LOYOLA PAPERS

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Half a millenium ago, the Spaniards came to these islands. Half a millenium ago, Ignatius was hit by a cannonball in Pamplona. Half a millenium ago, who would have thought that such seemingly unremarkable, and in some ways even unfortunate and unwelcome events – of some famished sailors landing and a hapless soldier wounded in battle – would give birth to one of the biggest Christian nations and the biggest religious congregation in the Church today? "God writes straight in crooked lines," as Teresa of Avila says. *Dios escribe derecho en renglones torcidos,* often without us noticing.

En renglones torcidos. A fitting image of our situation, mired as we are in a world of constant disruption, aptly described as VUCAD: volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and digital. The Covid-19 pandemic only brought to the fore how precariously unstable our position was, while auguring how even more unsettled it is bound to become with the long-term effects of all these lockdowns looming in the horizon. Here in the Philippines, we will soon elect a new President and other national leaders but the choices do not seem very promising.

Still, we ask with more excitement than trepidation: what could God be writing? As we know well from Scriptures, we have a God for whom moments of crises are but opportunities to do good and chaos is a fertile playground for creativity. *Dios escribe derecho.* We have a God who is able to write straight in crooked lines and to weave wonderful tapestries from the tangled threads of our narratives and lives.

It is against this hopeful yet at the same time gloomy backdrop that we present these selected articles from our students and alumni. Thankfully, the pandemic has not been able to paralyze education in LST, nor has it been able to dampen our students' budding passion for research. Thus, despite the obvious difficulties and limitations, we have continued to do our best to write, albeit sometimes also in rather tense and tentative lines.

In the first article, "*Bap*: A Critical Comparative Analysis of the Understanding of Sin in Thai Culture and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)," **Mongkol Wongwai, O.M.I.** presents an interesting analysis of the Thai concept of *bap* vis-a-vis the Catholic doctrine of *sin*. He makes use not only of dictionary and literary sources but also mines cultural expressions such as folk tales and popular songs as well as films, soaps and television dramas. Beyond the attractiveness of its creative and quite novel methodology, however, his research points out profound ways by which the intersection of the notions of *bap* and *sin* can mutually challenge and enrich each other, thus leading not only to a better understanding of transgression but even of God, humanity and the world.

In "The Gospel of Mercy for the Filipino Church," **Ramil del Rosario Marcos** revisits the "mesage of mercy" addressed by Pope Francis to our people during his 2015 visit to the country and considers its long-term implications for the Church in the Philippines. In this insightful reflection, he unravels the Pope's ecclesiological vision as expounded in *Evangelii Gaudium* and other documents, juxtaposing them with elements from our 500 year history, suggesting that the roots of a merciful and evangelizing Church may have actually been planted long before in our shores through the

efforts of the pioneering missionaries as well as succeeding generations of Filipino Catholics. At the same time, he also identifies challenges and raises important questions that will be good to consider if we truly want to live out the Gospel of Mercy.

The third article by **Elisa Manansala-Magtibay**, titled, "Designing the Grade 12 Christian Life Education Curriculum of Xavier School Nuvali Through the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm and the Life-Faith-Life Framework" chronicles the efforts of a relatively-new, Jesuit-run K-12 school located in an emerging urban center a few miles south of Metro Manila as it strives to integrate Ignatian principles in its religious instruction curriculum. Aside from providing a valuable glimpse into the design process that went into their program, this article also contains a number of seminal ideas that can be explored and developed further by those involved in the education ministry. Among these is the potential of using more widely-known and current teaching and learning models such as *Understanding by Design* and Groome's *Shared Christian Praxis* model as concrete ways to apply the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm towards creating opportunities for students to encounter Christ.

We are also pleased to feature **David O. Reyes'** "*Creatio continua in missio Dei*: Ecological Spirituality and Pedagogy in Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*" Here he examines an important aspect to which the Pope dedicates the entire Chapter 6 of this landmark document: the formation of an authentic ecological spirituality and pedagogy as a way to address the current global crisis. Unfortunately, this chapter is frequently neglected in discussions, perhaps due not only to its placement towards the end of the encyclical, but also since spirituality and pedagogy themselves are often viewed as the exclusive

realm of a few experts, ensuing in a certain reticence to tackle them. Hence, in this much needed investigation, Reyes develops the notion of *creatio continua* as a practical summons to participate in the *missio Dei*. He then explores how this can be translated into an ecological spirituality and pedagogy using as framework the concept of transformative learning as expounded by Hathaway and Boff.

Finally, we have **Alexander Hendra Dwi Asmara, S.J.**'s "Jacques Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology and its Contributions Towards Interreligious Dialogue." Here he dares to venture into analyzing some pivotal ideas of the controversial Belgian Jesuit theologian, Jacques Dupuis, in the area of interreligious dialogue. In particular, he tackles the possibility of using Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology as a lens in understanding other religions and establishing a reciprocally enriching relationship with them, without ending up in the extremes of inclusivism or exclusivism or falling into eclecticism, syncretism and relativism. While some of Dupuis' ideas may seem appalingly scandalous at first glance, Asmara's deftly nuanced analysis of his thoughts contextualizes his framework within the purview of the infinity of Trinitarian love and vitality, which is not exhausted in the definitive revelation of Jesus but remains able to communicate Godself with salvific potency in other religions, before and after the Christ-event. As a final application, he asks, can multiple religious belonging be compatible with being a good Christian? Can one, for instance, embrace vegetarianism following the Buddhist doctrine of *ahimsa* as a way of living out the spirit of *Laudato Si*'? This is certainly a very interesting read for us in the Asian context where many religions not only coexist but are inextricably intertwined in the daily lives of individuals, families, communities and nations.

In this issue, you will also find three synthesis papers from our Sacred Theology and Philosophy programs. First we have **Earl Allyson P. Valdez**'s, "A Church *Ever Ancient, Ever New*: A Theological Synthesis from the Perspective of the XV Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment." While then a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Manila, Fr. Valdez was part of the Philippine delegation to the 2018 Pre-synodal Meeting in preparation for the Synod and he uses three important points taken from the Synodal documents to synthesize some fundamental aspects of Christian faith in a manner that connects in a special way to the youth. We also have **Alexander Zammit, M.S.S.P.**'s, "*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi:* The Theological Significance of Eucharistic Prayer IV." Here he elaborates on the anthropological, soteriological and ecclesiological dimensions of what may seem to be a new Eucharistic prayer - which is actually based on the oldest extant anaphora of Hippolytus, a priest of Rome who was martyred in the second century – and unearths its vision of human beings, salvation and community "oriented towards the *communio* of the Trinitarian God." Last but not the least, we have **Manuel Francis B. Docto, S.J.**'s "Mystery and the Ascent Through Choice," a brilliant philosophical piece that captures the oft-tormenting yet captivating existential allure of mystery and the never-ending ascent to knowledge of it by way of a persistent choice.

On this note of persistence, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our President, former Editor-in-Chief and now Moderator, Fr. Enrico C. Eusebio, S.J., not only for entrusting the leadership of *Loyola Papers* to yours truly, but more importantly, for his quiet yet persevering efforts to revive and reestablish this student and alumni journal of Loyola School of Theology. The pandemic struck shortly after the publication

of the first issue but he made it sure that all of the first three issues came out on time, including our Commemorative Issue for the Quincentennial of the Arrival of Christianity in the Philippines. We hope that this humble initiative to promote student and alumni research in our Faculty of Sacred Theology will continue to inspire more of us to research and write as a true form of service to the Church.

Dios escribe derecho en renglones torcidos. As for *Loyola Papers*, we can only write and hope to continue writing, but with a similar hope that somehow we are planting seeds that one day will grow and bear fruit with the help of grace for God's beloved people.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo

ARTICLES

Bap: Comparing the Understanding of Sin in Thai Culture and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Mongkol Wongwai, OMI

Introduction

Language is of primary importance in inculturation as it is the medium for the people's articulation of their faith. Understanding the language of a people is critical in learning about their rich expressions of faith. It is primarily through words that faith is articulated and made central to how people receive, understand, and concretely express spirituality in their daily life.

The understanding of *bap* or sin among many Catholics in Thailand today does not seem to express the Church's doctrine fully and faithfully. For instance, there is the tendency to only emphasize sin as a transgression of the Church's commandments and precepts without further deepening. Thus, there is a need to revisit the notion of sin that integrates both the teaching of the Church and Thai cultural nuances. Each can mutually complement the other in enriching the understanding of sin in the Church and the popular culture towards a deeper knowledge, understanding, and expression of faith, especially for the Thai Catholic faithful.

Sin in Thai Language and Culture

In order to delve into a deeper comprehension of substantial concepts such as *bap*, its articulation in the language is one of

the fundamental elements that should be first considered. As Jose Mario Francisco puts it, "It has been generally acknowledged that words have multiple meanings, and our study must turn to how the words are used in ordinary contexts.[1]" Language and all its elements derive their meaning from a larger system of social structures.[2] Hence, it is crucial that people become aware of how they have been shaped by their social structures, cultures, and traditions.

For instance, the Church teaches that "sin is an offense against God… Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it."[3] However, in Theravada Buddhism, sin or *bap* is a general term denoting evil deeds or bad deeds that bring about suffering and spiritual deterioration.[4] Because Thai Catholics are subject to both influences, there is a need to address differences like this so that their catechetical formation will avoid a false or inadequate understanding of sin and be rooted in their culture.

Although the meaning of *bap* among the Thais has been much discussed, a systematic study of this theme needs to be done. Given this insufficiency, the author attempts to come up with at least an intelligible description and analysis of the

1 Jose Mario C Francisco, "Too Much 'Soul': Points and Counterpoints from Culture," in *Theology and Science, from Science and Religion…and Culture in the Jesuit Tradition: Perspectives from East Asia*, edited by Jose Mario Francisco and Roman Miguel de Jesus (Australia: ATF Press, 2006), 135.

2 James Fieser and Damuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy* (Philippines: 2003), 495.

3 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC): Definitive Edition based on the Latin "Editio Typica" (Manila: Word & Life Publications) no. 1850.

4 Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto), *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 34th ed., (Bangkok: The Tripitaka Foundation for Education and Peace, 2016), 235. See also วศิน อินทสระ (Wasin Intrasara), พุทธจริยศาสตร์. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๓ (*Buddhist Ethics*, 3rd ed.,) กรุงเทพมหานคร: ทองกวาว, ๒๕๔๑ (Bangkok: Thong Kwaw, 1998), 258.

multi-layered meaning of *bap* in Thai culture, from popular expressions—religious sayings, songs, films, and television dramas—to discovering the meaning of *bap* in people's lives.

Formal Definitions of *Bap* in the Thai language

In the contemporary Thai Royal Institute Dictionary, the term has at least three substantial meanings with it. The first definition states that "*bap* is a violation against religious laws and teachings." Secondly, it refers to an evil act or evil. Thirdly, it is used as an adjective describing any evil act and is synonymous with bad or evil.[5] These definitions see *bap* as the violation of Buddhist religious laws. The implication is that to be a good person, one should not break laws. In other words, good persons are those who follow (the way of) the laws. Initially, the association of *bap* with the violation of religious laws is more outstanding than the second meaning, which simply indicates that sin is an evil act. Therefore, *bap* and religious laws are correlated, but each one has no clear meaning without the other.

Meanwhile, the meaning of *bap* in the Tripitaka goes beyond mere observance of external religious laws. It goes to the level of life condition, sensitivity to pain, and the state of life. According to the Tripitaka,[6] *bap* (บาป) or sometimes *bapa* means "evil" which is "dharma that leads to the path of

5 พจนานุกรม ฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน พ. ศ. *2554*(*Thai Dictionary of the Royal Institute*, 2011), s. v. "บาป" or "sin," by ราชบัณฑิตยสถาน (Royal Academy), https://dictionary.apps.royin.go.th/ (accessed 28 June 2019). All translations are mine otherwise further noted.

6 Tripiṭaka is the traditional term for the Buddhist scriptures, meaning "Three Baskets." The version canonical to Theravada Buddhism is generally referred to in English as the Pali Canon. Mahayana Buddhism also holds the Tripiṭaka to be authoritative. The Tripiṭaka was most likely composed between about 550 BCE and about the start of the Common Era, likely written down for the first time in the 1st century BCE.

declination and evil and unpleasant situation, and it causes the actor or the doer troubles and sufferings."[7] Those who commit evil are deemed sinners or evil-doers, yet this includes all other immoral acts, bad things, misconduct, and evil deeds, bad consequences and deterioration. The word *bap* literally means evil, endangering, causing trouble, and suffering.[8] It is "karma" or *kamma* of an individual which leads one to suffer. It is also a kind of "dharma" which absolutely leads the actor or sinner to destruction.[9] Its meaning emphasizes suffering and "unsatisfactoriness" more directly. Initially, the concept of *bap* was more related to suffering, which causes unhappiness and lack of serenity in one's life. There would be a great shift in the meaning of bap from human suffering to the violation of religious laws from hereon.

It is in this context, however, that the dynamic dimension of bap is elaborated. As already mentioned, *bap* is always in the form of karma or *kam*. The Pali term *kamma*, literally, means "action" or "doing." Any kind of intentional action, whether mental, verbal, or physical, is regarded as *kamma*. It covers all that is included in "thought, word, and deed." Generally speaking, all good and bad actions constitute *kamma*. In its ultimate sense, *kamma* means "all moral and immoral volition" (*kusala akusala cetanā*). Involuntary, unintentional, or unconscious actions, though technically deeds, do not constitute *kamma*, because volition, the most important factor in

7 วศิน อินทสระ (Wasin Intrasara), พุทธจริยศาสตร์. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๓ (*Buddhist Ethics*, 3rd ed.,) กรุงเทพมหานคร: ทองกวาว, ๒๕๔๑ (Bangkok: Thong Kwaw, 1998), 258.

8 หนังสือพระบาฬีลิปิกรม ภาค หนึ่ง,สอง,สาม, พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๒ (Pra Pali Part I, II, III, 2nd ed.), มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย, มูลนิธิ.กรุงเทพมหานคร: มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย ๒๕๓๒, ๑๑๖๙ (Mahamakut Buddhist University (Bangkok: Mahamakut University, 1989), 1169.

9 Phajon Kamchusang, "Papa: An Analytical Study in The Concept of Theravada Buddhism," *The Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* vol. 26 no. 1 (January-June 2005): 67.

determining *kamma*, is absent.[10] The Buddha once said, "I declare, O Bhikkhus, that volition (*cetanā*) is *kamma*. Having willed, one acts by body, speech, and thought."

When *bap* happens in thought, it is usually well connected with speech and an act by the body, which is normally observable. Therefore, "what is called *bap* must be originated from the body, speech, and thought (or will) with evil intention."[11] Volition is a decisive factor in determining what *kam dee* (good karma) is and what *kam chua* (bad karma) is. The idea of *kam* interwoven with the concept of *bap* is of substantial significance, because, in Thai popular expressions of *bap*, the word would interchange with *kam*; thus, the use of both words to form just a single word *bap-kam* to equate with *bap.*

Aside from these given definitions of *bap*, there are also other definitions from contemporary distinguished Thai teachers and scholars whose works have influenced Buddhist academic studies. In the Bali-Thai dictionary of Thavee Thammatad, *bap* is defined as "sin, evil, obscenity, bad, degrading, or things that good persons must keep themselves away from."[12] The Thai-Bali-Sanskrit lexicon of His Royal Highness Krom Pra Chanthaburi Naruenaj defines *bap* as "evil, sin, demerit, and *kamma* of the causer of suffering and obscenity."[13] Or *bap* means simply bad, sinful, or evil.[14]

10 Narada Mahathera, *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. (Taipei, Taiwan: the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1998), 265, quoted Anguttara Nikāya iii, p. 415, The Expositor, part I, 117; Atthasālini, p. 88.

11 Phajon Kamchusang, "Papa: An Analytical Study in The Concept of Theravada Buddhism," 67.

12 Luang Tepdarunanusid (Tawee Thammatuch P. 9), *Thai-Pali Dictionary*, 6th ed., (Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1991), 237.

13 Chantaburi Naruenaj, *Pali – Thai – English – Sanskrit Dictionary*, 4th ed., (Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1994), 521.

14 Pin Mutukan, *Buddhism Part III* (Bangkok: Klang witthaya, 1984), 10-11.

Lastly, in the Buddhadhamma authored by Phra Prayudh Payutto, *bap* literally denotes things that pull the doer down into a wicked state. In general, it means being salacious or obscene.[15]

These definitions offered do not have much difference from the Tripitaka's. Nonetheless, another concept of *bap* emerges from the definition of the scholars, which has something to do with "obscenity" or "salaciousness." *Therefore, Bap has multi-dimensional aspects of meaning and emphasis, ranging* from suffering to religious violation and obscenity. The motivation of committing *bap* originates from *ki-laed* or passion, a complicated condition consisting of love, avarice, anger, and lust, innately established in human beings. *Ki-laed* is the root of *bap* that lures or causes humans and animals to do evil. In other words, it is bad dharma.[16]

Bap in Buddhist Sayings

There are several Buddhist sayings widely used in different public domains, especially in colloquial language. Nonetheless, the three sayings in this research were particularly chosen because they contribute to further understanding of the concept of *bap*.

This first saying, *Tham Dee Dai Dee, Tham Shua Dai Shua* (ทำดีได้ดี ทำชั่วได้ชั่ว), which literally means "good deeds result in good outcomes; bad deeds result in bad outcomes" is one of the most common proverbial expressions people invoke in casual conversations. This happens whenever they hear

15 Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto), *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 11th ed., (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2002), 334.

16 Phajon Kamchusang, "*Papa*: An Analytical Study in The Concept of Theravada Buddhism," 67.

news about crime, corruption, or sinful incidents happening in society. There are many examples of this proverb used in different contexts. Here are two examples:

> …my mother always taught me *Tham dee dai dee tham chua dai chua* (you do good things, you get good results, you do bad things, you get bad results in return) and my brother had never been enthusiastic about any religious proverb teaching. He once told me, 'In all religions, they have the same and only thing to say or to teach, that is, *tham dee dai dee tham chua dai chua*. And that is my religion. Period.'…[17]

The concept of *bap* in this saying focuses on the immediate action of an individual and its result. It also emphasizes the instantaneous cause and effect of every action, reflecting the idea that good and bad are the results of one's own action, much like a natural law, i.e., the law of karma. The emphasis is on the consequence of an external action rather than the internal deterioration of the mind and soul. The emerging idea expressed in the contemporary Thai context has shown that *each individual's bap is subjective*.

> Buddhism's 'law of karma' states that one lives on the fruits of one's own deeds. These days there have been numerous news reporting about people getting their karma in return for their being corrupt. These corruptions are prevalent in business and politics, social oppression etc. This is good news, especially for those believing in the very well-known teaching *tham dee dai dee tham chua dai chua*… [18]

17 นิธิ เอียวศรีวงศ์ (Nithi Aewsriwong), "ทำดีได้ดี ทำชั่วได้ชั่ว" (Tham Dee Dai Dee Tham Chua Dai Chua) บทวิเคราะห์ มติชนสุดสัปดาห์ ฉบับวันที่ 14-20 ตุลาคม 2559 (Matichon Weekly, 14-20 October 2016), https://www.matichonweekly.com/in-depth/article_12074 (accessed 20 December 2019).

18 Editorial, "Kod Haeng Kram Tham Chua Dai Chua'" (the law of karma: if one does bad, one gets bad result in return), *Siamrath*

In the expression of this short passage, the idea of *dee* (good) and *shua* (bad) is appropriated as a finished outcome called "karma"—the outcome of good and bad actions that rebound subjectively to an individual. For instance, if persons are corrupt in doing business, their sinful actions will eventually cause them certain forms of life deterioration. As the Great Buddha once said,[19] "Bhikkhus, beings are the owners of their *kamma*, the heirs of their *kamma*; they have *kamma* as their origin, *kamma* as their relative, *kamma* as their resort; whatever *kamma* they do, good or bad, they are its heirs. This, bhikkhus, is that exposition of the Dhamma on creeping." [20]

The second saying, *Hai Thuk Kae Than, Thuk Nnan Tueng Tua* (ให้ทุกข์แก่ท่าน ทุกข์นั้นถึงตัว), is literally translated as "You cause suffering to others, that suffering returns to you." This religious proverb annotates the predominant concept of *kam* by underlining the imposition of *dhuk* (suffering) on others and that *dhuk* will return later on to the imposer. Together with this saying is another one equipped with a similar idea, *kong kwean kam kwean*" (กงเกวียนกำเกวียน). A good example of how this proverb is applied to the societal context is when a famous newspaper, *Thairath,* titled one of its articles written by Nitikaroon Mingruchiralai as *Hai Thuk Kae Than, Thuk Nan Tueng Tua*. The article mainly criticized the improper treatment of the US government, boycotting other countries like India and China by increasing import duty whenever they were not pleased. Because of it, many countries are now increasing their import duty for the US

online, 28 April 2017, https://siamrath.co.th/n/14232 (accessed 20 December 2019).

19 Tipritaka volume 24: Pali Roman Sutta Pitaka, vol 16: Sutta. Aṅ. (5): dasaka-ekādasakanipātā, http://www.84000.org/tipitaka/read/v.php?B=24&A=6876&Z=6957&pagebreak=0, translated https://suttacentral.net/an10.216/en/bodhi (accessed 20 December 2019).

20 Ibid.

as well. This misconduct of the United States to others has finally returned to affect the lives of many Americans.[21] Thus, as implied by the author, this serves as a good example of how such saying is used even in today's socio-political context.

Another concrete example of how this saying remains substantively prominent in Thai culture and consciousness drama is its inclusion in the elementary school curriculum as early as *Matthayom* 5 (grade 5). It has been reinvented into a story for children, which later became a popular folktale.[22]

> Once upon a time, there was a Buddhist nun who lived in a small village. Every morning, she would rise up early to make merit by offering food for Buddhist monks. Praying every morning and evening was her routine. This nun always had her catchphrase *thukkhato thukkha tha nang* (what goes comes around) whenever she uttered. So, the people of that village sarcastically called her the *thukkhato thukkha tha nang* nun. Near her house lived a habitual drinker who often got disturbed by the daily prayer of the good nun. Wishing to testify if what she said was really true, this drunkard had an evil plan. He asked his wife to cook fish soup for the nun the following morning. This drunkard secretly put croton seeds he prepared in the soup. The following day, he asked his wife to give the soup to the nun without his wife knowing his evil plan. When the wife offered soup to the nun, she accepted it, but she did not eat it because she just finished her

21 This article is already summarized. For its full content see Nitikaroon Mingroochiralai, "Hai Thuk Kae Tan Thuk Nan Tueng Tua," *Thairath Online*, 9 October 2018, https://www.thairath.co.th/news/foreign/1392394.

22 This proverb is considered to be a must-learn lesson in Thai subject. By all means, almost every Thai student should memorize this teaching and put it into practice. In order to teach the students and they remember it by heart, Praya Sriharaj Ritthikrai had composed a short story or folk tale named "Kthukkhato Thukkha Tha Nang" (ยายชีทุกขโต) easy to elucidate the meaning of this proverb to children.

> meal. So, she kept it for lunch. When lunchtime was approaching, the nun suddenly changed her mind. Instead, she asked a boy to deliver this soup to a monk in the nearby temple. The monk accepted it and told the boy to keep it in a food cupboard, waiting for temple boys to arrive and eat together. This boy was the son of the drunkard. At the time, the boy felt hungry, so, waiting for no one, he secretly consumed the soup alone. After having finished the soup, the boy got a grave stomachache. He seriously threw up many times until he fainted. Everybody panicked and got scared. So, the monk called up the boy's parents. When the drunkard arrived, he trembled with fear asking for the cause of diarrhea. 'He ate the fish soup given by the nun,' the monk replied. The drunkard was speechless, bringing his son back. He had his son drink coconut juice he prepared as an antidote for the nun. 'How did you know that our son gets poisoned because of croton seeds?' asked the wife. 'I just know,' replied the drunkard. After that day, this habitual drinker never dared to defy the nun again. And he believed that the teaching of *thukkhato thukkhata nang* is true. In the end, this man repented and did good things to the nun and others around him.[23]

The main concept conveys a more complicated idea of how one's concept of sin or *bap* is initially formed. As a matter of fact, this concept of bap is more connected and concerned with its consequence rather than the action per se. In this saying, the term *bap* is not directly mentioned but is substituted by the term *thuk* or *dhuk* (suffering). In other

23 หนังสือเรียนภาษาไทยชุดพื้นฐานภาษา ชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 5 เล่มที่ *1* (Basic Thai Language for Matthayom 5 Part I), ตามหลักสูตรประถมศึกษา 2521 (This lesson is arranged according to the syllabus of primary education) ฉบับปรับปรุง พ.ศ. 2533) พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์คุรุสภาลาดพร้าว กรุงเทพมหานคร: 2542, 1 (Bangkok: Kurusapa Press, 1999), 1. This is the writer's translation and paraphrase of the original.

words, the aspect of *bap* in this saying focuses more on the "suffering" intentionally done to others. This wrongdoing of a deliberate wish for others' destruction will also cause similar devastation to the perpetrator. What is interesting about this story is the emphasis on the word *thuk* or *dhukka* in Bali, which means "suffering," "pain," "unsatisfactoriness,"[24] or "stress." *Bap* is not mentioned in the story, and *thuk* is used instead. But it is already assumed that the readers understand the action of causing suffering or unsatisfactoriness to others.

The third saying, *Kam dai krai koh kam nan kuen sanong* (กรรมใดใครก่อ กรรมนั้นคืนสนอง) which means "any karma that is done [to others], that karma will return (to the doer)"[25] is an oft-quoted catchphrase in Thailand. The Great Buddha once said, "Any individual who commits an act whether bad or good sees in himself/ herself the karma attached to it. Those who do good acts will have good results, but those who commit bad acts will certainly receive bad results in return."[26]

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24 Malcolm Huxter, *Healing the Heart and Mind with Mindfulness: Ancient Path, Present Moment* (New York:Routledge, 2016), 10. Quote: "dukkha (unsatisfactoriness or suffering) (....) In the Introduction I wrote that dukkha is probably best understood as unsatisfactoriness."

25 Another popular saying that shares similar connotation is "Koh kam tam khaen" (ก่อกรรมทำเข็ญ) which is an idiomatic verb which literally means "create karma and cause suffering," or virtually means cause suffering or dissatisfactoriness to others.

26 พระราชภาวนาวิสุทธิ์ (ไชยบูลย์ ธมฺมชโย), (Prarachapawanawisuthi, Chaiyaboon Thammachayo) พระธรรมเทศนา ใน บทความ "ธรรมเพื่อประชาชน: Dhamma for People," (A Sermon in Article "Dhamma for People"), DMC TV, 26 December 2011, http://buddha.dmc.tv/%E0%B8%98%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B0%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%B7%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%99/%E0%B9%83%E0%B8%AB%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%82%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%81%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%97%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99-%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%82%E0%B9%8C%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B1%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%96%E0%B8%B6%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A7.html (accessed 23 December 2019).

This prominent religious axiom still holds on to the popular concept of karmic law as in *hai thuk kae than thunk nan tueng tua*. Yet the idea of "karmic retribution" as a justifiable means for one's responsibility for evil or life-destroying acts done to others becomes manifestly accentuated. A substitution of the term *thuk*, "ทุกข์" (suffering) for *kam*, "กรรม" (karma) in *hai thuk kae than, thuk nan tueng tua* has also been observed. These two terms appeared to have been used interchangeably, signaling a significant interplay of their meaning and concept.

Bap in the Folk Tale Lilit[27] *Phra Lo* (ลิลิตพระลอ)

Lilit Phra Lo is one of the three stories considered as the best *lilit* of all time. Anonymously composed at the time of Ayutthaya kingdom[28] circa 15th century, *Lilit Phra Loh* has a great moral value, but it is also a religious teaching that has greatly influenced Thai people up to now especially through its being part of Thai language studies in primary school. This folktale is also representative of other folktales that aim to teach the same value, for instance, *Sang Thong* (สังข์ทอง), *Pikun Thong* (พิกุลทอง), *Pla Boo Thong* (ปลาบู่ทอง), and many more. In summary, *Lilit Phra Lo* goes like this:

Once upon a time, there were two kingdoms being antagonistic to each other, the Sruang kingdom and the Srong kingdom. Phra Lo, the king of the former, was so captivating

27 A kind of Thai stanza or verse composed of varying types of poetic feet or a narrative verse form, consisting alternately of poetry and "rai" (ร่าย) which is a kind of Thai verse.

28 Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, "Kham winitchai rueang phra lo lilit" (Verdict on Phra Lo Lilit), Nangsue bantuek samakhom wannakhadi (Annals of the Literary Society), 1, 5, 1932, https://vajirayana.org/%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%AD/%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B3%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B3 (accessed 24 December 2019).

and attractive that the two daughters, Phra Puen and Phra Paeng, of King Phichai Pitsanukorn of the Srong kingdom, were in need of viewing his shiny face. Consequently, Nang Ruen and Nang Roy, escorts of the two princesses, secretly besought a grand old man, Pu Chao Saming Prai, to lure Phra Lo with enchantments to come to Sruang. When spelled with charms, Phra Lo then bid farewell to his mother and his wife and left for the Sruang with his escorts, Kaew and Khwan. Having arrived at the Kalong River, Phra Lo cast lots to foresee his destination. It turned out negatively yet he still insisted on going to the Sruang kingdom. Along the way, a grand old man, Pu Chao Saming Prai, sent a spirit rooster to lure Phra Lo to a field in the palace. Captivated by the charming beauty of the rooster, Phra Lo followed the rooster until he reached the palace's field. The escorts of the two princesses, after seeing him, secretly led Phra Lo, together with his escorts, to the chamber of the princesses. When King Phichai Pitsanukorn knew about this, with great generosity, he was willing to feast a grand wedding for Phra Lo and his daughters. But the grandmother of Phra Puen and Phra Paeng still held grudges against Phra Lo because of their long-term being rivalry. She, therefore, falsely gave an order in the name of the king to apprehend Phra Lo, Phra Phuen, and Phra Paeng, and their escorts. They tried to fight back until death. Having received the news of his daughters' Phra Lo's, and the escorts' death, King Pichai Pitsanukorn was extremely infuriated with the grandmother of Phra Phuen and Phra. He immediately sentenced her, together with the soldiers who were part of the murder, to death. Pra Nang Boon Lue, the mother of Phra Lo, had sent her royal envoys to participate in the royal funeral of the king and princesses. Towards the

end, the two kingdoms had reconciled and become amicable to each other forever.[29]

Being one of the most explicit stories intended for the religious formation of the Thais, the folk tale cautions its hearers that whenever a hideous act is done to others, the same act will return to the perpetrator. *Bap* in this folktale is dishonesty, jealousy, and murder. *Lilit Pra Loh* is emblematic of Thai folktales, most of which embody the concept of *bap* in acts such as spousal infidelity and fits of jealousy among siblings or relatives that lead to murder. Nevertheless, those who do evil deeds to others get punished in various forms. *Bap* is associated with punishment. The conceptual theme of dishonesty and jealousy deliberately presented in this folktale brings about another dimension of sin, which is more "relational" and, at the same time, "emotional."

Bap in Thai Popular Songs

First, we look at the song *Bap Borisood* (Pure Evil/Pure Sin) released in 1987 and remains popular until today. The beautiful melody and melodic voice of the singers help to convey the message of the song.

> All human beings, both men and women, equally have good things and bad things. When first seeing each other, we all are showing presentable sides of ours to one another. 'I am a gentleman.' 'And I am a gentle lady.' '(The man) I don't smoke at all.' "(The woman) I am not fussy." Time elapses. The love (of both) is so sweet and beautiful. Both are committed to each other the love and the beauty of life.

29 Apart from being the Thai literature composed during the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai, the story of Lilit Phra Lo has been popularized up to the present as an inculcated virtuous lesson and folktale for Thai people, especially the children.

> Therefore, marriage is bound both together. '(The man) I am still back home on time.' '(The woman) I am still a good housewife.' '(The man) I give all my earning to you.' '(The woman) I will spend it carefully.' Time passes longer, love becomes insipid. No more goodness to show off, each begins to be drawn to new trials, Thai boxing is all around. '(The man) I just drank with my friends.' '(The woman) I just came back from a party at my office ha!' '(The man) I just give you this (small) amount of money, ok!' '(The woman) But I am so burdened with many expenses!' When patience comes to an end, divorce is the best solution. This result extremely sucks, very bad. The unfortunate are the children.[30]

Contextually, *bap borisood* refers to malevolent acts that affect others, whether intentionally or unintentionally, causing them certain suffering in life. Within the song's context, *bap* is used to describe children left behind by their divorced parents. As such, they are passively submitted to *bap* by their own parents. *Bap*, coined with another term "*borisood*," is described as *bap,* which originates from parents forming bondage of chains that enslaves other persons related by blood, especially the children. This aspect of *bap* emphasizes the role of parents in taking care of their children. If they are not responsible for educating them, caring less even if they become a problem of society, that is also called *bap.* This shows another characteristic that has to do with the "social aspect of *bap.*"For instance, in the microcosm of a family, when problems take shape in a family, especially between a couple who has scarce knowledge of handling them, divorce is often the best option to get out of the situation. Nonetheless,

30 Carabao Band, "บทเพลงบาปบริสุทธิ์" (Folk song "Bap Borisood") in Welcome to Thailand Album, released 1987, genre Folk, Crabao Official, reposted 20 March 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6smQkMTn68 (accessed 24 December 2019).

the ones who get directly affected are the children. *Bap,* in this sense, affects others; the ones affected are not necessarily the ones committing it but those receiving others' *bap*.

Secondly, we look at *Bap Kam Mee Jing* (Sin and Karma are Real), a piece of Thai pop-modern song that has received surprising appreciation from various types of music hearers in 2009[31] and made its second appearance again in 2017 as an original soundtrack (OST) in a popular soap opera *Mia Luang* (principal wife).[32] The content of the song captures another emerging characteristic of *bap* in the context of marriage:

> Sleep well, my sister. Be happy with what you have stolen.
> You need to embrace (him) without shame.
> Whoever will get hurt, never care; another woman is in great pain,
> So what! No need to remember anything when you know it well yet still do it.
> It means that you intend to do; I dare not to dissuade you but a warning (that)
> Karma is for real, sooner it will return to you.
> The thing you have stolen is hot, if you're not afraid of being burned,
> it's up to you.
> You should not trust him, a cobra does not choose who to bite.
> How much I love him yet, he broke my heart.
> You see that.
> I know you're lucky, not really mad at you, I understand. Love blinds you;

31 "Bap Kam Mi Ching" (Karma is real), Kapook Highlight, https://hilight.kapook.com/view/39187 (accessed 26 December 2019).

32 "Mia Luang" (The Principal Wife), in La Korn Chong Sam, Ch3Thailand, https://www.ch3thailand.com/%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%8A%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%873/second/428/%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%87.html (accessed 26 December 2019).

> It blocks your conscience; you are not shameful.
> Do whatever you can in order to get him, no matter who will get hurt.
> No mercy. Good or bad, you don't care.[33]

In the context of the song, *bap* (*kam*) is implicitly described as an act of interfering with others' love life and causing them separation. It is worth noting that kam is used with bap as one word to underscore the certainty of receiving *kam* (an action of the same kind) in return: a similar love-betraying action. Consequently, *bapkam,* as implied by the song, contains an idea of an attached consequence of a harmful act emotionally done to others, especially heartbrokenness. It still exists and will return to the doer. This aspect of *bap* is associated more with love affairs. Intentionally composed to educate the Thais about the "religious truth" of karmic teaching,[34] it emphasizes the "fidelity of the spouses" to each other in the context of marital love, as opposed to "adultery."

Thirdly, we analyze the song *Tha Leuk Dai* (If I Could Choose)[35]

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33 Song "Bap Kam Mee Ching" (Karma is real), sung by Pan Tanaphorn Waekprayoon, Kapook Musicstation, https://musicstation.kapook.com/%E0%B8%9A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%87_%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%20%E0%B8%98%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%A3%20%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%B9%E0%B8%A3.html (accessed 27 December 2019).

34 "Bap Kam Mee Ching Raeng Mai Kraeng Chai Click Talom Talai… Pung Taloo Lak Saen" ("Karma is real" Its popularity is rated by more than hundred thousand views), Khao Ban Teung, (8 July 2009), https://www.ryt9.com/s/prg/605545 (accessed 27 December 2019).

35 Song "Tha Luek Kurd Dai" (If I Could Choose) composed and arranged by Narongwit Taechatanawat and Porramet Murnsanid, Chandelier Music, Youtube: Ch3Thailand Music www.เพลงละครช่อง3.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1LWRZjTYxA (accessed 28 December 2019).

> I hate myself for I was born to be like this; for being a person without pride and dignity like this, I never wanted to be so. I want to be a good person; I don't want to be despised over and over. I want to have a good memory of myself; I don't want to be hurt. If life could ever be chosen, who would have wanted to be like this; my heart is hurt indescribably. If I could ever choose, I want to delete this part of my life; and begin life anew with someone who is truly good. Is there anyone who understands me? If you were I, you would understand the real reason. This might be the **karma** I have committed; it's time for me to repay.

There is no mention of the term *bap* in the song, not even once. However, the prevailing concept of *bap* is still present as an overarching concept in "karma" or *kam* in Thai. The substitution of *kam*, instead of *bap*, already presupposes the act of *bap* done previously, with the consequence taking place. This karmic theme brings about the theme of wrong-doing committed in the past: the doer needs to repay for the acts previously done. Therefore, the emerging concept of surrendering oneself to one's own destiny because of an evil deed done in the past is inevitable.

Bap in Films, Soap Operas, and Television Dramas

The films, soap operas, and television drama series we shall be treating here represent the countless films, TV dramas, and soap operas popularized in Thailand. The main contents of these forms of popular entertainment revolve around the teaching of *bap* and *kam*. Nonetheless, each underscores the emergence of *bap* from a different aspect. Thus, these films and TV dramas epitomize the rest of their kinds, which convey resembling messages in one way or another.

The locally-made horror-drama, *Arbat*[36] (Offence, Sin, or Infringement)[37], caused nationwide controversy in Thailand, especially with the Buddhist religion, because it exposed the negative behavior of monks and novices. The aim of the film was primarily to teach about karma in Buddhism. Many scenes show how monks violate the rules of Buddhist behavior by drinking alcohol, smoking, and having relations with women. In summary, the story goes like this:

> There was a young man named Son who did not quite care much about his life and future. He was forced by his parents to be ordained a monk for some concealed reasons. While staying in the temple to learn and practice Dharma, Son kept on transgressing the monk's laws by secretly smoking and drinking alcohol. He, in fact, did not care about the monkhood he had carried. Furthermore, Son clandestinely developed a relationship with Fai, a young girl who lived in a neighboring village. Son kept on doing these things as if there was no wrong without knowing that every action of his had brought him into a mysterious situation. During nights, Son began to see visions of the past tragic events happening in the *kuti* (monk's dwelling) where he was staying; he saw ghosts. He began to see two different kinds of ghosts. The first kind is 'Pret.' it is a palm tree-tall lady ghost who, according to Buddhist belief, committed grave sins when she was still a human being. Secretly, she had a sexual relationship with a monk in that temple for years until she got pregnant and bore a child. Because of what she did, she could not resist her conscience; she finally decided to hang herself. Aside from

36 *Arbat* (อาบัติ) means "falling from the goodness." It refers to the violation or infringement of Buddhist monks to the laws established by Buddha for the practice of the monks.

37 *Arbat* (อาปัติ or อาบัติ) also known as "Karma" in English is a horror-drama film directed by Kanittha Kwanyu and produced by Baramyu. This film was released to the public on 16 October 2015. It was selected as the Thai entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 89th Academy Awards in 2017 but it was not nominated.

> this, Son also saw a monk ghost. When he was still alive, he connived with the monk who had a secret relationship with that lady (who died and became a *pret*). However, that monk murdered him for the reason that the secret would be kept for good. The secret was finally disclosed. Through all these events, Son began to understand his own story of which was the main reason why he was forced by his parents to the monkhood. In fact, Son, because of his carelessness, killed a little girl in a car accident. His parents were afraid that Son would get revenged by the spirit of the little girl who followed him in every footstep. Hence, they forced him to live the monkhood, hoping that he would be spared from this karmic law. Understanding his situation, Son willingly remained a monk. This was done because of the belief that through the merits gained by means of good deeds done as a monk, those spirits (of the lady, the monk, and the little girl) would be freed from their entanglements.[38]

The term *arbat* literally means an "offense or infringement of Buddhist monks against the laws of the Buddha."[39] The concept of *bap* in this well-known, publicly criticized film is directly associated with the Buddhist religion, particularly with monks' violation of the ordinances. Thus, the emerging concept of *bap* is the "violation of religious teaching" of Buddhist monks or nuns and extends to Buddhist adherents who are asked to observe religious precepts for Buddhist laymen. This view of *bap*, grounded on religious laws, shows its "objectiveness" in that bap depends not only on internal interpretation but also on the external observance of certain religious regulations.

38 This is the writer's paraphrase of the original.

39 Royal Academy, s. v. "อาบัติ" or "Arbat," Thai Dictionary of the Royal Institute, 2011, http://www.royin.go.th/dictionary/index.php (accessed 30 December 2019)

On the other hand, *Keun Bap Prom Piram or* "Macabre Case of Prom Pi Ram" is a relentless but memorable dramatization of a 1977 rape-and-murder case that later inspired a novel.[40] The movie debuted in July 2003[41] and was awarded "best film" in the same year by the Thailand National Film Association Awards. The story goes:

In 1977, the body of a young woman, Samnian, is discovered along the railway track in the central plains of Thailand. She was raped and strangled. Two honest police officers are conducting the investigation. At first, the clues are meager: the victim is a traveler on the Bangkok-Chiang Mai train who wanted to go to Uttaradit; she had no ticket, so she was expelled from the train in the wilderness at the station of the small village of Prompiram; it is a pretty young woman visibly a little retarded mentally. At first, the investigators come up against a wall of silence. Then gradually, the languages are loosened, and the case takes a considerable extent. The crime exceeds the understanding in its horror. An influential local politician tries to smother the affair. This film is about the police investigation into this case which is 100% true and was eventually solved.[42] This hideous crime has brought unforgettable ignominy to the people of Prompiram, especially when they found out that the youngest criminal was nine years old and the oldest was 65 years of age.

In this movie, the concept of *bap* suggests "sexual molestation and hideous rape and murder." In this aspect, *bap* not

40 Russell Edwards, "Macabre Case of Prom Pi Ram," Film Reviews, Variety, 2004, https://variety.com/2004/film/reviews/macabre-case-of-prom-pi-ram-1200536366/ (accessed 30 December 2019).

41 Film "Kuen Bap Prom Pi Ram" (Macabre Case of Prom Pi Ram), released 25 July 2003, Siamzone, https://www.siamzone.com/movie/m/1356 (accessed 30 December 2019).

42 "The Macabre Case of Prompiram," (Kuen Bap Prompiram) directed by Manop Udomdej, Letterboxd, 2003, https://letterboxd.com/film/the-macabre-case-of-prompiram/ (accessed 30 December 2019).

only means rape and murder of the lady but also signifies disrespect for another's dignity and dehumanizing human values, especially for women. Its implicit concept of *bap* reveals a more humanistic view, emphasizing respect for the human person.

Meanwhile, the whole setting and purpose of the soap opera, *Krong Kam,* portrays the reality of lives that are inexorably entangled with the dynamics of karma. The story revolves around a family and particularly a mother raising her four sons. The authoritarian mother intervened in every aspect of her sons' lives, eventually arranging the marriage of all of them. For fear of hurting the mother, the four sons obeyed their mother's desire. However, the whole story did not end up as beautifully as she had intended. After the marriage, each son tried to live his life as he wanted to. All their marriage ended up short-lived and eventually shattered as each family began to encounter problems. And, certainly, the one who was hurt the most was the mother. The following passages selected from this television drama capture some significant concepts of *bap* which would be discussed later. Several parts of this drama mention "*bapkam*" in different contexts.

The young lady:	"Will you not be responsible for what you have done?"
The young man:	"I have told you to abort the child. Tell me how much you want?"
The young lady:	"You are so bad. How can you talk like this?"
The young man:	"Go away! Get out of here!"
The young lady:	"Don't you dare think that you will live a happy life. This sin (bapkam) will follow you. You will never find prosperity in your whole life."

The young man: "Go away. Get out of here!"[43]

These conversations taken from one of the many drama episodes express simply yet clearly the understanding of bap in people's lives. Happiness in life will be achieved or not, depending on what one has done in life. Abortion is mentioned in this dialogue. Committing abortion is sinful, and, in doing so, the life of the one committing abortion is inevitably attached to the deterioration of life due to *bap*. This understanding implies that *bap* or wrongdoing committed will ascertain degeneration of happiness, prosperity, power, or fame for the rest of one's life.

Another example of the same concept is repeated repeatedly towards the end of the drama emphasizing the significance of its teaching to drama audiences. However, the following scene appears to expand the drama's notion of *bap kam* as bringing negative outcomes upon the perpetrator and the children or succeeding generations.

Raenu: "Mom, I am so sorry. Please forgive me for bringing shame to our family."

Mom: "You need not mention this again. On the other hand, I am very much thankful to you for not foolishly and viciously planning to abort the child. Otherwise, this sin (bap) will follow you in your next world (next incarnation). And now the child is born, we have to try our best to take care of it." [44]

43 FIN "Bapkam Ni Mueng Nee Mai Pon…Cheewit Mueng Cha Ha Kwam Cha Roen Mai Dai" (You cannot escape this karma…you will never find progress and happiness in life), Krong Kam, Ch3Thailand, Youtube, 8 April 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSl-frctNS4Q (accessed 31 December 2019).

44 FIN "Hak Chat Na Mee Ching Noo Kho Kurd Ma Ten Look Mae Eek" (If there is next life, I wish that I will be born as your daughter once again), Krong Kam, Ch3Thailand, Youtube, 4 March 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPPSsbD8snM (accessed 31

Bap is shown as legitimate punishment one deserves for previous wrongdoing.

Aathong: "I had never thought that Pilai is a revengeful person." Mom, if you can forgive her, please do so. Mom, please!

Mom: "Actually, every (bad) thing that had happened in our family happened so because of me. I predetermined all your lives according to my own decision-making, and I never opened my eyes or cared whether you liked it or not, you were happy or not. All of these I did because I wanted to keep my face (my fame), so I did not accept Renu, and I wanted to win over Chai (her eldest son). That's why I asked you to marry Pilai. So what happened now! Everything is destroyed, destroyed. So pathetic! I am really stupid! (crying). "

Aathong: "Mom, don't mention it. It already happened.

Mom: "Your dad reminded me so many times, but I never even once listened to him; I never understood. I not only fall into the pit of hell but also pull all of you down to hell with me. Grandma had cursed me that my family would be ruined and broken, she told me that. Now it becomes true. (crying hard) Mom, mom, I am sorry. I accept…I accept karma alone. Don't let my children be heirs of these karma. Don't let these karma continue to my children and my grandchildren, please! I accept everything."[45]

December 2019).

45 FIN "Ban Bae Tong Lom Chom Hai Prau Phoo Ying Yang Koo"

Bap kam is an evil act done to others, and it returns to the doer and gets passed on to the next generation. The law of karma is pretty much focused. The presence of suffering in life has its root from one's deeds in the past. Surrender and acceptance of the outcome are the key to living one's life. The implication here is that *bap* is a predetermination that foreshadows one's destiny before he or she is born, which in any case requires one's "surrendering." In a sense, there is no room for one's freedom in choosing what to be and what to do. The concept of *bap* in this expression shows its social aspect as well.

This dramatic scene highlights and articulates the people's understanding of *bap* in a very realistic way. After having been faced with difficulties, concerns, or serious problems in life, one seems to effortlessly attribute one's present life to wrongdoings in the past and acknowledge such with resignation as one's own fault. *Kam* (karma) is believed to overshadow every aspect of life. By extension, it can also punish other people related to the direct perpetrator.

The last TV series we shall examine is *Mirror Reflects Karma: Klong Pridsana* (The Mysterious box)[46] that personifies *kam* as a judge or policeman pursuing justice on behalf of the victims. This concept of *kam* in the *Mirror Reflects Karma* is portrayed in a more aggressive, active, and dynamic

(The household of mother (in law) declined because of such a kind of woman like me), Krong Kam, Ch3Thailand, Youtube, 29 April 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMnMnCQTC0c (accessed 31 December 2019).

46 The Mirror Kra Chok Sa Thon Kram (the mirror reflects karma) is a TV drama series popularly watched nationwide. It was televised every Sunday from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The Mirror Kra Chok Sa Thon Kram Ton Klong Prissana," (the mirror reflects karma: the mysterious box episode) was televised on 14 October 2018 via Chong Sam (Channel 3), one of the most popular and influential free-to-air television networks in Thailand.

way. The plot of this series can be summarized as follows:

There was a female taxi driver who was taking a passenger to his home. After some time, the passenger realized that this taxi driver was trying to cheat on the meter fare, so he forged a plan to tell the driver that he lost his diamond ring in the taxi. He asked the driver to stop over at a convenience store to buy a flashlight. While the passenger was inside the convenience store, the taxi driver became greedy, so she drove away thinking that she would own that ring and leaving the passenger behind, not knowing that it was the plan of the passenger. The taxi driver intended to keep that diamond ring for herself planning to sell it for her daughter's tuition fee and other expenses in the house. One day while she was about to sell that diamond ring, unaware of what is going on around her, she almost got hit by a car. She was able to manage herself from being hit by the car, but she almost got killed by a sharp wood carcass thrown along the street. Suddenly, the taxi driver became aware of what her daughter always reminded her of becoming a good mother, not a vicious one like she has been. Because one day, the karma she acted would come back to her. Realizing what she was doing, she changed her mind and spent time searching for the owner. She then met the man, the passenger who lied to her about the diamond ring and returned the ring to him. Out of luck thought the man, he kept it for himself and planned to give it to his girlfriend. Nonetheless, when his girlfriend knew the truth, she got mad and asked him to find the real owner. Otherwise, she would break up with him. Out of fear of breaking up, the man or the passenger and the taxi driver were looking for the real owner until they finally found him unconscious in a hospital with his girlfriend crying beside his bed. The real owner of the diamond ring got hit by a car after he got off the taxi. After

realizing that he forgot his ring in the car, he ran after the taxi but unfortunately got hit by a car. After the two, the taxi driver and the passenger returned the ring and saw the owner of the ring become conscious, they both went home to live with their loved ones with great joy and happiness.[47]

Bap kam, which emerges in this drama simply denotes "bad intention" (though not yet concretized). Correspondingly, this emergence of the concept of *bap* shows another dimension which is very personal and subjective. It is rightly so as it precisely deals with the act and the "impure thought" or "volition" of the person. *Bap kam* is what people are afraid of when it decides whether to do good or bad. It works almost like a policeman patrolling and warning people not to violate any laws or commit sin against others, preferring good to bad. Otherwise, *bap kam* will harm the person in one way or another and make the person's life miserable. The cognition of *bap kam* functions like a person's conscience that keeps on reminding him or her of what kind of life he or she should live based on good ethics and a formed conscience.

In these examples, we see how the understanding of *bap* is popularly expressed as "suffering" or its "infliction on

47 "The Mirror Kra Chok Sa Thon Kram Ton Klong Prissana," (the mirror reflects karma: the mysterious box episode), Doo Rai Karn Yon Lang (watching from back-up video over the internet), Ch3Thailand, 14 October 2018, https://www.ch3thailand.com/%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A2%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%87/program/64473/The-mirror-%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%97%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%A1---%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%99-%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A8%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B2.html (accessed 3 January 2020).

others." Each notion is derived from the context where such suffering takes place. For instance, in the folktale Lilit Pra Loh context, bap resonates clearly with certain immoral acts like dishonesty, jealousy, and murder, which will lead one's life to destruction, even to death. Moreover, we observe that the interweaving terms bap, thuk, and kam are used interchangeably to describe *bap* as suffering, pain, and dissatisfaction.

Thus we realize that in the Thai mindset, the understanding of *bap* cannot be grasped comprehensively without the fundamental "law of karma". *Bap* and karma are intertwined. However, karma itself is not *bap* but its consequence. The idea of the law of karma or "karmic retribution" predominates the notion of *bap* in Thai culture.

The Concept of *Bap* in Thai Catholicism

Bap in the *Kam Son Christang*

Soon after they arrived in 17th century Siam, Catholic missionaries began translating important doctrines into the vernacular. Mgr. Louis Laneau (1637-1696) wrote several books, one of them being the "Catechism for Children and Adult."[48] Unfortunately, almost all of his books have disappeared.

In 1796, the first-ever catechetical book in the Land of Siam titled *Kham Son Christang* (Christian Catechism) was published, where the word *bap* was already used to translate *peccatum*.[49] In this early Thai catechism, *bap* is discussed in

48 Historical Archives, "พระสังฆราช หลุยส์ ลาโน," (Bishop Laneau), Historical Archives Archdiocese of Bangkok, 2015, http://catholichaab.com/main/index.php/2015-09-22-02-42-26/biography/2015-09-22-08-08-12/455-louis-laneau (accessed 3 December 2019).

49 Cf. "Kam Son Christang," printed by French missionary (printed at

the Tridentine question-answer format. And though a formal definition is not explicitly provided, the book nonetheless provides a sufficient discussion of *bap*.



Figure 1: The first Catechetical book, *Kham Son Christang*, published in 1796

Bap as Worldly Attachments and Refusing God

"Question: Why did God create us?"
"Answer: God created us for Godself, to know Him,

Sancta Crus Church, Bangkok, 1796), 16.

to love Him, and to attain happiness with Him in heaven forever."

"Question: In what way can we attain eternal happiness?"

"Answer: Only one way, that is, through knowing Him, loving Him, doing His will. The more we do this, the happier we are."

"Question: How is that so?"

"Answer: Because we are born to know God, to love Him, to serve Him and put our heart in Him like a fish in water. It is happy in there; outside of it (water) is suffering."

"Question: Aren't our lives happy here (on earth)?"

"Answer: For how long have we been happy? All are pathetic and are the cause of bap (sin) and punishment. Retribution is for those who do not know and understand."

"Question: Can money, wealth, possessions, and prestige of this world be sufficient for us to live a happy life?"

"Answer: Not at all. The more we own these worldly things, the more unceasingly we hunger. And the more we hunger, the more suffering occurs in our hearts."[50]

Avidity, avarice, anger, pride, concupiscence, and so on circulating in the heart makes disturbance and suffering. The more one possesses worldly things, the more one becomes afraid of death. A heart that is attached to earthly things losing the love for God and has fallen in *bap* (sin) must die, and God will judge. That's pathetic."[51]

"Question: How can humanity fall into bap (sin)?"

"Answer: Their faculty or knowledge is blinded, their heart is weakened and devious. They are impinged by sensuality."

50 Cf. "Kam Son Christang," 24-28.

51 Ibid., 30.

> "Question: How is their faculty blinded?"
> "Answer: They are blinded because what is good, they thought it was bad. And what is bad, they thought it was good. They are so blinded that they have forgotten God, their Creator."[52]

Though not directly defined, *bap,* according to the *Kham Son Christang*, is related to "knowing God, loving Him, and doing His will." It further expounds that those who fall into *bap* are those whose "faculty or knowledge is blinded, their heart is weakened and devious," therefore, "they are impinged by sensuality." When they are blinded, "they have forgotten God" by allowing themselves to be lured by worldly possessions. Not all temporal possessions and fame are bad in themselves, but rather it is the heart refusing God that makes it *bap*. To know God is the linchpin of the whole section on *bap* in the book. Thus, it implies that not knowing God is *bap* per se.

Bap as Disobedience to God

The *Kham Son Christang* continues to expand the meaning of *bap* as follows:

> But humans disobey God; they live in *bap* (sin). Therefore, God punished them by letting them live on their labor. They are bound to sickness, suffering, and death. This is the result of their disobedience to God, their Creator.[53]

Disobedience to God is central to the emergence of *bap* in human history. Hence, *bap* is described further as "not following God's will" and refusing "to know, to serve and to

52 Ibid., 32.
53 Ibid., 36-37.

love God." On the one hand, this concept of bap widens the scope of its meaning in the context of a relationship with God. On the other hand, it can also narrow down the categorization of what is *bap* to refusing Jesus and his Church, given the notion that it is only through Jesus Christ and "through" his Church that one can come to know God and follow His will.

Bap as Suffering

> "Question: Humans are living in *bap* (sin); they abandon God. How does God punish them?"
>
> "Answer: If they do not *tham bap*[54] (commit sin), they will not lose their lives. If they serve God, they will live happily in this world. And God will ascend them to heaven alive to attain happiness forever. But humans disobey God; they live in *bap* (sin). Therefore, God punished them by letting them live on their labor. They are bound to sickness and suffering, and death. This is the result of their disobedience to God, their Creator."[55] "Furthermore, if humans are not aware and repent for their *bap* (sin), returning to their Creator, serving Him, doing His will and confessing their *bap* (sin) when they are still on earth, He (God) will punish them by throwing them into hell where fire blazes eternally."[56]
>
> "Answer: Not at all. The more we own these worldly things, the more unceasingly we hunger. And the more we hunger, the more suffering occurs in our hearts."[57]

54 *Tham bap* is a verb form of bap, which is noun. Therefore, *tham bap* is equivalent to "commit sin" or "sin" in verb form.
55 Ibid., 36-37.
56 Ibid., 37.
57 Cf. "Kam Son Christang," 24-28.

Avidity, avarice, anger, pride, and concupiscence, and so on circulating in the heart makes disturbance and suffering. The more one possesses worldly things, the more one becomes afraid of death. A heart that is attached to earthly things losing the love for God and has fallen in *bap* (sin) must die, and God will judge. That's pathetic."[58]

The existence of suffering is seen as a consequence of sin as explicitly stated in the Scriptures: "[God said]…cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread until you return to the ground…"[59] Hence, *bap* is associated with the idea of suffering not as *bap* in itself but as punishment from God for the first sin humans had committed. Suffering can appear as physical sickness, psychological illness, and death. It is not confined only to the temporal level. It is also connected with eternal suffering in the fire of hell. As mentioned in the *Kam Son Christang*, *bap* is likewise associated with the idea of "hell" as punishment for those who do not know God, love Him, and serve Him:

> (He) came down from heaven to redeem humanity from *bap* (sin) and the hands of evil spirits. He is the only way for all of you to praise Him, to forsake *bap* (sin), to do merit…, to be saved from hell, and to live with Him in heaven forever.[60]…Furthermore, if humans are not aware and repent for their *bap* (sin), returning to their Creator, serving Him, doing His will, and confessing their *bap* (sin) when they are still on earth, He (God) will punish them by throwing them into hell where fire blazes eternally.[61]

58 Ibid., 30.
59 Genensis 3:17-19.
60 "Kam Son Christang," edited by Surachai Choomsripan (Bangkok: Assumption Press, 1997), 16-17. (หนังสือคำสอนคริสตัง เรียบเรียงโดย คุณพ่อสุรชัย ชุมศรีพนธ์ (กรุงเทพมหานคร โรงพิมพ์อัสสัมชัญ), 16-17).
61 Ibid., 37.

This concept of *bap* in the *Kam Son Christang* illustrates a very significant theme of catechetical formation during this period. Its origins in the Council of Trent (1545-1563) emphasize "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" (outside the Church there is no salvation).[62] As expressed in the words of the Council:

> If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted; and that he incurred, through the offense of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him, and, together with death, captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil, and that the entire Adam, through that offense of prevarication, was changed, in body and soul, for the worse; let him be anathema. [§1][63]

Bap in the Thai edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The Thai edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* came out in 1994 and defines *bap* "as an act that contradicts reason, truth, and right conscience. It is an act that offends God's love and fellow human beings caused by a perverse attachment to certain objects. *Bap* (sin) destroys human nature and human solidarity."[64] Following the definition of St.

62 *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, Orlando O. Espín and James B. Nickoloff, eds., (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 439.

63 Fred Noltie, "Trent on Original Sin," The Supplement: Catholic Commentary, (10 July 2009), https://the-supplement.blogspot.com/2009/07/trent-on-original-sin.html (accessed 5 December 2019).

64 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก ภาค 3 ชีวิตในพระคริสตเจ้า พิมพ์ใช้ภายใน (Catechism of the Catholic Church Part III: Life in Christ), แผนกคริสตศาสนธรรม อัครสังฆมณฑลกรุงเทพฯ (Printed for

Augustine, it is often understood as "words, deeds, or desires against the eternal laws." *Bap* is an offense against God. It sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it.[65] The first *bap* is disobedience, a revolt against God, desiring to become like God.[66]

Furthermore, *bap* can be classified according to the will, the act, or the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect; or the commandments they violate. They can also be categorized depending on whether they concern God, neighbor, or oneself. They can be divided into spiritual and carnal *bap*, or in thought, word, deed, or omission. The root of *bap* is in the heart of man and woman, in their free will, according to the teaching of the Lord[67]: for out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These defile a man and a woman.[68]

As far as the Church's definition of sin is concerned, it is translated through the term *bap* in conveying the meaning of sin from Christian concepts. The definition of sin translated as *bap* in the Thai edition of the Catechism does not seem to change substantially from the original definition given by the Church.

Internal Use only, Catechetical Center of Bangkok Archdiocese, 2003), 469. The English translation of the Thai Edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church used in this thesis is credited to the Definitive Edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994.

65 "บาปคืออะไร"(What is Sin?), แผนกคริสตศาสนธรรม อัครสังฆมณฑลกรุงเทพ (Catechetical Center of Bangkok Archdiocese), 13 December 2016, http://www.kamsonbkk.com/catholic-catechism/compendeum-catechism-of-the-catholic-church/7054-บาปคืออะไร (accessed 6 December 2019).

66 Ibid., 469-470.

67 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก ภาค 3 ชีวิตในพระคริสตเจ้า (Catechism of the Catholic Church Part III: Life in Christ)), 470-471.

68 Mt. 15:19-20.

Bap in Other Sections of the CCC

Aside from article 8, number 1849 of the CCC that gives its direct definition, other sections of the CCC expound further on the meaning of *bap* in a much more detailed manner.

To give a picture of the scope of its treatment, the following table lists the occurrences of *bap* found in the CCC.

Concordance of *Bap* in the CCC

- Involuntary ignorance #1860
- Lies #2484
- Violation of law #1949
- Harm to the community of believers #953
- Injury to the unity of the Church 817
- Separation of people from each other #845
- Sickness #1505
- Vice #1865
- Grave sins: capital sins #1866, #1876
- Anger #2302
- Blasphemy #2148
- Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit #1864
- Envy #2539
- Hatred #2303
- Malice #1860
- Murder 2268
- Neglect of Sunday obligation #2181
- Bap (sins) against faith #2088-89
- Bap (sins) against hope #2091
- Bap (sins) against love #2094
- Personal act #1868
- Bap khong sang kom (Social sin) #1869
- Threat to the unity of the Church #814
- Work of the flesh #1852
- Man sins freely #1739, #1874
- Bap (sin) as rejection of God #398, #415, #1487
- Seduction by the devil #391, #414-15
- Reality of bap (sin) #386-87
- Responsibility for the bap (sins) of others #1868

Bap Kam Nued (Original Sin), *Bap Nak* (Mortal Sin), and *Bap Bao* (Venial Sin)

The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language but affirms a primeval event: a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of mankind. Revelation gives us that certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.[69] Tempted by the devil, man lets his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeys God's command. This is what man's *bap raek* (first sin) consisted of. All subsequent *bap* (sin) would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.[70] By his *bap* (sin) Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but all human beings.[71] Adam and Eve would then transmit to their descendants a human nature wounded by their *bap raek* (first sin) and hence, would be deprived of original holiness and justice. This deprivation is called *bap kam nued* (original sin).[72]

Meanwhile, aside from original sin, we also speak of personal sins that people commit throughout life. These can be evaluated based on their gravity. The distinction between *bap nak* (mortal sin) and *bap bao* (venial sin) became part of the tradition of the Church.[73] *Bap nak* (mortal sin)[74] destroys

69 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 390.

70 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 397.

71 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 416.

72 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 417.

73 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1854.

74 Mortal sin results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. See CCC no. 1861.

charity in the heart by a grave violation of God's law and turns humanity away from God.[75] For a *bap* (sin) to be mortal, some conditions must be met: grave matter,[76] commission with full knowledge, and deliberate consent.[77] *However, bap bao (venial sin)* allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.[78] One commits *bap bao* (venial sin) when, in a less serious matter, he or she does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he or she disobeys the moral law in a grave matter without full knowledge or without complete consent.[79] However, even though the *bap bao* (venial sin) weakens charity and merits temporal punishment, it does not break the covenant with God.[80]

Consequence and Punishment of *Bap* (Sin)

Death is a consequence of *bap* (sin).[81] The Church's Magisterium, as the authentic interpreter of the affirmations of Scripture and Tradition, teaches that death entered the world on account of man's sin.[82] Even though man's nature is mortal, God did not destine him to die. Death is contrary to the plan of God the Creator.[83] "Bodily death, from which man

75 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1855.
76 Grave matter is specified by the Ten Commandments see คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1857-1858.
77 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1853.
78 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1855.
79 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1862.
80 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1863.
81 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1008
82 Cf. Genesis 2:17;3:13, 19; Wis 1:13; Rom 5:12;6:23.
83 Cf. Wisdom 2:23-24.

would have been immune had he not sinned" is thus "the last enemy" of man left to be conquered.[84]

For Adam's descendants, *bap kam nued* (original sin) also means deprivation of original holiness and justice. Although human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it and is subject to ignorance, suffering, and death. Concupiscence in Thai is called *kwam krai*. Baptism erases *bap kam nued* (original sin) and turns a person back toward God, but the *pon khong bap kam nued* (consequences) for the weakened nature persist in man and summon him to a spiritual battle.[85] The consequences of the first disobedience are the loss of the grace of original holiness,[86] the destruction of original justice, the weakening of control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body, and various conflicts in the union between man and woman.[87]

Meanwhile, personal *Bap* (sin) has a "double consequence." Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and makes us incapable of eternal life, leading to "eternal punishment." On the other hand, even if venial, every bap entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth or after death in "Purgatory."[88]

These sections of *bap* in the CCC truly expound its meaning in greater detail. However, the expositions are still largely confined to concepts of *bap* as disobedience to God, violation of His commands or laws, and turning away from Him.

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84 *Gaudium et Spes*, 18§2; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:26.

85 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 405.

86 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 399.

87 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 400.

88 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1472

Comparing the Notions of *Bap* in Thai Language and Culture and in the Thai Edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

In the preceding sections, the concept of *bap* and its related vocabulary in the Thai language and culture and the official Thai edition of Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) have been discussed and presented. The author will make a critical comparison and analysis of this concept to explore and investigate some significant themes in both traditions. Similarities and differences, as well as its implications for catechetical formation will be included. However, this analysis does not intend to cover the whole geography of *bap* in Thai popular culture. Moreover, this analysis does not endorse choosing between the Church's teachings and the cultural expressions but to present the dynamic interaction of both that lingers in the lives and minds of Catholic Thais.

Bap as an Individual's Act of Personal Volition

In both official Catholic teaching and Thai popular expressions, the subjective character of *bap* is central. While Catholic teaching on the morality of human acts emphasizes the intention,[89] the object chosen, and the circumstances of the action,[90] Buddhist-influenced Thai popular culture anchors its understanding of *bap* solely on *cetana* (volition), which is intrinsically bound with the law of karma. In this schema, *bap* is contingent on a person's actions based on *cetana* aroused by the thoughts subjective to that person. Not every evil act, is considered *bap*, since not every act brings about karmic

89 In Pali and Sanskirt it is also *cetanā*. The Thai Catechism of the Catholic Church also translates "intention" as *cetana* (เจตนา).

90 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1750.

consequences. Either good or bad action produces karma only when accompanied by feeling the pull of volition (*cetana*).

In contrast, involuntary or unconscious actions do not constitute karma, because volition, the most important factor in determining *kamma*, is absent.[91] This emphasis on individual moral responsibility based on karmic retribution instinctively becomes the norm of personal response to the issue of evil in society. The popular saying, *Tham dee dai dee, tham shua dai shua* (good deeds result in good outcomes, bad deeds in bad outcomes) becomes a paradigmatic expression that manifests people's belief in the reality of *bap* as both cause and effect.

Most significantly, *bap* expresses people's interior entity as desire, will, and intention, that is, *cetana*. Bap originates first from one's intention, mind, or will before it is actualized in the act.

Official Catholic teaching also holds that the morality of human acts subjectively involves intention. The *Kam Son Christang* elucidates this by stating that *bap* is a volitional desire to "refuse God" or turn away from "knowing God, loving Him, and doing His will." To refuse God implies that a person has freedom of choice to exercise one's "volition" to reject God or not. This volition forms the basis of corresponding responsibility.

This emphasis on volition is reflected in many Christian authors, both ancient and modern. Augustine describes sin as "any word or deed or thought against the eternal law."[92] In *A*

91 Philip Kapleau, *The Wheel of Death: A Collection of Writtings from Zen Buddhist and Other Sources on Death-Rebirth-Dying*, vol. 7 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 20.

92 J. C. O'Neill, "Sin," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Alan Richardson and John Bowden (Philadelphia:

Handbook of Theological Terms, Van Harvey defines actual sin as "any act, which includes thoughts as well as deeds, done in conscious and deliberate violation of God's will as expressed in the revealed or natural law."[93] Meanwhile, Andrew Song Park defines sin as a conscious offense against God or neighbors.[94]

In further understanding what constitutes *bap*, official Church teaching considers other elements such as object and circumstances. Choosing the morally good object, such as helping a person in need, involves knowing what is good and acting according to a correctly formed conscience. Considering the circumstances of the act entails space for the exercise of freedom. Though both these elements are external to the individual's volition and include limiting factors beyond personal control, including them widens the scope of what constitutes *bap* and the extent of a person's moral responsibility. Object and circumstance specify "the act of the will"[95] and constitute "elements that increase or diminish the moral goodness or evil of the human act" that involves the agent's responsibility.[96]

In contrast, Thai popular culture only factors *cetana* as the sole "locus of *bap*" because it is the only element that comes ultimately from the person's interiority. Significant Thai vocabulary like *jai* (heart)[97] or *chit jai* expresses what

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Westminster, 1983), p. 539.

93 Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1964), 220

94 Andrew Song Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (United States: Abingdon Press, 1993), 12.

95 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1751.

96 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1754.

97 "Jai" is a colloquial term sometimes used interchangeably with

comes from "inside" the person. Not only does *jai* refer to the "heart" as an internal organ of the body, but as "emotions," "feelings," and "volition" (*tang jai*). For example, the Buddhist Luangta Maha Boowa[98] often preached *Bun bap prakot tii jai haeng diaw*,[99] which means "merit or demerit, all are from the heart."[100]

The understanding of *bap* from the Church's teachings helps widen this relatively "subjective" character of bap as found in Thai popular culture. Aside from considering *cetana* as the significant element of *bap*, official Catholic teachings assert that the object chosen and circumstance are also interrelated essential elements that are indispensable to what constitutes *bap* or not. However, this difference does not necessarily contradict the Thai notion of *bap* but complements it. Interestingly, up to this point, the emphasis of *bap* has not yet anchored on violation of laws but rather on the person's internal disposition.

"cetana." There are also other terms like "jai," "chit," "chit jai," and "cetana" to refer to something coming from inside the person; it is feelings, emotions or desires and so forth. Earnestly speaking, as Julia Cassanniti pointed out in her book "*Living Buddhism: Mind, Self, and Emontion in a Thai Community*," in fact "there is no word for emotion in Thai at all." There are also no English translations that can suitably capture these terms. People are just using these terms presupposing that contextually everyone understands each other.

98 Venerable Ajahn Maha Bua was a well-respected Thai Buddhist monk who was thought by many of his followers to be an Arahant (someone who has attained Enlightenment). He himself was considered a master in the Thai Forest Tradition. After his predecessor's death, he was considered to be the Ajahn Yai (head monk) of the Thai Forest Tradition lineage until his death in 2011. See Masters and Their Organisations, Theravada Thailand – Forest Monks Tradition, http://www.buddhanet.net/masters/mahaboowa.htm.

99 In Thai บุญบาปปรากฏที่ใจแห่งเดียว

100 Luangta Maha Boowa, "Bun Bap Prakot Ti Jai Haeng Diaw" (Merit and Demerit only Appear in the Heart), A Preaching for Laity at Wat Pa Ban Tad, 18 October 2008, http://www.luangta.com/thamma/thamma_talk_text.php?ID=5163&CatID=2 (accessed 3 July 2020).

Bap and Its Effects on the Individual's Life and Social Condition

In Thai popular culture, *bap* and its effects on individual and social life are essentially understood in the forms of *kwam thuk* (pain and suffering) brought about by the law of karma. In contrast, official Catholic teachings assert that *bap* and its effects on both individual and society arise from original sin, which brings about "death,"[101] "damage of unity and community,"[102] and "concupiscence."[103]

Given its socio-cultural background of Buddhist dominance, Thai popular culture views every act of *bap*, whether individual or social, as intrinsically associated with the experience of "suffering," "pain," "dissatisfaction," and "unhappiness" brought about by the "law of karma." At the heart of the Buddhist teachings, the reality of *dukkha* (suffering), the first of the Four Noble Truths,[104] is ever-present in human consciousness. It presents a "realistic" view of life and of the world.[105] Whenever a painful event occurs in one's life, one cannot but ask about its association to *bap* or *bap kam*. Ratnam asserts that "it (*dukkha*) includes not merely physical and mental suffering. At the same time, it also contains deeper ideas such as imperfection, impermanence,

101 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1008.

102 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 817.

103 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), nos. 405, 399.

104 The First Noble Truth is generally translated by almost all scholars as "The Noble Truth of Suffering," and it is interpreted to mean that life according to Buddhism is nothing but suffering and pain. Both translation and interpretation are highly unsatisfactory and misleading. It is because of this limited, free and easy translation, and its superficial interpretation, that many people have been misled into regarding Buddhism as pessimistic. See. Wapola, *What the Buddha Taught*, 16.

105 Wapola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (Oxford: One World, 1997), 17.

emptiness, conflict, insubstantiality, unsatisfactoriness, and ignorance (*avijja*).[106] Therefore, according to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a famous and influential Thai ascetic-philosopher, the "fundamental principle of Buddhism…focuses solely on the elimination of suffering."[107] In order to be exempted from the effects of *bap*, one must extinguish the suffering, and the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to obtain "nirvana," the term used to describe the end of suffering and the cycle of reincarnation.[108]

In contrast, official Catholic teachings firmly hold that *bap* and its effects on both individual's life and social condition are related to original sin and its consequences in "death,"[109] "damage of unity and community,"[110] and "concupiscence,"[111] or "an inclination to sin."[112] Early Church Father Augustine of Hippo quotes the Book of Ecclesiasticus in pointing to pride as the source of all sin: "The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord; the heart has withdrawn from its Maker. For the beginning of pride is sin, and the one who clings to it pours out abominations. Therefore, the Lord brings upon them unheard-of calamities, and destroys them completely."[113] The CCC adds further that *bap* "scattered" and "led astray"

106 M. V. Ram Kumar Ratnam, *Dukkha: Suffering in Early Buddhism* (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 2003), 46-47.

107 Buddhadasa Indapanno, "The Heart of Buddhism: The Total Message of Buddhism," (A lecture Note on Dhamma on a special occasion at the Dhamma Study Club, Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, 17 December 1961), p. 4.

108 "Buddhism: Religious History and Beliefs," Butler University, Indiana, https://www.butler.edu/cfv/buddhism (accessed 23 July 2020).

109 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), no 1008.

110 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), nos 953, 817.

111 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), nos. 405, 399.

112 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), no. 1264.

113 Ecclesiasticus 10:12-13.

God's children.[114]

These two perspectives initially appear to be different. On the one hand, Thai popular culture views *bap* and its effects on the individual's life as pain and suffering. Moreover, it sees death, the loss of unity and relationship, and concupiscence under the karmic force that operates in human life. On the other hand, official Catholic teachings comprehend *bap* and its effects such as death, damage in unity and relationship, and concupiscence. It also views pain and suffering as a consequence of *bap* that is disobedience to God by humankind from its beginnings.

However, though each comes from different perspectives, these two ways of understanding *bap* and its effects do not contradict each other because they trace the ultimate source of *kwam thuk* (suffering, dukkha) in similar ways. As Wapola Rahula points out, suffering comes from "thirst" or "craving"[115]: it is the thirst for sense-pleasure, permanence, existence and becoming, and non-existence (self-annihilation).[116] In the Christian context, this thirst is also known as "pride," which C.S. Lewis considers "the essential vice, the utmost evil."[117] The Book of Genesis metaphorically expresses pride as the thirst to become like God,[118]or to turn away from Him. Hence, Lewis also speaks of it as "the complete anti-God state of mind."[119]

Therefore, *kwam thunk* is a consequence of this pride.

114 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 845.
115 Wapola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 29.
116 Wapola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 29.
117 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1980), 121-122.
118 Cf. Genesis 3: 5.
119 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 121-122.

In this way, craving in Buddhism and pride in Christianity complement each other in articulating the concept of *bap* in the Thai context. In addition, this complementarity opens the way to see suffering and pain in the wider context of "unity and relationship" and of their loss due to discrimination, injustice, and other related situations. Moreover, for the Christian, the meaning of suffering must be re-interpreted in the light of Jesus Christ's suffering. As Khawasiama propounds, "the significant Christian view of *dukkha* is self-denial, self-sacrifice or voluntary suffering for others."[120] Suffering becomes meaningful for Christians when it is seen in relation to the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ.

As to the social dimension, Thai popular culture views *bap* and its effects on the social condition as *kwam thuk* (suffering) of peoples, while Church teachings emphasize disharmony in community or society.

In Thai popular culture, the impact of *bap* as *kwam thuk* or *dukkha* (suffering) is articulated in relation to an individual's life and as the cause of direct pain and suffering to others. As Khawsiama points out, while there is personal *dukkha* in terms of pain, difficulty, fear, worry, and so on, social *dukkha* is the collective suffering of people.[121] It also involves social structures and institutions at large. David Kwansun Suh, a Minjung theologian, affirms that "*dukkha* is not only a metaphysical instability; it is also the result of social and political and economic instability."[122] As suffering affects humans both personally and communally, *dukkha* is a universal reality

120 K. M. Y. Khawsiama, "Towards a Theology of Dukkha: a Christian-Buddhist View on the Suffering of Ludu in Myanmar," *Asia Journal of Theology*, vol. 26 (2012): 117.
121 Ibid., 120.
122 David Kwan-sun Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ* (Hong Kong: CCA, 1991), 138.

of the daily experience of all humans bound by conditioned existence in a samsaric life.[123]

The theme of "suffering" becomes a multi-faceted reality that encompasses political, socio-cultural, economic, and, most recently, ecological aspects in the context of Thailand. For instance, when people experience suffering because of economic failure, ecological issues, or political injustice the *bap* that these politicians commit affects all other people in society. Moreover, the effect of *bap* can also take place within a family circle: from parents to children and children to grandchildren. As discussed earlier, Thai popular sayings emphasize the effect of *bap* on this family microcosm. They reiterate that the karmic consequences of *bap* affect the agent and the agent's kin.

In official Catholic teachings, social sin is interrelated with personal sin since personal sin affects our own relationship with God, and social sin is the actions that affect the people around us and our relationship with them. According to the CCC, "personal sins create structures of sin which lead the victims (of sin) to do evil in their turn." Thus "personal sins make everyone accomplices of one another and cause concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among them."[124] It further asserts that "sins give rise to social situations and insti-

123 David Thang Moe, "Sin and Evil in Christian and Buddhist Perspectives: A Quest for Theodicy," *Asian Journal of Theology*, vol. 29 (2015): 28. Samsaric life: Buddhism shares with Hinduism the doctrine of *samsara*, whereby all beings pass through an uncesasing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth until they find a means of liberation from the cycle. *Samsara* is considered to be *dukkha*, unsatisfactory and painful, perpetuated by desire and ignorance (*avidya*) and the resulting karma. Samsaric cycle will end if a person attain *nirvana*. See Kevin Trainor, Buddhism: the Illustrated Guide (USA: Oxford University, 2004), p. 58; 62-63. Also see Mark Juergensmeyer, Encyclopedia of Global Religion (USA: SAGE, 2012) p., 271-272.

124 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1869.

tutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. 'Structures of sin' are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a social sin."[125] In other words, the effect of *bap* includes disharmony within human communities. Each member of these communities suffers from its effect. In *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC), social sin is comprehensively expounded:

Social sin is every sin committed against justice due in relations between individuals, between the individual and the community, and also between the community and the individual. Social too is every sin against the rights of the human person, starting with the right to life, including that of life in the womb, and every sin against the physical integrity of the individual; every sin against the freedom of others, especially against the supreme freedom to believe in God and worship him; and every sin against the dignity and honor of one's neighbor. Every sin against the common good and its demands, in the whole broad area of rights and duties of citizens, is also social sin. In the end, social sin is that sin that "refers to the relationships between the various human communities. These relationships are not always in accordance with the plan of God, who intends that there be justice in the world and freedom and peace between individuals, groups, and peoples.[126]

At first glance, these two traditions appear to understand the effects of *bap* on the social condition from quite different

125 Ibid.

126 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*, Conpendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, no. 118, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html (accessed 17 June 2020).

perspectives. On the one hand, Thai popular culture sees *bap* as the suffering that people experience collectively from the smallest unit of a family to a larger society subjected to social, political, and economic instability. On the other hand, Catholic teachings underscore disharmony within the community over suffering. The suffering experienced by everyone at the social level originates from a "relationship" that has been broken because of prevalent injustice and violation of other people's dignity and freedom. When the bond of harmony and relationship is violated and damaged because of a selfish act of personal volition, every member of the community suffers and gets affected.

However, despite their distinctions, their different emphases are not contradictory but complementary. One challenges and inspires the other's social engagement and dynamic of building good relationships in society. In other words, through their everyday interaction, Thai popular culture can challenge official Church teachings to be more concerned about various forms of suffering. The Church is also challenged to take some concrete action in showing mercy and compassion for others. This challenge allows the Church of Thailand to revisit and reflect on how catechetical formation is being provided. The emphasis on social justice, rights of the persons, and community-relationship become a critical paradigm for catechesis to consider seriously. In fact, this is not something new in the Church. A Latin American theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, already spoke of sin in "liberation theology" as a social, economic, and political injustice that exploits the oppressed and the poor.[127] In turn, Church teachings can

127 Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: the Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 12.

challenge Thai popular culture's way of thinking by calling attention to the value of harmony and the establishment of good relationships in communities. Though suffering is a reality that cannot be eradicated from human history, unity within human communities should then be the focal point of concern rather than suffering.

Bap in Relation to Law: Karmic Law and Divine Law

In Thai popular culture, the contemporary meaning of *bap* is associated with the transgression of religious law and precepts. Catholic teachings likewise understand *bap* mainly as disobedience to God's law. These notions explicitly point to the objective dimension of *bap* in both traditions.

Thai popular culture inseparably correlates *bap* and religious law because *bap*, though coming from personal volition, is manifested externally through verbal or bodily action. Thus, to prevent people from committing *bap*, religious laws prohibit them from doing evil acts that harm others. For example, in *sila ha* (Five Precepts)[128] , Buddhists are asked to refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lies and harsh speech, and harmful substances to lead a good life. There are also other *sila* (precepts) originally intended for different groups of adherents, for instance, 227 *pra vi nai* (precepts) for Theravada Buddhist monks, 311 precepts for Theravada Buddhist nuns, and so forth.[129] These are external

128 The Five Precepts are: (1) abstain from taking life of living beings, 2) abstain from stealing, (3) abstain from sexual misconduct, (4) abstain from telling lies and harsh speech, and (5) abstain from harmful substances. Also see พระพรหมคุณาภรณ์ (ป.อ. ปยุตฺโต) พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสตร์ ฉบับประมวลธรรม พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๑๒ พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๖ , (Prayudh Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 12th ed., 2003) website: http://84000.org/tipitaka/dic/d_item.php?i=238.

129 Bhikkhu Ariyesako, "The Bhikkhus' Rules: A Guide for Laypeople," *Sanghaanloka Forest Hermitage*, 1998, https://www.

manifestations of *bap*, which come from personal volition. Thus personal volition and religious laws interrelate with each other in Buddhist-influenced Thai culture. More significantly, these religious laws and precepts are encompassed by the law of karma, which claims that every voluntary act (whether good or bad) leads to karmic consequences.

Religious law and precepts are meant to serve as spiritual and moral guidance in the pursuit of attaining *nibbana* or nirvana, the spiritual goal of Buddhism. These laws and tenets are means to eliminate possible obstacles, especially *bap*, from striving for liberation from suffering and karma. As long as people continue to violate religious laws, they still commit acts of *bap.* As a consequence, it will be hard for them to experience less suffering or to attain liberation from suffering and the karmic law. In short, if they continue to commit *bap* by violating religious precepts, they cannot attain liberation. Subsequently, these religious laws and precepts become the central paradigm of understanding *bap* in a legal manner where the law of karma binds every act of law violation.

Official Catholic teachings share commonality with Thai popular culture in terms of understanding *bap* as "disobedience." Hence *bap* is seen as disobedience to the Ten Commandments and the Church's precepts. For instance, attending Sunday Mass, fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, no killing, no sexual misconduct, and so forth—ought to be observed by so-called "good Catholics" in their pursuit of moral life. The Church's commandments then become the norm for Confession, involving what commandment one has transgressed and hence needs to confess as sin. As

nku.edu/~kenneyr/Buddhism/lib/modern/ariyesako/layguide.html (accessed 25 July 2020).

shown in Thai catechetical formation, the weight of *bap* is tied to the Ten Commandments and Church's precepts. Even in preparing the children and catechumens for Confession, the emphasis is the objectiveness of *bap* as a violation of the law. This overemphasis on the Church's commandments and precepts also reinforces the notion of *bap* as disobedience to religious law. Oftentimes, disobedience of law is assumed to be equal to disobedience to God.

The dynamics of religiosity in Thai popular culture and the Church teaching seems to be congruent because they are both oriented towards a legal understanding of *bap*. Despite this congruence, the two traditions have different implications. On the one hand, Thai popular culture imagines the law of karma actively reinforcing and hastening karmic retribution on the agent. This karma is linked to various situations. Therefore, when one transgresses religious law, one fears the agents of karmic law who will inflict certain kinds of suffering as punishment.

On the other hand, in Catholic teachings, behind the violation of law stands the God who is superior above all laws. This implies that the person breaks the laws and disobeys God's command by violating the law. Hence the image of God as a lawmaker becomes prominent. As Bill Cosgrave comments, "in the legal model of sin also, punishment for sin was a central idea, with that punishment being meted out here and/ or hereafter. God was, of course, the punisher as well as lawmaker, policeman, and judge. So, the image of God here was forbidding and fear-provoking."[130] This is reflected in official liturgical prayers of the Church. For example, the Act of Contrition during Confession states, "sins demand

130 Bill Cosgrave, "Understanding Sin Today," *The Furrow* Vol. 50, no. 10 (Oct., 1999): 539.

your (God's) punishment (*karn long tod*). The image of God who judges according to the laws is unavoidably accentuated. In the Rite for the Departed, the punishment (of *bap*) is mentioned three times when people pray for them to be saved from God's punishment for their guilt.[131]

Aside from their common emphasis on *bap* as a violation of law, both traditions consider the relationality of humans within society from different perspectives. In Thai popular culture, the expression *tham dee dai dee sham chua dai shua* (good deeds result in good outcomes, bad deeds in bad outcomes) indicates the understanding of *bap* in its relational dimension. It emphasizes that its consequence affects the agent and other people related in one way or another. The act of every human has an impact related on others. Moreover, "those who do good will be rewarded, but those who do bad get punished." This is not about teaching people to mind their own business or encourage them to be only self-concerned by doing less bap and accumulating more boon (merit) just for themselves, for their prosperous life in the future or even in the future next worlds. In other words, to avoid committing *bap* is not just avoiding punishment for oneself but also punishment for others. The spirit of the law of karma then includes treating fellow human beings well, building up a peaceful society, and creating harmony within communities.

In Catholic teachings, rewarding good and punishing evil is also ubiquitous in Jewish-Christian Scriptures.[132] Countless

131 See คณะอนุกรรมการฝ่ายจารีตพิธีกรรมและคณะอนุกรรมการฝ่ายส่งเสริมความศรัทธา หนังสือพิธีปลงศพ โรงพิมพ์อัสสัมชัญ บางรัก 1980 หน้า 35-36; 47 (Sub-committee for Liturgy and Sub-committee for Sustaining Faith, *A Catholic Funeral Rite*, Bangkok: Assumption Press, 1980, pages 35-36, 47).

132 See Proverbs 11:18; 13:21, Genesis 15:1, Psalms 58:1; 62:12, Isaiah 13:11, and Romans 2:6.

passages in the Old Testament speak of God punishing those who violate the Torah by inflicting pain and suffering in their lives while giving life and prosperity to those who remain faithful. However, in the New Testament, Jesus himself summarizes all of God's law into the two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-38). Here one finds the essential teaching of all laws. Indeed the spirit of the law makes all the commandments and precepts of the Church helpful principles for the faithful to lead moral lives. This integral connection between the love of God and the love of neighbor overcomes the narrow legal understanding of moral action and behavior. It also becomes a corrective to the common image of God as a lawmaker, judge, and punisher.

Bap in Relation to the Ground of Transcendence

Thai popular culture upholds that the ultimate ground of transcendence—in relation to *bap*—is the state of liberation from sufferings and attaining *nibbana*, the ultimate spiritual goal. At the same time, official Church teachings firmly profess the sole Triune God as the ground of transcendence.

Thai popular culture does not believe in a personal ground of transcendence, personal God, or Creator God. However, its striving for transcendence is instead found in its conviction of the ongoing possibility of rebirth until one achieves *nibbana* or *nirvana*. Buddhist Thais believe in the ground of Transcendental Being or, as Walpola called *nibbana*, the Absolute Truth or Ultimate Reality.[133] "*Nibbana* literally means "extinction." It is a state of being and is strictly defined as a

133 Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 35.

state without conditioned aspects, without arising, subsisting, changing, or passing away."[134] "*Nibbana* is often depicted as "bliss" or the cessation of suffering, *dukkha*."[135] Arising from Hindu religious thought, Buddhism carries a similar view that *nibbana* is a state of liberation from individual consciousness and the suffering of samsara, the cycle of birth and death. In Buddhism, *nibbana* assumes the individual to overcome desire, hate, and delusion to be freed from the dictates of karma.[136] To attain *nibbana*, one must eliminate the main root of dukkha, which is "thirst" (*tanha*).[137] Bap is not subject to an overall divine hegemony and authoritative governance within this framework but depends on an individual's actions.

Contrary to the way Thai popular culture understands *bap* in relation to the ground of transcendence, the Church teachings essentially affirm belief in personal Transcendence. It also firmly professes that God is the Creator of the world and the entire universe, including human beings.[138] The CCC affirms that "human beings are created in the image of God, and human individual possesses the dignity of a person. They are capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession, and of freely giving themselves and entering into communion with other persons. They are called by grace to a covenant with their Creator."[139] Hence, as the CCC describes, *bap* is first and foremost a "failure in genuine love for God"[140] and "an

134 Edward Irons, "Nirvana/Nibbana," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism: Encyclopedia of World Religions* (New York: Facts On File An Imprint of Infobase Publishing, 2008), 370.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 35.
138 Cf. Genesis 1-2.
139 คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 357.
140 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1849.

offense against God."[141] Fundamentally speaking, *bap* is a rupture in one's personal relationship with God.

As such, Thai popular culture and official Church teachings have different grounds of transcendence in relation to which *bap* is understood. The former believes in karmic force rather than God, and the latter fully believes in God, who is the Source of all goodness. Though these two are contradictory in their philosophical and theological grounds, they both promote similar values in terms of universal goodness.

Through religious laws and precepts, both Thai popular culture and official Catholic teachings guide people to live their moral lives with similar prescriptions and proscriptions. Mutual dialogue is the language that bridges these different grounds together.

Pastoral Implications and Reflections

While these two traditions have significant differences in understanding of *bap*, they could still complement each other. They widen each other's perspective and deepen each other's understanding of *bap,* which involves doctrinal exposition and cultural articulation. This has key implications that can be applied to pastoral practice.

First, catechetical formation on *bap* should involve the contextualization of *bap*. Given the influence of Thai popular culture that simply considers personal volition to *bap*, catechetical formation should stress the wider context of human action. This would lead to a more holistic notion of *bap* for Thai Catholics.

Second, catechetical formation may also underscore the

141 Cf. คำสอนพระศาสนจักรคาทอลิก (Catechism of the Catholic Church), 1850.

issue of social sin in the Thai context and the sense of moral responsibility of each member of society. Both Thai popular culture and Church teachings see social sin as collective suffering and pain caused by sinful social structures. Hence, catechetical formation needs to emphasize engagement in social issues by also stressing the sense of responsibility in *bap* that individuals have committed and affect others.

Third, Catholic catechetical formation may also stress the importance of relationships in the understanding of *bap*. Both traditions heavily underline the objective character of *bap* in emphasizing the transgression of religious laws and precepts. Current overemphasis on the legal understanding of *bap* should then be lessened so that law-oriented attitudes can be more human-centered or relationship-oriented. This can be achieved through careful attention to the process of formulating catechetical lessons for Thai Catholics nationwide. This helps re-calibrate the direction of the catechism towards two realizations: sin in relation to the person of the sinner and sin in relation to our relationship to others. The former helps deepen the meaning of Confession, which emphasizes the person's continual conversion and spiritual growth over the list of wrong deeds. The latter highlights that the greatest sin is not about breaking the Church's laws but the breaking of relationships in all forms. Without these realizations, Catholic teachings on sin will never promote conversion as the true goal.

Fourth, Catholic catechetical formation should endeavor to accentuate that *bap* consists of breaking one's relation to God in its ultimate sense. Granted that Thai popular culture's influence heavily banks on karmic law, the catechetical formation should emphasize *bap* as turning away from God. Otherwise, *bap* for Thai Catholics' would cage around

suffering and pain, leading to an incomplete image of God as a "punishing God." On the contrary, God is in solidarity with us in our suffering, especially in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. This would accentuate God as merciful than punishing.

Though these implications could have arrived through contemporary theological reflection on God's mercy and compassion, the study of the influence of Thai popular culture on the lived religion of Thai Catholics uncovers how Thai Catholics live their faith. Though limited to the understanding of *bap*, this study helps the Church in Thailand deepen the lived religion of Thai Catholics and promote more authentic evangelization.

On a wider note, the Catholic Church in Thailand should pay more attention to the translation of key doctrinal terms like *bap*, while mindful of the contextual and cultural understanding. It must reassess how terms are used especially in liturgical services and prayers. For instance, the prayer, "O God, I am sorry that I have sinned because sins demand your punishment especially sins that offend you, the source of goodness and worthy to be praised...," can be re-formulated as "O God, I am sorry that I have sinned because my sins destroy my relationship with you. I have committed sins that offend you. You are the Source of goodness. You are worthy of being praised..." If the Church preaches a personal and relational God, and the effect of *bap* is the ruin of one's relation to God, then the terms used in prayers should also center on the "break of relation" rather than "punishment." Given the influence of Thai popular culture viewing suffering as punishment from karma, this aspect of breaking relationships must be emphasized. Otherwise, if the use of terms does not convey the message faithfully, it might result in wrong views

or mistaken beliefs that give rise to wrong thoughts, wrong words, and wrong deeds.[142] Thus, the Church should transmit the faith which she herself lives. And the best place to transmit the faith is a community nourished and transformed by its liturgical life and prayer: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. [143]

Concluding Reflections

Since religion is more than ideas or beliefs, language becomes the privileged entry point into the culture and mind of a people and their religious practices.[144] Because language is a human and cultural resource to make sense of reality, people commonly articulate their religion or faith through the language they use in their daily lives.[145] And these discourses express their "lived religion," that is, the "religion and spirituality that are practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people in the context of their everyday lives."[146]

Therefore, it is truly relevant and necessary to seriously consider how people are firmly rooted in their own particular socio-cultural milieu. As Pope Francis has asked the Church today, it is a way to "listen" to the people. It is also a great challenge for Thai Catholics to live their faith in a culture

142 The Buddhadasa Indapanno, *The Heart of Buddhism: the Total Message of Buddhism* (A lecture on Dhamma on a special occasion at the Dhamma Study Club Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital 17 December 1961), 18-19.

143 Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly, "*the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*" *(Instrumentum laboris*), 27 May 2012, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html#The_Church_Transmits_the_Faith_Which_She_Herself_Lives (91) (accessed 25 July 2020), no 97.

144 M. B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15.

145 Jose M. De Mesa, *A Theological Reader*, "The Ginhawa which Jesus brings" (Philippines: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2016), 331.

146 McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 12.

immensely immersed in Buddhist influences. Moreover, they have to wrestle with their "lived religion" in which the Faith of the Church and the people's daily experiences of faith have to become integral and "make sense" amidst the complexity of religious pluralism and the diversity of popular culture expressions.

To narrow the gap that seemingly separates doctrinal teachings and lived religion, more effort is needed to critically study Thai popular culture and Church teachings on various topics of faith. This is to effectively implement the results of such studies to help consolidate what the Church universally teaches and what the people of Thailand culturally practice. The First Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand 2015, "Christ's Disciples Living the New Evangelization," reiterates the significance of "inculturation and dialogue" and urges the local Thai Church to "respect differences," to "acknowledge the good points of other cultures," and to "appreciate the way of life of the Thai people."[147] This insight from the Plenary Council is not entirely new in the sphere of evangelization in the post-Second Vatican Council period. However, serious articulation and effective implementation are still inadequate, especially in relation to the vastly unexplored socio-cultural and anthropological grounds of inculturation involving language and culture. The Church needs to change her superficial level of inculturation and dialogue. She must enter into a deeper ground of encounter where people's faith and their invaluable cultures actively associate.

147 Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand (CBCT), *Christ's Disciples Living the New Evangelization*, 33.

The Gospel of Mercy for the Filipino Church

Ramil del Rosario Marcos

Introduction

The celebration of the 500th anniversary of the first encounter between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the natives of the Philippines successfully proceeded in 2021, albeit with major modifications in plan and execution. Unfazed by major challenges, chief among them the worldwide coronavirus pandemic and its ensuing limitations, Church personnel creatively utilized both conventional and social media to allow people to witness, participate and celebrate the major opening events.

Taking great interest and closely following up on the activities from his office in Rome, Pope Francis lent valuable moral and spiritual support to mark the anniversary and bring it to the consciousness of the whole Church. It must be remembered that his 2015 pastoral visit to the country was prompted by a double purpose – to witness firsthand the sufferings of the Yolanda typhoon victims and to contribute to the enthusiasm of the preparatory phase of the quincentennial festivities.

However, a deeper consideration of the central message of Pope Francis' ministry - the message of God's mercy - can contribute to the deeper understanding of the great possibilities for evangelization that the anniversary commemoration holds. The themes of a church that is centrifugally moving, that accompanies people and that lives the spirit of poverty, close to the heart of Pope Francis and conspicuous in his

view of evangelization in *Evangelii Gaudium*, all stem from his reflections on mercy that is both God's most important attribute and the Church's most urgent task. This paper offers reflections on how to receive the message of mercy of Pope Francis and incorporate it in the enduring challenges the anniversary celebrations will leave behind.

Undaunted by initial setbacks, the Church in the Philippines successfully commenced the much-awaited celebration of the 500th anniversary of the first proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the natives of the islands. There were considerable hurdles to be confronted. First there was the insouciance of the national civil leadership towards the activities, fueled by the open antagonism of the country's president against the Catholic Church. Then came the coronavirus pandemic that caused the major standstill in all areas of life not only locally but globally.[1] The pandemic dislodged schedules, logistics, and human and material resources reserved for the commemorations. Thankfully, the resilience and creativity of Filipinos prevailed as various alternatives were considered and implemented allowing for even a low-key but consistently flowing program.

While dates were reset, participation reduced, or events spread in various locations, Filipino Catholics still enthusiastically followed the activities through the various social media that provided coverage. The Archdiocese of Manila launched its celebration and marked its establishment as the first diocese in the country, founded four hundred forty-two

1 Jonathan Daniels, "How to Mark the 500th Anniversary of Christianity's Arrival in the Philippines," *INQUIRER.net*, December 24, 2020, https://opinion.inquirer.net/136375/how-to-mark-the-500th-anniversary-of-christianitys-arrival-in-the-philippines (accessed on September 7, 2021).

years ago, with a simple Mass on February 6, 2021.[2] The Diocese of Legazpi even earlier kicked off their local celebration commemorating the missionary toil of the Spanish Franciscans in their area in 1578.[3] Key celebrations were then held in the Diocese of Maasin (recalling the first Mass) on March 31, 2021 and in the Archdiocese of Cebu (recalling the first baptism) on April 14, 2021. Other important events, like the mission congress, were further spread up until April 2022.[4]

Pope Francis' Special Message to Filipinos

Among the most enthusiastic and encouraging supporters of the celebration was none other than Pope Francis himself.[5] The Pope's primary aim in his 2015 visit to the country was to encounter the survivors of the 2013 super-typhoon Yolanda. Recorded as one of the strongest typhoons in history, Yolanda "killed more than 6,000 people and caused almost $3 billion in damage. In the storm's wake, 90 percent of the structures in

2 Jheng Prado, "Archdiocese of Manila Commence Year-long Celebration of 500 years of Christianity," *The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila*, February 7, 2021, https://rcam.org/archdiocese-of-manila-commence-year-long-celebration-of-500-years-of-christianity/ (accessed on September 7, 2021).

3 Mhar S. Arguelles, "Diocese of Legazpi Launches Celebration of 500 Years of Christianity," *INQUIRER.net*, November 29, 2020, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1366169/diocese-of-legazpi-launches-celebration-of-500-years-of-christianity (accessed on September 7, 2021).

4 Roy Lagarde, "Church Pushes Back 500 Years of Christianity Celebration due to Covid-19," *CBCP News*, September 24, 2020, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/church-pushes-back-500-years-of-christianity-celebration-due-to-covid19/ (accessed on September 7, 2021).

5 Zacarian Sarao, "Pope Francis 'took' Presiding of Mass to Celebrate 500 years of Christianity in PH," *INQUIRER.net*, August 25, 2021, https://globalnation.inquirer.net/198731/pope-francis-took-presiding-of-mass-to-celebrate-500-years-of-christianity-in-ph (accessed on September 7, 2021).

Tacloban were destroyed. Some 1.9 million people were left homeless and another 6 million displaced."[6]

Pope Francis wished to visit the country to express his unity with the suffering population. He was drawn to the plight of the typhoon victims whose rehabilitation was slow and incomplete years after. In general, the Pope was in a quest to touch base with the country's poor, not only in the Visayas, but also in the capital city of Manila. It was very clear that his desire was to spread the consoling message of God's tender closeness at the moment of adversity.

However, that visit had a secondary purpose. It was also the start of the preparatory phase of the quincentennial celebrations. Addressing then-President Benigno Aquino III, the Pope mentioned that his visit was a prelude to the celebration of "the fifth centenary of the first proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on these shores."[7] He attached great importance to this anniversary and hoped it will highlight the Church's "continuing fruitfulness and its potential to inspire a society worthy of the goodness, dignity and aspirations of the Filipino people."[8]

Aside from the message of solidarity with the typhoon survivors, Pope Francis also brought to the Filipino Church his message of mercy. For the Pontiff, the first step to become a missionary church involved this simple reminder to reconsider God's mercy. He prompted the Church to stick to the

6 Joshua J. McElwee, "Francis Braves Tropical Storm to Offer Consolation to Typhoon Victims," *NCR Online*, January 16, 2015. https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-braves-tropical-storm-offer-consolation-typhoon-victims (accessed on November 21, 2020).

7 Pope Francis, "Address before President Benigno Aquino III," *On a Mission of Mercy and Compassion: Homilies and Speeches of Pope Francis in His Pastoral Visit to the Philippines (Study Edition)*. (Makati: Word and Life Publications), 2015, 3.

8 Ibid., 4.

basics of the faith, to the simple, rudimental message of Christ because "perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy."[9]

The practice of contemplating on mercy is crucial for any Christian community since "it is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness" (MV 2).

Far from being mere soft sentimentalism, the message of mercy was a decisive and emphatic call to action. Surely Pope Francis spoke of what it means "to 'cry; to be open to surprises; to love; to dream; to have no words to say; to be silent,"[10] but in the end, he also stressed that actions were important. CBCP President Archbishop Socrates Villegas thus called on the people to reflect on the papal visit's major themes to keep the memories of his visit alive for a long time. More importantly, he encouraged the faithful to act on the challenges the Pope expressed so that these can truly bring people the joy, hope, peace, and faith that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ.[11]

9 Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus (Bull of Indiction)* (Pasay City: Paulines, 2016), 10. Henceforth *MV*.

10 Socrates Villegas, "From Euphoria to Reality to Mission: Post Papal Visit Statement," January 22, 2015, *CBCP Online*, http://cbcponline.net/from-euphoria-to-reality-to-mission/ (accessed on November 7, 2020).

11 Ibid.

Towards Becoming a Merciful and Evangelizing Filipino Church

This double call to reflection and action becomes more significant in view of the potentials for evangelization that the quincentennial will bring. It will be highly beneficial to draw inspiration from Pope Francis' lessons on a merciful and evangelizing Church as Filipino Catholics give thanks for the half-millennium of blessings and as they prepare to confront the tasks of the demanding times ahead through a livelier sharing of the message of Jesus. The following are humble reflections on how to incorporate Pope Francis' models of a merciful and evangelizing Church in the consciousness of Church leaders and the faithful as they celebrate the quincentennial and, more importantly, as they strive to make its effects enduring and relevant for the future.

A Filipino Church that Goes Forth

The spread of the Christian faith in the Philippines succeeded due to the hard work of the protagonists – the missionary friars – many of whom were men of deep apostolic faith, holy life, and courageous zeal.[12] They were sincere visionaries bent on a singular purpose: to spread God's message of salvation to new lands in the Orient. Many of these missionaries had pioneering experiences in the Americas where they learned effective missionary methodology and strategies. Aware of the crusade of Fr. Bartolome de las Casas in the New World, these early missionaries served as a buffer against the Spanish colonizers' abuse of power

12 Crisostomo Yalung ed. *The Archdiocese of Manila: Pilgrimage in Time (1565-1999)*, vol. 1 (Manila: The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, 2000), p 17.

and destructive force by protecting the natives and working for the salvation of their souls and their bodies. De las Casas wrote to the king in defense of the natives: "For what is necessary is not conquest by arms, but persuasion with sweet and divine words, and the example and works of a holy life…"[13] Thanks to these pioneering missionaries who learned this lesson, the bloodshed, and cruelty suffered by the tribes of the Americas were not replicated in the process of colonization of the Philippines.

Though they were few at first, these missionaries accepted the hardships and dangers of unfamiliar terrain, a strange culture, and a foreign way of life. Undaunted by the challenges they faced, these men steadily ventured into different places to meet the natives and proclaim the Gospel. There is hardly any province in the Philippines today where the faith has not been introduced by the series of missionary expeditions from different religious orders which were assigned to the country.

These early missionaries exemplified the Church that goes forth. They hiked mountains, traversed plains, and sailed perilous seas to evangelize, baptize, and to plant the Church. Redemptorist priest Picardal argues that though unfortunately identified with the caricature of a despotic friar in the popular imagination, the early missionaries were in fact, good priests, teachers, builders, leaders, and defenders of the people.[14] It is

13 John Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University) 1979, 6.

14 Amado Picardal, "Celebrating 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines," *Rappler*, October 20, 2019, https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/celebrating-500-years-christianity-philippines (accessed on November 7, 2020).

a tribute to their lifelong sacrifices that the entire country is still predominantly Catholic after 500 years.

From the start of his pontificate, Pope Francis has always envisioned a Church always on the move. He has spoken vehemently against a self-referential Church, one that is complacent and satisfied, resting on its laurels and finding no reason to leave its comfortable and familiar premises. He adheres to the Vatican II image of the Church as a people on pilgrimage. He calls every Christian not only to be disciples, faithful to Christ, and loyal to the Church, but to be missionary disciples who personally embrace the call to take every opportunity, however simple, to spread the Word of Christ and to be willing to go to roads less traveled.

Pope Francis situates mercy at the center of this actively moving Church, which he also calls a "community of missionary disciples."[15] Such a community, he says, moves forward in search of people, impelled by mercy itself, since it had the first experience of God's infinite goodness and therefore "has an endless desire to show mercy" to others.[16]

To elucidate the merciful stance of being at the service of people in the peripheries, in their needs and sufferings, it is helpful to turn to another imagery popularized by Pope Francis, though one that was not from his original thoughts. In a famous interview shortly after his election, he "foreshadowed his program for the Catholic Church as a 'field hospital' for the wounded, a profound, indeed stunning image."[17]

15 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium (*Pasay City: Paulines, 2013), 24. Henceforth this will be cited as *EG.*

16 Ibid.

17 Blasé Cupich, "Field Hospital," in *A Pope Francis Lexicon*, edited by Joshua McElwee and Cindy Wooden (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press), 2018, 72.

The Pope's own words were, in fact, most powerful and emotive in describing this vision. He told Fr. Spadaro: "I see clearly that the thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle… Heal the wounds, heal the wounds… And you have to start from the ground up."[18] The Pope is challenging the Church to prioritize the wounded persons around her.

It will be good to emphasize the sacrifices of the early missionaries to the Philippines in the celebrations of 2021-2022. Their mission set in motion the spread of the Christian faith in every part of this country. They were true harbingers of a missionary spirit and reliable instruments of the Church that goes where the need is great. In many ways, these missionaries were the first to bravely penetrate the geographical peripheries for the sake of bringing to people the Good News.

In these peripheries, the missionaries found the simple folks to whom they brought some knowledge of advanced methods of agriculture and fishing. They encountered the ignorant whom they taught to read and write. They met the sick for whom they became healers and consolers. Some of the missionaries even acted as military commanders defending the peaceful natives from the attacks of the marauding pirates from Mindanao.

Looking back at their achievements today can inspire the Church to set out and to continue discovering the modern peripheries that exist in our midst. There are still geographical peripheries waiting for the visit of Christians to teach, guide,

18 Pope Francis (with Antonio Spadaro), "A Big Heart Open to God: An interview with Pope Francis." *America* vol. 209 no. 8 (September 30, 2013), 24.

and help the people there. An example may be the indigenous communities that are unprotected and exploited. People who assist them, including priests and lay leaders, are targeted and branded as rebels or communist agents.

There are also new peripheries in the center of bustling cities or urban areas. These are existential peripheries where missionary disciples can make headway through their initiatives and creativity. Call center workers, slum dwellers, and the poor who are easy targets of extra-judicial killings belong to these new peripheries. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope contemplates the phenomenon of modern cities where new problems and concerns arise and where the Church's merciful and healing presence is needed (EG 74).

A Filipino Church that is Poor and for the Poor

Pope Francis' clarion call for intense involvement in the plight of the poor did not come as a big surprise to Catholics in this country as it did in the opulent nations of the West. Nor did his ringing campaign for a Church for the Poor come as a total novelty. Since 1991's Second Plenary Council of the Philippines,[19] the slogan "Church of the Poor" has been popular in talks, symposia, conferences, and meetings. PCP II recognized the "option for the poor" as the Philippine Church's way of promoting the dignity of the poor and of helping lift them up from situations of oppression and exploitation. The plenary council called on Catholics to review their relationship with the vast number of poor Filipinos and to give them priority in the space of the Church.

In glowing terms, PCP II described how the Philippine Church could become a champion of those who are

19 Henceforth PCP II.

economically stranded and socially marginalized. Everything must begin with a desire to embrace the evangelical spirit of poverty, detached from material resources and having profound confidence in the Lord alone.[20] Members and leaders were encouraged to have a special love, a love of preference, for the poor.[21] This means giving both attention and time to the poor and being willing to use the Church' resources for their welfare.[22] Inspired by the words of Pope John Paul II, the Church must express its solidarity with the situation of the poor and collaborate with them in efforts that address the root of their problems. The Church of the poor sees Christ in the guise of those who are most neglected in society.[23]

Given the above description of one of PCP II's noble resolutions, it would seem that Filipinos do not need the reminder and motivation of Pope Francis. However, ten years after the assembly of PCP II, an evaluation of its implementation was conducted. In a private conversation with this researcher then, a Mindanao archbishop who was asked to speak on the theme "Church of the Poor" said in jest that he was tempted to say to the participants to just stop talking about the option for the poor because, in reality, it did not exist! Brandishing a slogan was not equivalent to truly having active, lasting programs designed to make the poor a central focus of the lives of dioceses and parishes. Without denying the positive impact of the concept in the consciousness of Catholics, the archbishop bravely admitted that its practical implementation remained one of the most difficult to achieve. In recent years,

20 Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House), 1992, 48.
21 Ibid 49.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid 50.

oblivious of PCP II, not much has been discussed about the Church in the Philippines becoming a Church of the Poor.

Pope Francis has placed the poor at the center of the Church's attention and action through his words and also through his inspiring way of life. He goes beyond the concept "option for the poor" by inviting the Church to first become to be a "poor Church." This calls for a real conversion, a radical change of attitudes, of the people in the Church. How insidiously has the type of worldliness that hides behind the veneer of religion, or piety, and even of poverty permeated the life of the Church.

Following the thoughts of Pope Francis, it is clear that "mercy is the ultimate foundation of the preferential option for the poor."[24] Divine preference has decreed that God show the poor "his first mercy," and so the Church must follow this noble example (EG 198). What is the special reason for the poor to be so chosen to merit this special benevolence? They are certainly not better human beings than the wealthy. Nor are they more virtuous than people in other sectors of society. Receiving God's mercy is pure grace from the generous heart of God. "Their empty hands and empty stomachs make them open for his love, and God gives the poor and the excluded his merciful love, thus making them first in receiving the kingdom of heaven. Human beings who follow God in his mercy and ally themselves with the poor will be their co-heir."[25]

Looking back at the history of the Church as an institution in the Philippines, it is undeniable that it had the advantage

24 Erik Borgman, "A Field Hospital after Battle: Mercy as a Fundamental Characteristic of God's Presence," in *Mercy* edited by Lisa Cahill, Diego Irarrazaval and João Vila-Chã, *Concilium*, 2017/4, 65-75 (London: SCM Press), 2017, 71.

25 Borgman, "A Field Hospital after Battle: Mercy as a Fundamental Characteristic of God's Presence," 73.

of influence, property, and education. While the majority of Catholics are poor, the existence of the Church has been stable and enduring. Far from having been a persecuted church, in many ways, it has been a privileged one. The scandal of massive poverty in Asia's most Christian country raises many questions and poses huge challenges for evangelization.

One of the preparatory themes for the quincentennial was dedicated to the poor. Pope Francis mentioned this in his opening statement during his 2015 visit. He was aware that the Church is at the forefront of relief operations in times of calamities. He knew that the Church continues to be the biggest benefactor and advocate of poor people outside of the government, given the limitations of resources and personnel.

The coming celebrations of the fifth centenary of the first proclamation of the Gospel will be enriched with lessons from Pope Francis' ideas of a truly poor church, in view of the future, of life beyond the first five hundred years. Can the future Filipino Church be vulnerable in the presence of the poor, not talking over their heads but silently standing in reverence and solidarity before their situation of misery and pain like Pope Francis did in Tacloban? Can the future Filipino Church learn how to weep like Jesus for Lazarus, Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow of Naim because it has become truly merciful and thus can internalize the suffering of others? Can the future Filipino Church have the courage to beg from the poor, asking them to evangelize it with their poverty, humility, trust, and joy in the Lord?[26]

26 Pope Francis, "Impromptu Speech at the University of Santo Tomas," in *On a Mission of Mercy and Compassion: Homilies and Speeches of Pope Francis in His Pastoral Visit to the Philippines (Study Edition)*. (Makati: Word and Life Publications), 2015, 44-45.

Designing the Grade 12 Christian Life Education Curriculum of Xavier School Nuvali

Through the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm and the Life-Faith-Life Framework

Elisa Manansala-Magtibay

In 2016, the Jesuit Basic Education Commission (JBEC), a consortium of all Jesuit Basic Education schools in the Philippines, including Xavier School Nuvali (XSN), met with all their Christian Life Education (CLE) Department Heads/ Academic Coordinators and Campus Ministry and Service Coordinators in a seminar-workshop run by Fr. Johnny C. Go, S.J. In the said meeting, the participants expressed the need for a "common" or "standard" curriculum that will guide them in crafting their own curriculum consistent with the Jesuit thrust and character.[1] At the same time, XSN has been re-visiting, re-evaluating, streamlining, and finetuning its own CLE curriculum, building on the curriculum development work and initiatives in previous years, to concretely reflect the school's vision and mission and more evidently manifest the school's core values and goals which are the six Cs: *Compassion*, *Competence*, *Conscience*, *Character*, *Culture*, and *Community*.[2] The goal was also to make the existing curriculum accommodate or integrate the Department of Education's core subject requirement entitled "Introduction

1 Cf. the Minutes of the Meeting, JBEC-CLE Cluster Workshop, Xavier School San Juan, October 2016.

2 Johnny C. Go, "Xavier School Vision and Mission," Xavier School San Juan, 24 October 2001.

to the Philosophy of the Human Person."[3] This is to make faith education veer away from mere content acquisition and move steadily towards focusing more deliberately on meaning-making and real-life context learning.

In this context, this research aims to serve as a "reference" or resource material for JBEC schools' curriculum development needs towards the common goal of "education in knowledge of faith and in the life of faith."[4] It also provides a concrete, purposive, and systematic way of orienting CLE teaching towards its most important goal: to develop and strengthen our students' communion with our Lord Jesus Christ[5] thus transforming a typical secular Jesuit-school student into a thinking and serving believer,[6] with designing the Grade 12 CLE curriculum in XSN as a paradigm case.

Pope John Paul II spoke about the importance of "education in the faith . . . especially the teaching of Christian doctrine . . . imparted in an organic and systematic way with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life (*Catechesi Tradendae* [CT] 18)". He also said that "education in the *faith*" is the fundamental task of the Church (CT 15).[7] How does one effectively educate in the faith and pass on the Christian message's essentials to today's young students?

3 Department of Education, "Senior High School Core Curriculum Subjects," *Senior High School,* http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/SHS%20Core_Pambungad%20sa%20Pilosopiya%20ng%20Tao%20CG_0.pdf (accessed May 4, 2016).

4 Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 67. Hereafter *GDC*.

5 Ibid. nos. 80-81.

6 Cf. the notes on Xavier School CLE/Campus Ministry and Service Office Conversations with School President Fr. Johnny C. Go, Xavier School San Juan, President's Boardroom, 10 May 2012.

7 Episcopal Commission on Education and Religious Instruction, *Maturing in Christian Faith* (Pasay: St. Paul Publications, 1985), 50. Hereafter NCDP.

A Christocentric Approach and Methodology

Jesus Christ is the center and core of the Christian message: "There is no compromising the centrality and primacy of Christ. Everything--the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, the sacraments, word of life, devotions, etc.--must be taught in relation to Christ, and with the purpose of leading the catechized into intimacy with Christ."[8] Furthermore, "at the heart of the Christian message is Jesus Christ, who is himself "the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn 14:6)". As the Truth, Christ is the "real light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (Jn 1:9). He reveals the Father (cf. Jn 14:6) and sends the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (cf. Jn 14:17) who guides us to all truth (cf. Jn 16:13). Through Christ, we become "consecrated in truth (cf. Jn 17:19)", walk in the path of truth (cf. 2 Jn 4), act in truth (cf. Jn 3:21), share in the work of truth (cf. 3 Jn 8) and worship in Spirit and truth (cf. Jn 4:24).[9]

The basic aim of education in the faith is to "put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ (CT 5)". The heart of instruction is not a doctrine, a moral principle, or an act of worship, but "a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth (CT 5)." To teach then is to lead students to study the mystery of Christ in all its dimensions, including the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself, the Truth. Christ, therefore, will be the basic integrating principle and focus of this project. The "intended learning outcome" of teaching is not just to become dogmatic experts on Christ but to become his humble disciples, not just to know *about* Jesus, but to know

8 Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines*, no. 157. Hereafter *PCPII.*

9 Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: ECCCE, 1997), 65. Hereafter *CFC.*

Jesus.[10]

Knowing the person of Jesus--His words, parables, and arguments being inseparable from His life and His very being--provides a powerful image and hope for what our person could become and gives meaning to our daily sacrifices and struggles life. *Gaudium et Spes* articulates this more clearly:

> Catholic doctrine is the expression of the truth that Christ our Lord brings us. This truth does not resolve all the problems and riddles of our daily lives. It does not take the place of our planning what we should do or sharing our experiences, and learning from them. But as Christians who are open to Christ's truth in faith, we have a direction and a basic insight into life. We are better able to work out our own personal response to the basic human questions: 'Who am I?,' 'Why am I here?,' 'How am I to relate to others?' Christ's truth gives each person 'the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny.'[11]

Therefore, "Christ must be taught not only as a once-upon-a-time person in history, but as our contemporary, as the Lord who is with us, the Emmanuel who is the Way and Guide in our journey to the Father."[12] In this way, students will find it easier to relate to His person and to find His place in their life and context today.

How do we attempt to do this? By immersing the students in Scripture and the Gospels; by "the approach to Scripture as a narrative or story, the co-relating of the 'little stories' of our own personal lives with the 'Big Story' of salvation

10 Thomas Groome, "From Life to Faith to Life: Some Traces," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 8 (2011): 8-9.

11 Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et Spes* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), no.10 . Hereafter *GS.*

12 *PCPII,* no. 158.

history . . . ."[13] Also, "nothing and no one speaks better of the Incarnate Word of God than the scriptural Word of God . . . . When the Bible is read . . . it is Christ himself who speaks to us . . . Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ."[14] Immersing the students in the Word of God will focus them in God and Christ who will dispose them to the God who will communicate himself directly and personally to them, in order "to embrace him/her with His love . . . and dispose him/her for the way in which one could better serve God in the future."[15]

While faith is a personal response to God's self-revelation, faith cannot just be between a student and Jesus Christ, for it is Jesus himself who gives the perfect model of the communal dimension of faith. He said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent me" (Jn. 12:44). The knowledge and life of faith of the students in Christ are a jump and an immersion into the Triune God. The personal response to Jesus finds its deepest expression in response to the call of community--an outward movement from the self towards the other. Jesus' very words in the Gospel of Matthew give this so much clarity:

> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him and say, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?" And the

13 Joseph L. Roche, "Catechesis/Religious Education in the Spirit of PCP II," *Landas* 6 (1992): 152.

14 *PCP II,* no. 159.

15 Louis J. Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, (Detroit: Loyola Press, 2010), http://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/SpiritualExercises/Puhl (accessed April 122018).

> king will say to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:35-40).

CLE teaching, then, hopes to bring students to the realization that the more they respond to Christ and develop a real relationship with Him, the more they are compelled to respond to others' need, especially of the poor. Classroom instruction must help students see and recognize the face of Christ in others, especially the poor, for the love of Christ is "a personal individual response, yet only possible as a member of the Christian community, the Church."[16]

The modules presented in this study follow Xavier School's Academic Institutional Framework, a framework that spells out the school's Vision-Mission-Goals' alignment to its academic programs. The Academic Institutional Framework explains the **why** and the **how** of Xavier education. Xavier School's ultimate goal is to form Xaverians into persons of *Compassion, Character, Conscience, Competence, Culture,* and *Community.* The six Cs are an elaboration of Xavier School's vision and profile of the Xavier graduate. They embody the qualities of the ideal Xaverian, and must serve as the goal of all that Xavier School is doing.

Qualities Of The Xaverian: The Six Cs[17]

Conscience refers to the spiritual self of the Xaverian, which includes--but is not limited to--his moral life. **Character** means the psycho-emotional self of the Xaverian. Equally important in one's growth, after all, is his emotional intelligence or EQ. **Community** refers to the social self of

16 *CFC*, no. 49.
17 Go, "Xavier School Vision and Mission."

the Xaverian, his ability to be with people and to work with them. **Competence** refers to the Xaverian's functional self, knowledge, and skills that enable him to perform diverse tasks and carry various responsibilities. **Culture** means the Xaverian's historical self, his identity as shaped by his roots and his present culture. **Compassion** refers to the Xaverian's social life, i.e., his orientation to service and his preferential option for the materially poor and marginalized.

Therefore, ultimately, the aim of the six Cs, of Xavier Education "is the formation of principled, value-oriented persons for others after the example of Jesus Christ."[18] How does Xavier School and this project attempt to accomplish this? Through the Academic Institutional Framework's conscious and deliberate use in two approaches: 1) Approaches to *Teaching* the six Cs and 2) Approaches to *Learning* the six Cs.[19]

Approaches to *Teaching* the 6 C's

Approaches to *Teaching* the six Cs links Xavier School's education to *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986),[20] the foundational document that articulates the identity and mission of Jesuit schools and outlines *Ignatian Pedagogy* (1993)[21] or the Jesuit approach to teaching. Both serve as

18 *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education - An Abridged Version* (Rome: International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education, 1986), (London: Jesuit Institute, 2014), https://3e-h4ot43gk9g3h1uu7edbbf1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp content/uploads/2016/03/Characteristics-Abridged-Jesuit-Institute.pdf (accessed April 5, 2018).

19 Rita Atienza, "How Do We Achieve Our VMG?," Lecture given during the Xavier School Institutional Planning Workshop at Xavier School, San Juan City, 20 February 2018.

20 *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education - An Abridged Version*.

21 *The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm: A Practical Approach*, (London: Jesuit Institute, 2014), http://jesuitinstitute.org/Resources/

guiding principles from which Xavier School bases its ways of proceeding, particularly in teaching and assessing.

The ultimate goal of Jesuit education (and of Xavier education) is the person's full growth, which leads to action. Thus, it becomes clear that if educators are to exercise a moral force in society, they must insist that "the process of education take place in a moral as well as an intellectual framework of inquiry" by which students discuss significant issues and complex values of life, and have teachers capable and willing to guide that inquiry.[22] Pedagogy must include a world view and a vision of the human person[23] and Ignatian pedagogy "presents academic subjects out of a human centeredness," with stress on uncovering and exploring the patterns, relationships, facts, questions, insights, conclusions, problems, solutions, and implications which a particular discipline brings to light about what it means to be a human being. Also: "education thus becomes a carefully reasoned investigation through which the student forms or reforms his or her habitual attitudes towards other people and the world." From a Christian standpoint, "the model for human life is the person of Jesus." Jesus teaches by word and example that the realization of one's fullest human potential is achieved ultimately in one's union with God, a union that is sought and reached through a loving, just and compassionate relationship with one's brothers and sisters. This means assisting young people "to enter into the sacrifice and joy of sharing their lives with others." It means helping them to discover that "what they most have to offer is who they are rather than what they have."[24]

Ignatian%20Pedagogy%20Abridged%20%20(Jan%2014)%20210x210%20MASTER.pdf (accessed April 5, 2018).

22 Ibid. nos. 12-13.

23 Ibid. no. 11.

24 Ibid. nos. 15-19.

To further grapple with the question of how, it becomes important to unpack the five key terms in the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm--*context*, *experience*, *reflection*, *action*, and *evaluation*--and describe how they can engage students in deep learning.

> **Context.** The context of learning refers to what both teacher and students bring to class from their worlds, especially previous knowledge: "Ultimately, the aim of this pedagogy is to help students move beyond a preoccupation with individual context and become responsive to larger social contexts and to the needs of others."[25]

> **Experience.** Experience describes any activity in which students can grasp facts, concepts, and principles being considered and experience some sensation of an affective nature. Experience "might mean an out-of-the-classroom experience: service-learning, field trips, clinicals, internships or research--in the lab, in the field, in the library or experiencing a text, and see the text as an opportunity to encounter the ideas and values of another person. In all these cases, however, experience resides in the student's encounter with people, places, events, and texts that stretch them beyond prior knowledge and experiences."[26]

> **Reflection.** Reflection refers to students looking back on their experiences to understand the significance of these experiences fully. Students must be given opportunities to analyze and evaluate ideas, observe

25 Susan Mountin and Rebecca Nowacek, "Reflection in Action: A Signature Ignatian Pedagogy for the 21st Century," in *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind*. ed. Nancy L. Chick, Aeron Haynie, and Regan A. R. Gurung. (Sterling, Va.: Stylus Publishing, 2012), 135 https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1176&context=theo_fac (accessed 20 February 2018).

26 Ibid. 136.

and discern patterns, draw inferences, and so on. However, they must also be asked to empathize, imagine, probe into feelings, and develop affective areas. Ignatius's *Examen*[27] which encourages individuals to look back on experience not simply as a brain disconnected from the world, but as a person living in the physical world with other individuals, many of whom have needs that call out for attention, may be a useful reflection tool.

Action. Action refers to students practicing or doing what they have learned from their reflected-upon-experiences. This may be expressed as new awareness, a sentiment, a hope or a decision to think more about the topic, or a commitment to a practical activity or a specific action.

Evaluation. One additional, crucial element of this paradigm is a process of evaluation. Evaluation refers to how the teacher and the student review the learning process to monitor and improve learning during and after class.

In summary, it can be said that all learning is situated in a specific context, rooted in previous and new experiences, dependent upon and deepened by reflection about those experiences, made truly meaningful when put into some kind of action and further improved by deliberate evaluation.

Approaches to *Learning* the Six Cs

Approaches to *Learning* the six Cs are Xavier School's way of breaking up the six Cs into smaller skills, abilities,

27 Mark E. Thibodeaux, *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2015), vii-xxii.

and performances that Xaverians need to be proficient in, live out, and articulate even outside the classroom. These smaller skills, or what Xavier School calls core generic skills are what will be taught directly in the classroom and what teachers may assess explicitly or implicitly using varied strategies. For example, breaking down ***Conscience*** into smaller skills, abilities, and performances would mean that the teacher may teach and look for the following in the classroom: practicing the daily *examen*, exercising discernment and values clarification, analyzing ethical and moral dilemmas, silencing, meditating, finding values behind rules and policies, praying sincerely and often, regularly attending mass, participating actively in the sacraments, and others. How can these be taught? All of these may be taught as stand-alone knowledge and skills or as an accompanying activity to a main lesson or as classroom/school routines or as a stand-alone full module or course or by "mentioning" or "making reference to" or as events and activities done in school by the students.

As the IPP prescribes, the modules take into account the kind and context of learners the school has today. The modules veer away from traditional, informational question-answer method, stressing memorization of objective doctrines of the Faith and move towards more contextualized, problematic, experiential, and meaning-making approaches. The modules also implement the practices of Visible Thinking,[28] an approach to education that calls for *externalizing* processes of thought and focuses on developing

28 Ron Ritchhart, Mark Church, and Karin Morrison, *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011) and David Perkins, Ron Ritchhart, Shari Tishman, *Harvard Project Zero: Visible Thinking* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard Graduate School of Education) http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/visible-thinking (accessed May 3, 2018).

students' thinking skills towards truth-seeking, understanding, fairness, and imagination to hopefully modify, affect or touch the daily life of students. In chapter one of the book, *Making Thinking Visible*, the authors described a map of thinking involved in understanding and identified eight thinking moves that are integral to understanding, without which it would be difficult for understanding to occur:[29]

1. Observing closely and describing what's there
2. Building explanations and interpretations
3. Reasoning with evidence
4. Making connections
5. Considering different viewpoints and perspectives
6. Capturing the heart and forming conclusions
7. Wondering and asking questions
8. Uncovering complexity and going below the surface of things

While these eight thinking moves are essential to understanding, it is important to stress that they are by no means exhaustive. This list of eight thinking moves is a useful starting point and is a very good building block for other thinking patterns like problem-solving, decision making, forming judgments, identifying patterns, and making generalizations, generating possibilities and alternatives, evaluating evidence, arguments, and actions, formulating plans and monitoring actions, identifying claims, assumptions, and bias, and clarifying priorities, conditions, and what is known. These thinking moves and patterns are what *Visible Thinking* endeavors to externalize and make visible.

29 Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison, *Making Thinking Visible*, 11-15.

> When we make thinking visible, we get not only a window into what students understand but also how they are understanding it. Uncovering students' thinking gives us evidence of students' insights as well as their misconceptions. We need to make thinking visible because it provides us with the information we as teachers need to plan opportunities that will take students' learning to the next level and enable continued engagement with the ideas being explored. It is only when we understand what our students are thinking, feeling, and attending to that we can use that knowledge to further engage and support them in the process of understanding. Thus, making students' thinking visible becomes an ongoing component of effective teaching.[30]

Part of visible thinking is the use of technology in instruction. It is important to recognize the context of our learners as digital natives who are born into the reality of gadgets, uninterrupted internet connection, and unlimited access to information. The main tool for learning and researching for our students today is the internet, where they can access any information from all sources. Our students are "online" most the time. According to the book entitled, *Growing Up Wired: Raising Pinoy Kids in the Digital Age*, some of the main reasons for "needing to be online" are boredom, attention problems, self-absorption, and lack of interest in reading printed books, magazines, newspapers, in favor of online activities. They prefer to interact online rather than face-to-face. They use social media like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter a lot. This is the generation of kids we are teaching

30 Ibid. 27.

today--digital natives—who have never known a world without the Internet and connectivity.[31] Technology integration in learning will aid integral faith formation to become more relevant and relatable to students. It will also educate our young students towards more responsible and productive use of technology and away from mindless and unhealthy use of time just surfing and watching questionable content and sites.

Knowing our students today

Who are the young students today? In the context of this study, this meant asking, who is the G12 batch of Xavier School Nuvali students? How do they think? What are their concerns and preoccupations? What scares them, and what gives them hope? As these G12 students are also a part of the Filipino youth, it also helps to understand them in this context. Who is the Filipino youth today? What are their concerns and preoccupations? What scares them, and what gives them hope? The 2016 *Truth About Youth* research conducted by McCann Truth Central [32] mentioned three enduring truths about being young that are as true today as they ever were despite the fast-moving world of social media and communication:

> The notion of needing to "find yourself" has transcended generations. Being young is still ridden with angst because it is a time in which your identity is being formed.
>
> Friends are everything and "finding your people" or

31 Queena N. Lee, Ma. Isabel Sison-Dioniso, Nerisa C. Fernandez and Michele S. Alignay, *Growing Up Wired: Raising Pinoy Kids in the Digital Age* (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, 2013).

32 The Truth About Youth 2016, McCann Truth Central, https://mccann.com.au/wp-content/uploads/the-truth-about-youth.pdf (accessed October 6, 2018).

> a group of people to hang around with is the key to establishing yourself and your happiness.
>
> "Finding your place in the world" is the third great youth pursuit that remains relevant across eras. By this we mean figuring out your values, your passions and your ideals, as well as establishing your sense of personal justice and right and wrong.

This gives us an insight into our young students' hopes today who despite the many distractions they face continue to yearn for what is most essential, most true, and most meaningful. This picture of the young Filipino today is reinforced by another study conducted by Jayeel Cornelio, a sociology professor from the Ateneo de Manila University on a group of religiously involved Filipino students.[33] In this study, Cornelio asserts that while others may complain about the decline of religiosity among young people, "there are catholic youth, for example, who do not go to church but participate in outreach activities organized by their peers. My view is that many young people are reinterpreting religion to make it more meaningful to them. This is their reflexive spirituality."[34] The reflexive spirituality of the young Filipino students is characterized by a seeking attitude "but only insofar as it is maintaining a Catholic identity . . . ."[35] Both studies point to the young Filipino as searching and seeking for who he or she truly is as a person and as a Catholic.

33 Jayeel S. Cornelio, "Being Catholic as Reflexive Spirituality: The Case of Religiously Involved Filipino Students," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series no. 146 (Singapore: National University of Singapore, September 2010).

34 Cf. "Rethinking the Faith of the Filipino Youth," 23 August 2016, Ateneo.edu, http://ateneo.edu/ls/news/features/rethinking-faith-filipino-youth (accessed September 27, 2018).

35 Cornelio, "Being Catholic as Reflexive Spirituality",7.

The specific context of the Xavier Nuvali high school students will agree with Cornelio's findings that our young students have not lost their religion. The study conducted by Ronnel King, a professor of Psychology from the Education Institute of Hong Kong, for Xavier School in 2017 shows that students in Xavier School Nuvali scored above average in the twenty-four character strengths and above average on all character strengths. Their top five character strengths were humor, capacity to love, gratitude, hope, and religiousness. While their friends are important to them, their teachers appeared to be the most important factor in developing their academic engagement and sense of belonging in school, while their parents had the most influence in developing their intrinsic motivation and life satisfaction.[36]

Since Xavier School Nuvali is a Jesuit institution, it would be worthwhile also to view its young students today using the lens and perspective of Jesuit education itself. In the keynote address delivered by Fr. Michael Garanzini, SJ, the Higher Education Secretary of the Society of Jesus, last October 6, 2018 at the Ateneo de Manila University,[37] he described what he sees is the larger context where we can situate our students today. He did that by saying that the new frontiers for Jesuit education today are anthropological. Frontiers that ask the question: "What does it mean to be human today? This is because "technology is changing the way we process information, the way we think, the way we communicate

36 Cf. the notes on "Positive Psychology and Education: Xavier Insights," by Ronnel King, Xavier School San Juan, Sports Center Boardroom, 1 October 2018.

37 Cf. the notes on API-JEC International Conference on Educational Frontiers, "Post-Conference Keynote Presentation: Challenges and Opportunities of Jesuit Education," by Fr. Michael Garanzini, SJ, Ateneo de Manila University, Leong Hall Auditorium, 6 October 2018.

(easy and shallow), the way we behave and socialize (what we do with our time), and the way we work (more efficient but less humanizing). These result in our students being easily distracted, feeling alienated and rushed, stressed and pressured, over-stimulated and over-loaded, and unsure of their future."[38]

This is where the design of the G12 CLE curriculum enters the picture. Given that being a young person today has not changed, where will they approach these goals? Young persons look for authenticity and real friendships, seek meaning in their lives and faith, have deep hope to do, and be good. Yet, they find themselves in a completely different landscape and arena--one that is defined by technology and social media. How can the students be equipped to become fully alive, find the truth in their seeking, and find God within their searching and hoping? How can they be guided in navigating the internet today and to use technology responsibly? Fr. Garanzini very clearly stated that technology is not the enemy. However, like any other inventions that transform our way of living, technology must be used or wedded to a deeper wisdom, which we find in the humanities. Therefore, he said, we should prepare a generation of young people who must be:

1. Critical thinkers, capable of taking various points of view
2. Able to organize, plan and execute a task in an efficient manner, that is able to self-monitor (How am I doing?)
3. Able to weigh and discern the moral consequences of a course of action
4. Able to appreciate the slow process of real achievements
5. Convinced that something greater than him/herself

38 Ibid.

is at work in our efforts, sustaining our efforts and achieving good[39]

Designing the XSN G12 CLE Curriculum

The modules in this research are guided by the principle so eloquently expressed by Claude N. Pavur, SJ when he said that the curriculum carries the mission: "The *Ratio Studiorum*'s greatest contribution to our times may well be the idea of the importance of the curriculum as the primary vehicle for the mission . . . . In the midst of an abundance of competing factors in (school) today, the curricular aspect needs to be recognized as the essential bedrock of the mission."[40]The design process of the G12 curriculum follows the Understanding by Design (UbD) Framework[41] that the school has aligned with the IPP and has long been using. UbD is a curriculum and instructional planning framework created by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe to guide teachers in coming up with engaging and effective instruction, by design, i.e., as intended and purposefully planned by the teacher. UbD is grounded on a definition of a student who "understands" as a student who has "explored and made sense of" the most important and enduring concepts at the heart of the unit and is therefore able to transfer this learning independently and strategically in new and challenging situations in the real world. These two key principles of UbD – (1) *long-term transfer (T)* as the goal

39 Ibid.

40 Claude N. Pavur, "The Curriculum Carries the Mission," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* (2008): 30-31, art. 9. https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com.ph/&httpsredir=1&article=1168&context=conversations (accessed September 14, 2018).

41 Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design Framework,* Expanded 2d ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD] Publications, 2005).

of instruction, and (2) *meaning making (M)* as enabling this transfer to happen – imply that *acquisition of knowledge and skills (A)* is important, not as end goal of instruction, but as a means to meaning making and transfer. The third key principle of UbD is the principle of *backward design when planning a module/unit,* which helps ensure alignment of TMA in the module's goals, assessment, and learning experiences.[42] Thus, backward design in module/unit planning involves three stages. The following table illustrates how the five IPP elements, supported by the TMA concepts of UbD and the backward design process, are used in module/unit planning at Xavier School:

42 Rita Atienza, "UbD/IPP Alignment at Xavier School: A Closer Look at the IPP Through the Lens of UbD" (Xavier School, San Juan: 2013).

Table 1: Unit Planning at XS: Enhancing the IPP Elements with UbD TMA[43]

IPP Elements	IPP Elements and UbD TMAs in the XS Model/Unit Plans
Context This is what both teacher and students bring to class from their worlds, especially previous knowledge (academic, community, national/ global, personal contexts).	**Context** Teachers must constantly exert efforts to get to know individual student and class contexts and keep abreast of ongoing community, national, and global contexts. The teachers must also know if their students are ready to tackle the academic demands of the unit. These must be considered in unit planning.
Experience Any activity in which students can obtain a cognitive grasp of the facts, concepts, and principles being considered and experience some sensation of an affective nature. After undergoing either direct or vicarious EXPERIENCE, learners perceive data as well as their affective responses to it, and then probe further and make sense of the data (e.g., by analysis, comparison, contrast, synthesis, evaluation) so that they can . . . "achieve comprehension and understanding of the human reality that confronts them" (IPP: A Practical Approach #44, 46).	**Knowledge and Skills** For a proper focus on priorities and coherence of a unit, the teacher must carefully identify which Knowledge and Skills are important to know and do and which are just "worth being familiar with." As Prelection (or in UbD, a "Hook activity"), teachers design powerful learning experiences, i.e., opportunities for the student's initial "encounter" and "interaction" with important knowledge and their initial attempts in performing key skills. Learning Experiences (cycles of Experience-Reflection -Action) The IPP tells us that, "to achieve... understanding of the human reality that confronts them," the unit must necessarily provide the learners with ongoing cycles/interplay of powerful encounters and EXPERIENCES involving priority knowledge and skills which are designed to • provoke, in turn, ever deepening REFLECTION, thought, and inquiry about big and important ideas, and

43 Ibid.

	• provide students the scaffolds (ACTIONS AND TASKS of increasing difficulty and complexity) toward the Performance Task. UbD, too emphasizes the need for such cycles of T-M-A. During the unit, the students must be given numerous opportunities that EQUIP them with important knowledge and skills. That leads them to REVISIT, RETHINK, REFINE, deepen, and extend student understanding and prepare them for the Performance Task's successful accomplishment.
Reflection A thoughtful reconsideration of some subject matter, experience, idea, purpose, or spontaneous reaction, in order to grasp its significance more fully, i.e., • understand the truth being studied more clearly • understand the sources of the sensations or reactions he experiences in this consideration • deepen his understanding of the implications, for himself and others, of the subject matter being studied • achieve personal insights into events, ideas, truth or the distortion of truth, and the like • come to some understanding of who he is.	**Reflection/Making Meaning** Students are provided experiences that will guide them to "make meaning" of the unit's important ideas by exploring, grappling with, investigating, and reflecting on the Reflection Questions (Essential Questions) and/or Enduring Understandings of the unit. These Reflection Questions and EU should refer to: (a) subject-specific synthesis; (b) connections to real-world scenarios, other disciplines (c) metacognitive insights (about the learning process or the way of knowing in the discipline); and/or (d) realizations about the self, world, life, and God. Students must be provided with numerous Make Meaning activities to help them explore the EUs and Reflection Questions from various perspectives and continue building and deepening and rethink/ refine/ revise understanding.
Action Action Goals – subject-specific intellectual abilities, habits of mind, attitudes, and values, aligned with the six Cs, that a student must manifest by Gr. 12	**Subject Action Goals and Evidence of Learning** Identifying the desired results of the unit starts with the identification of long-term Subject Action Goals and Evidences of Learning (milestone)

Action (assessments) - Products, performances, and other evidence accomplished during every unit of their evolving understanding of the subject matter and resulting changes in attitudes and values, e.g., novel, open-ended, real-world challenges, and tasks	outcomes at Grade 2, 6, 10, and 12) pertinent to that particular unit. These represent the unit's "contribution" towards the accomplishment of the subject area's Overarching Goals and the school's six Cs in the students. **Performance Tasks, Other Evidence** The students are assigned an authentic assessment or transfer task (also called a Performance Task), representing a novel and challenging real-world situation in which they will have to apply/transfer the knowledge, skills, and understandings they have acquired. The students must also accomplish assessments that provide Other Evidence of acquisition of knowledge and skills, understanding of RQs and EUs, and growing proficiency (scaffolded Transfer Tasks), leading to the successful accomplishment of the Performance Task.
Evaluation This is how the teacher and the student review the learning process to monitor and improve learning during and after class.	**Evaluation** Teachers conduct formative assessments to keep track of student progress toward unit goals, as well as to adjust instruction mid-stream, if necessary. Teachers also make notes about revisions and enhancements that may be made to the unit in the future.

After seeing clearly how the alignment between the IPP and the UbD will help in student engagement and effective teaching, it is good to point out how another general approach specific to Christian religious education is very much aligned and relevant to the goals of IPP/UbD. This is called the *Shared Christian Praxis* of American educator Thomas Groome or what he simply describes as "bringing life to faith and faith to life.'"[44] In his book, *Sharing Faith*, Groome defines *Shared*

44 Groome, "From Life to Faith to Life: Some Traces," 9.

Christian Praxis as:

> . . . a participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their socio-cultural reality, have access together to Christian Story/Vision, and personally appropriate in community with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith towards God's reign for all creation.[45]

> Essentially, the "life to faith to life"[46] approach of *Shared Christian Praxis* offers five movements that so consistently reflect the IPP elements. It is an approach to faith education that: (1) engages people's interests and what is meaningful for them; (2) has them reflect upon their own lives in the world--call it praxis, experience, or whatever; (3) gives them persuasive and ready access to Christian faith as meaningful to their lives; (4) prompts them to correlate and integrate these two sources of truth and spiritual wisdom--life and faith; and (5) invites them to decide for lived Christian faith.[47]

According to Groome, "a *life to Faith to life* approach needs to focus its curriculum around a *generative theme* as it is nearly impossible to teach or learn anything if there isn't real interest . . . . Such interest arises around a topic that arouses curiosity and/or that really matters, so that it's in our "best interest" to know it. In other words, we are most likely to learn whatever seems meaningful to our lives. Paolo Freire, the contemporary educator who coined the phrase "generative

45 Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry the Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 135.

46 Groome, "From Life to Faith to Life: Some Traces," 17.

47 Thomas H. Groome, *Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2011), 271.

theme" for what is of real interest to people and thus a starting point for education, proposed that such themes always arise from life, from present praxis. For example, when one raises up a great question, issue, challenge, problem, fear, hope, threat, or desire from people's lives, this is most likely to be generative and to engage their interest actively.[48] The table below illustrates the harmony between the IPP and the *Life to Faith to Life* approach:

Table 2: The IPP and the Life to Faith to Life Approach

Life to Faith to Life: The Movements[49]	Elements of the IPP[50]
1. Have students respond to the theme as it pertains to their lives. (Naming/Expressing Present Action) This turns students' attention to their own lives and the world in which they live, including their relationships with friends, their family, school, local and inter/national communities. It engages the attention of students, providing motivation for learning that is participative and dialogical. It introduces the "generative theme" or topic of the learning experience or unit of work.	**Context and Experience** The CONTEXT OF LEARNING refers to what both teacher and students bring to class from their worlds, especially previous knowledge EXPERIENCE describes any activity in which students are able to obtain a cognitive grasp of the facts, concepts, and principles being considered, as well as experience some sensation of an affective nature (IPP: A Practical Approach #43).

48 Ibid. 286.

49 Groome, Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples and Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education: Sharing our Story and Vision (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980) and Groome, Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry the Way of Shared Praxis and Michael Bezzina and others, "Shared Christian Praxis as a Basis for Religious Education Curriculum: The Parramatta Experience" (October 1996).

50 International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education. 1994. Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach. Available at the Jesuit Curia in Rome [website] http://www.sjweb.info/documents/education/pedagogy_en.pdf. (accessed April 15, 2018) and Rita Atienza, "UbD/IPP Alignment at Xavier School: A Closer Look at the IPP Through the Lens of UbD."

Here, students are asked to recall and reflect on an experience related to the topic or theme. They may need assistance in making the connection between events in their life and the topic. Feelings, actions, and knowledge are examined. Students are invited to tell their personal stories or relevant lived experience. Alternatively, events may be illustrated by stories from literature. Contemporary events of significance may be given a vivid focus by video, news footage, or personal witness. The teacher's own experience and personal story may be shared where appropriate.	That which is directly and experienced by the students usually has a great impact on the students. However, teachers often have to settle for providing vicarious experiences for the students instead. After undergoing either direct or vicarious EXPERIENCE, learners perceive data as well as their affective responses to it. They then must probe further and make sense of the data (e.g., by analysis, comparison, contrast, synthesis, evaluation) so that they can ... "achieve comprehension and understanding of the human reality that confronts them" (IPP: A Practical Approach #44, 46).
2.Encourage students to reflect critically on the theme in conversation together. (Critical Reflection on Present Action) The purpose of this movement is for students to stand back and consider what has been named. It goes beneath the superficial as it identifies underlying factors, more deeply-seated values, beliefs, understandings, and attitudes. This movement is helped by sharing and by the encouragement of critical thinking. It leads students to explore what is happening in relation to their theme or topic, but why. The establishment of a reflective atmosphere in which students can listen to themselves and others is important.	**Reflection** REFLECTION refers to "a thoughtful reconsideration of some subject matter, experience, idea, purpose, or spontaneous reaction, in order to grasp its significance more fully" (IPP: A Practical Approach #49). Students must be given opportunities to analyze and evaluate ideas, probe connotations, observe and discern patterns, draw inferences, and so on. Still, they must also be asked to empathize, imagine, probe into feelings, and develop affective areas.
3.Share the Story and Vision of Christian faith in ways pertinent to the theme and meaningful for this group, context, and occasion. (Making Accessible Christian Story and Vision)	

This centers on a presentation of Christian Story and Vision. The Story is not just biblical stories. It is the faith story of the Christian community throughout history and in the present as expressed through Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church in its teachings, prayer, and worship, communal life, and a mission involving the lives of faithful Christian people throughout the ages. The presentation must be faithful not only to the Story itself, but also to the students, taking into account their levels of maturity and capacity for understanding. The Vision reflects the promises and demands that arise from the Story. These empower Christians, calling them to prepare for the Reign of God, first proclaimed and established by Jesus. Analysis and critique of the above content are required. Within a reflective atmosphere, questions to be discussed could include – "Is this Christian Story/Vision relevant today?" "What counter values are operative in our lives?" Connections should be made in other areas of student knowledge.	
4. Encourage students to appropriate and integrate Christian faith with life. (Dialectical Hermeneutics to Appropriate Christian Story/Vision to Student's Stories and Vision) This movement is extremely important because students connect their own reflected-upon experiences with the Christian Story/Vision. Here the dialogue between life and faith, religion, and society helps the students to grow in wisdom, deepening the meaning that they are creating for themselves. At its best, this is an "A-ha!" experience and is at the very heart of shared Christian praxis.	

5. Invite students to make a decision – cognitive, affective, or behavioral in response to the whole process. (Decision/ Response for Lived Christian Faith) In this movement, the students are given the explicit opportunity to make decisions about how to live the Christian Faith in the world. Their response can be cognitive, affective or behavioral; it may be personal or communal, it may or may not involve an external expression. Its real content is exploring ideals, hopes, vision for the future, exploration of values, setting priority, and deciding about personal commitment, although vaguely. It seeks to encourage students to express feelings and attitudes that may lead to a greater self-discovery. Its focus is not simply action in the sense of going out and participating in community outreach programs – if that occurs, then that is a bonus. Its goal is a reflection on personal growth in the Christian community. It raises questions – if this is the meaning of this Christian Story, what is my role in it, and will I be involved? Every reflection does not necessitate action. Rather its effect can be cumulative so that later opportunities may be an occasion for action.	**Action** ACTION refers to "internal human growth based upon experience that has been reflected upon, as well as its external manifestation," and is based on the ultimate aim of Jesuit education, i.e., "to form young people who could and would contribute intelligently and effectively to the welfare of society" (IPP: A Practical Approach #61, 62). Action Goals refer to the specific student outcomes ("internal human growth") which the school, through its various policies, programs, and activities, would purposefully and deliberately like to aim for by the time the student graduates in Grade 12. These Action Goals represent intellectual abilities, habits of mind, attitudes, and values that are subject-specific, but which also represent how the school's core values, the 6 Cs, should be manifested in each subject area. Action (Assessments) – In class, for every unit, students must provide "external manifestation" or evidence that their evolving understanding of the subject matter and the resulting changes in attitudes and values are already starting to lead them to action and commitment. Evidence of this understanding and the likelihood of transfer of learning even beyond the school's four walls can only be provided by having the students accomplish authentic transfer tasks, i.e., products and performances involving novel, open-ended, real-world challenges, and tasks.
	Evaluation This refers to "how the teacher and the student review the learning process to monitor and improve learning during and after class". This implies an ongoing formative assessment of the students and their progress during the unit by the teacher, and subsequent revision of the learning plan, as needed, based on the results of the formative assessment.

Designing the modules/units was thus guided by the illustrations shown above of the alignment of the IPP, the UbD and the *Life to Faith to Life* approach of Groome's *Shared Christian Praxis* model. All three endeavor to make religious education and formation, engaging, relevant, and transformative for our students. All three endeavor to pass on the "treasures" of the Faith and help lessen the gap between life and *life in faith*.

The research modules include sharing sessions among students and a lot of processing of student experiences by the teacher. Therefore, it will be helpful for students and teachers to follow a simple set of guidelines on both sharing and processing. While the importance of individual reflection is shown and taught to students, it is as important for them to see and experience the benefits of communal reflection through group sharing. In sharing, a student who is able to articulate his situation, his feelings, and his sentiments hear himself--hears all of it as if it were apart from him. This gives the student a certain degree of objectivity to better understand, grasp, and reflect on his own context. The processing of students' experiences inside and outside the classroom is integral to the modules of this project. In processing the students' experiences, the teacher helps the students learn from their experiences by asking questions that will lead them to reflect on, analyze, make sense of, communicate, reframe, and add more value and meaning to their experiences. This allows them to connect such meaningful experiences to what they value in life, their choices, and how they will live out their faith convictions.

Conclusion

Thomas Groome says that Christian religious education aims to enable people to live as Christians, that is, to live lives of Christian faith. This would seem to be its purpose since the Christian community first began to educate – an education that leads people to the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ.[51] Every effective CLE modules aims to satisfy such purpose and in so doing, tries to respond to the objective of making CLE teaching truly transformative for its students – one that will help them act on their convictions, live out their faith in Christ, and let their light shine, as the Gospel invites.

Also, "applying, then, the Ignatian paradigm to the teacher-learner relationship in Jesuit education, it is the teacher's primary role to facilitate the growing relationship of the learner with truth, particularly in the matter of the subject being studied under the guiding influence of the teacher. The teacher creates the conditions, lays the foundations and provides the opportunities for the continual interplay of the student's experience, reflection and action to occur."[52] The teacher's role and responsibility cannot be underestimated here. The complexion and quality of formation are affected by how effectively or how poorly the student is supported and guided by the teacher towards the true and the good.

When all is said and done, it is the deep hope of every Catholic and Jesuit educator that our students' minds will be challenged, their hearts will be moved, and their hands will work towards bringing about the Kingdom of God in the life of every human person, especially of the poor and the oppressed. At the same time, if it proves difficult to see the

51 Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 34-51.
52 *The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm: A Practical Approach*, 7.

fruits and results of all these efforts, may we find ourselves consoled by the prayer attributed to the newly-canonized Saint Oscar Romero:

Prophets of a Future Not Our Own[53]

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

53 This prayer was first presented by Cardinal Dearden in 1979. This reflection is an excerpt from a homily written for Cardinal Dearden by then-Fr. Ken Untener on the occasion of the Mass for Deceased Priests, October 25, 1979. Pope Francis quoted Cardinal Dearden in his remarks to the Roman Curia on December 21, 2015. See http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prophets-of-a-future-not-our-own.cfm (accessed November 2, 2018).

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Creatio Continua in Missio Dei: Ecological Spirituality and Pedagogy in Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*

David O. Reyes

Introduction

It is said that when the famed J.R.R. Tolkien wrote about the mythical world of Middle Earth, he had in mind not only his Catholic faith but also his concern for the environment. Being a hardline Roman Catholic, Tolkien is dubbed as "conservative." Still, a closer look at his immense work reveals a man ahead of his time, a revolutionary and a prophet. Nancy Enright writes, "His views on the environment would be considered progressive in today's terms, more so than those of many politicians who see themselves as environmentalists."[1]

Tolkien's thoughts in his work depicting Middle Earth—a world that existed in a mythical time thousands of years ago, are ideas that reflect much the thoughts that Pope Francis expressed in his environmental encyclical *Laudato Si*.

For Tolkien, nature did not come into existence out of its own but is a creation of God. In Tolkien's mythical universe, Eru – or the One – is the creator of the world in the beginning.[2] Drawing inspiration from the spirituality of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Pope emphasizes the right attitude to nature, which views respect for nature as a concrete expression of our reverence for God. The Poverello of Assisi never lost sight

1 Nancy Enright, "Tolkien, Middle Earth and Laudato Si," *The Way* 57, no. 2 (April 2018): 55.
2 Ibid, 55.

of the majesty of nature and always saw that its very source springs out from God. Drawing strength from the example of the saint, Pope Francis encourages us:

> If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously (LS 11).

The title of Francis' environmental encyclical – *Laudato Si* – is a phrase taken from Saint Francis of Assisi's 13th-century hymn of praise *The Canticle of the Creature* or *the Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon*. It is a lyrical praise of God's wondrous deeds through the creatures in this world. It is said that this Umbrian phrase can be translated both as *Be praised* or as *Praised be*.[3]

Tolkien coincidentally agrees with Pope Francis' criticism against technocratic paradigms that inform the modern world. He has a dislike and distrust against "technology as an externalization of power: 'use of external plans or devices instead of development of inherent inner properties and talents.'"[4] The Pope similarly expresses the same thought: "Science and technology are not neutral; from the beginning to the end of a process, various intentions and possibilities are in play and can take on distinct shapes" (LS 114). These thoughts express the pitfalls of technology when disassociated from the spiritual realities of things.

3 Xue Jiao Zhang, "How St. Francis Influenced Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*," *Crosscurrents* 66, no. 1 (March 2016): 45.
4 Enright, "Tolkien, Middle Earth and *Laudato Si*," 56.

A response to these pitfalls is a spirituality that must be lived: "the connection between how we treat non-human creatures and the way we treat one another." This is a thesis that Pope Francis explores in *Laudato Si*. The Pope establishes a correlation between the present ecological crises with that of human and social degradation: "The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation" (LS 48).

Tolkien's imaginative Middle Earth is a fantasy literature often criticized as an escapism from the real world. It is often viewed as irrelevant to our troubled times. And yet, it courageously describes what Pope Francis tries to address in *Laudato Si*. Tolkien raised environmental issues through the lenses of literary fiction, while Pope Francis attempts to address the contemporary world's attention on present ecological issues through ecological spirituality.

Questions on Spirituality and Pedagogy

The mythical Middle Earth is replete with literary symbols that describe how fictional creatures were created by a fictional god and how they relate to one another for good or bad. Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* proposes a similar spirituality that considers one's relationships with God and other creatures.

This paper will delve into a deeper analysis of this spirituality espoused by Pope Francis. Three questions need to be answered: (1) What is Pope Francis' notion of spirituality?; (2) What is Pope Francis' ecological spirituality in *Laudato Si*?; and (3) Why is the Pope's

ecological spirituality important in today's world as viewed by contemporary pedagogy?

In answering the first question, this paper will analyze how the Pope described or defined "spirituality" in his major pontifical documents. The second question will attempt to make a more specific analysis of the ecological spirituality that Francis advocates. The analysis of these questions will be substantiated by how other authors/theologians scrutinized and understood the Pope's works. Finally, a discussion on the Pope's ecological spirituality will be devoted along the lines of education. It should be noted that Pope Francis devoted the last chapter of his environmental encyclical to ecological education and spirituality. Here, the researcher will work along the lines of transformative learning theory as espoused and interpreted by University of Toronto professor of education Mark Hathaway and Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff.

Spirituality as an Interior Impulse: An Excursus

To grasp the ecological spirituality that Pope Francis promotes in *Laudato Si*, it is important to understand his notion of spirituality initially. In the encyclical, the Pope offers us a glimpse of how he understands spirituality. In fact, in expressing his mind on the matter, he quotes from his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium:* spirituality is an *"interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and community activity"* (EG 261).[5] The source of this interior impulse is no other than the Holy Spirit, whose fire burns in our hearts. A precondition to the workings of the Spirit is an attitude that

5 Ibid., 216.

welcomes Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and drives us forward in faith, hope, and love as we advance towards full communion with God (cf. LF 7).

In his first encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, Francis succinctly describes how this "interior impulse" occurs (cf. LF 21). When one opens up and accepts Jesus Christ in his heart, the Pope tells us that the believer's self-awareness expands. It begins to thrive in the "presence" of this Other, and "in love, life takes on a whole new breadth." The believer does not see with his own eyes anymore but sees and interprets things as Jesus sees them. "In the love of Jesus, we receive in a certain way his vision," Francis says.

The locus where this "interior impulse" takes place is the heart, but it should be understood in its Hebraic sense and not in its contemporary meaning, i.e., affective dimension. Scripture is very clear about this. Aside from being the seat of emotions, the heart is the repository of memories, ideas, plans, and decisions. As the Book of Sirach says, the Lord "imparts to [men] an understanding of the heart. With wisdom and knowledge, he fills them; good and evil he shows them." [6]

An openness to the interior impulse has a transformative value since it opens up one's heart to an encounter with Christ and an acceptance of how he views the daily realities of life. Openness entails one to learn "to share in Christ's own spiritual experience and to see all things through his eyes" (LF 46). But, what kind of spirituality do we learn from Jesus?

An analysis of Pope Francis major writings always points to "a spirituality of drawing nearer to others" (EG 272). This

6 Cf. Sirach 17:5-6 NAB

is in response to the prevailing notion that suggests an introspective spirituality, a spirituality defined and measured with how it builds the self. The spirituality that the Pope underlines is a spirituality that goes beyond the confines of the self, and is measured not by how it defines the self but by how it relates with others. For him, a spirituality that is ego-centered does not lead to holiness: "Anything done out of anxiety, pride, or the need to impress others will not lead to holiness." Pope Francis' vision of spirituality is two-fold: one that connects the person with God and another that moves us to the mission. In short, the Pope dismisses a spirituality directed to the individual but always leads the individual to the other.

First, a *spirituality of drawing nearer to others* necessitates a connection with God. Popular piety is a concrete example of this connection. He claims that "it is truly a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the lowly" and "expresses that content more by way of symbols than by discursive reasoning." Reflecting on the family, Francis calls popular piety "a treasure of spirituality for many families" because the "family's communal journey of prayer culminates by sharing together in the Eucharist, especially in the context of the Sunday rest" (AL 318).

In contrast, the Pope criticizes two extremes of spirituality. On one end, he condemns Gnosticism as a "disembodied spirituality" and "one of the most sinister ideologies" that "considers its own vision of reality to be perfect" and "domesticates the mystery… of God and his grace, or the mystery of others' lives" (cf. GE 40). And on the other end, he blasts all forms of ersatz spirituality that "dominate the current religious marketplace" but has nothing to do with God (cf. GE 111). For Pope Francis, prayer is not purely a contemplation of God but is also "intercessory" in character,

i.e., as "an expression of our fraternal concern for others" (cf. GE 154).

This brings us to the second point. A *spirituality of drawing nearer to others* involves "the need to respond adequately to many people's thirst for God" (EG 89). In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis says that "we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity" (EG 262).

In spelling out his definition of spirituality, the Pope dismisses a spirituality that is purely centered on one's thirst for God or "a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others." Instead, he desires "a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness…" (EG 89). It is a spirituality that considers the good and welfare of others, a spirituality that sees the individual relating with God through others, through his neighbors.

Finally, Pope Francis recognizes that spirituality results in something concrete in us. In *Lumen fidei*, the Pope says that the fruit of a spirit-filled life is joy, "which is the clearest sign of faith's grandeur" (LF 58).

Ecological Spirituality: *Creatio Continua in Missio Dei*

In the preceding section, it was mentioned that Pope Francis seems to propose a *spirituality of drawing nearer to others*. Such a spirituality dictates a connection with God and a need to respond adequately to people's thirst for God. These two concepts are keys to understanding the ecological spirituality of Pope Francis.

A close reading of *Laudato Si* leads us to a recognition that our human response to the various ecological crises must necessarily spring forth from our conviction that we are all connected to God: "The doctrine of God must be our driving motivation and controlling concern, even as we turn to this most urgent of human crises."[7]

It is important to note at the onset that some criticize *Laudato Si* for lacking persuasion due to a deficiency of rational objections against the Christian understanding of creation and eschatology and for giving too much emphasis on personified language to describe the world.[8] Critics argue that value and care for the natural world can stand without God's relationship to the world. Their arguments denigrate on two points. First, *Laudato Si*'s synthesis of faith and reason seems to lack persuasiveness because it ignores what is contrary to reason with respect to the fate of the cosmos. Second, *Laudato Si* fails to respond to the problem of *natural evil.* This spirals from the objection that there are features of the natural order, forms of cruelty, waste, or purposelessness that appear to be inconsistent with the ascription of power, goodness, and beauty to the divine Creator of the universe.

But such criticism is a misreading of Pope Francis' great innovative social encyclical. The encyclical does not overlook questions on the destiny of the world. On the contrary, it incorporates the entire creation with that of the destiny of man. It is not a discourse that attempts to give a lengthy theological response against the problem of evil. Rather, it is

7 Eugene R. Schlesinger, "A Trinitarian Basis for a 'Theological Ecology' in Light of *Laudato Si*," *Theological Studies* 79, no. 2 (2018): 342.

8 Here I rely on the arguments discussed in Stephen N. Williams, "Laudato Si and the Environmental Imperative: a Compelling Theology for Our Times?," *European Journal of Theology* 28, no. 2 (2019): 148-149.

an attempt to give a human –not just a Christian – response to the evils that beset the world today. To understand these points, it is necessary to look at the strong foundation of the Pope's ecological spirituality: a theology of creation.

A *spirituality of drawing nearer to others* is grounded on the relational ontology that Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar propounded.

Barth developed an *analogia relationis* both in God's Trinitarian relationality and in His relationship with the world. His theology of creation is both Christological and pneumatological in character. For him, "creation is the outward expression of God's eternal election of humanity in Christ and, as such, it has a 'telos' not only in history but also in its own inner reality and dynamism."[9] Here, Barth offers the idea that creation is a Trinitarian act and not accidental and whimsical. It is a rebuttal against what the medieval Dante Alighieri suggested regarding the cosmos; that it is an "overflowing of God's eternal love" and an impulsive act of God's Divine Will likened to the blossoming of a flower that opens into new loves.[10]

The most profound transformative event for our understanding of ourselves and the world, even if it stands outside the structures of causality that define our finite world, is the event of Jesus' Resurrection, the "first day of the new creation." "If the resurrection is indeed God's act, it not only transforms our understanding of the Triune God in relation to human finitude… it must also transform the whole of

9 James Hanvey, "*Laudato Si* and the Renewal of Theologies of Creation," *Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 6 (November 2018): 1023.

10 Anthony Oldcorn, Daniel Feldham, and Giuseppe Di Scipio, "Notes" in *Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy*: *Paradiso*, trans. by Allen Mandelbaum, (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 416.

the material and non-human life of creation."[11] All creation participates in God's own life not as extension or emanation, as if it could make some claim by its own power or right, but as the grace that comes through Jesus, the Resurrected Lord.

Creation for Barth, too, is pneumatological in that "it is in the Spirit, as the point of convergence for the will of the Father and the obedience of the Son, that creation… finds both its beginning and the possibility of the human person as a covenant partner."[12] Barth's theology of creation implies that through Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit's act of sanctifying and inspiring humanity to goodness, God's free personal act of Love for humanity is fulfilled. Also, the relational and dynamic nature of creation (*creatio continua*) is established.

Interestingly, this *creatio continua* resounds clearly in the conversion experience of Saint Francis of Assisi, from whom the Pope draws inspiration. Thomas de Celano, one of the first to write about Saint Francis and the history of Franciscan Order, wrote in his biography of the saint:

> The first work that blessed Francis set his hands to as soon as he had been freed from the yoke of his blood father was to rebuild one of the Lord's temples. He did not attempt to build Him a new one but repaired an old and dilapidated church instead. He did not undermine the foundations but built over them, thus reserving his privilege with Christ without even knowing it. In fact, no one can lay any other foundation than the one that has already been laid, namely Jesus Christ. Thus, returning to the place

11 Hanvey, "*Laudato Si* and the Renewal of Theologies of Creation," 1028.

12 Ibid, 1023.

> where, as we have said, the Church of St. Damian had been constructed long before, with the grace of the Most High, he carefully restored it in a short time.[13]

This narrative is significant because the theme of *repairing* and *restoring* is a key concept to Saint Francis' mission. Obedient to the will of the Divine Majesty, he regarded and adhered to what the Lord has instructed him to do: "He repaired and restored [the Church of San Damiano's] structure because he believed that Christ called him to build His Church upon the foundation where Christ had laid for him."[14]

Following the footsteps of his saintly namesake, Pope Francis makes use of the language of *repairing* and *restoring* in his environmental encyclical. He says that as a Church, "we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair. Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems" (LS 61). He also insists that "the best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world."[15]

Hans Urs Von Balthasar picks up where Barth ends. Von Balthasar holds that Christians, as "guardians of being" who encounter and recognize the ontological difference between God and the world, must give defense or witness against

13 Thomas de Celano, *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi and the Treatise of Miracles*, trans. Catherine Bolton (Assisi: Editrice Minerva, 2007) 27-28.
14 Zhang, "How St. Francis Influenced Pope Francis' Laudato Si," 43.
15 Ibid, 75.

technological instrumentalization and reductionism.[16] Pope Francis highlighted the incapacity of technology to see the vast network of relations and the need to look for solutions not only through technology but through "a change of humanity."[17] Here, the Pope seems to surmise that a theology of creation presupposes a theological anthropology that determines humanity's moral relationship with the natural and the biological life.

Indeed, the solution to the ecological problems that the world is facing rests on humanity. As Pope Francis points out in *Laudato Si* 101-36*,* the various ecological problems that the world is facing today are the result of human activity, especially of our misuse of our natural resources and of the non-human lives that have been entrusted to our care. As Eugene Schlesinger writes, "It can only be through a change in human activity that this crisis can be addressed and, by the grace of God, corrected."[18] Yet, to address the ecological problems that the world is facing, as the Pope also points out in *Laudato Si* 137-62, there is also a need to address the needs of our fellow human beings.

A spirituality that responds to the people's thirst for God is a spirituality that considers the welfare and common good. In presenting a detailed analysis of the global problems and issues that the world is facing today, ranging from climate change to social injustices, Pope Francis' environmental encyclical suggests that these ranging issues are not isolated problems that need to be resolved. Rather, these issues are interconnected and are required to be viewed holistically. As

16 Hanvey, "Laudato Si and the Renewal of Theologies of Creation," 1024.

17 cf. Francis, *Laudato Si* 9 and 20.

18 Schlesinger, "A Trinitarian Basis for a 'Theological Ecology' in Light of *Laudato Si*," 343.

he says, "It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people."[19]

The Pope is eloquently establishing a powerful connection between how we treat non-human creatures and how we treat one another. Misuse of the Earth and its creatures leads to the exploitation of fellow human beings. Pope Francis never suggests that humans are *not* more important than other creatures. Rather, he suggests that attached to our being an *imago Dei* is the greater responsibility of taking care and nurturing the Earth and its creatures.

In the language of *Laudato Si,* the connection between the varied issues facing the world and the connection that non-human creatures have with humans is called *integral ecology.* True to the spirit of Saint Francis, the Pope names our common home both as *sister* and *mother.*[20] The Earth is our sister because, like us humans, she too is a creature of God, and so, therefore, we belong to one family and that we both have God as our Father. And yet, the Earth is also our mother because she gives us shelter and provides nourishment to us. The Pope's analogy about the Earth as mother and sister points to the truth that everything is connected. Sadly, today's society fails to grasp the imbalance that wanton exploitation of creation causes in the connectedness that is shared by everyone. "With the loss and extinction of some species, we will no longer see God's wondrous deeds and praise Him through them on Earth. This loss causes a disconnection between the

19 Francis, *Laudato Si* 92.
20 cf. Ibid, 1.

Creator and the human beings because we know that Saint Francis found God's existence and experienced God's beauty in every creature."[21]

The urgent need for a radical transformation of humanity with how it conducts itself with the rest of creation is an essential element of the Church's environmental mission. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si* 3, underscores that part of the ongoing missionary renewal called for in *Evangelii gaudium* is the dialogue about our common home.

To partake in the *creatio continua,* an emphasis on humanity's need to always participate in the *missio Dei* is crucial: "The concept of mission as *missio Dei* is meant to highlight that mission is first of all and fundamentally a divine activity, rather than a human one. We are recruited into and invited to participate in God's mission, but our place in that mission is not at the center."[22] Two facts emphasize the importance of this.

First, it veers away from the anthropocentrism that has led the world to the environmental crisis that it is facing: "The Creator's agenda is the center of our concerns, and this Creator has not made an isolated humanity, but placed us within a vast whole, all of which he values."[23] To overcome the ecological crisis, human beings must learn to accept their position and connection with the overarching structure of nature and creation. Boundaries must be accepted in dealing with nature by not regarding them simply as objects that must be exploited. Addressing humanity's self-conception and identifying its place in the world is an important part of

21 Zhang, "How St. Francis Influenced Pope Francis' Laudato Si," 49.
22 Schlesinger, "A Trinitarian Basis for a 'Theological Ecology' in Light of *Laudato Si*," 345.
23 Ibid.

this process: "Human beings… are and always remain part of nature. The mandate to humankind to be God's caretaker on Earth changes nothing fundamentally."[24]

Second, the centrality of divine action in our redemption and the redemption of the world is placed in the foreground. The ultimate purpose why each creature will have to be saved – *repaired* or *restored* – is not for our end, but so that "God may be everything to everyone." As Nathan O'Halloran writes, "The creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end."[25]

This is particularly and sincerely made possible through the Eucharist. Pope Francis laconically and dramatically describes this mystery: "The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above but from within; he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living center of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life" (LS 236).

Ecological Spirituality of *Laudato Si* Viewed along with the Lenses of Pedagogy

Pope Francis admits in Laudato Si 15 that he is convinced that change is impossible without a process of education

24 Reinhard Marx, "'Everything Is Connected': On the Relevance of an Integral Understanding of Reality in Laudato Si," *Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (2016): 298.

25 Nathan W. O'Halloran, "'Each Creature, Resplendently Transfigured': Development of Teaching in Laudato Si," *Theological Studies*79, no. 2 (2018): 397.

and that human development can draw lessons from the rich spiritual heritage of the Church to achieve this.

This paper has labored to cull from Pope Francis's major pronouncements regarding his understanding of spirituality. And his writings have shown that he views spirituality as an interior impulse that encourages, motivates, nourishes, and gives meaning to our individual and community activity. He spoke of a spirituality of drawing nearer to others. And by speaking of others, it has been identified that Francis is referring to two realities in the spiritual life. It is a spirituality that necessitates one to go out of himself and find a connection with God. It also means responding adequately to many people's thirst for God.

It has also been established that the same is true when Pope Francis speaks about ecological spirituality. The Pope's environmental encyclical insists that an ecological spirituality must always necessarily spring forth from one's conviction that all creatures – both non-human and human lives – are connected to God. And the same document suggests that an ecological spirituality requires a *creatio continua* by means of sharing in the *missio Dei*.

The Pope firmly believes that there is a need for a "distinctive way of looking at things," an educational program, and a spirituality that will "generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm."[26] In *Laudato Si* no. 211, he expresses his confidence that a formation in ecological responsibility can embolden different ways of action that will usher change in the world for the better. And in *Laudato Si* 216, he expressed interest in exploring how spirituality can motivate concern for the care of our common home.

26 Ibid, 111.

This section will devote a considerable discussion on ecological spirituality as viewed along with the lenses of a pedagogical theory dubbed as a transformative learning theory. The way Pope Francis lays down his ecological vision in his encyclical suggests a pattern along the lines of transformative learning theory, specifically of University of Toronto professor Mark Hathaway and Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff's take on this celebrated concept.

The main proponent of transformative learning theory is Jack Mezirow, who, in 1978, was commissioned by the United States of America's Department of Education to conduct a nationwide action research project study that would analyze why so many women were returning to study and how their studies affected them afterward.[27]

Transformative learning is defined "as a process in which the *meaning perspective*, including thought, feeling and will, fundamentally changes."[28] This means that every individual has a particular view of the world. This may or may not be well expressed in words, but it is usually based on a set of paradigmatic assumptions that is built on the individual's upbringing, experience, culture, faith, and education. The main proponent of transformative learning theory, Jack Mezirow, holds that people find it hard to work for change because their worldviews have become unconscious frames of reference constructed by the habits of the mind.[29] Particular

27 Michael Christie et al., "Putting Transformative Learning Theory Into Practice," *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 55, no. 1 (April 2015): 11.

28 Arnd-Michael Nohl, "Typical Phases of Transformative Learning: A Practice-Based Model," *Adult Education Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2015): 35.

29 Christie et al., "Putting Transformative Learning Theory Into Practice," 11.

worldviews, Mezirow insists, have become so deep-seated that it would need a powerful argument, which he called *disorienting dilemma*, to unseat them all.

Mezirow identified ten phases of transformative learning: (1) a disorienting dilemma; (2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; (3) a critical assessment of assumptions; (4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared; (5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; (6) planning a course of action; (7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; (8) provisional trying of new roles; (9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationship; (10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.[30]

But change, for Mezirow, is always provisional.[31] When specific paradigms begin to dominate an individual, group, or institution, Mezirow claims that it is time to begin to question the paradigm and, if not, subvert them.

Since Mezirow conducted his first study in 1978, he has frequently revised his transformative learning theory after engaging in dialogue and debates with fellow educational theorists: "During the last 20 years, over hundreds of studies have been carried out using the theory, increasing expansion in research, repeatedly needed to point out Mezirow's theorization, synthesizing the salient concepts and the evolution of his theory."[32] In today's field of adult education, Mezirow's theory is considered a harmonious, reliable, and efficient model.

30 Nohl, "Typical Phases of Transformative Learning: A Practice-Based Model," 36.

31 Christie et al., "Putting Transformative Learning Theory Into Practice," 22.

32 Chiara Biasin, "Transformative Learning: Evolutions of the Adult Learning Theory, "*Revue Phronesis* 7, no. 3 (2018): 12.

However, in 2014, a study concluded that Mezirow's phases varied from case to case, and the same study proposed a more general phase model.[33] A five-phased general model, based on different learning situations, was proposed as a revision to Mezirow's ten-phased model, and Mezirow's concept of disorienting dilemma was replaced.[34] The five phases are: (1) non-determining start; (2) experimental and undirected inquiry; (3) social testing and mirroring; (4) shifting of relevance; and (5) social consolidation and reinterpretation.

A non-determining start begins the process of transformative learning. The process begins when novelty, neither anticipated nor planned, abruptly breaks into life. It is called a non-determining start because the "first experiences do not in any way predetermine the (transformative) character of the subsequent process."[35]

Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* is a novelty in that no pope in history has devoted a social encyclical that confronts the ecological problems that the contemporary world faces. In fairness to his predecessors, the previous popes have spoken about environmental issues but never has a pope devoted a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the environmental problems and their correlated social issues until this pontificate. The Pope's global prowess and influence have started a worldwide dialogue on the issue of ecological degradation, and the fruit of this dialogue has yet to be reaped: "*Laudato Si* will be remembered long beyond the current age because

33 Nohl, "Typical Phases of Transformative Learning: A Practice-Based Model," 37.

34 Here I will be relying on Nohl, "Typical Phases of Transformative Learning: A Practice-Based Model," 39.

35 Nohl, "Typical Phases of Transformative Learning: A Practice-Based Model," 40.

Pope Francis is writing about a timeless view of nature, rooted in the spirit of Saint Francis."[36]

When the non-determining start has commenced, the main actors begin to experiment with the new practices and take into account the results of their efforts, and readjusts them.[37]

Pope Francis' environmental encyclical is not simply based on previous papal pronouncements and ecclesiastical teachings. Its novelty lies in the fact that it relies on scientific facts, communal experiences, dialogue and rests on the long history of the institutional Church. For instance, Pope Francis said that "A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system" (LS 23). In another instance, Francis humbly admits that "there are certain environmental issues where it is not easy to achieve a broad consensus" and that "the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics;" instead he encourages "an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good" (LS 188).

Arnd-Michael Nohl writes, "In the third phase, the actors exposed their new practices to the appraisal of other people and had the opportunity to reflect on them in light of the reactions of their interaction partners."[38] Swapping between reinforcing one's newly found practices in a group of like-minded people and baring them to the assessment of the bigger community help actors fathom the importance of what has newly been integrated into their lives. This is to oblige them to appropriate their new knowledge and skills within a group.

36 Enright, "Tolkien, Middle Earth and *Laudato Si*," 61.
37 Nohl, "Typical Phases of Transformative Learning: A Practice-Based Model," 41.
38 Ibid.

At the onset of his encyclical, Pope Francis invited all people – Catholics and non-Catholics alike – to dialogue about our common home. The traditional title page of the encyclical letter omits the receiver of the papal letter, which caught the attention of many commentators. Since the publication of this encyclical, a lot has been said by many scholars who wish to interpret and appropriate the message of this encyclical to the particular situations of life, notwithstanding the number of criticisms and praises that this encyclical has garnered. Since the encyclical has only been recently published, we may surmise that the world is still in this phase of receiving the intent and message of *Laudato Si.* Its proposals have yet to be tested; its vision has yet to be fully realized.

The fourth phase, which is shifting relevance, means that the new practice becomes the focused experience from being in the margins. It must be noted that there are many transformation processes where new practices commence, and yet older habits persist. In such cases, the new practices gradually expand.[39]

Although, as this paper holds, we are still in the third phase, Pope Francis' new approach to the ecosystem has also paved the way for its practice. Parishes are beginning to tap their own ecology committees, and churches are beginning to implement eco-friendly measures to save the environment from further destruction. This involves harnessing electricity through solar panel systems, conservation of water resources, recycling, observance of "seasons of creation," and catechesis and education.

Finally, "the transformation process ends in a phase in which the actors find social relations that stabilize their new

39 Ibid, 43.

practices."[40] As Pope Francis envisions towards the end of his encyclical, "The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures" (LS 240).

Still, Pope Francis' ecological spirituality can be viewed along with the lenses of transformative learning theory, particularly according to its theoretical perspective, which is cultural-spiritual. Here, Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff's take on the theory of transformative learning comes to play. sThey have dubbed Hathaway and Boff's take on this theory as *The Tao of Liberation*.

Hathaway and Boff define *the Tao of Liberation* as "a search for wisdom, the wisdom needed to effect profound transformations in the world."[41] They adapted the ancient Chinese word *tao* to describe their take of the theory of transformative learning as a principled way or path that leads to harmony, peace, and right relationship. This is very apt for Pope Francis' encyclical since Francis shares in the same direction. He wishes to rectify the misuses and abuses that our common home has suffered and eventually achieve a harmonious communion in creation.

In a separate paper that Hathaway presented at an education conference in Canada, he identifies five important elements to their take on transformative learning.

The first of these elements is *invocation.* Invocation is "remembering our communion with other beings and the

40 Ibid, 44.

41 Hathaway, Mark and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation* (New York: Orbis Books, 2009) xxiii.

cosmos, and finding inspirational energy through beauty and awe."[42]

In his encyclical, Francis points out that we need "to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a global scale" (LS 9). In this paper, it was earlier mentioned that Francis picks up from Von Balthasar, who viewed Christians as *guardians of being.* In highlighting this, he emphasized the importance of *wonder* as a fundamental value for the guardians of being: "Wonder is not only the epistemological response to the presence of Being, it is ultimately our encounter and recognition of the ontological difference between God and the world."[43]

Wonder is important to remind us that as much as we are called to participate in the *creatio continua*, we humans are still ontologically different from God. We are not creators who can exploit and abuse creation but must constantly be aware of a higher Being who is beyond our finite comprehension. The same wonder helps us appreciate the beauty around us and lead to glorifying the One who made us all. Hathaway identifies *mindfulness* as a key concept to invocation. It empowers us to "cultivate our awareness of the emerging story of the universe and foster an apprehension of the interconnection of all beings."[44]

Another key element in *the Tao of Liberation* is *letting go*. This concerns "embracing the void and clearing away the cobwebs of delusion that ensnare and disempower us."[45]

42 Mark Hathaway, "Transformative Learning and the Ecological Crisis: Insights from The Tao of Liberation" (Canada: New Prairie Press, 2011), 286.
43 Hanvey, "Laudato Si and the Renewal of Theologies of Creation," 1024.
44 Hathaway, "Transformative Learning and the Ecological Crisis: Insights from The Tao of Liberation" 286.
45 Ibid, 286.

Francis has mentioned a lot of environmental issues and problems. He emphasizes that part of the solution is to face reality courageously. It is a process of letting go to work for a better future. He says, "In the concrete situation confronting us, there are a number of symptoms which point to what is wrong, such as environmental degradation, anxiety, a loss of the purpose of life and of community living. Once more, we see that realities are more important than idea" (LS 110). He is insisting that action is better than the enunciation of ideas.

A key concept to letting go, Hathaway says, is *meditation*. It is "the process of emptying ourselves of preconceptions and predisposition allowing a radical openness to new perspectives." Is this not what Francis said about contemplation of creation, which "allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us"?[46] In *Laudato Si* no. 161, he invites us even to reflect on our accountability before those who will suffer the consequences of our abuse.

The third element is *creative empowerment*. This is "reconnecting with the intrinsic power that enables us to see clearly and act decisively in the right way, at the right place, and at the right time."[47] Its key concepts are *intuition* and *compassion*.

Reflecting on the Pope's encyclical, Eli McCarthy mentions the creative empowerment that mercy teaches us. He says that "mercy enters into the chaos of the troubled relationships and sin, finds nonviolent ways to illuminate the truth of the conflict, and to heal the harm done to the relationships."[48] Although Pope Francis mentions the word,

46 Hathaway, "Transformative Learning and the Ecological Crisis: Insights from The Tao of Liberation" 286.
47 Ibid.
48 Eli McCarthy, "Breaking Out: The Expansiveness of Restorative

"mercy" only once in his environmental encyclical, it is much present in the words and spaces between them; that the care for creation is a practice of mercy.

Hathaway's last element in his take on the transformative learning theory is *incarnating the vision:* "We move," he says, "from vision to embodiment to action."[49] Important to this element are traditional praxis-oriented processes with more spiritual and intuitive approaches.

The vision of the care for creation is embodied in our sacraments. "The Sacraments," Pope Francis says, "are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life" (LS 235). Indeed, one would notice that many of the *matter* used in the sacraments are creatures of God: the water that is blessed, the wine produced from the sweetest grapes, the bread baked from wheat, and the oil yielded from olive. These are material reminders that humanity, too, must incarnate God's vision for all creation: to raise it up to the glory and holiness of God.

The elements of *Tao of Liberation* indeed is a pedagogy that leads us to a greater appreciation of ecological spirituality. They are indeed *tao* – paths – of liberation in the sense that *liberation* "entails repairing the terrible damage that we have inflicted both upon each other and upon our planet."[50]

Conclusion

The celebrated Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins once said: "All things are… charged with love, are

Justice in *Laudato Si*," *Journal of Moral Theology* 5, no. 2 (2016): 68.

49 Hathaway, "Transformative Learning and the Ecological Crisis: Insights from The Tao of Liberation" 286.

50 Hathaway and Boff, The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation, xxv.

charged with God and if we know how to touch them give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of Him."[51]

True to his Jesuit heritage, Hopkins' poetry triggers the imagination and invites us to examine what is right and wrong with our lives: "He saw humanity's assaults on nature as a kind of sin but retained a deep hope that, despite the destruction unleashed by humans, God and the redemptive power of God's love at work in nature could and would change things."[52]

Like his fellow Jesuit, Pope Francis does the same in his landmark encyclical Laudato Si. If Tolkien and Hopkins used literature to rouse humanity's slumbering spirits, Francis' encyclical too is a wake-up call for everyone.

The Pope envisions not only concrete responses to the ecological problems that the world is facing. He proposes an ecological spirituality that must be lived not only by Catholics but by non-Christians as well. Spirituality, after all, is an interior impulse that encourages, motivates, nourishes, and gives meaning to our individual and community activity. And so, an ecological spirituality is something that moves all of us to continue our participation (creatio continua) in God's act of creation (missio Dei). This participation is borne out of our gratitude and connection with God, and our extreme desire to lead others to God. As our participation in this ongoing Divine act of creation, care for creation is a concrete step in living out gloria Deo et pax hominibus.

Pope Francis' ecological spirituality is an invitation for

51 *The Note-Books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins,* edited by Humphrey House (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 342.

52 Nancy Enright, "Hopkins, Nature and *Laudato Si*," *The Way* 58, no. 2 (April 2019): 85.

us to re-educate and re-orient ourselves to a lifestyle that promotes care for creation. We have seen that the Pope's ecological spirituality is plausible, gauging it from the lenses of transformative learning theory as a sound pedagogy for change. Perhaps Pope Francis has shown us a disorienting dilemma by giving us a comprehensive analysis of the perils that beset Mother Earth today. Yet, it is not too late to learn from our mistakes and take the path of changing our mindsets and attitude for the love of God in creation. As James Hanvey writes, "The imago Dei must lead to the imitatio Christi if the human being is to realize his or her own created life and purpose."[53] A humanity that basks in the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ must always participate in God's salvific activity and must educate himself by engaging in moral, spiritual, and intellectual tasks.

Pope Francis says, "Everything is interconnected," and "this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity" (LS 240).

53 Hanvey, "*Laudato Si* and the Renewal of Theologies of Creation," 1031.

Jacques Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology and its Contributions Towards Interreligious Dialogue

Alexander Hendra Dwi Asmara, SJ

Introduction

The history of theology shows the shift of its focus and discussion as a response to new questions in each different time. As a reflection of the faith of the believers, theology finds a good starting point within the context of the signs of the times. In this recent time, the "new experience of pluralism," as Paul Knitter states in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness,* can be the "sign" of the present context. According to him, today's Christians experience religions in a new way—that is, they are feeling not only the *reality* of other religious paths but also their vitality, their influence in our modern world, their depth, beauty, and attractiveness.[1] This experience opens our eyes to a deeper reflection of other religions as part of God's plan of salvation and to the possibility of mutual enrichment. Because of this new experience of pluralism, Christians are feeling the need for a more productive dialogue with other religions, a new attitude toward them.

1 Paul F. Knitter and John Hick. eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions* (NY: Maryknoll, 1987), vii.

Avery Dulles believes that pluralism is really not an entirely new reality for the Church, although the response to this reality has varied with the passage of time.[2] From the apostolic times onwards, Christianity has had to situate its message, first, in relation to Judaism from which it emerged and subsequently to the other religions that it encountered along its way. Christian theology of religions is really a response of the Church to her encounter with people of other faiths.

The Church's Dialogue with Other Religions, Then and Now

In the early Church, Christianity had to define its identity in relation to Judaism. This identity was clarified at the Council of Jerusalem, which established that Christianity was different from Judaism, and those who wanted to be Christians were not duly obliged to keep some stipulations in the Jewish tradition (Acts 15). In the first 1,500 years, the encounter between Christianity and other religions was predominantly negative despite significant attempts at dialogue made by authors such as St. Justin, who wrote on the idea of Logos-Sower, Peter Abelard, who wrote "A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian," and Nicholas of Cusa with his "The Peace of Faith."[3] This, however, was a negative way of expressing an important aspect of the Christian faith, namely, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and human beings (cf. 1 Tim.

2 Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ, "World Religions and the New Millennium," in *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis,* ed. Gerald O' Collins and Daniel Kendall (NY: Maryknoll, 2003), 3.

3 Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (NY: Maryknoll, 1997), 57-109.

2:5).[4] In the sixteenth century, especially after the discovery of the new world in 1492, when Christianity entered into contact with the religions of Eastern Asia and the Americas, some missionaries sought to find positive elements in these religions and even to incorporate indigenous elements, like Chinese and Indian rites, into Christianity.

In this century, the development of the theology of religions has shown a more positive and welcoming attitude toward other religions. For the most part, Catholic theologians hold an inclusivist approach, holding that salvation is for all people through the grace of Jesus Christ.[5] In the same manner, the Second Vatican Council regards other religions in a positive way as having "seeds of the Word" (AG 11 and AG 15), "a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men and women" (NA 2), and "elements of truth and grace" (AG 9). Post-conciliar documents such as *Redemptor Hominis* by John Paul II also reflect a positive posture toward other religions. This openness provides a significant foundation for interreligious dialogue.

The key point of doing theology in a pluralistic context is having a deep experience of and relationship with other religions in daily life, rather than propositions and theories. Its point of departure is a practice of interreligious dialogue itself, which helps the Christian interpretation of religious plurality. The Asian Bishops were thinking along this line when they saw the great religious traditions of their peoples as "significant and positive elements in the economy of

4 Josef Neuner, SJ and Jacques Dupuis, SJ, *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Bangalore, India: Theological Publication, 1995), 377.

5 The classic threefold approach in theology of religions can be seen further in Allan Race, *Christian and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

God's design of salvation." As described in the Theological Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) in 1987:

> Its experience of other religions has led the Church in Asia to a positive appreciation of their role in the divine economy of salvation. This appreciation is based on the fruits of the Spirit perceived in the lives of the other religions' believers: a sense of the sacred, a commitment to the pursuit of fullness, a thirst for self-realization, a taste for prayer and commitment, a desire for renunciation, a struggle for justice, an urge to basic human goodness, a total surrender of the self to God. The positive appreciation is further rooted in the conviction of faith that God's plan of salvation for humanity is one and reaches out to all peoples.[6]

A major feature of Jacques Dupuis' approach begins with the willingness to accord other religions a positive role in the divine economy of salvation, inspired by the actual experience of the fruits of the Spirit visible among them. It searches for the meaning of religious plurality in a deeper reality, in the light of Christian faith, for its significance lies in God's own plan of salvation for humankind.

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology

The Trinity as the Source and Goal of the Religious History of Humankind

In response to the interventions of the Congregation

6 "Evangelization in Modern Day in Asia," Statement of the First Plenary Assembly of the FABC, Taipei (1974), cited in Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (NY: Maryknoll, 1997), 220.

for the Doctrine of the Faith pertaining to his work,[7] Dupuis argues that his Trinitarian Christology offers another possible, legitimate and helpful perspective in building an open Christian theology of religions while still remaining faithful to the Catholic heritage:

> The documents of the Congregation approach the faith in a dogmatic perspective, based on select quotations from Scripture, from conciliar documents, and from the pronouncement of the Church's magisterium. This approach, while legitimate, is not necessarily exclusive. Another perspective consists in developing what has been called in this book a "Trinitarian and Pneumatological Christology." The task of theology in this context will consist in asking whether the religious pluralism which characterizes our present world may or may not have a positive significance in God's one plan of salvation for humankind – whether, that is, the Christian faith in Jesus Christ, universal Savior of humankind, is compatible with the affirmation of a positive role of other religions in the mystery of salvation of their followers.[8]

According to Dupuis, only a radical Trinitarian approach

7 In the summer of 2000, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued a Declaration entitled *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*. This document takes up a number of themes that are present in Dupuis' book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, including the relationship between the work of the Word incarnate and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation (chapter two) and the unique mediation of Christ (Chapter Three). In 2001, the CDF released a Notification on *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, which sought to clarify certain possible ambiguities [and not heretic] within the text and correct possible false conclusions that readers may draw from it independent of Dupuis' own intentions. Finally, in the light of the reaction to *Dominus Iesus* and the Notification in March 2001, the CDF published an explanatory commentary on the *Notification*.

8 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 262.

can preserve the essential unity of the salvific economy while at the same time allowing for the legitimate diversity which is manifest in the plurality of religions. In other words, the "Christian vision of the Triune God opens the door for a positive evaluation of other religious traditions."[9] In the divine Trinity, "salvation history is in its entirety the history of the origin of all things from God through his Word in the Spirit and of their return to God through the Word in the Spirit."[10] The Trinitarian rhythm of God's activity throughout salvation history is the action of the Word and the Spirit since the time of creation. The universality of the salvific action of Christ, which is the climax of God's self-communication to humankind, cannot be understood without the universal presence of the Word before the incarnation (Jn 1:1-4) and without the universal presence of the Spirit who blows where it wills (Jn 3:8).[11] The Trinity also constitutes the final goal of humankind's religious history:

> The expansiveness of God's inner life overflowing outside the Godhead is, in the last analysis, the root cause for the existence in human history of convergent paths, leading to a unique common goal: the absolute mystery of the Godhead which draws all paths to itself, even as in the first place it launches them into existence.[12]

The Triune God is the Ultimate Reality that has revealed Godself to human beings through history. Vatican II expresses this as follows:

> It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom, to reveal Godself and to make known the mystery of

9 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 313.
10 Ibid., 209.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.

> his will [Eph 1:9]. His will was that human beings should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit and thus become sharers in the divine nature. By this revelation, then, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses human beings as his friends (DV 2).

The Divine Trinity also serves as the hermeneutical key to an interpretation of the Divine Reality to which other religions testify. Dupuis argues that "in every authentic religious experience, the Triune God of Christian revelation is present and operative, though anonymously."[13] Dupuis points out some attempts of theologians in tracing Trinitarian activity in other religious traditions, even though he asserts that these attempts should be critically evaluated.[14]

For Christian faith, Dupuis maintains that the essential unity of the salvific economy of the Trinity is realized and expressed in the incarnation of Christ.

The becoming human of the Word of God in Jesus Christ, his human life, death, and resurrection, is the culminating point of the process of divine self-communication, the hinge upon which the process holds together, its key interpretation. The reason is that the Word's 'humanization' marks the unsurpassed and unsurpassable—depth of God's self-communication to human beings, the supreme mode of immanence of his being-with-them.[15]

It is from this incarnational perspective that Dupuis

13 Ibid., 277.

14 For example, Raimon Panikkar in his book the Unknown Christ of Hinduism establishes a parallel between Father-Son, on the one hand, and Brahman-Ishvara, on the other. He pursues the parallel between the Spirit and the Atman in the Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man.

15 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 209.

proposes a term called "Trinitarian Christology." Trinitarian Christology denotes an open Christian theology of religions which focuses on and affirms the centrality of the Christ-event in the whole of Trinitarian reality. In this Christological perspective of the Trinity, Dupuis points out that "the one human face of God who is Jesus Christ may be said to relate to other saving figures from which God has not withheld his saving presence and grace."[16]

Trinitarian Christology: A New Perspective in a Christian Theology of Religions

Recent debate on the theology of religions has been dominated by three mutual perspectives of Race's model, namely, exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Each parallels three fundamental perspectives: ecclesiocentrism, Christocentrism, and theocentrism. Dupuis notices the "shift of the perspective in Christian theology of religions" from narrow ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism, and then to theocentrism. However, he points out that many theologians find Race's categories significantly inadequate in terms of being a model of Christian theology of religions, since they imply an "either/or" mode of contradiction among the three important elements of the Christian faith.[17] A more crucial implication of Race's paradigm is that a Christian theology of religions seems to be founded not so much on harmony, convergence, and unity, but rather on "confrontation and contradiction,"[18] to the extent that other religions are considered as a hindrance that must be overcome or a fact of life that we must be resigned to tolerate.

16 Ibid., 283.
17 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 84.
18 Ibid.

Dupuis himself particularly criticizes the exclusive opposition between inclusivism in a Christocentric perspective and pluralism in a theocentric perspective that Race's paradigm proposes. The debate between these two positions focuses on the central figure of Jesus Christ, a centrality opposed by the pluralistic view: "Is it still possible to make the salvation of all human beings depend on the particular historical individual Jesus of Nazareth, about whom they [other religious traditions] often have not heard or whom otherwise they have not been in a position to recognize?"[19] For Dupuis, this debate is misplaced and unnecessary because Christocentrism is never opposed to theocentrism, since it is theocentric by being Christocentric and vice versa.

> The first is that the assumption made by a growing number of theologians that a Christocentric perspective is no longer tenable, calls for some clarifications. Are Christocentrism and theocentrism really at odds, as is being claimed, as two contradictory paradigms? The Christocentrism of Christian tradition is not, in fact, opposed to theocentrism. Christian theology is not faced with the dilemma of being either Christocentric or theocentric; it is theocentric by being Christocentric and vice versa.[20]

Dupuis also criticizes Race's inclusivist perspective. Inclusivism is the dominant position among Catholic theologians in the Christian theology of religions since it is able to combine the centrality of the Christ-event and the possibility of divine manifestation in other religions. However, Dupuis' main objection to inclusivism is its insistence on the saving presence of the Christ-event when this presence

19 Ibid., 88.
20 Ibid.

is not unequivocally acknowledged and when non-Christians explicitly attribute their religious lives to sources other than Christ.[21] Inclusivism is an *a priori* Christian solution to the problem of salvation of other religions: Dupuis considers his Christian theology of religions inclusivist, but significantly qualifies it by stating that even without affirming Christ, "non-Christians have a real mediatory role of salvation for their members."[22]

Dupuis, therefore, proposes the more integral model, the Trinitarian Christology, which incorporates all aspects that are otherwise set in opposition to each other by Race's model. "Whereas inclusive Christocentrism is non-negotiable for Christian theology, it can be combined with a true theocentric pluralism, both aspects being complementary in a single reality."[23] This model overcomes not only the exclusivist but also the inclusivist paradigm, without resorting to the "pluralist" paradigm based on the negation of constitutive salvation in Jesus Christ.[24] In Trinitarian Christology, one arrives at a position which sincerely attempts to harmonize Christocentrism with a certain pluralism of religions in God's design.

> Therefore, Trinitarian Christology allows for the recognition of the ongoing presence and activity of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Such a perspective makes it possible to affirm a plurality of ways or paths to human liberation/salvation in accordance with God's design for humankind in Jesus Christ; it also opens the way for recognizing other saving figures in human history.[25]

21 Terrence Merrigan, "Exploring the Frontiers: Jacques Dupuis and the Movement 'Towards a Christian Theology of Religions,'" *East Asian Pastoral Review* 37/1 (2000): 34.

22 Dupuis, "'Christianity and the Religions' Revisited," *Louvain Studies* 28 (2003): 369.

23 Ibid., 90.

24 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue,* 256.

25 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 282.

A Trinitarian Christology, in other words, is a model for a theology of religions which could well be called "inclusivist pluralism." In inclusivist pluralism, one may affirm at the same time a plurality of religious paths having some salvific value for their adherents while keeping to the inclusivist position by holding fast to Jesus Christ as universal Savior with whom these paths are essentially and organically related in accordance with the one divine plan of salvation for humankind.[26]

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is also "an approach which combines an inductive a posteriori method with the a priori deductive one, thus professing explicit reference to the concrete reality of de facto religious pluralism."[27] In his Trinitarian Christology, Dupuis dialogues between the a priori element or the "text" which is the revealed data contained in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, and the a posteriori element or the "context," which is the complex reality, including the sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and religious reality.[28] In interpreting the Scripture, Dupuis avoids the "proof-text method" which selects texts and takes them out of context, and makes them affirm what they do not say. At the same time, he also insists that "Scripture and the New Testament, in particular, is not a monolithic piece of writing and that many affirmations are found in it which may seem to contradict each other, but are in reality complementary and must be combined and integrated."[29] Dupuis' Trinitarian

26 Dupuis, "The Truth Will Make You Free," *Louvain Studies* 24 (1999): 226.

27 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 262.

28 Dupuis adds the third element, namely, the "interpreter." The "interpreter" is the ecclesial community, a believing people in the community.

29 Dupuis criticizes the unilateral interpretation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ based on a few isolated texts: Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5 and

Christology combines both the deductive and inductive approaches which are the firm beliefs of the universality of Christ the Savior and the fact of "the element of truth and grace" (AG 9) and "a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men and women" (NA 2) in other religions as the work of the Word of God and the Spirit of God in them.

Positive Effects of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology

Applying a Trinitarian Christology to a Christian theology of religions has several positive effects.

First of all, a Trinitarian Christology reveals the relational aspect of the centrality of the Christ-event with God's universal plan of salvation through the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Dupuis finds it reasonable to say that God's saving action is not exclusively bound by the Christ-event, since the non-incarnate Word (*Logos asarkos*) that "enlightens every human being by coming into the world" (Jn 1:9) pre-exists the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ, and endures eternally after the Incarnation, after the historical event of Jesus Christ. In the same way, the Spirit is also universally present in history, even before the time of creation. Therefore, while a Trinitarian Christology affirms the centrality of the Christ-event, it also leaves room for other paths of salvation which are invariably enlightened and inspired by the universal and eternal presence of the selfsame Word and Spirit. This

Jn 14:6. He proposes a more integral hermeneutic of the biblical data. For example, the Word "pitched its tent among human beings" (Jn 1:14) in Jesus Christ, but Wisdom had previously taken possession of every people and nation (Sir 24:6-7) and "pitched her tent" in Israel (Sir 24:8-12). Likewise, Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 114:6); but the Word who is before him was "the true light that enlightens every human being by coming into the world" (Jn 1:9).

is the first positive effect of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology: it provides grounding for interreligious dialogue since it is more theologically open and attitudinally positive towards non-Christian religions.

Secondly, a Trinitarian Christology encourages Christians to recognize the mediating and saving roles of other religious traditions now seen as various ways through which God saves humankind. Dupuis says that "the other religious traditions are oriented toward the mystery of Jesus Christ in whom they can find their fullness; however, that orientation does not prevent the germs of 'truth and grace' contained in them."[30] A Trinitarian Christology constructs a solid basis for "a true understanding of the meaning of interreligious dialogue, since the fact that we share the same Spirit—the Spirit of God and—that the 'seeds of the Word' are sown among others constitutes the concrete foundation for a dialogue."[31]

A third positive effect of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is the fostering of a mutual complementarity, an exchange and a sharing of values, a dynamic interaction between Christianity and other religions. The element of "truth and grace" in other religions can enrich the Christian's religious values.

Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religions

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is a model for a Christian theology of religions that is able to combine and hold together the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation and a truly positive and salvific value of other

30 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 257.
31 Ibid., 223.

religious traditions for their followers. Dupuis moves beyond the dilemma of choosing between Christocentrism and theocentrism, or between inclusivism and pluralism, which is understood as paradigms mutually opposed and excluding each other. Thus, a Trinitarian Christology overcomes not only the exclusivist but also the inclusivist paradigm, without resorting to the "pluralist" paradigm based on the negation of constitutive salvation in Jesus Christ.

The key element in Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology, which makes a "breakthrough" in Christian theology of religions, is his affirmation that the universal presence of the non-incarnate Word and the Spirit enlightens and inspires other religious traditions. The Christ-event, the deepest and unsurpassable self-commitment of God to humankind, does not exhaust the mystery of God. Thus, there is room to believe that God communicates Godself to other religions through the divine Word and Spirit. In other words, the Christ-event as the climax of God's self-communication to humankind should not be interpreted exclusively, which eventually leads in condemning and rejecting the element of "truth and grace" (AG 9) in other religions. The Christ-event, the culmination of saving history, does not repudiate but, in fact, confirms all that God has done for humankind before that event and in view of it. Dupuis steadfastly affirms the centrality of the Christ-event, but this sincere affirmation need not entail exclusivist statements by which any positive significance in God's eternal design for humankind in other religions is denied.

In his Trinitarian Christology, Dupuis opens to a more positive dialogue between Christianity and other religions and avoids the excesses of the traditional threefold model of "exclusivism," "inclusivism," and "pluralism." He suggests

that Christians can learn new aspects of truth and grace from other religions (which he suggests "exclusivists" and "inclusivists" do not allow), but denies the "pluralist" claim that there are other saviors unrelated to Jesus Christ. Therefore, other religions have "positive but hidden meaning" and can be "ways or routes of salvation" intended by God.[32] Hence "the goal of interreligious dialogue is the common conversion of Christians and members of other religious traditions to the same God—the God of Jesus Christ, who challenges them through each other."[33]

Interreligious Dialogue as Mutual Enrichment

In his Trinitarian Christology, Dupuis affirms the elements of "truth and grace" (AG 9) in other religious traditions which Christians can learn in interreligious dialogue. Thus, interreligious dialogue must be reciprocal and complimentary, engaged in dynamic interaction between Christianity and other religions, resulting in mutual enrichment. Dupuis intends a "mutual complementarity" which "without suppressing the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the consequent irreducible singularity of Christianity, maintains, nevertheless, that true aspects of the divine mystery can so stand out and be expressed in other traditions that even Christians can profit from contact with them."[10]

"Complementarity" is understood here not in the sense of the fulfillment theory according to which Christian truth 'brings to completion' in a one-sided process the fragmentary truths it finds sown outside. Rather, "complementarity" refers to "an exchange and a sharing of saving values or

32 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 253.
33 Ibid., 234.

a dynamic interaction between Christianity and other religions.[34]

Dupuis is open to the possibility that some aspects of the divine mystery may be found stressed more vividly in other religions than in the Christian revelation. This, therefore, calls for interreligious dialogue in which participants may find their own faith stimulated and deepened by another's. For Dupuis, the process of dialogue is two-way. It is, therefore, possible that Christianity will find its own fulfillment through engagement with other traditions. Dupuis understands that the mystery of salvation is mediated overtly, explicitly, and with full visibility through Christianity.[35] Other religions contain the element of truth and grace; however, these still only "anticipate God's fuller disclosure and decisive self-gift in Jesus Christ."[36]

Accordingly, Dupuis critiques the "fulfillment" theory as the framework for interreligious dialogue because it reduces truth and grace in other religions to merely "seeds" or "stepping stones" to be nurtured and superseded in and by Christian revelation. In the "fulfillment" theory, non-Christian religions simply represent the human aspiration for union with the divine mystery, while Christianity represents the one God-given answer to such aspiration. The "fulfillment" language is basically an a priori language emphasizing the Christian self-understanding about means of salvation and judges other religions and their role in the history of salvation. Interreligious dialogue demands respect and affirmation of the "otherness" of other religions and not rejection and

34 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 257.
35 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 319.
36 Ibid., 325.

disrespect. Rather, it is a form of sharing, of giving, and receiving. Dupuis advocates a mutual complementarity between Christianity and other religions, which leads to a mutual fulfillment between Christianity and other religions where each participant can be enriched.[37]

Interreligious Dialogue Demands Commitment and Openness

Dupuis objects to the fulfillment-theory understanding of interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, he also disagrees with another extreme called the "pluralist" position. Pluralism rejects a "constitutive" and "inclusivist" Christology, which avows that humankind is saved by God in Jesus Christ, since it does not give room for genuine dialogue.[38] As understood by the pluralist frame of mind, dialogue can be sincere only if it takes place on an equal footing between partners. This means that Christians should give up their faith on the constitutive character of Jesus Christ. The pluralist argues that interreligious dialogue demands openness from each participant, which must, first of all, renounce any claim to uniqueness for the person and work of Jesus Christ as a universal constitutive element of salvation.

Dupuis argues that a "constitutive" Christology is not necessarily "exclusive" because the universal saving impact of Jesus Christ leaves space for other "saving figures" and other religious traditions, where God is present and at work through God's Word and God's Spirit.[39] Moreover, without commitment to and integrity in one's own faith, a dialogue

37 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 257.
38 Ibid., 228.
39 Ibid., 227.

will end in a form of "syncretism"—a reduction of faith in the quest for a common ground—or "eclecticism"—a combination of the various traditions by choosing scattered elements and forming a shapeless, inconsistent amalgam.[40] The pluralists do not take seriously the real differences among religions. They even play down the contradictions among the religions while the search for an underlying unity ends up with the lowest common denominator, like liberation or human salvation. In other words, the pluralist's proposal that "one should give up one's faith in interreligious dialogue" will not result in a fruitful dialogue. Dialogue presupposes the integrity of personal faith. Interreligious dialogue must admit the differences and possible contradictions among the religions and seek understanding in those differences.

If dialogue supposes the integrity of personal faith, it also requires openness to the faith of the other. Openness is the willingness to enter into the experience of the other, striving to grasp that experience from within one's own faith-perspective:

> To know the religion of another is more than being cognizant of the facts of the other's religious traditions. It involves getting inside the skin of the other, it involves walking in the other's shoes, it involves seeing the world in some sense as the other sees it, it involves getting inside the other's sense of 'being a Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist or whatever.[41]

Trinitarian Christology as the Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is primarily an

40 Ibid., 229.
41 Ibid., 230.

intra-Christian dialogue that provides a theoretical theology of religions for a more fruitful dialogue between Christians and other religions. His theology leans more toward the dialogue of theological exchange and spiritual experience because of the intellectual manner of his theology and the shared spiritual movements of the Spirit in other religions.

A Trinitarian Christology gives a theological foundation for interreligious dialogue in three aspects. First, a Trinitarian Christology highlights the "mystery of unity and salvation" of humankind in God's plan of salvation. Therefore, in the Trinitarian Christology perspective, interreligious dialogue takes place between persons who are already bound to each other in the unity of God's plan of salvation through the universal presence of God's Word and God's Spirit in human history. Secondly, a Trinitarian Christology affirms the positive role of religions in the salvation of their adherents. Therefore, dialogue with other religions is not meant to convert them to Christianity but to share in their values and work together to build God's Kingdom. Third, a Trinitarian Christology affirms the importance of the proclamation of the Good News as an integral part of interreligious dialogue.

A Trinitarian Christology and the "Mystery of Unity and Salvation"

Dupuis argues that his particular model of Trinitarian Christology expresses "the mystery of unity and salvation" of humankind, which Vatican II considers a foundation for interreligious dialogue. *Nostra Aetate* states that "Humanity forms but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth and also because all share a common destiny, namely, God"

(2). Dialogue is thus established on a double foundation: the community which has its origin in God through creation and its destiny in God through salvation in Jesus Christ.[42] In this "mystery of unity," differences have to be acknowledged, although they are less important than unity which is the more radical, basic, and decisive of the two. Invariably, "Dialogue and Proclamation" also affirms that "from this mystery of unity, it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit."[43]

> Christians know this [the salvific action of Christ] through their faith, while others remain unaware that Jesus Christ is the source of their salvation. The mystery of salvation reaches out to them, in a way known to God, through the invisible action of the Spirit (DP 29).

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology recognizes the ongoing presence and activity of the Word of God and of the Spirit of God in the history of humanity, including the world religions.[44] He argues that the Spirit is present in the economy of salvation everywhere and mediates all genuine religious experiences of God. Such mediation reaches other believers through channels available to the Spirit: sacred scriptures, religious practices, and rites which the Second Vatican Council expressed as "seeds of the Word" (AG 11). The Spirit is active in a distinct manner on a cosmic scale outside visible Christianity (RM 28) without, as Dupuis says, opposing the Christ-event as if they [the Christ-event and the Holy Spirit] functioned in two distinct economies. In such a situation, for

42 Ibid., 222.
43 Ibid., 224.
44 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 385.

Dupuis, interreligious dialogue takes place between people who are already saved by the work of Jesus Christ and who share in the communion of the Spirit. God's Word and God's Spirit have already been present in those religions.

A Trinitarian Christology and Communion with Others

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology proposes a theology of dialogue which is grounded on the Being/Self of God who is dialogical, not only in reaching out to humanity in history, but also in God's very nature as Father, Son, and Spirit.[45] The entire history of human salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvelously begins with God and which he prolongs with humankind in so many different ways (ES 70). Dialogue is found in the very plan of God. Mission is mostly the mission of God who intended to share with people the fullness of life in God's eternal Son and the Holy Spirit (AG 2). Thus, mission means entering into the mystery of a missionary God whose love embraces the world in ways we have neither known nor imagined (GS 22). Therefore, Dupuis argues that the commitment of Christians to dialogue is not merely anthropological but also and primarily, theological. Christians should enter into a dialogue with all human beings in the very same way that God entered into a constant dialogue of salvation with humankind.[46] Thus dialogue is Trinitarian inasmuch as "God the Father initiated and established it with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit" (ES 70).

Moreover, Christians are also called to build a "mutual and reciprocal" dialogue with others based on a communion model of the Trinity. Interreligious dialogue is meant not to convert others into Christianity. It is for Christians to discover and

45 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 255.
46 Ibid., 225.

encounter the presence of the Spirit of Christ in the members of other religions. In such an atmosphere, Christians should not only hope for the conversion of the "other." Christians themselves should remain open to experience personal transformation and remain attentive to the movement of the Holy Spirit which might come from other believers and their religious traditions.

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology also highlights another aspect in the theology of dialogue: that God has initiated a dialogue between God and humanity through the world religions. Religious traditions are a "path to salvation." This refers not merely to humanity's search for God, but also God's search for humankind. In fact, God takes the gracious initiative in inviting non-Christians to share in his divine life.[47] Therefore, the world religions do not simply represent the universal human aspiration for union with the divine mystery; they represent God's self-communication to humankind. Dupuis here quotes John Paul II's *Redemptor Hominis*, which states that "other religions have authentic religious experience which is the work of the Holy Spirit who is present and active in the world" (RH 6).

> The world religions are signs of God's presence in the world. Every religion is unique and through this uniqueness, religions enrich one another. In their specificity, they manifest different faces of the supreme Mystery which is never exhausted. In their diversity, they enable us to experience the richness of the One more profoundly. When religions encounter one another in dialogue, they build up a community in which differences become complementaries and divergences are changed into pointers to communion.[48]

47 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 305.
48 Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association (December 28-31, 1989), "Toward an Indian Christian Theology of

By affirming the positive role of other religions, dialogue of Christians with other religions is grounded on respect for others and on enrichment from the difference. A Trinitarian Christology highlights the surplus of God's mystery in other religions that Christians can learn and by which they can be enriched. While the historical Jesus represents the fullness of God's salvific will, he does not exhaust the mystery of God which is made present in the world religions through the non-incarnate Word.

Trinitarian Christology and the Proclamation of the Good News

Dupuis is definitely aware that there can be no authentic evangelization without proclaiming Jesus Christ the "constitutive" Savior, but he is equally aware that in such contexts as the church in Asia, Africa, or Latin America, there can be no profound evangelization and inculturation of Christ's message without dialogue with other religions and cultures. By affirming the "constitutive" role of Jesus Christ as the universal Savior, Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology also recognizes that dialogue with other believers ultimately constitutes the deepest motivation of Christians: to announce Jesus Christ and to share with others the joy of knowing and following him as Lord and Savior.[49] The document "Dialogue and Proclamation" shares the same notion:

Insofar as the Church and Christians have a deep love for Lord Jesus, the desire to share him with others is motivated not merely by obedience to the Lord's command, but by this

Religious Pluralism," in *Religious Pluralism: An Indian Christian Perspective*, ed. K. Pathil (Delhi: ISPCK, 1991), 338-49.

49 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 228.

love itself. It should not be surprising, but quite normal, that the followers of other religions should also desire sincerely to share their faith (DP 83).

A Trinitarian Christology underlines the necessity of both dialogue and the proclamation of the Christian gospel. Proclamation is part of Christians' commitment to faith in Christ, and of their mission to share God's love to the world. Thus, Dupuis acknowledges that in the Church, interreligious dialogue is always "in tension" with the proclamation.[50] It is a tension between the "not yet" of the Church who, together with the others is in history a pilgrim toward the fullness of the Kingdom, and the "already" of the Church that is in time and in the world the sacrament of the Kingdom: the former [the already] makes proclamation possible and the latter [the not yet] makes interreligious dialogue necessary.[51] Dupuis argues that the aims of dialogue and proclamation differ: the former seeks a deeper conversion of both partners toward God (DP 40 to 41), while the latter aims at inviting others to become disciples of Jesus Christ in the Christian community (DP 83). Taken together, dialogue and proclamation are closely linked. Dialogue contains an element of witness to one's own faith, and proclamation is to be carried out in a dialogical manner.[52]

50 This "tension" highlights that dialogue and proclamation must be distinguished as two different aspects in the Church mission; yet both are closely interrelated. In the traditional theology of religions represented, for instance, by *Dominus Iesus*, dialogue with other religions happens outside the mission and plays a preparatory role. Thus dialogue becomes subordinated to proclamation (DI 22). In this situation, the main purpose of the evangelizing mission is to proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Savior with the intention of converting others. The real problem with this approach is that conversion becomes one-sided.

51 Dupuis, "A Theological Commentary: Dialogue and Proclamation," in *Redemption and Dialogue*, ed. W. R. Burrows (NY: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1993), 155.

52 Michael Louis Fitzgerald, "Dialogue and Proclamation," in *In Many and Diverse Ways: in Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, ed. Daniel Kendall

Proclamation itself is dialogical, for "the communion brought about by dialogue is the deepest dimension of God's own mission in our midst luring us into self-giving love."[53]

In maintaining the importance of Gospel's proclamation, it must be noticed that Dupuis does not incline his theology toward ecclesiocentrism—an approach that has been objected to by Catholic theologians, including Dupuis. In his Trinitarian Christology, he moves beyond eccleciocentrism and offers a fruitful insight into the universality of the Kingdom of God as the center of every religion.[54] Dupuis agrees that the fullness of the means of salvation is in the Church (LG 9, 14, 17, and 48; RM 11; and DI 16). At the same time, he affirms that in relation to other believers who do not belong explicitly to the Church, the role of the Church is different. The other believers do not have to belong explicitly or implicitly to the Church in order to be saved. The Council appears to have affirmed this by another term in saying that the unbaptized are "oriented" to the church (LG 36). Hence, Dupuis argues that the proclamation of the Good News is not primarily to convert members of other religions to be an explicit member of the Catholic Church. Rather, its aims is to do the mission of Jesus Christ in the world to build the Kingdom of God. People are called to build the Kingdom of God by opening themselves to the action of the Spirit:

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and Gerald O'Collins (NY: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2003), 191.

53 Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 227.

54 Concerning the function of the Church in the process of salvation, Church documents distinguish three elements which are non-negotiable. Firstly, the church is the sign and instrument of God's salvation directed to all people (LG 9, 14, 17, 48; RM 11; DI 16). Secondly, all other believers are oriented to the Church and are called to become its part (LG 13, 16; AG 7; DH 1; RM 10; DI 20-22). Finally, the various religions cannot be considered as ways of salvation which complement the Church (RM 36; DI 21-22).

> It is true that the inchoate reality of the Kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere, to the extent that they live "Gospel values" and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills (Jn 3:8). But it must immediately be added that this temporal dimension of the Kingdom remains incomplete unless it is related to the kingdom of Christ present in the Church and straining towards eschatological fullness (RM 20).

The Relevance of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology to the Asian Church

Asia is a continent characterized by widespread poverty. Except for a few developed countries such as South Korea, Japan and Singapore, most Asian countries are among the poorest in the world. "The Church in Asia then, with its multitude of poor and oppressed people, is called upon to live a communion of life which shows itself particularly in loving service to the poor and the defenseless" (EA 32). The FABC highlights this poverty in Asia as a *locus theologicus* for theology. Another document from the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) says that the experience of the struggle of the poor and the oppressed against all forms of injustice in the Third World as a source of theology must be taken seriously as a new locus for theological reflection.[55] Thus, an important feature of Asian theology is human liberation and thus the coming together of different religions in the continent is not primarily to talk about problems among religions, but to solve the problems of poverty, injustice and violence in society.

55 See Final Statement of the Fifth EATWOT Conference, New Delhi, August 17 – 29, 1981, in *The Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 199.

Dupuis' theology of religions is very much influenced by the Asian context and Asian theologians. For him, because of the intertwined phenomena of widespread poverty and deep religiosity in Asia, interreligious dialogue must go hand in hand with actions towards the liberation of the poor in Asia.[56] Thus, Dupuis situates the praxis of interreligious dialogue in the context of human liberation. Following "Dialogue and Proclamation," Dupuis underlines the importance of uniting dialogue with the praxis of liberation such that

> Dialogue is for integral developments, social justice and human liberation. . . . There is need to stand up for human rights, proclaim the demands of justice and denounce injustice . . . . independently of the religious allegiance of the victims. There is need also to join together in trying to solve the great problems facing society and the world, as well as in education for justice and peace (DP 44).

Dupuis argues that one of the significant *loci theologici* for interreligious dialogue is to bring liberation especially to those who are poor and marginalized in society. Dialogue with other religious members is united with the praxis of human liberation that the members of the different religious traditions must engage together in the struggle for human liberation out of the differences between their respective religious faiths.[57] Dupuis particularly refers to the Asian context with poverty as its main characteristic together with religious diversity. As the FABC's document states, God is present and most clearly active in the poor of Asia; therefore, the Asian bishops have made the preferential option for the poor the fundamental direction of the church of Asia.[58] In this context,

56 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 119.
57 Ibid., 375.
58 Gaudencio Rosales and C. G. Arevalo, eds., *For All the People of*

Dupuis argues that interreligious dialogue in Asia should mainly fight for human liberation.

Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology is genuinely open to a Kingdom-centered theology of mission.[59] The goal of dialogue, therefore, is not ultimately to sweep other religions into the Church but to work with them in building the Reign of God.[60] By emphasizing the reality of the Kingdom of God instead of the centrality of the Church, Dupuis echoes the same intention with the FABC's document which points out that the mission of the Church in Asia is "to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God: to promote justice, peace, love, compassion, equality, and brotherhood in these Asian realities. In short, it is to work to make the Kingdom of God a reality."[61]

Further Reflections

After doing research on Dupuis' theology of religions, particularly on his Trinitarian Christology, I believed that what Dupuis is simply trying to do is to take a God's eyeview of the history of salvation, allowing him to observe how God in many and diverse ways has been giving Godself to humankind for their salvation. For him, religious pluralism shows that God is love and God's love is "greater than our heart" (1 Jn 3:20). The plurality of language, then, finds its ultimate source in a God who is Love and communication.

Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, vol. 1, Documents from 1970 to 1991 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books; Quezon City, Claretian Publication, 1992).

59 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 342.

60 Dupuis, "The Theology of Religious Pluralism Revisited," 211-263.

61 FABC: "Journeying Together toward the Third Millennium," in *For All the People of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences,* vol. 1, *Documents from 1970 to 1991*, ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arevalo (NY: Orbis Books; Quezon City, Manila: Claretian Publications, 1992), 275.

As a Jesuit, I also believe that Dupuis was inspired and deeply moved by the contemplation of the Trinity in the second week of the Spiritual Exercises: "Here it is how the Three Divine Persons were looking upon the whole extent and space of the earth, filled with human beings. They see that all were going down into hell, and They decreed, in their eternity, that the Second Person should become man to save the human race." Here, for Ignatius, the Christ-event is always in relationship to God's universal plan of salvation, willed by the three divine persons, as it has been expressed as well by Dupuis in his Trinitarian Christology. In the same way, Dupuis was also inspired by the "Contemplatio ad Amorem" or *Contemplation to gain love* in the Fourth Week of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. This contemplation is meant to find God's love in everything and love everything in God.

To Be Religious Is to Be Interreligious

As I reflect on Dupuis' writings, I found out that his main concern can be expressed in this statement: genuine religion necessarily entails a relationship with the other religions; thus, to be religious is to be interreligious.[62] What does this mean? It is in dialogue with other religions that Christianity can come to a fuller realization of its own identity and mission and a better understanding of the unique revelation that it has received from Christ. In the same way, other religions can achieve their full potential only in dialogue with each other and Christianity. There is then a reciprocal relationship between Christianity and other religions. In short, it is in and

62 This title is taken from the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association, entitled "Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism" on December 1989 from Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (New York: Maryknoll, 1997), 2-3.

through a conversation with others that we come to know who Jesus is for us today, and how to be a Christian in this pluralistic society. Our faith is not threatened but rather enlarged by the different ways of other faiths that have become a source of blessing for us.

As I reflect on my faith journey, Dupuis' concern resonates with my personal experience as well wherein my faith as a Christian was strengthened and deepened through my relationship with other believers, particularly with my Muslim brothers and sisters. Through this relationship, I have encountered in their religious traditions a sense of the sacred, a commitment to a deep personal experience of God and a total surrender of the self to God which eventually gave me a chance to learn and to deepen my faith as a Christian.

I am convinced that interreligious dialogue does not begin with propositions and theories but with experience and relationship. Through a real encounter with other religions, I have found the superabundant riches of the Divine Mystery expressed in the uniqueness and the depth of their faith. Their diversity enables us, Christians, to experience the richness of God more profoundly and thus deepen in our faith as Christians. Elizabeth Johnson quotes Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' analogy beautifully to show the enrichment that interreligious dialogue can bring:

> What would faith be like if we acknowledged the image of God in another, whose truth is not our truth? It is like feeling secure in one's own home, yet moved by the beauty of foreign places, knowing they are someone else's home, not mine, but still part of the glory of the world that is ours. It is like being fluent in English, yet thrilled by the rhythms of an Italian sonnet. It is like realizing that your life is a sentence written in the story of your own faith, yet

> pleased to know that there are other stories of faith written in other lives, all part of the great narrative of God's call and humanity's response.[63]

The Possibility of Multiple Religious Belonging?

Another element that I found deeply significant in Dupuis' theology of religions is his concern for "mutual enrichment" between Christianity and other religions, "an exchange and a sharing of saving values take place between Christianity and the other traditions and from which a mutual enrichment and transformation may ensue between the traditions themselves."[64] In fact, I realized that this mutual complementarity is the unique character of Dupuis' theology of religions which differentiates it from Race's approach. Does Dupuis also affirm the possibility of multiple religious belonging? By focusing on the mutual complementarity among religions, Dupuis opens up the possibility of adopting and living out other beliefs. Is multiple religious belonging in accordance with Catholic teachings with regard to the centrality of Jesus Christ? This question is very relevant particularly in the Asian context where religions are part of their people's culture. Not infrequently, Asian people go to pray and worship in pagodas, temples and shrines without caring about what religions these pagodas, temples, and shrines belong.

Given the model of Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology, which affirms the "elements of truth and grace" (AG 9) in other religious traditions as the work of God's Word and God's Spirit, multiple religious belonging is not only possible but also

63 Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum Publication), 178.
64 Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 326.

desirable.[65] If non-Christian religions contain an "element of truth and grace" and if they may be considered ways of salvation from which Christianity can and should benefit through dialogue, then there should be no theological objection against someone wishing to be a Christian and at the same time following some doctrinal teachings and religious practices of other religions, for as long as these are not patently contradictory to Christian faith and morals. It is through the effort to "go over" to other religions that Christians can deepen their Christian identity. Raimundo Panikkar shares his experience: "I 'left' as a Christian, 'found myself' a Hindu and I 'return' as a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian."[66] Dupuis gives an example of Christian-Buddhist encounter where the Buddhist learns more about what is uniquely valuable in Buddhist "gnosis," while Christians learn about what is uniquely valuable in Christian "agape." Thus, Dupuis affirms that the dynamics of multiple religious belonging is not to start from an abstract consideration of other religions' doctrines but on the willingness to deepen and enrich one's faith by combining one's Christian commitment and another faith experience.[67]

Multiple religious belonging is one form of interreligious dialogue where one tries to step into the shoes of a devotee of another religion and tries to acquire the same religious experience. It would allow Christians to learn from other traditions. Therefore, in the first place, the commitment to Jesus Christ

65 Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 504.

66 Raimundo Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 2.

67 Dupuis, "Christianity and Religions," in *Many Mansion*? *Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity,* ed. Catherine Cornille (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 69.

is assumed to be strong and without doubt so that the quest for the spiritual riches of other religions is meant to deepen and enrich Church teachings. This would clearly distinguish this manner of openness to other faiths from religious eclecticism, syncretism and relativism.

The dynamics of multiple religious belonging is a phenomenon which poses challenges and offers opportunities for the Church. Dupuis clearly makes this phenomenon more acceptable and desirable as the way for "mutual complementarity." However, its practice by people, especially the young, who do not possess the necessary qualifications, can easily lead to the danger of eclecticism, syncretism, and relativism. Among those qualifications, especially important are a deep commitment to Jesus Christ as the "unique" Savior, a firm rootedness in the Christian community, a competent knowledge of the doctrinal and religious traditions of both Christianity and the non-Christian religions, docility to the guidance of a trustworthy teacher or director, a genuine and sincere quest for communion with God, and an effective commitment to the work of justice.[68] The document *Dominus Iesus* warns against the following dangers of interreligious encounter:

> The difficulty in understanding and accepting the presence of definitive and eschatological events in history, the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history, the ecclecticism of those who, in theological resarch, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the tradition and magisterium of the Chruch (4).

68 Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging," 515-16.

Dupuis shares with us his effort to provide an inclusive theology of religions for a more positive and open concrete stance toward other religious traditions. His theology, as Dupuis says, is a "qualitative leap" in the theology of religions as he has been able to break new ground by offering fruitful insights through the model of Trinitarian Christology. With great courage and at painful cost, he opens a new path so that others can travel further in the quest for understanding the marvelous fact of religious pluralism as an expression of God's love. Pope Francis appears to be one of the theologians who dare to "follow" Dupuis' path in affirming the universality of God's love to all people. In an interview, Pope Francis emphasized God's limitless love, asserting that "God's mercy has no limits, even for those who have no faith." In his encyclical *Lumen Fidei,* he also expressed the importance of love in Christian faith:

> It is clear that the faith is not intransigent, but grows in coexistence that respects the other. The believer isn't arrogant; on the contrary, truth makes him humble, knowing that, more than our possessing it, it is truth that embraces and possesses us. Far from stiffening us, the certainty of the faith puts us on the way, and makes possible witness and dialogue with everyone.[69]

69 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Lumen Fidei,* June 29, 2013, Encyclicals *http*:// www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/encyclicals/documents/ papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei_en.html.

BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY

SYNTHESIS PAPERS

A Church Ever Ancient, Ever New

A Theological Synthesis from the Perspective of the XV Synod of Bishops on "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment"

Earl Allyson P. Valdez

As mentioned in the Synod's final document, the young people today are "the present and not only the future."[1] This was congruent with the theme, "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment." It also reflected the Church's concern over the young people, their contexts, and their challenges today. From the proceedings, the bishops aspire to determine the direction of the Church in preaching the Gospel in all areas of human life. Significantly, the proceedings included the participation of the young people from the preparatory stages down to the discussions.[2] The Synod turned out to be fruitful in revealing the young people's worldview,

1 The Holy See, "Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment," XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2018, http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html, §54. Further references to the document are indicated in the main text with the abbreviation FD, followed by the section number.

2 The Synodal process involves four particular stages held from 2017 to 2018, namely (a) the Preparatory Phase in which a commission is formed to create a work outline to be discussed in the second phase, (b) the Presynodal Meeting held in Rome where young people all over the world are gathered with the task of creating a Document that reflects the views and concerns of the young, which leads to (c) the creation of the *Instrumentum Laboris* which integrates input from the different dicasteries and committees in the Vatican, together with the Final Document of the Presynodal Meeting, and finally (d) the Synod itself, which is tasked to produce a final document that serves as the synthesis of the whole process. For a summary and timeline of the process, see FD 2-3.

situation, lived faith, and evaluation of the Church's identity and pastoral activity. The Church pays attention to the young people and accompanies them toward Christ and the offer of salvation. Given that these are at the heart of the Church's faith and mission, one might ask: *What does the synodal process reveal about the reality of the Church and her distinct way of living and believing?*

This theological synthesis would attempt to answer this question by discussing how the three interconnected points of the Synod's bring to new light the fundamental aspects of the Catholic faith. Ultimately, it shows how the Church, in her task of listening and accompanying the followers of Christ, constantly updates herself with the present contexts of the world. As the Church "ever ancient yet ever new," she affirms her distinct character as Christ's Body, called to participate in the mission received from the Holy Trinity. The Church bears the essential task of understanding and responding to the world in her preaching of the Gospel in word and deed.

Young People and the Call of a Listening Church

Being a listening and accompanying Church is not the end-product of the synodal process but her fundamental characteristic. With the "joys and hopes, grief and anguish" [3] of the young people today, the synodal process shows a Church that truly attends to their contexts and challenges. Moreover, the process shows a Church allowing the youth to be active participants in her mission, given their unique ways of belonging to

3 Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery O.P. (Northport: New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1984), §1.Further references to the document are indicated in the main text with the abbreviation GS, followed by the section number.

and acting in the world.[4] Reflecting on this more deeply, the Church identifies her role akin to how the Resurrected Christ listened to and accompanied His two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Like Christ, the Church continually listens to the concerns of young people and leads them to recognize Him in their journey toward growth, maturity of faith, and fullness of life (cf. FD 4). A part of this listening stance is the Church's trust and confidence in the youth's ability to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19), and make the salvation of Christ relatable to their context and challenges.

An important detail that emerged is the ***synodal*** identity of the Church, wherein she identifies with *all her members and with all believers*, most especially with the marginalized sectors and the world at large. From this, she sets to understand herself as a pilgrim community that journeys to her ultimate destination by listening and taking care of the needs and concerns of her members (cf. FD 121). As one people of God, the Church carefully discerns the path she will take in the future, recognizing that the treasures of her past and the concerns of the present can aid her in doing so.

True enough, this was the way the Synod Fathers and the young participants identified the Church's becoming.The documents and proceedings of the Synod genuinely reflect the Church's concerns and views of the young, from how technology affects their lives down to how the present culture affects their faith. Rather than resorting to generalizations, the Synod faced these head-on and named particular ways

4 The Holy See, "'Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment': Pre-Synodal Meeting Final Document," XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2018, http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/news/final-document-from-the-pre-synodal-meeting.html, §11. Further references to this Document will be indicated by the abbreviation PM, followed by the section number.

the Church could listen to and accompany the young in their journey to Christ.

This unique way of being Church reflects her fundamental identity affirmed and asserted in ***ecclesiology***: as the Father's people, called to holiness in and through the Son, and continuously animated by the Holy Spirit in her mission of evangelization.[5] As such, the Church heeds to her calling to be in this world, to understand where and how people dwell and witness the Gospel (cf. GS 40). The dialogical nature of the Synod reflects this calling in today's context, as young people are gathered together in Christ to share their situation, their lived faith, and the significant role of the Church in their lives. Moreover, they are encouraged to be creative in living their faith by using their God-given gifts and talents in their groups and communities.[6]

The Church remains faithful to her fundamental identity by listening, discerning, and accompanying the faithful toward Christ. Through the Synod, she names and articulates her mission. She heeds and responds to the realities of her members, finds avenues to preach the Gospel, and seeks opportunities to make the faith concrete through loving, merciful, and hopeful deeds. She does so with the aid of the treasures (Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Tradition) entrusted

5 Cf. Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), in *Vatican Council II* ed. Austin Flannery O.P. (Northport: New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1984), §9-17. Further references to the document are indicated in the main text with the abbreviation LG, followed by the section number.

6 Cf. The Holy See, "Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod 2018: 'Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment,'" XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2018, http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/instrumentum-laboris-for-the-synod-2018--young-people--the-faith.html, §140. Further references to the document are indicated int he main text with the abbreviation IL, followed by the section number.

to her to safeguard and articulate. The Synod brought out the meaning of what it means to be Church. The results can be brought to fruition if lived concretely in local churches and communities. While on her journey to the fullness of life, the Church accepts and fulfills her tasks (LG 63).

The Faith: The Believing Young in an Unbelieving World

More than reflecting on the identity of the Church, the Synod also considered the nature and situation of the Catholic Christian faith today. As reflected in the Final Document, both the Preparatory Document and the Presynodal Meeting show that the bishops—and the Church as a whole—desire to understand what the youth firmly believe in and hope for.[7] Thus the Synod articulated the beliefs (or the lack thereof) of young people today. In turn, this articulation assists us in widening our understanding, not only of the theology of ***revelation and faith*** but also of ***Christian worship*** and its primary expression *(lex credendi, lex orandi).*

The Synod identified that the world was primarily secularized, and its perspectives and values present a challenge for preaching and living out the authentic Catholic Christian faith. This identification does not disregard the possibility of living an authentic faith since the Church believes in its gratuitousness and the holistic response to it by her members. [8] Thus, the Synod appreciates the vibrant faith of the young believers and how it brings a sense of meaning and purpose in

7 The Holy See, *Documental Support for the Presynodal Meeting* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 24-25; See PM 6-7.

8 Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*)," in *Vatican Council II,* §5.Further references to the document are indicated in the main text with the abbreviation DV, followed by the section number.

their complex lives (cf. PM 14; IL 31; FD 16). The Synod also presented two distinct but inseparable images that capture their faith. On the one hand, it notes the prevailing worldviews which present as challenges to the Catholic Christian faith. For instance, the idea of being "spiritual but not religious" and the distorted/incomplete views of Jesus' identity and mission (cf. FD 50.) On the other hand, it shows how the young respond creatively to the challenge of living out their faith within their own spaces, contexts, and communities. These enable them to gather for common prayer in faith assemblies and youth festivals (PM 13-14).

Following these observations, the Synod pointed to a fruitful response: ***to witness the Christian faith*** by living and reflecting its truths. This is to be taken together with the challenge to know the faith through comprehensive catechesis (cf. FD 164). The Synod emphasized making Christ present in our midst and reflecting the love, mercy, and compassion he shows through listening and accompanying his present followers in their journey. The young desire to commit to this way of life (cf. PM 12), they also aspire for models who can help them be honest and open in sharing their struggles and hopes (PM 10). To put it simply, the young desire a faith that is both professed and lived in the ordinariness of human life. They desire that Christians truly follow Christ, the same Christ who incarnated God's love through his sacrifice on the cross and the same Christ who promises eternal life to those who believe and follow him. Here, the Synod affirms and situates the **fundamental *Christological* point of our Christian faith**.

This the core of ***Divine Revelation,*** which the Second Vatican Council articulates as the revelation of God's goodness and wisdom. By revealing Himself and His will, "men [and

women] should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature" (DV 2). Furthermore, it is to believe that the words we profess truly express the meaning of the actions we are called to do and make these actions represent what we mean in our words (DV 4). These essentially constitute Christian witnessing which the youth desire to see and live out. This also shows that we are more challenged to profess our faith by a careful and joyful understanding, articulating, and living out our faith in the world that seems to reject or take it for granted.[9]

But more than just witnessing, the Synod also articulated the desire of the young to proclaim, celebrate, and make present the God whom they firmly believe. Thus, the Synod also discussed the significance of ***sacred liturgy and worship***. Appreciating the Sacred Liturgy as the source and summit of Christian life in its totality,[10] the young people affirm the importance of Christian worship, most especially the Eucharist as the Real Body and Blood of Christ (cf. SC 7).

However the young people demand a "Eucharistic way of life," where they could draw from the Eucharist on how to live the Christian life and celebrate it in worship. They recognized the different avenues and spaces for them to celebrate their faith in communal gatherings and assemblies (e.g., youth days, prayer and Bible study circles, or gatherings in common

9 Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation* Evangelii Gaudium *on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, Apostolic Exhortations, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

10 Vatican II, "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), in *Vatican Council II*, ed. Austin Flannery O.P. (Northport: New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1984), §10. Further references to the document are indicated in the main text with the abbreviation SC, followed by the section number.

spaces such as coffee shops). They know that through these, they can appreciate more the Eucharist and the rest of the sacraments, for these are the means to proclaim, discuss, and celebrate their faith. Moreover, they also desire to lead and organize events and initiatives (e.g., musical, artistic, or sports events) to attract other young people to the Church (cf. PM 12-14). In articulating these aspirations, young people point out diverse ways of living out the meaning and significance of our faith as it is taught, lived out, and celebrated in the sacraments, most especially in the Eucharist.

With these considered, the Synod brought forth an understanding and living out of the faith by drawing from the treasures of the Church and appropriating it within the context of the young. Furthermore, these expressions are centered on Christ, who accompanies and listens to those who follow Him.

Voational Discernment: Faith and the Fullness of Life

Finally, the Synod discussed ***vocational discernment***, with special attention to the fundamental call to holiness and its appropriation to given situations and contexts. More than just laying down specific guidelines for making the "right choices" in life, the Synod emphasized that knowing God's will involves going through a process of prayer and reflection (see FD 77). Furthermore, the fruit of this process is to recognize and make good and loving choices, which the Lord desires that every person commits given his or her fundamental call to holiness.

The Synod greatly emphasized that this call to holiness is not restricted to the priestly and/or religious life. Rather, holiness is found and expressed in different ways of living that

young people today know and feel they are called to (cf. PM 8; IL 85). Seeing it as a "proposal of love" and a "missionary sending," the Synod pointed out that vocation is fundamentally relational, taking into consideration the quality of relationships that one has with God and with others. Therefore, what is necessary is to use one's own gifts and talents in the service of God and neighbor, which constitutes the loving choices that we are called to make.

It is noteworthy that part of responding to this call to holiness is to choose what is right and avoid evil.[11] Living a moral life might be more challenging given the changing social norms, public opinions, technology, and social media. Without issuing moral judgments on some issues, the Synod pointed out that young people need to understand their situations to do what is good. It called for young people to transcend a certain sense of "moralism" and get in touch with the real, individual situations that call them to be good and do good.[12] As with discerning God's call to be and act in a certain way, the young are called to seek the guidance and accompaniment of Christ (through the Church), not only teachings but also in witnessing a good and holy life.

Bringing all these together, the Synod provides an understanding of young people based on the Christian understanding of personhood, which binds Christian anthropology and morality with our theology of grace, evident in present circumstances and challenges. The Church firmly believes

11 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: Word & Life Publications, 1994), no. 1777. This is the Church teaching on conscience, as "a judgment of reason" through which he comes to know the good to be done and the evil to be avoided (CCC 1778).

12 In the Presynodal Meeting Document, this is the participants' way of describing a particular stance the Church takes with regard to morality and moral teachings (see PM 1.).

that, as creatures made in the image and likeness of God, human beings are called to live a life that glorifies God; in doing so, they receive the fullness of life and the salvation they seek and desire (GS 12). Though these ultimate ends are freely granted by God, with the desire for it placed in their nature,[13] free and intellect need to be exercised to understand and pursue these ends. Despite limitations, the human person is called to make choices that reflect and manifest God's love and goodness and affirm and value our God-given dignity. These choices involve life-defining and small acts of charity. Thus, young people are called to choose freely and even"risk" living the way of life that God calls them to be and incarnate His love and mercy.

Conclusion: The Church "Ever Ancient and Ever New" Within the Horizon of Hope

To summarize this discussion of the three major aspects in the XV Ordinary Synod of Bishops, it is important to see that the Synod reflected and touched on the fundamental aspects and dimensions of the Christian faith and life within the context and situation of young people today. This active dialogue involving the Church, the young people, and all peoples of good will lead to a further articulation of our fundamental beliefs on God, the Church, the human person, and the challenges brought by the present circumstances. In other words, it touches on the theological themes of **ecclesiology, divine revelation, Christian worship, Christology, Christian anthropology, and Christian morality.** Indeed,

13 In this regard see also Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967).

the Church in her synodality, shows that she can respond to the signs of the times and critically and prayerfully discern how to move forward. She does so by incarnating the treasures handed to her in our current situation. This fulfills St. Augustine's words of a Church "ever ancient and ever so new."[14]

This way of being Church says something about doing theology as a fundamental aspect in her life. Reflecting on the process and fruits of the Synod, it can be seen how theology is attuned not only to official teachings but to the present realities. In addition, theology also pays attention to other disciplines that aid in understanding God, the Church, the world, and the human person. What emerges is a dialogical and "synodal" theology. It is attentive to the signs of the times while being faithful to "seeking understanding." More importantly, it leads to fruitful action and encounter with the world, especially with persons and communities. The Gospel is preached and made alive in particular situations, cultures, and contexts.

After having seen how the Church exists in a synodal manner, it must not be forgotten that all these articulations and proposed responses are placed within the horizon of hope. The synodal process highlights the hope of the Church that the young can "see visions and dream dreams" (cf. Joel 3:1; PM 15) and participate in the divine work of "making all things new" (Rev 21:5). Surely, the conversation and dialogical process initiated at this Synod must continue even after the Synod. As time passes, new challenges and opportunities to preach the Gospel will appear. Most of all, one must see that the Church places her hopes on the young who hope and

14 Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), X, xxvii.

dream for a better future. In turn, they will lead the Church closer to God, their true end. Uncertainty looms, and the Church's "ever ancient and ever new" task of bringing the world closer to God remains as daunting as ever. The pilgrim people of God can only hope and trust in the God who guides and accompanies them, the same "promise-keeping" God who loves and calls today's young people.

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi:

The Theological Significance of Eucharistic Prayer IV

Alexander Zammit, MSSP

Every religious missionary would have to grapple with these questions, "How do theological truths learned in the study of theology sound in the ears of Christians who have never studied theology but have lived the mystery of the faith in their life?" and "How is our theological language received by people who are alienated or new to the Christian faith?" There seems to be a missing link between the truths reflected and spoken upon in theological studies and their concrete expressions in the lives of many people, which can only be bridged by language and experience. Taking this problem into account, the author attempts to deepen the understanding of *lex orandi, lex credendi,* by theologizing the fourth Eucharistic Prayer (EP) in an effort to narrow the gap between theology and the experience of faith.

The axiom, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine (5th c.), points to a deep relationship between the experience of worship and the truths of faith that the worshipping community upholds. In this paper, three attempts would be made: 1) to define *lex orandi, lex credendi,* 2) to discuss its implications, and 3) to propose a systematic theology of the liturgy which affirms its nature as the work and participation in the life of the Holy Trinity.[1] Liturgical theology as a "theology of the Trinity" becomes important in searching for

1 Cf. Edward J. Kilmartin S.J., *Christian Liturgy* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988).

how the liturgical experience becomes an immersion in the "central mystery of the Christian life and faith."[2] Dubbed as the prayer that is "at the heart of the Liturgy of the Eucharist,"[3] the EP shall be examined for its implications to theological anthropology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi

The last chapter of Luke's gospel recounts the story of Jesus journeying with the disciples to Emmaus. The One who had been walking with them all along was made known to them (ἐγνώσθη αὐτοῖς - cf. Lk 24:35) in the breaking of the bread. The space where the bread was broken becomes the space of intuition and faith. The breaking of the bread is the *kerygma* given to the community of disciples. Thus, the revelatory nature of this gesture is a hermeneutic to understand the well-known and frequently misinterpreted *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

While liturgical prayers are "evocative, poetic and symbolic" expressions of the mystery of faith (*ars*), theological treatises, by nature, are closer to scientific expositions (*scientia*).[4] However, this does not mean that liturgical prayer is not theological but rather, it "reflects the faith of the Church."[5] Thus, the theology of the Eucharist must not be prescinded from the mystery of faith because faith and the Eucharist are

2 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: Word & Life Publications, 1997), no. 234.

3 International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/GIRM.pdf, no. 30.

4 Paul de Clerck, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: Sens Original et Avatars Historiques d'un Adage équivoque," Questions Liturgiques 59 (1978): 211.

5 Hector Scerri, "The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer: A General Analysis of its Structure and Content to appreciate its Ecclesiological Meaning," *Melita Theologica* 51:1 (2000), 23.

rooted in the same saving event: "Christ's gift of Himself in the Paschal Mystery."[6] Hence, the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* is an invitation to consider liturgy as a "theological locus" and an expression of the *sensus ecclesiae*.[7]

Irenaeus tells us that "our doctrine agrees with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms the doctrine."[8] Scholastic theology holds that the liturgy of the Church is a "first theology," affirming the intrinsic bond between the Church's prayer and her beliefs.[9] If the Eucharist is the fullest manifestation of the Church's *lex orandi* (*SC* 1), it is also a manifestation of the Church's *lex credendi*. In the various mystagogical treatises of the Church Fathers, one discerns an effort to communicate the meaning of the liturgy as a pathway to enter into and understand the mystery of faith. Taking these into account, the author proposes a systematic theology of the liturgy that demonstrates liturgy "as a transparency for the mystery of salvation."[10] Only then can one consider how liturgy serves as a language and experience that communicates the truths of faith.

The Eucharist as the Work of and Participation in the Trinity

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is foundational to any attempt at articulating a theology of the Eucharist. Edward

6 Pope Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis*, 22 February 2007, Vatican Archive, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html (accessed October 17, 2017), no. 34.

7 Paul de Clerck, "Lex orandi, lex credendi," 192-93.

8 Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, 4: 18:5 (PG 7: 1028).

9 John D. Laurance S.J., *The Sacrament of the Eucharist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 44-45.

10 Ibid., 98.

Kilmartin's theology of the liturgy involves approaching the Trinity as a "grounding of symbol"[11] for the Eucharist. As the work of the Trinity, there can be "no Christian prayer without the action of the Holy Spirit, who unites the whole Church and leads it through the Son to the Father."[12] What the community celebrates and believes is made possible by the gift of faith, in communion with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.[13]

A systematic approach to Trinitarian theology thereby views liturgy as the "place where the economic Trinity unfolds itself."[14] Kilmartin describes the liturgical life of the Church, especially the Eucharist, as a "real symbol" of the economy of salvation, completely embodying the reality it signifies. As a "real symbol," Christian worship is understood as the "self-communication of the Trinity," inherently part of the plan of God revealed "by the Holy Spirit" (Eph 3:5).

One begins from the *perichoresis* within the immanent Trinity. The fulfillment of the dynamic of self-giving love within the three Divine Persons overflows into the economy of salvation or God's self-communication. A return to the Father completes this economy. The Spirit, who is the Love between the Father and the Son, is the "power of life." The mission of the Son and Spirit in the world reaches fulfillment in the kenotic movement of the Incarnation, which leads to complete self-offering (cf. Heb 9:14). The Lord is now a "vivifying Spirit" (1Cor 15:45) for humanity through the resurrection. He has become the Giver of life (cf. Jn 5:21).

11 Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 107.
12 Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, in *Documents on the Liturgy*, https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/GILH.pdf (accessed October 17, 2017), no. 8.
13 Cf. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 102.
14 Ibid., 181.

By giving them the Father's Spirit, the Son loves the Father just as the Father loves His children. The epicletic moment of Pentecost is the constitution of the *ekklesia* that loves the Father "in Spirit and truth." (Jn 4:24). This *ekklesia* lives according to the kenotic pattern set by the Son who constituted it. The space in which *kenosis* becomes possible is the earthly liturgy celebrated by the Church. God's beloved are called to live a kenotic life, "in love to the Father *and* to the Father's other children."[15] Therefore, the fundamental orientation of the Church in prayer is a kenotic love in the image of the Son, moved and inspired by the Spirit. By receiving the symbols of bread and wide that the Spirit sanctifies, the community commits to live in the kenotic way of life, "dying to self, in order to rise in glory."[16]

As the "center and high point" of the Eucharist, the EP is the "great creed" that proclaims and makes present the "salvation, deification, and membership as sons [and daughters] that Christ himself gained for humanity."[17] In this paper, we shall look in particular at EP4, which has been described by some as the "most theological" amongst all the Eps,[18] being Johannine in its theology and the most Trinitarian due to the influence of Eastern theology. Therefore, we shall harness this potential by going deeper into the theology expressed by EP4 and how it makes *lex orandi, lex credendi* visible.

15 Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 102.
16 Ibid., 192.
17 Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 78; Raymond Moloney S.J., *Our Eucharistic Prayers in Worship, Preaching and Study* in *Theology and Life Series,* vol. 14 (Delaware: Michael Grazier, 1985), 58; Yves M.J. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Economy*, vol. 3, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 229.
18 Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1986), 157.

The Anthropological Dimension in EP4

Every EP starts with a preface that praises God for his greatness. It is the heart of the Eucharist because it embodies thanksgiving that is "a profession of faith…a place of justification."[19] Below is the preface of EP4:

> It is truly right, holy Father, that we should thank you, truly just that we should glorify you, for you are the one God, living and true…You who alone are good and the source of all life have made all things that you might fill your creatures with your blessings and give joy to many of them with the brilliance of your light.[20]

The prayer is addressed to God the Father as the Source of all being (cf. Eph 3:14-15). The central word in this opening doxological line is "holy." The Johannine roots of EP4 is discernible in how holiness is here understood (cf. Jn 17:11). Holiness is not an attribute of God among others but "the very essence of the Godhead."[21] Holiness marks and sanctifies the believers to be God's adoptive children. From a theologico-anthropological perspective, EP4 roots the identity of those who pray to the Father in a "filial life and communion with the Father."[22] Those who are baptized as God's children are formed after the image of the Incarnate Son. As "synthesis interpreters and priests" of the created world, human beings lend a voice to the created order so that the Creator and Source of all goodness can be praised and glorified. God has given personhood to humanity (understood as communion) that can

19 Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, 159.
20 All excerpts from the EP4 are taken from the original Latin translation provided by Enrico Mazza in his *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*.
21 Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, 160.
22 Ibid.

"recapitulate creation…which originates from the communion of otherness in the Trinity."[23]

The Soteriological Dimension in EP4

The *anamnesis* of EP4 goes through the entire salvation history. The economic mission of the Son is seen as its culmination. EP4 borrows the Johannine vision of God's saving action springing from and being directed to love (cf. Jn 3:16). The soteriological vision of God's love is friendship which began in the act of creation, but which humanity abandoned in favor of death. In his grace, God wants to restore that friendship and bring it to completion:

> You made human beings in your image and entrusted the world to their care so that, serving you alone, their Creator, they might rule over all creatures. And when through disobedience they had lost their friendship, you did not abandon them to the power of death. In your mercy, you came to the aid of all of them, so that they might seek and find you.

Salvation takes its most definitive form in the person of the Son. The Son is both the "Only-begotten" in relation to the Father, and the "Savior" in relation to humanity.[24] The fullness of this economy within the anamnetic narrative culminates in the paschal mystery. As the "sacrament of memory" and the banquet set by the Son for His Bride, the Church, the Eucharist manifests what was made possible by the earthly mission of the Son. This anamnetic moment

23 Yik-Pui Au here refers to John Zizioulas' liturgical theology, that is also grounded in theology of the Trinity. Cf. Yik-Pui Au, *The Eucharist as a Countercultural Liturgy: An Examination of the Theologies of Henri de Lubac, John Zizioulas, and Miroslav Volf* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 59.

24 Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, 167.

brings into reality the perfect love of the Son for the Father that has become kenotic for us.

This love thus operates a new orientation in the celebrating community: "that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and rose for us." God's Kingdom manifests the love of the Father for the Son, the Son's love for the Father, and their gift of mutual love through the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 17:23, 26). For Alexander Schemann, the joy of the Christian faith and experience resides in the fact that "that which is limited (humanity), has its origin in God who is complete, and in relation to Him, humanity is able to witness to Him, reflect His light, and act through his grace."[25] The *anamnesis* does not simply remember the last supper as to make present the sacrifice of the cross but brings out the quality of making present the original plan of creation. The entire earthly life of the Son is understood in the *anamnesis* as a total gift of self. The words of Isaac the Syrian resonate well with the soteriology expressed in EP4:

And why was he stretched out on the cross for the sake of sinners, handing over his sacred body to suffering on behalf of the world? I myself say that God did all this for no other reason than to make known to the world the love that he has, his aim being that we, as a result of our greater love arising from an awareness of this, might be captivated by his love when he provided the occasion of this manifestation of the Kingdom of heaven's mighty power - which consists in love - by means of the death of his Son.[26]

25 Cf. Alexander Schmemann, *L'Eucaristia, Sacramento del Regno* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2005), 29

26 Cf. Hilarion Alfeyev, "The Spiritual Word of Isaac the Syrian," *Cistercian Studies* 175 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2000). Quoted in Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, http://orthodoxeurope.org/

The Ecclesiological Dimension in EP4

Every EP has an *epiclesis,* or a prayer addressed to the Father that He may send down the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is introduced as the One who will bring to completion the work of the Son. This resonates with the Johannine passages where Jesus promises to send his disciples "another Advocate," whom the Father will send in His name (cf. Jn 14:15-ff). In EP4, the Son is said to have sent the Spirit "from you, Father, as the first fruits for believers, who would finish his work in the world and bring holiness to completion." Thus, in EP4, the theology of the paschal mystery outlined in the *anamnesis* is "inflected in a pneumatological direction… giving a global vision of the entire economy."[27]

In EP4, one finds two inseparable epicletic prayers. The first is an invocation to the Father that the Spirit may sanctify the gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The second is a parallel invocation that the community "gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit…may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory." The Holy Spirit is both the One who brought about the Incarnation of the Word ("having taken flesh by the Holy Spirit") and the One whom the Father sent to constitute the Body of Christ.[28] By the power of the Spirit, the Church comes to exist as the Body of Christ through the salvific realities of the Word and the Bread.[29] In the image of the Son, the Church becomes a "living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory." The Eucharist forms a community that has unity as its *sine qua*

print/11/1/16.aspx (accessed October 17, 2017).

27 Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, 168.

28 Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 230.

29 Cf. Chito Arevalo, "L'Eucharistie et l'Église," http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2002-03/25-999999/06SAIIFR.html (accessed October 17, 2017).

non because it is founded upon and oriented towards the *communio* of the Trinitarian God.

Conclusion: The Eucharistic Prayer as an Evangelizing Exposition of the Faith

This paper followed Edward Kilmartin's thesis that liturgical theology is to be grounded in a theology of the Trinity. Liturgy can express the theological truths of faith because it is both the work of the Trinity and participation in the *communio* that is the Trinity. Three central moments of EP4 are identified to delve into the theological significance of the prayer: the preface, the anamnesis, and the epiclesis. Each of these moments unravels the anthropological, soteriological, and ecclesiological dimensions rooted in the work of the three Divine Persons.

As a missionary called to serve the Christian community in the name of Jesus the good shepherd to his pilgrim Church, we see the potential of liturgical language as an effective means of evangelization. The Son invites his Bride to His Father's banquet. In turn, He invites the Church to make the liturgical space wide open for the world. In the Eucharist, the Church witnesses God who "destroys death forever… and who wipes away the tears from every face" (Isaiah 25:8). The liturgical experience does not remove the Church from the world. Instead, the experience of the Eucharist becomes "the symbolic representation and realization of salvation history…a real event whenever men and women of goodwill respond responsibly to claims made upon them to act in accord with their human dignity."[30]

30 Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 88.

Mystery and the Ascent
Through Choice

Manuel Francis B. Docto SJ

"We suppose that sight improves as objects are conquered… it is perfected in their loss."

-Michel de Certeau, *White Ecstasy*

Most of my philosophy teachers would begin their course by underlining that any philosophical reflection is provoked by a moment of anomaly. An anomaly or disorder from how things usually work catches the mind's attention and awakens it by leading it to question and reflection: for instance, a missing book from the shelf, an unsettling silence of an extroverted friend, or a death of a loved one.

For me, it was a line from my Philosophy of Religion professor that left me both in awe and confusion. He said beautifully in Filipino, *"Sa pagpapakilala ng Diyos, nagtatago ang Diyos"* (As God reveals who he is, he hides). The ambiguity of the statement led me to question if God is truly knowable in his all-at-once-revealing-and-hiding. If he is knowable, up to what extent is he knowable? How much of him is known, and how much is hidden and remains inaccessible to me? What makes him knowable at all? As the confusion in ambiguity continually persists in my consciousness, my mind also responds by wrestling with it. It is always ongoing because a question is only answered by another question.

The philosophical enterprise as an ongoing questioning and questioning further is marked by fecundity because it gives birth to new insights. After all, to question is to begin a quest in shedding light on unknown things in order to understand them. Having a new in-"sight" can mean that I have a new understanding about a certain thing. Hence, an "aha!" moment is also an "I see…" moment. In other words, when we gain new insights, we see, we understand, we grasp the thing questioned.

But then, sometimes, the endless questioning in philosophy strikes me as a futile task. It is almost like philosophy as a discipline of questioning is absurd because despite its forward motion, it eventually seems to move towards the direction where nothing can be seen. The quest to uncover will inevitably point me to a certain hiddenness. This moving-towards-hiddenness reminds me of a term we used in linear drawing when I was still studying architecture in college: the vanishing point.

The Humility of the Vanishing Point

The vanishing point is used in drawings to represent three-dimensional models which are usually called perspectives. It is the point where all lines converge. Let us paint a picture: you are walking along Katipunan Avenue, and you try to look as far as your eyes can take you. Then you will notice that everything – road, buildings, center island, light posts, line of trees – converge into a single point. This is the point where everything becomes hidden, as it were, because my vision can no longer see anything beyond that point of convergence. Things that lie beyond the point of convergence vanish even if I focus my eyes for a long time. If the discipline

of questioning that is innate in philosophy is as futile as straining my eyes to see what is beyond the vanishing point, then what good can it give?

Socrates is well aware that the discipline of questioning is more important than finding answers when we see philosophy as love for wisdom. Most of his dialogues, if not all, possess such a character of criticizing, refuting, and examining arguments until his interlocutors reach the inevitable point of *aporia,* or not finding a definitive answer to a question. But then, the beauty of an aporetic moment is that it leaves the person perplexed insofar as it opens the person to the humbling discipline that is philosophy. Indeed, no question is answered, but a new insight is gained: I know that I do not know.

A moment of *aporia* is similar to walking straight towards the vanishing point, only to realize that as you go closer, the point of convergence continues to recede further into its hiddenness (which can lead to even more perplexity!). If anything, the point of perplexity is crucial because it can either leave the person stunned and motionless or it can drive the person to inquire all the more.

However, despite the seeming futility of running towards an ever-receding point, the frustration of not finding answers, and the hiddenness in all that there is to know, does it truly stop us from questioning?

Mind for Mystery

For the medieval thinker and theologian, Saint Thomas Aquinas, the human mind possesses an unrestricted drive to

know all that there is to know about all that there is.[1] A human being's power above all other beings lies in the capacity to question what things are, why things are, and how all things fit in the greater scheme. In other words, the mind's intending towards the many things, or for Aquinas, *beings*, that can be known shows its openness to the vastness of reality and its drive to seek a vision of unity in it. On the flipside, *beings* can be known because they are open to being known, but only through a dramatic unveiling. Hence, there is openness between the mind's intelligence and its unrestricted drive to know the whole of reality and *being's* intrinsic intelligibility that reveals itself gradually.

But then, the enterprise of knowing proves to be tedious and tricky. After all, knowing seeks certainty that supposedly sheds light on things that are "hidden" in the darkness of unknowing. Many philosophers have tried to pin down how we know and what we can know. Yet their efforts only open seekers to further questioning such as, "Do we know things as they really are or only as we perceive them?" Things become even more complicated because of the one reality we cannot escape as human beings: change.

One of my favorite references to fluctuating reality is Heraclitus' river allegory. A flowing river is filled with much life and movement that one cannot grasp, not even literally, as there are no two moments when the river is exactly the same. Moreover, Plato deemed that whatever is changing belongs to a lower kind of reality. It is a mere appearance of an immutable higher reality called the Forms where true knowledge lies. Appearances appeal to the senses, which deceive and are

1 Gerald McCool, *The Universe as Journey: Conversations with W. Norris Clarke, S.J.*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988), 255-281.

therefore not a reliable foundation to attain true knowledge. In short, knowledge remains uncertain in the realm of change or the sensible world as we know it.

Among the thinkers of the Modern period, it is perhaps Descartes who is most allergic to uncertainty. In fact, he nitpicks everything in order to discover a way out of the hiddenness in things and trickery of change. Using his method of doubting, Descartes succeeds in finding that one thing unblemished by uncertainty: the mind as the thinking thing. The thinking thing is indubitably real and exists insofar as it is doubting, which is an act of thinking (*cogito ergo sum*). Now perhaps we can say that nothing is hidden because the starting point of all knowing is the conscious "I" and not the object being known. In effect, the "I" knows by surrounding, engulfing, and assimilating objects outside of itself and imposing meaning on them. The "I" is at the center where nothing is hidden because everything else is a mere derivative reality.

What happens then to a person who is known only through the "I" imposing meaning and not letting the person unfold? The person is reduced to an object, a thing-thrown-in-front to be examined like a statue. I remember reading *Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals* where Robert Barron distinguished a statue from an icon and how the latter can be an avenue for deepening one's spirituality.[2] On the one hand, a statue is three-dimensional, and therefore, one can go around it, examine its proportions, and identify its material. There is no element of "beyond" when looking at a statue because one can almost immediately say, "Hey! This is an object!" On the other hand, an icon,

2 Robert Barron, *Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals* (Crossroad, 2002).

because it is two-dimensional, acts as a window. For instance, consider the orthodox icon of Christ the *Pantocrator*. If one looks at Jesus' eyes, there is a certain depth that invites and captivates the observer. There is a "beyond" in the depth of the eyes, and there is also something beyond the limits of the boundaries framing the icon which remains to be inaccessible to the observer. Therefore, the spirituality of an icon is in its capacity to open the person to something that escapes the "I's" imposition of meaning. The "I" cannot surround, engulf, and conquer what is inaccessible and hidden from its understanding.

The Persisting Itch for Mystery

A sense of bringing into light the hiddenness of things mysterious is one thing that gives the human person the drive to know. I, for one, love crime-suspense thrillers because it is always a delight to be at the edge of my seat as I try to play detective inside my head. People like me love to read suspense-thrillers not because we are psychopaths but because there is a rush in feeling that one is participating in completing a suspense-thriller narrative.[3] There is an itch to uncover what is hidden and to find out what will happen next. The rush we get in reading is not just in the gut, but more so in the mind. It is an intellectual rush. Violence and crime are anomalies in the routines of daily life, and this is why they draw attention and invite further thought.[4] One knows that such disturbance in the norm demands from the mind a

3 "The Psychology of Suspense," *Crime Reads*, https://crimereads.com/the-psychology-of-suspense/ (accessed March 11, 2021).

4 "Why are We Obsessed with Psychological Thrillers," *The Times of India*, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/O-zone/why-are-we-obsessed-with-psychological-thrillers/ (accessed March 11, 2021).

reason for the unfolding of the events and even its own solution to the problem.

Saint Thomas Aquinas further elaborates such dynamism between the intending "I" and the unfolding mystery of being: again, the relationship between the human mind's intelligence and being's inherent intelligibility. According to Aquinas, the mind and being are radically for each other; they define each other and are correlatives.[5] It is almost like saying that one cannot exist while the other does not. In other words, mystery can only be mystery insofar as there is a conscious being that sheds light on its mysteriousness. Heidegger reiterates that it is the human being's vocation to speak of that mystery as it unfolds from the darkness.

The darkness of mystery can both be frightening and awesome, mysterium tremendum et fascinosum, as Otto describes it. What comes to mind when talking about the combination of fear and awe is the journey of Alice into the depths of Wonderland. For one, I choose to believe that the author of Alice in Wonderland did not arbitrarily select the name of the protagonist who slowly discovers the mystery of Wonderland. The name "Alice" can be traced to its roots in the Greek word aletheia, which means "to unveil" or "to uncover." Alice also finds herself in an unknown land, and there are a lot of moments when she is threatened and frightened by the new and unusual things that she sees. But despite the dangers that Alice experiences in the depths of Wonderland, she still went on deeper and deeper into the darkness of mystery.

5 W. Norris Clarke, "Action as the Self-Revelation of Being," in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

Loss of Sight and the Logic of Love

It is easier to associate mystery with darkness because in darkness, as in mystery, one can easily lose sight. Yet the experience of Saint Anselm of Canterbury in his journey of seeking what (or who) can be considered as the mystery of mysteries, namely God, is an experience of a loss of sight - not, however, because of darkness, but because of a blinding light.

Driven by his desire to see God, Anselm reaches the point of blindness: *"I strive to see more, but I see nothing beyond what I have seen…."*[6] He has seen God and yet has not yet seen him at the same time. It would seem that in his journey to see God, he has finally reached the point of convergence, the vanishing point. However, what makes Anselm's journey a distinguished one is that his motivation is a departure from a human being's sheer innate unquenchable thirst to know. What moves him to seek God is his desire and love for God, his faith that seeks understanding. When Anselm says, *"I seek your face, Lord, it is your face I seek,"*[7] it is not from his sheer capacity to intend towards the object of his knowing, God, but the will that is moved by his desire.

A famous line from Shakespeare is often invoked by lovers who are separated by a great distance. "Absence only makes the heart grow fonder." This line resonates with what desiring is all about: the longing for something that is or someone who is not there and is untouchable, ungraspable, and cannot be seen. It communicates a sense of lacking something that needs to be satisfied, making the heart restless, in Saint Augustine's terms, until it rests in that which will make it complete.

6 Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
7 Ibid.

The unquenchable thirst to know in Saint Anselm, therefore, slides from mere natural correlativity between human intelligence and the intelligible towards another added dimension in knowing that involves the capacity of the will to choose. The capacity to choose opens the person to go beyond the vanishing point, the uncertainty of mystery, and the darkness of not-seeing. In other words, "to know" here is not to grasp and understand as in the Cartesian enterprise but to risk not-seeing despite the striving to see. It is by risking amid not-seeing that one's vision begins to coincide with the disappearance of things from one's view.[8] In short, a person is able to see only in that blinding moment. The all-at-once-revealing-and-hiding is exemplified when God said *"I am who am"* to Moses. It is a divine utterance that escapes the grasp of the human intellect while still letting it know, albeit only partially. The statement *"Sa pagpapakilala ng Diyos, nagtatago ang Diyos"* opens man to the mystery of God - that there is something or someone other than oneself who escapes the grasp of one's understanding. If anything, mystery creates a space of awareness that one is not alone.

Towards the Mystery of the *Other*

A sense of mystery prompts a person's awareness that things known are something-other-than-oneself. This other is uncontainable, at least not completely, within the confines of human categories. For Emmanuel Levinas, it is the person who possesses the radical otherness, who is completely *Other*, and who resists the grasp of the "I."

To comprehend literally means "with grasp."[9] It is the itch

8 Michel de Certeau, "White Ecstacy," in *The Postmodern God*, ed. Graham Ward (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997), 155-158.

9 The word "comprehend" comes from two Latin words: *cum* which

of human intellect to grasp and assimilate things (or persons), reducing the *Other* within the bounds of the mind's categories. I normally see this in a person's familiarity with another. For example, a dear friend of mine, even after decades of familiarity, continues to surprise me with an unexpected change in temperament or a transformation of behavior, for better or worse. These moments of surprise make me say that I do not know my close friend that well after all. More fundamentally and in a more tangible way, the *Other* exceeds this level of familiarity and is also all-at-once-revealing-and-hiding, and can indeed "surprise"[10] through the very epiphany of the face.[11]

For Levinas, the element of surprise as experienced in the encounter with the face is "straightaway ethical."[12] The face implies that the *Other* is radically separate from me and that this separation is not towards a fusion but a relation: an ethical relation. This is a critique of Heidegger's understanding of the relationship between *Dasein*[13] and the *Other* that is grounded on knowledge. The former, in its isolation, becomes aware of its independence from everything and seeks to escape its solitude.

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translates "together" and *prehendere* which translates "to grasp".

10 In the French language, the word *prise* translates, "taken" while the prefix *sur-* means "above" or "beyond." Hence, the word "surprise" can mean "to be above or beyond being taken or grasped."

11 Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics and Infinity," trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1982), 85-92.

12 Ibid.

13 *Dasein* or "being-there"*:* Martin Heidegger's understanding of *being* is fundamentally ontological. Here, *being* is understood as a verb, that is, to exist is "to be." Since existence cannot be shared and is exclusively private, *being* is isolated, at least ontologically. Levinas mentions that "the fact that I exist, my existing, which constitutes the absolutely intransitive element, something without intentionality, without relation." In other words, there is nothing ethical about *"to be."* And so, there is a need to go beyond the ontological understanding of *being* that is isolated in its existence.

The first kind of *being's* exit from its isolation towards the world is through knowledge. However, this escape from solitude eventually goes back to itself as it assimilates objects. Levinas says, "In what concerns knowledge: it is by essence a relation with what one equals and includes, with that whose alterity one suspends, with what becomes immanent, because it is to my measure and to my scale"[14] (One can almost hear Descartes say the same thing about the *cogito's* knowing process). In other words, in this attempt to escape solitude through knowledge, it assimilates the objects, including the *Other,* and makes it the "same"[15] as itself. But there is another way to escape *being's* solitude, and that is sociality.

The escape through a social relationship deposes *being's* dominion over the *Other* because sociality does not only escape isolation, but it escapes *being* itself. Moreover, social relationship recognizes the otherness of the *Other,* who is not the "same," and that resists assimilation through knowledge. Hence, what is social is ethical because here *being* becomes aware of the *being-in-front;* there is the encounter with the *Other.*

The encounter with the face is a reminder that I am a human being with other human beings. There is a completely *Other* outside myself. This *Other* is someone that transcends pure objectivity and, at the same time, ethical because it commands me to be responsible for the *Other.* The face gives a straightforward ethical command, "Thou shall not kill," that prompts a person to act and go against the violent tendency to

14 Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1982), 60.

15 The term "same" is used by Levinas in the process of knowing as assimilation, that is to say, whatever is known is absorbed by the ego making it the same or equal as itself. Consequently, the *Other* is loses its radical otherness and is reduced to a state of immanence.

conquer the *Other,* so to speak, and fit it in its own measure and scale. And so, the encounter with the face is a de-centering from the ego-centricity of *being* and the resolution not to twist them to fit our own image.[16] Here, the mystery of the *Other* finds another name as the infinite, ever sliding away from the grasp of the finite mind.

The Ascent Through an Ongoing Choice

Where does philosophy, with its task of questioning, ultimately lead me if the inquiry into the existence of things, God, and other people always arrives at a mystery ever-sliding away from my own understanding? Here, the more compelling question for me is: why do I even bother to continue asking when all I get are more questions, and when I find myself even deeper in the darkness of mystery? What is the whole point of the unrestricted drive to know when what is intelligible seems to direct me only towards the receding vanishing point? What is the sense of philosophy and the questions it asks? What is in it for me?

In order to move forward with these questions and not be completely paralyzed by the seeming futility they provoke, I want to establish that philosophy and the act of questioning are indeed inseparable. They are tied to each other inasmuch as the love for wisdom should also mean the love for a type of inquiry caused by fascination and awe that in turn trigger curiosity and attention. Such predisposition can open one to an ongoing meaningful journey. Although one can never fully exhaust the understanding of all of reality, it is not impossible to know reality.

16 Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island* (Colorado: Shambhala Publications, 2005).

One is not alone and is always a being in a community of beings. It is thus important for the human agent or actor to exercise the power of choice and choose to raise one's vision towards the whole of reality. Here, I would like to express three points:

First, the discipline of questioning in philosophy orients us to the mystery of reality and at the same time, to the awareness that it is not impossible to know that mystery. Knowing is possible, but always only in a perspectival way. This means that human knowing is limited and can never absolutely comprehend anything. The desire to know of the human mind may be unrestricted, but its capacities for understanding are also finite. The human being can only intend[17] to things that reveal themselves gradually within a space-time continuum. For example, the best virologists do not completely understand the COVID-19 pandemic yet, even after more than a year, because it is still unfolding, and all we can do is to patiently wait. Furthermore, knowing will always be influenced by the knower's contingent existence in history. The human knower is a conscious being who is thrown-in-the-world (as Heidegger puts it) at a crosspoint[18] in history where culture and all other societal factors influence the shape of one's understanding. Knowing is not static, not in the sense of imposing meaning on the object, but in understanding from a unique viewpoint. Knowing is dynamic because there is a relationship between the one who intends and the one that unveils.

Since knowing is perspectival, it enriches the meanings of

17 The word "intend" comes from the Latin word *intendere* which means "to stretch/ extend towards" (*in: "*towards" + *tendere: "*stretch")

18 Ramon Reyes, "Man and Historical Action," in *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings*, ed. Manuel B. Dy, Jr. (Makati City: Goodwill Trading Co., 2001), 105-110.

things. When the "I" questions, such act of questioning is done by and properly belongs to the inquirer alone. In short, I am invited to philosophize because I can bring into philosophy my own unique way of seeing things. My own understanding contributes to and enriches the overall meaning of things in the same way that others can and do. For instance, one poem can generate as many readings and meanings as there are readers and interpreters of it.

Second, the "I" who questions points to a "you." I am a being among other beings: *inter homines esse.* I am a person in relation with others. The *Other* is not a mere object to be examined using the methodologies of the exact sciences so as to shed light on and make known the *Other* in its intelligibility. For the *Other* is also a conscious being who sheds light on me and who affirms that I am also intelligible, that I exist. Furthermore, the ethical impetus in the command "Thou shall not kill" echoes the call to value and respect the *Other's* dignity. The radically *Other* demands respect as the person unravels gradually. Also, the *Other,* who is all-at-once-revealing-and-hiding, demands respect because I can never completely grasp anyone. Hence, I am called to free myself from the urge to contain any person by reducing one to a mere insight or simply use the other for the sake of my ends. Therefore, the respect for human life springs forth from an authentic and deliberate questioning of the "I" who asks, "Who is this other-than-myself?"

Finally, the discipline of questioning embedded in philosophy carries me beyond mystery towards an ascent of the mind through my ongoing choice. Numerous philosophers understand the ambit of reality as the One. Despite the many particulars, there is that which is the source and end of all things and that binds all things. Plotinus elaborates this in

his Neoplatonic worldview of the One and the many through the metaphor of emanation. For him, things flow from God[19] and cascade to a hierarchical order from the most perfect, spiritual realm to the least perfect or the material world. However, there is a reversal of the order in the soul's ascent towards the Source. Plotinus presents the ladder of knowledge where thinking lifts one's thoughts from the least perfect to a higher perfection and a broader reality.

Nevertheless, the genius of existential Thomism's take on metaphysics further explains that the ascent to God is through participation within a universe viewed as an ordered hierarchical community of beings belonging to the same Father.[20] It is in the unrestricted drive of the mind towards things intelligible that one's consciousness is raised to the Source of all existence. Yes, the mind reaches its limits, but it rebounds and transcends those limits through one's capacity to inquire further.

Yet again, there is another kind of participation here. This participation is not that of the analogous kind in the hierarchical order, which is more of a passive one: I am human, and I participate in the whole of reality through my existence as a human being among other beings. But I also participate actively through my choices that ripples throughout the ambit of reality. To act then as a human being is not only to act through passive self-expression and self-communication nor to be "surprised" by the *Other* even without any such intention

19 Plotinus' understanding of a "God" as the One whom everything flows from (Source) is not a God who creates for creation is an act. Since creation involves a movement from potentiality to actuality, it cancels out his concept of God who is absolute unity and pure actuality. God does not do but just *is*. And so, things flow from God out of necessity just as light emanates from the Sun, the ultimate source of light.

20 McCool, *The Universe as Journey*, 255-281.

whatsoever by the *Other*. Above all, to act is to actively and consciously choose. Each choice that I make creates change, even if only like a leaf falling in the middle of a forest, as Khaled Hosseini describes in *The Kite Runner*. It may be a small act, but it is an act that affects and changes the universe in its own way, however small a change this may be.

Hence, the journey of philosophy is not just in its discipline of questioning that raises the mind to higher realities, but also in the act of choosing to do it, choosing to rebound when limits show, and choosing to transcend the abyss of mystery. The human condition is as such: it fluctuates like a river. I know, and I do not know. I grasp, and things slip away from my grasp. I see, and then I see nothing. But each time I encounter mystery, it is not nothingness; it is depth-beyond-me. Choosing to enter that depth does not mean losing sight, but it is what opens me to higher realities whose excess of meaning can be compared to the brightness of the sun, which human eyes cannot directly behold without immediately becoming blinded.

And so, the ascent entails choosing to look at the Sun, as the character in Plato's myth of the cave does. The light of the Sun compels one to contemplate it, but one may choose not to do so because of fear, uncertainty, loss of control, or because one may see it as an unwanted burden of existence. For me, sometimes I see the task of philosophical inquiry as a burden that is as futile as Sisyphus' perpetual task of pushing the rock up the mountain only to start all over again upon reaching the top. But if only Sisyphus would realize that it is *his* rock, not anybody else's, that it is only he who can choose to do that task! He would be able to embrace his rock and choose to do his existential task not because it is a punishment but because he is willing to do it. Only then would his ascent not be an absurd one, but one with meaning. He understands and yet also remains a mystery even to himself.

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