cannot provide all means. Like other ecclesial movements, Fondacio only acts as an activator of one's path to discipleship.

In its formation program, Fondacio aspires for its students:

- to become a new creation through the actualization of one's baptismal grace;
- to live and share in Christ's threefold office in one's state of life;
- to rediscover ecclesial dignity by participating actively in the local Church, with the network created at Fondacio and other ecclesial movements;
- to accept one's mission wherever it may be.

15 *What Is the Spirit Telling Us?* Stages of Growth – draft 2, 2008 (Internal doc). See also IFF Asia, *Deepening Discipleship,* 30.

To achieve this, IFF Asia offers a unique model for lay formation anchored on the following theological concepts:

- Tripartite Model of Engagement: Local Church, Student, and IFF Asia;
- Tri-Dimensions of Formation: the Human Person, Community, and Mission;
- Three Pearls of Formation: Spirituality of Blessing and Docility to the Spirit, Lay Discipleship in Today's Context, and Integrated Formation.

An Eco-System of Charism, Vocation, and Ministry

Through formation and service, each human person can rediscover and develop their God-given gifts. The megatrends (i.e., youth, women, etc.) in Asian societies will have become the learning grounds for religious communities. Antonio Maria Sicari mentions that religious institutes tend to keep their charism as an exclusive property, thus, preventing the lay from discovering their own. Additionally, he also laments the negligence and lack of trust of lay members in various congregations (i.e., third order).[16] Hence, to address both poles, Sicari recommends the existence of "a charismatically formed laity" at the base level[17] by nudging the religious and the ordained to open up the "charismatic deposits" stored for centuries.[18]

Applying Sicari's analysis to the analogy of the garden, the seeds of vocations planted by the Spirit would not bloom because of the strict separation among the states of life. There exist strong dividing walls within which each vocation exclusively promotes and protects their own. There are intensive efforts to weed out; but through time, some have grown to

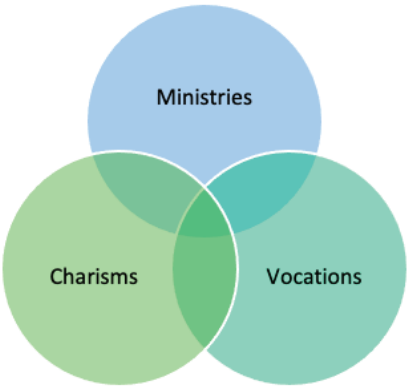
16 Antonio M. Sicari, "Ecclesial Movements: A New Framework for Ancient Charisms," *Communio* 29 (Summer 2002): 288-291.

17 Sicari, "Ecclesial Movements," 296.

18 Ibid., 298.

become self-occupied. Eventually, the quantity and quality of vocations would dwindle. There is hunger in the land.

Diagram: An Eco-System of Grace for the Church



Cross-fertilization and reciprocity of charisms, vocations, ministries; and the various states of life among the People of God.

Healthy vocations and ministries blossom from the sharing and free flow of talents and resources. An ecosystem of grace (charism, vocations, ministries) exists in the garden of the People of God. The ordained, religious, and the lay receive sustenance from the Gardener—Christ. When a part of the system is neglected, isolated, or suppressed (i.e., the laity), it affects the whole. From the common priesthood flows the equality and dignity of vocations. This is what Peter Hai calls an "interdependency" among vocations. [19]

Vatican II calls for every baptized to use their spiritual gifts to build the Church's life. In the words of John Paul II,

19 Peter Hai, "Evaluation of the FABC Theology of the Laity," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 47/3 (2010): 237.

the "institutional and charismatic are equally essential aspects of the Church's constitution and work together, in different ways, to build up the Church's life, to foster its renewal, and to promote the sanctification of the people of God."[20] The existence of various ecclesial and social movements after Vatican II connotes that ministries are not uniform. To be called a Servant Church, our Church needs more people to be reached through new forms and expressions of the Gospel (FAPA I [ACMC, art. 114] 88).

The bishops continue to convince themselves that the Church in Asia will "grow into her true self only if the love and service of Christ becomes more evident to all" (FAPA I [ACMC, 1977, art. 130] 91).

Systems Thinking and Learning Organizations

The awakening of civil society across the globe tells that people long for self-actualization and fulfillment.[21] In the language of the Church, each person groans for all creation

20 John Paul II, *Address on the Occasion of the Meeting of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities,* Speeches, 30 May 1998. See Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Movements in the Church. Proceedings of the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, Rome,* May 1998. (Rome: Vatican Press, 1998), 3.

21 Andre Rochais, the founder of PRH *(Personnalité et Relations Humaines),* writes of the "deposit of potentialities and therefore of creativity which is latent in the innermost depths of every being…. Everything is there, in this sub-stratum of Humanity, in this sub-stratum of men and women of this planet, everything is there to form a more human world." PRH believes therefore, the movement of "centering on oneself" leads to an opening toward "more than self", because beyond race, culture and religion, one reaches the shore of what is most "common" and most universal in all humanity, the perception of a profound and true humanity. If such is the case, PRH argues that the growth of persons is not only one value to be recognized among others. It becomes "the No. 1 value of a human society." Taken seriously and on a vast scale, it can foster greater personalization and greater humanization of society. See Personality and Human Relations, Persons and Their Growth (Poitiers, France: Personnalité et Relations Humaines – International, January 1997), 264-265.

to come into fullness (cf. Rom 8:19-21). Furthermore, Peter Senge reminds us that liberation is not individualistic, but rather collective.[22] In the context of formation, problems cannot be solved through band aid solutions. Senge suggests three guidelines for groups to become an organic whole: 1) the primacy of the whole, 2) the communal nature of the self, and the 3) generative power of language. In the first guideline, he highlights the importance of the unity of the whole, while in the second and third guidelines, he turns to relationships and uses the language of human experience in reading social trends and factors.[23]

In the context of lay formation, the primacy of the whole reinforces the need to hold the total ecclesiology of Vatican II and FABC, while the communal nature of the self and the generative power of language applies to the maturation of the Christian vocation in communities and in reading the signs of the times. The Church must pray collectively for the prophetic spirit of courage to inspire new interpretations and possibilities. When this Spirit is lacking in the Church, she slips back into dysfunctional clericalism and legalism.[24]

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the influence of the FABC's Theology of the Laity on IFF Asia's formation program. This

22 This remark of Peter Senge captures the need of the times. See "Navigating Webs of Interdependence," IBM *Social Media,* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOPfVVMCwYg (accessed on 27 July 2013).

23 Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organisation* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 24-27.

24 Giulia Cirillo, "Pope Francis: Without Prophecy, only Clericalism," *Archivio Radio Vaticana,* 16 December 2013, http://www.archivioradiovaticana.va/storico/2013/12/16/pope_francis_without_prophecy,_only_clericalism/en1-756052 (accessed on 29 December 2013).

was achieved by comparing the critical teachings of FABC with the program and practices of the said institute. The author points out the need to live out one's priesthood consciously and inform the local communities of the pivotal teachings of FABC. By doing so, the lay would be able to understand the centrality of proclaiming the Reign of God and take proactive roles in discipleship and liberation efforts.

BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYNTHESIS PAPERS

On Education Today:
A Thought Experiment

Angelo B. Balsita, FMVD

Introduction

"Man is the only being who ***needs*** education," said Immanuel Kant. For him, education means nurturing, disciplining, and teaching together with the culture. Each person needs to be nurtured with tender care and attention from the parents. Discipline is needed in order to change one's *animal nature* into human nature. It is a merely negative part of education, said Kant, because it counteracts man's natural unruliness. However it educates a person to live with other people. Later on, when accustomed to following the reason more than the instinct, instruction can be further given, that is, the positive part.

This reflection paper focuses on the positive part of education which is instruction or teaching together with the culture, or today what we have as higher education. First, it will elaborate on some observations and problems in education in the 21st century, at least what is evident here in the Philippines. Second, it will analyze and evaluate the current education system with Kant's idea *On Education*[1] specifically with the help of Chapter VI where he discussed practical education. Lastly, it will propose some theories for a new education system.

A Critique of Education Today

Many students today perceive that the higher education system is just something "required" to get a degree and a

1 Immanuel Kant, *On Education* (London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1899)

job. Furthermore, higher education seems to be reduced to skill-learning instead of a profound character formation that Immanuel Kant and many educators would like to propose. The perception is unavoidable since people observe that only students who are good in English, Mathematics, and Science excel in the academic field. Basing the scholastic excellence on these three main subjects is like assessing them if they are capable of working in the industry or not. What if a student is not good at these three subjects but is artistic, creative, and kind-hearted, is she to fail? What if a student is good at these three subjects but has a bad character, is she to pass? What is the goal of our higher education?

We must rethink and reassess our education system because of two reasons: (1) If higher education's goal is only to teach skills and certify students to get a good job, then it is at a threat of extinction today; (2) If the objective of higher education is only to produce employees to work for big companies than being good persons and active part of the society, humanity is destined to fail.

Many of us, young people, think that we do not need to go to college or university anymore because the skills we need to learn for work are found on the internet. Almost any knowledge under the sky can be accessible now. During the Ancient and Medieval periods, books were limited. To have a hand in Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine's books was a big deal and was only for the elite! But today, great philosophical and scientific books are downloadable on the internet with just one click. During the Modern period, one needs to pay a professional to do a specific job and a skill-master to teach how it can be done but today, if our *tubo* (tube) has a problem, I do not need to call a *tubero* (plumber) anymore because I can learn how to fix the tube by watching tutorials on YouTube! One

can even be a professional IT programmer just by learning online. There is a website called www.freecodecamp.org where anyone can learn programming for free. They reward verified certifications if you can finish the projects. These certificates may be used to apply to big companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Amazon. I have a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and I can affirm that this NGO's website teaches more programming skills that are more updated and useful for the IT industry than what I have learned through my four years in college. One can study almost anything and earn certifications while sitting and drinking coffee at home. So, the big question is, "why go to college?"

Another issue at hand is that if the current education system creates skilled workers without forming their characters, then the system can lead humanity to a terrible disaster. A bad person who is uneducated is less dangerous than a bad person who has a college degree. If a madman is intelligent but not wise, he can duplicate COVID-19 in many ways and keep on spreading it to the world. An intelligent madman can create a website that corrupts the minds of children and the youth. We know that there are already a lot of pornographic websites, abusive videos, games full of violence, and discrimination on social media accessible even to kids and teenagers. A street thief can steal P10,000 but an intelligent thief like a corrupt politician can steal billions of pesos from his fellow countrymen. An intelligent madman can create war weapons that can ruin the world. Science, mathematics, and language are powers and when they are placed in the wrong hands, they can be used to destroy everything.

On Education by Immanuel Kant

Higher education today must focus on teaching morality or else we will be back to our *animal nature* like what Kant

argued, although now we can be skilled and intelligent animals or be like chimpanzees with missiles! Proper education is not only skill learning but character formation. Kant said, "Our ultimate aim is the formation of character."[2]

Higher education must include practical training or in other words ***moral*** training which teaches a man how to live as a free being. Kant said, "This is the education of a personal character, of a free being, who is able to maintain himself, and to take his proper place in society, keeping at the same time a proper sense of his own individuality."[3] Practical education consists of *skill*, *discretion*, and *morality*.

Skill training is part of higher education and its aim must be for a better character of a student. Skill training develops one's talent and character through *thoroughness*. Kant said, "thoroughness is an essential element in the formation of a man's character, while skill is necessary for talent."[4] Discretion is mainly about temperament and the art of outward behavior. Morality is the deep and internal formation of a person. For Kant, each person ought to learn their duties and do what is right because it is right, not because of a reward or a selfish interest. "Morality is a matter of character."[5] Morality includes putting our passions on one side, practicing compassion, not sympathy, and learning a few things thoroughly rather than many things but superficially. A person of a character is one with a firm purpose to accomplish a goal and one who actually accomplishes it.

2 Ibid, 94.
3 Ibid, 31.
4 Ibid, 91.
5 Ibid, 93.

Rethinking the Higher Education System

Immanuel Kant himself noticed during his time that schools lacked the most essential thing in education which is teaching moral values to students. He said, "Almost all our schools are lacking in something which would nevertheless greatly tend to the formation of uprightness in children — namely, *a catechism of right conduct.*"[6] For him, the moral formation must contain, "in a popular form, everyday questions of right and wrong."[7] In rethinking the education system, we might want to consider and even elevate this idea.

Morality is something that cannot be taught online. It is not a set of duties and rules that can be memorized and be done blindly nor be followed because of rewards and punishments nor is it only a set of ideas that can be studied three hours a week. I argue that to teach morality or to form the character of a person, it must be exemplified in flesh, lively, and daily. Therefore, the proposal for a different higher education system that must be considered is one of the ***master-disciple systems*** or the "discipleship" model where the students live and learn from a *life master* or a life coach. It is an idea that was practiced during ancient times and is applied today in some instances like in the seminary.

In the Ancient Period, disciples follow their masters and live with them. This is both applied to secular and religious traditions. Philosophers by that time teach wisdom and ideas to their students while the religious authorities teach faith and law. They were in fact, not just a teacher like what we think today who teaches in a classroom three hours a week, gives an assignment, and sometimes scares the students with exams. The students or the "disciples" learn not only through words

6 Ibid, 97.
7 Ibid, 97.

but also through the actions of their master. They observe their master's way of thinking, way of responding to a situation, and way of treating people. They travel with the master, follow him with his schedule, dialogue with him during meal times, study how he speaks, and so on.

If the ultimate aim of higher education is morality, then the model of "discipleship" can be considered today, or else, as I have argued, there will be no need to go to college in the future since all the skills, crafts, and knowledge will be available sooner or later on the internet. The discipleship model is the best way to transmit wisdom and morality which cannot be learned just by sitting on a chair with a laptop.

As a religious person, my novitiate experience in Chile, South America which lasted for two years, was like a character formation using the "discipleship" model. I was with the other five seminarians and two formators who are masters in life, morality, and skills. I learned not only when they teach us but I learned all the time from them. I even learned from one of them a particular way of smiling and finding humor in all things. He did not need to teach me that, instead I only needed to observe him, live with him, and I automatically replicated his good deeds in my own way, freely and joyfully.

Discipleship as an education system for all people is not impossible if we are to invest in it. Countries are willing to invest to train their citizens intensely and rigorously in military service for two years to get them ready to "fight against" other countries. If so, then why not train people to form their character and be moral for two years to get them ready to "work with" other countries, to create peace, communion, and fraternity? The latter needs more courage and valiancy.

Discipleship Model as the Higher Education System

How can a modern discipleship education system be imagined? This part of the reflection will try to develop general foundations on discipleship as an education system. Just a note that this is a philosophical reflection and is not scientific research, thus it is free to theorize without being confined to the limits of the social, political, and economic reality present today.

The discipleship education system is for students who have finished high school. Ideally and generally, they will be around 16 to 18 years old. Normally at this age, a person is aware of his or her individuality and freedom and has the power to think about and choose what is right or wrong. One can then make decisions on his own thus can train his or her morality properly and consciously.

The students must have the chance to know the masters and the masters, the students. The students can choose a master or a team of masters to follow for a period of time. It can be for one whole year to four years. The masters must be life masters or life coaches. They must be competent, moral, and exemplary in all their work so that they can lead the students well. The masters can be experts of different fields such as philosophy, politics, science, art, social work, theology, medicine, and so on. The students, aside from following their masters who will give them their tasks, will also have some skill subjects that they can take online. The masters are responsible to teach the students proper conduct, learning how to learn, integrating and practicing the skills, the art of living, and so on.

Let us take, for instance, a student named Kyle. He wants to go to higher education and he takes up the course BS Computer Science. He will be needing to take some skill subjects online,

but minimal, and most of his training and formation will be coming from the master he will choose. Let us say Mark and Bill are the masters. They are both knowledgeable in science and humanities and they are competent to form Kyle and the rest of the disciples integrally. Both Kyle, Mark, Bill, and other disciples will live in a university campus. Mark and Bill will lead their students while at the same time they can keep their job as IT or software engineers or IT business owners. The students will observe them and the masters will teach the students. The students may even attend some of their masters' meetings and may join them in their decision-making. In this case, students will have real-life learnings that will help them grow both in skill and in morality.

How about the private life of the students and the masters? If they live with each other, then, how can they relate with their family, friends, and partners? If we think about it, living our private life must also be something to be learned. Most of us do not know what to do in private life and that is problematic. If we will be frank about it, students today with our current education system seem to have no time to learn about relationships because they have a lot of schoolwork to do! Our current education system may seem to be prioritizing calculated outputs than priceless relationships. No wonder why when students become working professionals, they bring this habit.

Relationship is part of moral education hence it must be included in the new education system. The discipleship model is a model of relationship, of learning how to relate to persons as persons and not just for utility. The current system seems to be like students who *use* their professors to learn and earn a degree while teachers *use* their students to earn a salary. Of course, there are a lot of good-hearted students and teachers

who truly care for each other but nevertheless, the current system does not promote genuine and deep relationships with others. Learning genuine relationships is one of the main goals of the proposed education system. The students must learn to closely relate with their masters who are people-person so it must be ideally not hard to relate with them.

Having said this, we need to address the question of family, friends, and partners. For the family, they can visit them during vacations. Students will learn from their masters how they relate with their families and then apply it to their own families during vacation periods. It aims not at a superficial relationship but an authentic and deeper one. Students will learn how to have a deep and intimate connection with their family even if they are far from them and only visit them for some period. It will prepare them when they become working professionals and live on their own. This is far better than students always being with the family but do not know how to talk, eat, or have fun with them because their relationship skills are not formed. For friends, the students must learn to befriend their co-disciples. It teaches them to love unconditionally whether they like a person or not. This will avoid the issue today that people are centered into exclusive and closed groups, marginalizing many.

Marginalization and divisions are the cause of poverty and war. For partners, they can be set aside during this period of time of higher education. It is not that the system is against romantic partnership but it desires undivided attention on character formation which will ideally equip the students for better and more matured exclusive relationships in the future.

Many complicated details will come along with the idea of the discipleship system but these are the fundamental ideas. I myself would like to learn in this way. If I am honored, I would

be glad to live with Dr. Manuel Dy, Dr. Mark Calano, or Dr. Agustin Rodriguez for a period of time and learn about life with them and from them. I also would like to be a life master myself and have students whom I can teach in this way. I will be treating them with care and gentleness and at the same time with firmness and discipline. I will not even hesitate to treat my students as my children for whom I want nothing but the best. The main goal of the discipleship system is forming the character or teaching morality which is basically to learn to love each other unconditionally and profoundly and to create genuine and intimate relationships.

Conclusion

We must rethink our education system today because time is changing. We live in a world where knowledge is accessible to anyone, at any time, from anywhere. Skills keep on changing in this fast-paced world and skills can now be learned through the internet. Higher education must not only think of equipping and teaching skills to students but of forming their character as Immanuel Kant claimed. If we just stay in our current higher education system, students will no longer see the need to attend college. Furthermore, we are facing the challenge of many intelligent and skilled people who lack moral values. They are endangered to lead themselves and the whole of humanity to destruction. Many young people know a lot but do not know what to do in life and who to be. Humanity today has power, but it lacks direction and purpose.

Discipleship is one system we can consider implementing if we aim for an integral and profound character formation of each person. This model is not only for the elite nor for the religious but for all. It may be first executed for some who can afford it and if the experiment works, it may be done city-scale, country-scale, and worldwide. It can be implemented

together with the current education system. Skill courses can be taken online while students live with their masters.

The proposed education system does not seem to be so profitable for some but we must be hopeful that the government and business owners would support this system. We must realize that in the end, a good society and good business are built not only by skilled people but especially by good people. The proposed education system also hopes to be the new "military" training because it forms the people not to fight each other but to fight the good fight within and to freely choose to do what is right because it is right. In this new education system, we can level up as humans and make a big leap toward the perfection that Immanuel Kant dreamed of.

INTO THE DEEP: NAVIGATING FROM LONELINESS TO INFINITY

Joseph Wong Shun Yip, SJ

"*The soul that sees beauty may sometimes walk alone.*"

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Isolation – the very experience highlighted by the pandemic – is the space where I journeyed throughout the years of my philosophical studies. By chance or by grace, philosophy became one of my walking companions as I went through these moments of confinement where I often asked myself, "What does isolation bring forth?"

There are some benefits to isolation. It provides more personal time and space for reflection. I have the leisure to stop amidst the daily routine, the space to pay attention to what is going on around me, and the opportunity to ask questions about the mundane, search for the essentials, and clarify the obscure. Isolation provides me the fertile ground for the act of philosophizing.

If Thales became the laughing stock because he fell into the well while he was thinking about what happened in the sky, it is no longer the case when we take time to reflect and seek meaning from our pandemic experiences. The pandemic tells us the same message Socrates had more than two thousand years ago, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

Isolation does not only open the door to philosophical reflection but also draws on the limit situation we confront.

Nothing stands out more vividly than the experience of loneliness – community lockdown, self-quarantine, or social distancing. Physical isolation also leads to social and psychological isolation. From time to time, we experience being alone, left out, alienated, separated, lost, and thus, lonely.

However, loneliness does not emerge only from a pandemic. At some point in our life, we all experience loneliness. We are born into the world as an individual. We live the challenges and triumphs in our life mostly on our own. We face our death alone. Being lonely is indeed a fundamental human experience. As the Beatles' song goes, "Look at all the lonely people!"

If wonder motivated the Pre-Socratics to question the origin and order of the world, faith moved Augustine and Aquinas to reason about the nature of God, doubt drove Descartes to seek a clear and distinct understanding of what can be known, and fear and anguish irritated the existentialists to inquire the meaning of being human, it was the experience of loneliness that pushed me to question.

What is loneliness? What does it mean when I say that I am lonely? How does philosophy help me understand the original experience of loneliness? Is it only a negative notion? What can be drawn out from loneliness? Where does loneliness lead to?

Disquieting as they may appear, our questions represent a passion – a passion to know and to love. The same passion has propelled the philosophical adventure of countless thinkers over time. As a philosophy student, I do not go on this journey alone. *Philosophia*, the passion for wisdom, pushes me to put out into the deep unknown, to journey to the periphery ever changing, and to explore the horizon ever new. Meanwhile, the wisdom of passion inspires me to navigate from loneliness to infinity.

A Quest for Human Flourishing

Loneliness often comes when we are alone. It appears as a discomfort like living in a prison cell. But loneliness does not equate to being alone. I can enjoy being alone – whether listening to music, reading, writing, and reflecting – and the most extreme case is the monk who prays and works all day long in a hut of his own. I am content to stay with the aloneness, which is called solitude.

The song "Shallow" by Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper well expresses what loneliness is. It is an experience of "falling" in which we either fear or want change. As human beings, we have a quest for the deep. "I'm off the deep end, watch as I dive in. I'll never meet the ground. Crash through the surface, where they can't hurt us. We're far from the shallow now…" Loneliness is discontent with shallowness. In loneliness, I feel discomfort with not being in touch with deeper reality, including the innermost part of myself. There is a desire to "crush through the surface" of routine and superficiality and to "dive in" the deep to know and make meanings.

Socrates was the pioneer against shallowness. He refused to take everything for granted, to accept what the majority says, to listen to beautiful but empty words from those who called themselves wise. Socrates was lonely because he sought to attain wisdom through vigorous investigation and dialogue . His way to break the shallowness was to question, refute, and examine every argument. He challenged the common beliefs and prejudices of Athens in the marketplaces, until he was put to death - alone.

The wisdom he attained in these conversations was nothing but humility – to know that I do not know. Shallowness can sometimes be a cover-up for ignorance but wisdom requires

of me the humility to acknowledge my limitations in order to gain deeper insight . As my teacher in Philosophy of the Human Person said, "To have a point of view is first that you are able to go out of your point of view." This movement of going out is dramatically portrayed in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. As the only man who escapes from the narrow cave and sees the enlightened reality has his eyes burned and is eventually persecuted, the journey to go against shallowness is paradoxically a lonely path.

And yet shallowness is not only related to what one knows about reality but also one's purpose. Despite any measure of accumulated knowledge, a person remains shallow when he cannot answer the questions "Who am I" and "What am I living for?" Something is lacking in his life. Thus, he feels that "I'll never meet the ground."

Aristotle was well aware of this problem. Therefore, he posed the question of the ultimate purpose of human life. I can have many purposes in my life, such as pleasure, honor, health, and wealth, but what is the self-sufficient, final, and attainable end of human living? Aristotle thought that it was happiness (in Greek, *eudaimonia*). Rather than a static state of pleasure, *eudaimonia* is the lifelong process to attain excellence (*arête*) of our human nature. In other words, human beings aim toward flourishing.

But what is human nature? For Aristotle, human beings are rational, which differentiates us from other animals. Yet, he acknowledges that we also have biological needs and passions. The latter can even influence our actions. For example, a celebrity can slap a person out of anger and a politician can lie to gain power. The uniqueness of being human is to exercise rationality to direct our impulses and guide our

actions. Thus, the end of human beings is to attain excellence in their intellectual capacity.

Aristotle was very practical. He knew that we do not live in the realm of ideas, but actions. We can only attain virtues through our actions, that is, as we often say "learning by doing." In order to do this, we have to cultivate both intellectual and moral virtues. While intellectual virtue is the pursuit of knowledge and truth, moral virtue is developed through the habitual practice of seeking the mean (*mesotes*) between excess and deficiency. Thus, I can only acquire virtuous living by choosing the appropriate response in every situation guided by reason . This appropriate response is the middle ground between the extremes, for example, courage between rashness and cowardness, moderation between self-indulgence and insensibility. While there is no absolute answer for different situations, I can build up my virtuous character only through continuous practice.

Nothing can put down a virtuous person since his sense of purpose and way of life are built-in instead of an add-on. He can continue to choose his means followed by his reason even if he is in a distress situation like loneliness. Is this not the same challenge the pandemic posed to us? Every day I discern the middle ground of prudence between social distancing and freedom, of charity between self-preservation and solidarity with the poor, and of truthfulness between easy answers and research-based decisions.

Reason Out in Solitude

Loneliness is not only experienced in isolation but also amidst the crowd. For example, when I become functional in the workplace, when I talk about many topics rather than myself in a conversation, or when I move in and out of my

apartment without any interaction with the neighbors. I can live as an apathetic and impersonal being.

One of the iconic paintings that capture the modern landscape of loneliness is Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks." It portrays a brightly lit diner with four people within. While each person does not seem to connect, they fall into endless questioning in solitude. It presents the two ways we try to escape from loneliness.

In loneliness, we experience boredom. While some people choose to act out and find refuge in all kinds of sensory pleasure, such as alcohol, drugs, gaming, and sex, others retreat inwardly to the mind. Our human mind has the unrestricted drive to know about everything,[1] and thus, fulfills our desire to connect with everything outside. Loneliness can motivate our drive for knowing, questioning, and doubting.

Who else, but Reńe Descartes, was so fascinated with doubting in his philosophical enterprise? He does not doubt in order to destroy but to seek what is true. Doubting is a method for him. He thinks that everything can be doubted except the act of doubting. In other words, I can doubt everything, even my body, but not the mind that doubts. Thus, he reaches a foundation of *cogito*: I think, therefore I am.[2] I am a thinking being.

Descartes started the revolution to turn the world upside down. Reality is no longer perceived as how it appears to the mind, but as what the mind can know – those which are clear and distinct. Thus, he separates the knower as the subject and the known as an object. The subjective mind which doubts,

1 Norris Clarke, SJ, The *One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 29.

2 Reńe Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selection from the Objection and Replies,* trans. Michael Moriarty (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008), 17-24.

understands, wills, and imagines treats everything as an impersonal object; and n ot only the external reality, but we can also conceptualize the internal experiences, including loneliness. By adopting this scientific thinking, I can deduct my mental experiences into limited concepts.

Immanuel Kant further suggested that all knowledge is the active construction of the mind to the external reality. Knowing is no longer an act of receiving but perceiving. I organize what I perceive into different categories in my mind. Everything is in the mind, everything is *a priori*. The Matrix world is possible! I shall be skeptical about all things that cannot be validated by the mind.

Following this scientific mindset, I then understand loneliness as the "affective and cognitive discomfort or uneasiness from being or perceiving oneself to be alone or otherwise solitary."[3] Loneliness can thus be defined as an emotion in our affectivity and perception in our cognition.

Loneliness, as an emotion, is a rather broad concept to describe the feeling of distress in being alone. It covers the feelings of sadness, grief, fear, anxiety, and hopelessness. Loneliness for a widow is felt in the sadness of losing a lifelong companion and being alone. Loneliness for a newcomer in high school is felt in the fear and anxiety of not being able to make new friends and being alone in class. Loneliness for a president who faces a war is felt in the helplessness of lack of support from other countries and fighting alone. If we only see loneliness as an emotion, it means a lot of very different experiences.

3 American Psychological Association, "Loneliness", *APA Dictionary of Psychology,* https://dictionary.apa.org/loneliness (accessed April 8, 2022).

Loneliness, as a perception, is about the cognitive distress of the discrepancy between our perception and reality. In other words, I perceive being alone whether I am alone or immersed in a crowd. For example, a foreigner comes to another country. He may live with the local people but think that he is alone and left out because neither does he fully understand the local language and culture nor do the people around him understand his culture and worldview well. He may perceive this as a dangerous and stressful situation. While it describes the invisible barrier between the self and others, it does not touch the essence of loneliness.

Although these categories are helpful to grasp what the internal experience of loneliness means, they have their limitations. They cannot explain the total experience of loneliness. Edmund Husserl, on the other hand, provides another way to understand loneliness as a subjective experience through his phenomenology.

Rather than treating reality as a mere object, Husserl suggested that we go "back to the things themselves" (In German, *das Ding an sich*),[4] that is, to return to the phenomenon, that which presents itself to us. In other words, I try to see things as they are, free from any prejudice. How can I do that? First, I have to "bracket" my natural attitude towards the object I want to know. I have to be aware of the lens I wear in seeing things outside me.

Many people equate loneliness to a negative and unpleasant situation that needs to be avoided. It is even described as "social pain," which people hesitate to talk about. Moreover, loneliness is seen as a sickness, which can lead to depression and eventually death. The former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek

4 Manuel Dy, "The Phenomenological Method", in *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Second Edition), ed. by Manuel B. Dy, Jr. (Makati City: Goodwill Trading Co., Inc., 2012), 43-50.

H. Murthy declared a "loneliness epidemic" in 2017 while the British government appointed a "Minister of Loneliness" in 2018 to tackle loneliness. Some even say chronic loneliness is like "smoking 15 cigarettes a day."[5] Loneliness may kill, and thus, turns to terror. The pandemic just intensifies the fear. But I have to set aside these negative notions about loneliness before I go further to investigate what insights I can extract from the experience.

On the other hand, knowing is not only the mind's active construction of what I am conscious of but also the inherent relationship between the knower and the known. Husserl calls it the intentionality of consciousness. I am always conscious of something other than my consciousness. There is no object without the subject. The world is meaningless without man and there is no man who is outside of the world. Human beings are embodied spirits. In other words, knowledge is always limited, incomplete, and perspectival. I am always like the blind men appraising the elephant in the Asian parable. To know is to understand things in context. To know about loneliness, I do not only ask what it is but also how it relates to me in my experience.

Encountering the Face of the Other

If we put loneliness into context, we can only echo what John Donne exclaimed, "No man is an island."[6] Human beings are not only rational animals but social beings. Knowing cannot satisfy loneliness in the end. If knowing is synthetic, it is always egocentric. Because knowing as a process of synthesizing is to totalize the external world as the "same" as

5 Jill Lepore, "The History of Loneliness," *The New Yorker Magazine,* April 6, 2020, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/06/the-history-of-loneliness (accessed April 8, 2022).

6 John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions,* 1923.

what my mind constructs; it turns everything into the self. I eventually come to face being imprisoned alone in my being. On the other hand, the feeling of loneliness is a call to escape from the imprisonment of the self in being.

For Emmanuel Levinas, nothing but the *Other* can escape from the imprisonment of the self in being shallow and impersonal, which he named as *there is* (in French: *il y a*).[7] In the state of *there is*, one is terribly fixated on the impersonal being where it is totally impossible to escape. The exit is through the relationship with the *Other*.

The *Other* is alterity to the self. When another person stands in front of me, it is necessary to ask the question "Who are you?" The *Other* is unknown to the I. I cannot assume anything that the *Other* shares the same with me. Even if I have known a friend for some time, perhaps I only know 2 percent about him. I cannot put the *Other* into my boxes. I cannot even push the *Other* to reveal himself. The *Other* is always a surprise to me.

It is more outstanding when talking with a child. They always give astonishing answers and questions. Once I was on the bus with my 5-year-old cousin and we passed by a cemetery. He suddenly asked me, "What is a cemetery?" I answered, "It is a place for the dead." He instinctively responded, "Why do we still need a place to live if we are dead?" I can never imagine a 5-year-old child would ask such a deep question!

The *Other* cannot be conceptualized but appears to me through the *Face*. The *Face* does not only signify physical appearances, gestures, and expressions but the whole of the *Other*. Even if twin sisters, who share similar physical features,

7 Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo,* trans. R.A Cohen (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press), 47-52.

live and grow together, they are not the same. The *Other* is always another being different from the I.

Yet, the *Other* is also vulnerable because my egocentric mind can easily kill the otherness through assimilation to the I. I can treat the *Other* as an object rather than a subject. Thus, the *Face* of the *Other* is a command to the I that "thou shalt not kill."[8] I have to respect the *Other*, not simply because of the otherness, but the unique subjectivity of the *Other*. Therefore, the I has total responsibility for the *Other* when the I realizes that the *Face* represents the resistance to my powerful ego. It orders and ordains me to stop clinging to the self, but to be being-for-the-*Other*.[9]

It is interesting to examine the phenomenon of wearing face masks during the pandemic. Despite the good reasons to wear a face mask, it imposes a buffer for the immediate command of the *Other* on me. While I desire to take off the mask, is not the mask also calling out my resistance to allowing the *Other* to communicate with me? Yet, the sick, poor, homeless, and lonely continuously command me beyond their masks! The *Other* said, "You are not the only lonely being." It orders me to step into the loneliness of the *Other*.

Can I request the *Other* do the same to me? The *Other*-I relationship is not reciprocal but asymmetrical. For Levinas, the *Other* is always before the I. When I say, "Here, I am," it implies that I am here to listen to the *Other* and bear the responsibility to serve the *Other*. I am the hostage of the *Other* and nobody can replace my responsibility.[10] Such responsibility does not only have interpersonal implications but socio-ethical-political consequences. It is in this spirit

8 Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity,* 86-88.

9 Ibid., 51-52.

10 Ibid., 95-101.

J.F. Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."[11]

The relationship with the *Other* unavoidably leads to the phenomenon of love. Loneliness, eventually, is about our desire to love. Its here that Max Scheler may not agree with Levinas in treating every relationship as ethical. For him, i t is loving which is more fundamental to the human person because, apart from the reasoning of the mind, there is a reasoning of the heart.[12] One does not love another person for any reason, including values or benefits that can be had from the other. These may be the results of love, but not the cause of loving. Love is not a rational but primitive human response to the essence of other persons and things.

What is love then? Loving is indeed "manifested more by deeds than by words."[13] We cannot define it, but we can understand it through the act of loving. For Scheler, love is first an intentional movement. When I love someone, I see the values in the other. Yet, I do not love a person because of her values. I love a person who is valuable. Love does not create values for the other. Love also does not promote the higher values of the other. Love only brings out the higher values of the other. Thus, love is an intentional movement from the

11 J. F. Kennedy, "President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address," *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum,* https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/inaugural-address (accessed April 8, 2022).

12 A priori for Max Scheler does not limit to the intellect but intuition. His phenomenology is influenced by Blaise Pascal's order of the heart *(ordre du coeur, logique du coeur)* that "the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing." One of the things the heart knows is the movement of love.

13 Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius,* trans. George E Ganss, SJ (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 94, no. 230.

lower value to the higher value of the beloved.[14] A child is always precious in the eyes of his parents. The parents do not only see what good qualities the child has, but the potential, or the higher possible values, in the child. Out of love, the parents accept the whole person of their child.

Moreover, love is not limited to persons, but also includes other things. Scheler is not allergic to being attached to the self because love entails freedom. Everybody and everything can bear values. When I love someone or something, I am moved to see these values of the beloved person and thing, e ven if these values may not be realized. For example, I love theater art. I simply fell in love with this art form by an attraction and fascination. Later, I discovered its values - the beauty, the powerful expression, and the dynamic energy. But not every play I have watched embodies these values. There are bad performances, but they cannot reduce my love for theater.

Therefore, I can genuinely love myself, not because of my ego-centeredness, but the recognition that I am valuable. In this sense, love cannot be conditional. Loneliness may push me to reach out to others, but I cannot love others and anything out of feeling lonely. Loneliness calls out our capacity for love in acceptance and self-giving. The fundamental expression of oneself is not about my self-knowledge, but my very self. Loneliness asks of my creativity to express my appreciation and love for others. Are we not moved by the generosity and selfless giving of the health workers, the caring neighbors, and the ordinary folks who continue to serve our everyday needs during the pandemic? Love will eventually bring out the good.

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14 Manuel Dy, "Max Scheler's Phenomenology of Love," in *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings,* Second Edition, ed. by Manuel B. Dy, Jr. (Makati City: Goodwill Trading Co., Inc., 2012), 229-236.

Towards the Unreachable Infinity

While love itself is unconditional, it does not mean that loneliness will disappear. We may experience loneliness, despite being fulfilled in life, being peaceful in mind, doing good to others, and engaging in loving relationships. It is the kind of loneliness one experiences in front of crisis and death, the so-called "existential loneliness." It is also a spiritual experience for people of faith, often called the "desert experience." Loneliness expresses the ultimate concern of human beings in our finite existence within the world and seeking for the Infinite, which some name God.

Existential crisis often comes unpredictably when we contend with the way we are. It comes as a danger that shakes the foundation of our life. It came as restlessness to Augustine, fear and trembling to Kierkegaard, a cannonball to Ignatius, the pandemic to some of us. Facing the overwhelming sense of losing oneself pushes us to ask , "What is this all about?"

Yet, this cannot be just a speculative question. It is not about what caused all these to happen. It is rather about the whole of reality, the ultimate context of our experience, or existence itself . A crisis is an opening for our being to dive into the deep. Thus, it is the narrow and lonely path one has to go through on one's own.

For Anselm of Canterbury, it came as an alternating conversation, and even struggle, between the heart and the head, faith and reason, prayer and philosophical argument. Moved by his desire to know more about God, he came to a concept of God 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived (in Latin: *id quo majus cogitari nequit*).[15] His faith

15 Anselm of Canterbury, "Proslogion," *In Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury,* trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1986), 93.

moved him to seek more understanding of the Infinite One whom he loved. Although what he had was a limited concept, which cannot prove the existence of God, Anselm's effort demonstrates through his argument that faith is reasonable. What he started has brought forth a series of conversations that still engage both believers and non-believers today.[16] Paradoxically, our finiteness is like the deepest cry to the Infinite space. Its echo from the Infinite will bounce back and amaze us to continuously question the mystery of being.

Absurd as it is, the existential experience is often expressed in a story or a narrative. One of my favorites is "Life of Pi," in which a spiritual Indian boy, Pi, is left with a ferocious Bengal tiger named Richard Parker on a lifeboat and stranded in the Pacific Ocean. After experiencing his life-and-death struggle with the wild tiger and a near-death starving, through the eyes of Richard Parker, Pi looks into the depth of a solitary sea. He then sees the diversity of all living beings together in one unity.

Perhaps, this is the same vision Thomas Aquinas saw when he contemplated the question of being as one and many. He was astonished at how every single being could be unique and different from each other, even while they exist harmoniously as one among themselves. How could this be?

16 Kant critiques Anselm's argument that existence is a predicate rather than a concept, which means that something that exists in the mind does not necessarily exist in reality. Another contemporary argument is the "Invisible Gardener" by Antony Flew. Flew thinks that Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence is like an invisible gardener, that no conceivable event is a sufficient reason for withdrawing their assertion about God. However, we can also read Anselm's argument in philosophical hermeneutics in order to understand the saying rather than the said, in order words, the intentions and insights of Anselm beyond his literal argument. (See Anthony Flew, et al.; Paul Ricoeur.)

For Aquinas, every being is living in tension metaphysically. While each being is active in nature pouring out its energy to and receiving from others, they are interconnected with each other as a community of beings. While each being is active in nature pouring out its energy to and receiving from others, they are interconnected with each other as a community of beings. However, their ways of participation are limited by their unique modes.[17] A tree exists in a tree way and a human exists in a human way. Yet, all beings are united as one family and share in the same source of life. We belong to each other!

In loneliness, I find out my uniqueness in all creation and no other being is the same as me. I realize that I cannot escape from the fact of being alone because I am given my individuality. I am free to know, act, and love. I am responsible for my response to the situation of loneliness. Meanwhile, I also discover that my individuality is limited. The experience of loneliness says that I am not self-sustained. It humbles me and silences me.

Loneliness tells me that I am not supposed to be alone as my faith reveals , "It is not good for the man to be alone."[18] If I take the leap of faith, loneliness will bring me into dialogue with the Infinite. It asks me to put myself at the mercy of others. Loneliness, at last, is an invitation to surrender oneself to the greater reality and God the Infinite. I am not alone but in total reliance on the Other. As Gabriel Marcel said, to exist is to co-exist (in Latin: *esse est co-esse*) and participate in the life of others.[19] This sense of belonging is the ultimate

17 Norris Clarke SJ, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 72-91.

18 Cf. Genesis 2:18.

19 Clarke, *The One and the Many,* 72-91.

encouraging word from the Infinite to the being who feels lonely in its finitude.

No wonder after the vision and a scary thunderstorm in which Pi begs for God's mercy, he arrives at a floating island full of meerkats and interconnected trees. At the center of the island is a freshwater pool nurturing all living beings, saving the dying Pi and Richard Parker. Sometimes, God seems absent in the ordinary to make space for us, yet He remains imminently present in the hiddenness.

Epilogue

"Alone and on foot" – this is how Ignatius describes himself after his studies intersect with moments of trial and imprisonment in Alcala and Salamanca.[20] In solitude, Ignatius begins to reflect and put his spiritual encounter into words. Thus, he comes to his *Principle and Foundation* – "Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord…we ought to use everything to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it."[21]

Loneliness, as a point of departure, launches my philosophical journey from the self to the mind, to the Other, and towards the Infinite. It does not necessarily lead to destruction but *magis* – to look for the more, the wider, the farther, and the deeper. Yet, after all the efforts of navigation and exploration, the insights bring me back to "the richness of reality," as Fr.

20 Luis Goncalves De Camera, SJ, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola,* trans. Joseph Tylenda, SJ (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1985),

21 Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises,* 32, no. 23.

Roque Ferriols, SJ wisely said.[22] The way of return is another pilgrimage towards the *magis* Ignatius envisioned! It is worth trying, as T.S. Eliot beautifully wrote:

> *We shall not cease from exploration*
>
> *And the end of all our exploring*
>
> *Will be to arrive where we started*
>
> *And know the place for the first time.*
>
> *Through the unknown, unremembered gate*
>
> *When the last of earth left to discover*
>
> *Is that which was the beginning;*
>
> *At the source of the longest river*
>
> *The voice of the hidden waterfall*
>
> *And the children in the apple-tree*
>
> *Not known, because not looked for*
>
> *But heard, half-heard, in the stillness*
>
> *Between two waves of the sea.*[23]

22 Roque Ferriols, SJ, "Insight," in *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings,* Second Edition, ed. by Manuel B. Dy, Jr. (Makati City: Goodwill Trading Co., Inc., 2012), 3-6.

23 Excerpt from T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding,* 1942.

Finding the Trinity in All Things: A Reflection on the Practical Implications of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Life

Aloysious Lubega, SJ

The doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental to Christianity, yet, at the same time, it is an arduous doctrine to explain. According to some theologians, the doctrine of the Trinity has become not only isolated from other areas of systematic theology but has also come to be considered as having no consequence in pastoral, ethical, and practical matters of the Christian life. In this paper, we want to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not only connected to other areas of theology but also has pastoral and practical implications for daily Christian living.

The Doctrine of the Trinity in Scriptures, the Church Fathers, and St. Thomas Aquinas

The Trinity is not explicitly formulated in Scripture, although we get some allusions there.[1] As Gerald O'Collins notes, the Old Testament "contains, in anticipation, categories used to express and elaborate the Trinity."[2] For example, in the creation story, we have the expression "Let us make…" (Gen. 1:26; also, the visitors to Abraham in Gen 18:1-15).

1 St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity: De Trinitate.* Trans. Edmund Hill, OP; Ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 1991), Book VII, Chapter 4.

2 Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 11.

In the Synoptic Gospels, the most eloquent Trinitarian proclamation comes from Jesus: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit…" (Mt 28:19-20). In John's gospel, the Father and Son are featured prominently, while the Holy Spirit is given various names – Paraclete, Consoler, Advocate, etc.

The dispute on the doctrine of the Trinity was one of the most divisive debates in the early Church. Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria, is usually identified as the figure that provoked the articulation of the Trinitarian doctrine.[3] He wanted to protect the absolute unity of God by rejecting the full divinity of Jesus.[4] The Council of Nicaea I, convened by Emperor Constantine to settle the matter, excommunicated Arius and ruled that Jesus is fully God and fully human. Both are of one essence – *homoousios*. But the meaning of *ousia* was far from clear.

The Cappadocians, Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, argued that there are three substances (*hypostases*) or persons in the Godhead, but they are of one essence (*homoousia*). The Father is the font/cause; the Son is begotten by the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. However, the Cappadocians did not convincingly explain the One and the Three, but they succeeded in preserving a mystery that has been handed down to them from tradition.

St. Augustine of Hippo proposed a psychological explanation of the Trinity.[5] Since we are made in the image of God, we

3 Ladaria, Luis F., *The Living and True God: The Mystery of the Trinity,* Trans. Maria Isabel Reyna and Liam Kelly (Miami, FL: Convivium Press, 2010), 40.

4 O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God,* 111-113.

5 *De Trinitate* IX, 2, 2.

can know something of God by analyzing our rational human soul. A human being loves the self. I know myself, and I love myself. Here, there are two persons – the I, and the self that I love. Yet both of these are entirely one. This is then, like the Father and the Son, and the love between them in the Holy Spirit. Instead of the Greek one *ousia* and three hypostases, Augustine preferred the Latin one *essentia*, and three *personae*. He argues that we find it difficult to understand the doctrine because sin has corrupted our minds. In the end, Augustine succeeds in talking about the Trinity, although he does explain its essence.

For St. Thomas Aquinas[6], being, knowing, and loving perfectly coincide in God. The Word (Jesus) is God understanding God – God self-understanding (the intellect). The Holy Spirit is God loving God – God's self-love (the will). Thus, Aquinas uses Aristotle's categories of intellect (for knowing) and will (for loving). However, Aquinas accepts that reason can tell us about the One God, but not the Triune God, who only comes to us through revelation. He also concedes that human reason cannot fully grasp God in this life but will possibly do so in the next life.

The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theological Discourse

So far, our Church forebears and scholastics used the approach of metaphysics to understand and explain the doctrine of the Trinity. Scholasticism and post-reformation theology became increasingly problematic. To begin with, such theology was manualist, highly intellectual, polemical, and focused more on proof-texting to defend the faith.[7] The

6 *STh* I, 37, 1.

7 Leinsle, Ulrich G., *Introduction to Scholastic Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 354-355.

downside was that many people found it hard to relate to the tenets of faith, such as the Trinity. This apparent irrelevance of the doctrine of the Trinity was earlier identified by Immanuel Kant, who noted that "The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has no practical relevance at all, even if we think we understand it; and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends all our concepts. Whether we are to worship three or ten persons in the Deity makes no difference."[8]

In addition, the scholastic method was ahistorical and metaphysical in an era when historical criticism was gaining popularity in philosophy and theology. [9] Instead of getting trapped in a static, non-changing, highly abstract theology, there emerged a quest to return to the original and historical sources of the Christian faith. For the doctrine of the Trinity, instead of speculating on its inner nature (immanence), it became imperative to rediscover how God had revealed Godself in history (economic Trinity). In fact, Karl Rahner attempted to restore the doctrine of the Trinity to where it belongs – in revelation. For him, God is known in the way God has revealed Godself, not how we want God to be. God has revealed Godself in the economic Trinity, and this economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity. In Rahner's own words,

> The relations of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit to us - relations which are expressed in Scripture - are fundamentally the immanent Trinity itself. Therefore, we do not have to occupy ourselves so much with psychological speculation on the Trinity (in the vein of St. Augustine), which, though it may be very sublime, leads to a dead end. Such speculation may be very profound and beautiful and magnificent; it even

8 Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties,* Trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979), 65-67

9 Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology,* 354-355.

> deserves our respect, since it is the result of a thousand years of theologizing about the Trinity.[10]

Rahner does not want us to abandon metaphysics but wants us to focus on history and the Incarnation as the starting point in our knowledge of God's self-revelation. This helps us draw a connection between the triune God, grace, the Incarnation, and creation (cosmos).

In addition, some Catholic and Protestant Reformers indicated an attempt to move away from philosophical speculation and doctrinal finesse and towards the experiential, spiritual, and practical dimensions of doctrine (e.g., the Trinity).[11] Concerning the doctrine of the Trinity and the reformation, St Ignatius of Loyola demonstrates very well the need to move from an intellectual assent towards a more affectionate assent to the doctrine. St Ignatius writes about how he prayed to the Trinity "with great vehemence, devotion, and tears" and how he had "so much sobbing and effusion of tears, all terminating in the love of the Holy Trinity…" We can realize that for St Ignatius, the Trinity is not something to cram and intellectualize but rather a triad of persons who can be experienced with affection.[12]

This experiential, existential, and social approach has been gaining more ground in contemporary theological discourse. Some of the proponents of this method and approach include Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, Anne Hunt, Ally Moder, Catherine La Cugna, Mary Daly, Elizabeth Johnson,

10 Karl Rahner, *The Content of Faith: The Best of Karl Rahner's Theological Writings,* Eds. Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt; Trans. Harvey D. Egan (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 355.

11 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christian Understandings of the Trinity: The Historical Trajectory* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 166.

12 Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Diary* # 48, 63, 109–10, in *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works,* Ed. George E. Ganss, S.J., et al. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991), 244–45, 253.

Leonardo Boff, Miroslav Volf, Bernard Lonergan, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Gerald Manley Hopkins, Pope John Paul II, and Pope Francis. Karl Rahner decries the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity has been left to develop on its own without being connected to other areas of theology. In Rahner's view, the consequence of this is that

> Christians, for all their orthodox profession of faith in the Trinity, are almost just 'monotheist' in their actual religious existence. One might almost dare to affirm that if the doctrine of the Trinity were to be erased as false, most religious literature could be preserved almost unchanged throughout the process.[13]

Rahner's observation is stunning. If theology is a coherent system, how come a change or a disappearance of the doctrine of the Trinity apparently elicits no changes in other areas of systematic theology? Jürgen Moltmann had also observed that "most Christians in the West, whether they be Catholics or Protestants…whether God is one or triune evidently makes as little difference to the doctrine of faith as it does to ethics."[14] If Moltmann is correct, we could also ask ourselves: how could a doctrine so central to faith have apparently very little impact on faith and practical Christian life?

Rediscovering the Connection of the Doctrine of the Trinity to Other Areas of Theology

Some theologians have attempted to reconnect the doctrine of the Trinity to other areas of theology. In her book *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of the Christian Faith*, Anne Hunt wants to "awaken the trinitarian intuition and to

13 Karl Rahner, "Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise 'De Trinitate,'" in Theological Investigations, vol. 4, (London: Helicon Press, 1966), 79. See also Jürgen Moltmann *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 1.

14 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 1.

foster an explicitly trinitarian imagination that extends and enriches the entire theological enterprise."[15] She argues that the Trinity is the *nexus mysteriorum* – the doctrine of the Trinity explains other Christian mysteries, and at the same time, other Christian doctrines help explain the mystery of the Trinity. Hence, all theology begins and ends in the God who is One and Triune.

Karl Rahner also seeks to show the interconnectedness of the Trinity to other Christian mysteries – from creation, Incarnation, to eschatology. He stresses that "fundamentally there are only three absolute mysteries in Christianity: the trinity, Incarnation, and sanctifying grace; and we must be aware of the internal relationships among these mysteries…."[16] From these three absolute and interconnected mysteries flows anthropology, ecclesiology, missiology, liturgy, soteriology, eschatology, and the rest of theology. Rahner holds that grace is not a thing but a person. When we say that God has given us grace, we are saying that God has given us Godself. Grace is uncreated just as God is uncreated. God's self-giving is to every human being, irrespective of religion and creed, and by nature, every person is open to God (a condition known as "supernatural existential"). This immanence makes the Triune God a real and active force in Christian life.

Rediscovering Some Practical Applications of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Given the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity to the Christian faith, we cannot afford to restrict it to the arena of

15 Anne Hunt, *The Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (New York: Orbis, 2004), 4.

16 Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993), 39.

theory and speculation. Properly understood, Catherine La Cugna notes

> The doctrine of the Trinity is, in fact, the most practical of all doctrines. Among other things, it helps us articulate our understanding of the Gospel's demands; how personal conversion is related to social transformation; what constitutes "right relationship" within the Christian community and in society at large; how best to praise and worship God; and what it means to confess faith in and be baptized into the life of the God of Jesus Christ.[17]

Perhaps ecclesiology is a good starting point for applying the doctrine of the Trinity. The Church has been predominantly hierarchical, patriarchal, centralized, and authoritarian for centuries. However, these strengths have also been weaknesses. The centralization robbed local Churches of their autonomy. The Pope can veto the bishops; the bishop can veto his priests; the parish priest can disregard the inputs of his parishioners, who are exhorted to pay, pray and obey. This hierarchical and authoritarian Church has become less acceptable to many Catholics in this era of collaboration, collegiality, and participatory governance.

Fortunately, Vatican II tried to rediscover the ecclesiology of the early Church. The early Church considered itself a community of believers, baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this *communio fidelium*, all the members brought their talents and gifts to build up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:4-6). Although different members had different gifts and offices, all were called to one faith in the same God who inspires these gifts of service in everyone. *Lumen Gentium* reenvisions the Church as "a people made

17 Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," in *The Christian Century* 109/22 (July 1992): 678–82.

one by unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (LG 1, 5).

Some theologians, such as Leonardo Boff, argue that if the Trinity is a communion, the Church must also be a communion where hierarchy and authoritarianism give way to shared responsibility, participation, and inclusivity. The Pope, bishops, and priests are essential but are neither above nor outside the Church; they are within the Church. In his own words, "the Trinitarian vision produces a vision of the Church that is more communion than hierarchy, more service than power, more circular than pyramidal, more loving embrace than bending the knee before authority."[18] Just recently, Pope Francis has been calling for a synodal Church, rooted in "communion, participation and mission," values through which the Church "contemplates and imitates the life of the Blessed Trinity, a mystery of communion…."[19] Hence, we find in the life of the Trinity our greatest example and motivation for a participatory and inclusive Church.

There is little doubt that ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are some of the greatest imperatives of our time. In today's deeply divided body of Christ, we may do well to recall the prayer of Jesus, that "…they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). Following the lead of Vatican II, St. John Paul II, in *Ut Unum Sint,* stressed that,

> … it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of 'appendix' which is added to the Church's traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her

18 Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society,* Trans. Paul Burns (Eugene, OR: Wipf& Stock, 2005), 153-154.

19 Pope Francis. *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis for the opening of the Synod,* Addresses, 9 October 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211009-apertura-camminosinodale.html (Accessed Jan 12, 2021).

> life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does.[20]

Indeed, there are many reasons for working towards Christian unity – avoiding the religious wars of the past, addressing common problems such as poverty and climate change, etc. All these are worthy motivations. However, the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* notes that "the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church…finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, one God."[21] Hence, we find in the Trinity a very practical ideal – the greatest motivation and example for ecumenism.

Engaging in ecumenical dialogue is our humble acknowledgment that the Triune God is working outside the confines of the Catholic Church. In the Sacred Scriptures, the disciples of Jesus realize that there are other people casting out demons in Jesus' name, although they are not part of the tightly-knit group of Jesus. John asks Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us" (Mk 9:38). Jesus' reply is stunning: "Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us" (Mk 9:39-40; also, Lk 9:49-50). This implies that Catholics ought to respect and appreciate those in other Christian churches who are not in communion with Rome but who are working to uphold the dignity of humankind just as Jesus did.

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20 Pope John Paul II. *Ut Unum Sint. On Commitment to Ecumenism,* Encyclicals, May 25, 1995, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html (accessed Jan 12, 2021), no. 20.

21 Vatican II, "Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio,*" in *Documents of Vatican Council II,* edited by James Kroeger (Makati: Paulines Publishing House, 2011), number 2.

In the spirit of interreligious dialogue, the Church in Vatican II recognized that there can be truth and holiness in other established religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam, among others. According to Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* (NA), "People look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence" (NA 1), and "Throughout history, to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hidden power, which lies behind the course of nature and the events of human life" (NA 2).[22]

More recently, Pope Francis has been at the forefront of the interreligious dialogue with Islam. In his apostolic journey to the United Arab Emirates, Pope Francis, together with The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, signed a *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, which contained the statement, "The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race, and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings."[23] Far from denying the truth revealed in the Christian faith, this statement acknowledges that the Triune God also works outside the Church.

The Church's work of interreligious dialogue is an affirmation of the Spirit of God who blows where the Spirit wills (Jn 3:8). This Scripture invites Christians to observe carefully and to listen attentively to the Spirit of God working outside the Church. In the famous words of Gerard M. Hopkins, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." Like electricity, the Triune God, although imperceptible, is the power, energy,

22 Vatican II, "*Nostra Aetate:* Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," in Documents of Vatican Council II, edited by James Kroeger (Makati: Paulines Publishing House, 2011).

23 Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

and dynamism that sustains the universe. Everything in the universe bears the imprint of the Divine Logos and is sustained by the Divine Spirit, the giver of life. In the words of Teilhard de Chardin, humanity is immersed in a "divine milieu" wherein "by means of all created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us and molds us" while at the same time this divine reality "nevertheless eludes our grasp so constantly that we can never seize it here below…."[24] By recognizing that the Triune God is at work in and through all peoples, including non-Christians, the Christian is called to attentiveness to the voice of God speaking in other religions.

We also live in times when women are waking up to an apparent exclusion in social and ecclesial affairs. Some theologians, such as Elizabeth Johnson, propose that a proper understanding of the Trinity can provide a helpful framework for women's liberation in society and the Church. She argues that the image of a male God has fostered clericalism and patriarchy, used to dominate women, and exclude them from full participation in Church and society. Elizabeth Johnson observes that women,

> …are called to honor a male savior sent by a male God whose legitimate representatives can only be male, all of which places their persons precisely as female in a peripheral role. Their femaleness is judged to be not suitable as metaphor for speech about God. In a word, women occupy a marginal place in the official life of the Church, that is, necessarily there but of restricted value."[25]

In addition, some theologians argue that the view concerning women's defective and inferior nature in relation

24 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu: An Essay on the Interior Life* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957), 112, 113.

25 Johnson, Elizabeth E, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002), 26-27.

to men has provided a legitimation for domestic violence against women. Ally Moder even argues that "the issue of violence against women is intrinsically tied to the doctrines of the Trinity and atonement" because Jesus' submission to the Father's will on the cross has been used to justify the suffering of women under abusive husbands.[26] For her part, Mary Daly notes that "if God is male, then the male is God."[27] Zimbabwean feminist theologian Francisca Chimhanda has pointed out that in her local Catholic but patriarchal Church, women have "ears and no mouth," meaning that women should be ready to listen to men but not to talk. In addition, "a woman who discusses inclusive ways of being Church is either labelled a feminist (with the term being used pejoratively), or asked whether she wants to become a priest."[28] Women have consequently ceded Church leadership positions to men since men most closely manifest the patriarchal attributes of God.

If it is true that the Triune God cannot have a gender, the Church should reduce its insistence on a male God. Johnson has written the book, *She Who Is,* to indicate that God is as fully female as He is male.[29] Johnson is attempting to dismantle the arguments given for refusing to admit women to sacred orders. First, Jesus did not display any of the masculine qualities usually associated with conquering heroes. By preaching kindness, meekness, and embracing weakness, "the crucified Jesus embodies the exact opposite of the patriarchal ideal of

26 Moder, Ally, "Women, Personhood, and the Male God: A Feminist Critique of Patriarchal Concepts of God in View of Domestic Abuse," *Feminist Theology* (2019) Vol. 28(1): 85–103.

27 Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985),

28 Chimhanda, Francisca, "Raising Consciousness regarding the Dignity and Vocation of Women in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe: A historical developmental process," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. [online]. (2008) vol.34, suppl.1: pp.1-16. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992008000300002&lng=en&nrm=iso

29 Johnson, *She Who Is,* 13, 38.

the powerful man…."[30] Secondly, Johnson writes that contrary to Pope John Paul II's view that Jesus "entrusted only to men the task of being an 'icon' of his countenance as 'shepherd' and 'bridegroom' of the Church through the exercise of the ministerial priesthood,"[31]

> … women are icons of Christ, *imago Christi*, in every essential way. There is a natural resemblance between women and Jesus Christ in terms of a common humanity and participation in divine grace….The naive physicalism that reduces resembling Christ to being male is so deviant from Scripture and so theologically distorted as to be dangerous to the faith itself."[32]

Johnson's argument might not easily convince the Church to ordain women, but at least it motivates the Church to include women in its governance structures. Pope Francis has already led the way by appointing women with voting rights to the Synod of bishops.[33]

The doctrine of the Trinity can also enlighten the Church's program of social justice. Miroslav Volf writes that "in an important sense, the doctrine of the Trinity does entail a 'social program' and that "it ought to shape our 'social vision.'"[34] In today's Church and society rife with exclusion, exploitation, and inequality, Leonardo Boff argues that "no

30 Ibid, 170

31 John Paul II, *Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women*. Letters, June 29, 1995 https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html, par.11.

32 Elizabeth E. Johnson, "Responses to Rome," *Commonweal* (January 26, 1996): 11-12.

33 Christopher White,"Pope Francis Appoints Religious Sister as Secretary General of Vatican City," November 4, 2021, *National Catholic Reporter,* https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/pope-francis-appoints-religious-sister-secretary-general-vatican-city (accessed January 12, 2021).

34 Miroslav Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program": The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement" *Modern Theology* 14/3 (1998): 403-423.

other theological or biblical concept is as close to the ideal of integral liberation as this concept" of the Trinity.[35] From his idea of *perichoresis* in the Trinity, he notes that the perfect communion in the Trinity "can be seen as a model for any just, egalitarian (while respecting differences) social organization. Based on their faith in the Triune God, Christians postulate a society that can be the image and likeness of the Trinity."[36] Since the Trinity is about love and equality in the God-head, these qualities should be reflected in our society. In this sense, the Trinity provides inspiration for Christian politicians to work toward the common good.

Relevance of the Trinity to My Spiritual Journey and Religious Vocation

The doctrine of the Trinity also impels me to some *praxis* in my personal spiritual life and religious vocation. First, the Trinity as a relationship and a communion resonates well with my personal life. Although I am an individual, unique, and created in the image of the Trinitarian God, I feel the importance of being in communion with others. This interdependence among individuals, families, and communities is still very much alive in many African cultures. Individuals maintain a sense of their communal duties and obligations without losing their sense of individuality and independence. An individual makes the community, and the community makes the individual. This idea and praxis, which is called *Ubuntu*, is summarized in this one saying by African

35 Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology,* Trans. P. Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 52.

36 Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society,* Trans. Paul Burns (Eugene, OR: Wipf& Stock, 2005), 11

theologian John S. Mbiti: "I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."[37]

My community does not suppress my individual identity, and my individuality does not neglect the community. This mystery calls one to respect the diversity in other people and not to make others like oneself. Here, one recalls Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem *Pied Beauty*, in which he praises God "for dappled things." Respecting the diversity of the human race is respecting the Triune God who created them.

In my religious life and mission, the Trinitarian God is the primary impulse. In the second week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, St Ignatius invites the retreatant to contemplate "how the Three Divine Persons looked at all the plain or circuit of all the world, full of men, and how, seeing that all were going down to Hell," and decided to send God the Son (Jesus) to save the human race. St Ignatius prayed fervently to be "placed with the Son" so he could cooperate in the mission of Jesus. Following in the steps of St. Ignatius, our mission which flows directly from the Trinity is to collaborate in the "salvation of souls" through the various apostolates.

On the other hand, I believe that the ultimate response to the doctrine of the Trinity is that of wonder and contemplation. Although mine is a "faith seeking understanding," I have gradually understood that a creature can never fully comprehend its creator. Like the legend of St. Augustine's encounter with a child on the seashore, trying to comprehend the Trinity is like trying to empty the ocean into a sand hole. During my study of theology, I have realized that approaching the Trinity via the intellect is a nerve-wracking exercise. It is perhaps more helpful to approach the Trinity via the heart. In

37 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), 141, 147, 152, 166, 279.

my prayer, one is before a reality that surpasses all vocabulary and understanding. In sum, just as the doctrine of the Trinity calls us to understanding and to action, it also calls us to silence, reverence and adoration, and contemplation.

Some Limitations of "Appropriating" the Trinity and Conclusion

We have tried to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not as divorced from other areas of theology as it has been purported to be. We have seen Anne Hunt's explanation of the Trinity as the *nexus mysteriorum*. Also, following the lead of St. Ignatius of Loyola, we have seen the importance of moving from merely intellectual assent to the doctrine of the Trinity towards a more affective approach. We have also seen that a proper understanding of the Trinity has practical implications for ecclesiology, ecumenism, gender issues, ethics, social justice, and politics. As Paul Tillich has observed, "Theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received."[38]

It is not possible to exhaust all the practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity. Neither are we supposed to reduce the Trinity to only what is ethical and pragmatic. As Volf notes, "the road from the doctrine of the Trinity to proposals about global or national social arrangements is long, torturous, and fraught with danger."[39] First of all, we have to realize that the perfect communion in the Trinity cannot be fully realized in the life of the Church and society, for we are human and fallen. God has revealed Godself but also remains a mystery to be contemplated. As Jürgen Moltmann has observed,

38 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* Vol. I. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 5.

39 Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program," 403-423.

> Consequently, theology in action and theology in doxology belong together… The modern world's devotion to what is ethical and pragmatic has led to the disintegration of the doctrine of the Trinity in moral monotheism. The reduction of faith to practice has not enriched faith; it has impoverished it. It has let practice itself become a matter of law and compulsion. If we are to be freed for practice – not from it! – it is important for meditation, contemplation and doxology to be rediscovered.[40]

In our Christian life, the Triune God should spur us not only to action but also to stillness. As we strive to understand the Trinity, St. Augustine's dictum – *Si comprehendis non est Deus* – should serve as a good reminder.[41] In the words of St Anselm, ours is *fides quaerens intellectum*[42]. We believe, but we also still seek to understand. In our efforts to comprehend the Triune God, we should not be discouraged, for although we might not be able to climb the heights of God, the Triune God has pitched God's tent among us (John 1:14). God is the *Immanuel* (Mt. 1:23)!

40 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 8-9.

41 *Sermon* 52, 16: PL 38, 360.

42 *Proslogion, Proeemium.*

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