LOYOLA PAPERS

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR'S PREFACE

After its more than three-decade hiatus, *Loyola Papers* has finally been revived, thanks to the efforts of Fr. Enrico C. Eusebio, Jr. S.J., our President and Editor. This move to provide a suitable platform for student and alumni research in LST is very much in line with the Apostolic Constitution, *Veritatis Gaudium*, which points to the "pressing need to give new impulse to the scientific research conducted in our ecclesiastical universities and faculties" (5).

In line with this, the revival of this journal and its specific focus on student and alumni publication is a welcome step towards building a culture of research in this ecclesiastical theological Faculty, a research culture that we hope would be rooted in and relevant to the context of our local churches. Allow me then to present to you our humble offering, especially in this year—the last in the novena leading up to the Quincentennial of Christianity in the Philippines—a year that has been dedicated by our bishops to Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and Indigenous Peoples.

The first article, by **B. Christian Triyudo Prastowo, S.J.,** titled "Resonating With The Word: Exploring the Thought of Daniel Madigan S.J. in His Attempt to Share Christian Faith with Muslims" is a timely exploration of the complex theme of Christian-Muslim Dialogue. Just recently, the move to convert the *Hagia Sophia* into a mosque has revived old animosities, but this time in the world of social media, where we also see a lot of conflict, hate, and violence wrongly motivated by religion. Hence, Prastowo's work is not only

a homage to Madigan and his legacy but also a reminder that dialogue between Christians and Muslims (and other religious traditions as well) even in theological matters—and especially in theological matters!—is not only possible and necessary but potentially enriching for all parties involved.

Barnabé Hounguevou, S.J.'s "Jesus as Guest, Host, and Meal: Three Images as Approach to the Christological Problem in Africa" immerses us into the challenge of "naturalizing" Jesus in Africa where Christ is perceived as a foreign and irrelevant entity. Hounguevou's rich discussion leads us to reflect on the extent to which we have also introduced Jesus in a way that is truly rooted in and relevant to our own people's culture. Following the thought of Enyi Ben Udoh, he advocates a Christology anchored on understanding and presenting the figure of Jesus as guest, host, and meal in a manner that is faithful both to African culture as well as to Scripture and tradition. In this year dedicated not only to Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue but also to Indigenous Peoples, he models a way for us to navigate the vast but still largely unchartered territory of doing theology in a fully Catholic but also fully indigenous way.

In the third article, "Full, Conscious and Active Participation in the Liturgy in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as Pastoral Response to the Universal Call to Holiness in *Lumen Gentium*," **Ruben B. Orbeta, Jr., S.J.** attempts to synthesize the clarion call of these two Vatican II Constitutions into a path of holiness for our time. This is yet another opportune topic, and even Pope Francis himself recently issued the apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, which tackles the same theme in 2018. Orbeta's paper reminds us once again

that holiness is not out of reach. The liturgy itself in which we are called to participate regularly is a "school of holiness" accessible to all, if only we engage in it, as the Council instructs us, in a full, active and conscious manner. This is also something that the isolation from the liturgy that some of us experienced during the quarantine will hopefully help us to appreciate better.

Ramil R. Marcos' "Resonance of Bartolome de las Casas' Thoughts in Leonardo Boff's Theology" follows Boff's bold attempt to marry Trinitarian theology, often thought to be lofty and inaccessible, to grassroots Liberation Theology. The aim is to arrive at a way of understanding this central mystery of faith, which is both rooted in and relevant to people's experiences. In the second part of the article, he highlights what he perceives to be vestiges of this relatively recent theology in the life and work of the great Dominican missionary, Bartolome de las Casas. What makes this article a riveting read is the striking similarity between the suffering and oppression experienced by the peoples of Latin America and the native Indians to the heart-wrenching contexts of our people today, which was further exacerbated by the pandemic. As such, the critique offered a path to find resonance in our situation as well.

In the fifth article, *"Amoris Laetitia* and Admission of Divorced and Remarried Catholics to the Sacraments," **Patrick D. Boyoc** looks into Pope Francis' exhortation on the family and its stand on the admission to the sacraments of divorced and remarried Catholics. While demonstrating the controversial document's fidelity to tradition, he also highlights its unique contributions, especially in integrating other

moral principles—also within the tradition—in the process of discernment of the situation of the persons involved. It is only the second issue of this journal, but this is already our second paper on *Amoris Laetitia.* It is truly heartening to see the courage and willingness of our budding theologians to engage in this complex yet very relevant topic from a theologically sound and pastorally sensitive standpoint.

The last article in this issue by **Joseph Don D. Zaldivar** with the title "What you are going to do, do quickly.": A Close Reading of Judas' Betrayal of Jesus and Jesus' Self-Knowledge as "Lamb of God" in John 13:21-32" is a well-documented exegetical treatment of the Betrayal Announcement Narrative that sheds light on the often misunderstood figure of the traitor, Judas. However, in exploring the figure of Judas and the grim narrative of his treason, what is equally highlighted in the process is the beauty and radicality of the Lord's free and fully conscious self-sacrifice, in consummate contraposition of betrayal and unrelenting love. The liturgical postscript is like a welcome dessert after a very rich meal as it adds a new layer to our appreciation of the *fractio* and *Agnus Dei*.

We are equally proud to present two excellent STB synthesis papers on this issue. The first is **Mokam Saa, S.X.**'s "Revisiting the Admission of Persons in Polygamous Marriages into the Church from a Renewed Understanding of Faith, Sin, and Salvation," a very interesting and impressive application of fundamental theological concepts learned to respond to a concrete issue in the local Church. The second paper is **Angelo Paolo O. Asprer, S.S.P.**'s "Catholicism is Communication," which synthesizes theology from the aspect of communication, which is very appropriate in this age of rapid and massive communication-miscommunication.

As a final treat, we are pleased to publish last year's Valedictory Address by **Robbie B. Paraan, S.J.,** with the title "Theology of the Streets." *Loyola Papers* joins him in congratulating the graduates of Batch 2020 and in calling on all LST students, past and present to be

> …bold and creative with your theology. Our professors have given us the basics of our faith, the grammar and vocabulary to now speak—or even sing!—in tongues. It is not enough to give a good account of and to speak responsibly about our faith. We must mine the gifts of the Spirit to inspire others to believe.

May *Loyola Papers* continue to empower our students to dig deep into the rich mine of the Word in the world!

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo

ARTICLES

Resonating With The Word:
Exploring the Thought of Daniel Madigan S.J. in His Attempt to Share the Christian Faith with Muslims

B. Christian Triyudo Prastowo, S.J.

Islam is one of the religions that depict Jesus.[1] In al-Qur'ān, he is portrayed as a prophet of the highest rank (cf. Q 2:253, 33:7) and a "sign" (*aya*)[2] shared between Islam and Christianity (cf. Q 19:21; 21:91; 23:50; 43:61). In Muslim-Christian relations, nevertheless, dialogue about Jesus remains a contentious issue.[3] These are the areas where Muslims often challenge Christian theology: the divinity of Jesus, the Incarnation and redemption events, and the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Both

1 In al-Qur'ān, Schedl counts its references in 15 out of 114 chapters (*suras*) and in 93 out of 6339 verses (*ayas*). Jesus' name in al-Qur'ān is ʿĪsā and without doubt, al-Qur'ān honors *ʿĪsā* greatly. Yet, it must be fitted neatly into the overall theological framework of al-Qur'ān. See Claus Schedl, *Muhammad Und Jesus* (Freiburg, Basel: Herder, 1978), 6 and G. C. Anawati, "Isa," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 4, eds. E. van Donzel and B. Lewis (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 81.

2 The Arabic word for sign (*aya*) refers to God's wonders in nature and His actions in history (*ayat ullah*). The miracles of the prophets and more specifically, the wonder of the Qur'an, are reflected in the qur'anic verses (*ayat*). In the New Testament Gospels, *semeion* (Greek for 'sign') refers to the actions of Jesus, especially his miracles. Cf. Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 257.

3 J. Jomier reflects, "We (Muslims and Christians) both speak of Jesus (ʿĪsā), but we do not know him by the same sources." See Jacques Jomier, "Jesus as Seen by A Muslim," in *Information and Formation*, eds. O.C. Lim and Theresa Ee-Chooi (Kuala Lumpur: Catholic Research Centre, 1994), 1. Some accounts on the rejection of Jesus' images are: Q 112:3; 9:30; 5:18 (rejection on Son of God); Q 15:17, 72 (rejection on Divinity of Christ); Q 4:171; 5:116 (rejection on Trinity). The holy Qur'ān (al- Qur'ān) is the source of the Muslims' knowledge of Jesus.

Christians and Muslims often use the polemical approach.[4] Meanwhile, various political factors have also led to hostile actions.[5] As a result, the relationship between the two religions is dominated more by suspicion and mutual exclusion[6] than friendship and a joint effort to read together the "sign."

After centuries of having a negative perspective about Islam, the Church, in more recent times, has opened a new stage marked by a more positive attitude towards dialogue and cooperation with Muslims. This is embodied in the document *Nostra Aetate*.[7] Still, on many occasions, there are Christians who have remained reluctant to learn together with Muslims, lest they are misunderstood to compromise the principles of

4 Christians saw Islam as a completely false ideology and, therefore, adopted an aggressive policy of propagating Christian truth without taking Islamic perceptions into account. On the other hand, Muslims perceived that Christians falsified the scriptures and distorted the image of Jesus. See. J.M. Gaudeul, "Learning From Polemics - Part 1: Central Themes," *Encounter* no. 75 (May 1981) and "Learning From Polemics – Part 2: Minor Themes," *Encounter* no. 80 (December 1981).

5 Saad Ghrab, "Islam and Christianity: From Opposition to Dialogue," *Islamochristiana* 13 (1987): 99-111. Askari mentions this tendency as "monologue tendency" of the "monological religion". See the complete analysis in Hasan Askari, "The Dialogical Relationship between Christianity and Islam," *Journal of Ecumenical* Studies 9 (1972): 477-487.

6 Alwi Shihab, "Hubungan Islam dan Kristen Memasuki Abad 21," in *Melintasi Batas Agama,* eds. K. Hidayat and Ahmad Gaus A.F. (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1998), 317.

7 The Catholic Church acknowledges that both Muslims and Christians worship the same God, although they express differently. The Catholic Church recognizes that Muslims strive to submit themselves wholeheartedly and officially acknowledges their esteem and veneration of Jesus and Mary. She calls both to come together by forgetting the past and strive sincerely for mutual understanding to promote and preserve peace, liberty, social justice, and moral values for the benefit of all humankind. Cf. Vatican II, *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate*), October 28, 1965, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (accessed December 17, 2019), no. 3. Hereafter, NA.

faith. There are even those who believe theological dialogue with Muslims to be impossible.

It is in this context that Daniel Madigan S.J.,[8] coming from his extensive experience of engagement with Muslims and study of the Qur'ān, argues that dialogue with Muslims without including theology would be ineffective. Moreover, he believes that living in the same world and believing in the same God (who Is and continues to be present) demands doing theology together, to resonate the Word in the world.[9] Speaking from his experience, he contends that "taking seriously the Muslims' questions of our faith, rather than simply becoming defensive or rejecting it out of hand, has been extremely fruitful."[10] However, doing theology with them would require a deeper relationship as a foundation.

From the Muslim point of view, the document "A Common Word"[11] also calls for theological and interreligious exchange

8 Daniel Madigan S.J. is an Australian Jesuit priest who teaches Religious Pluralism at the Georgetown's Department of Theology since 2008. He is a Research Fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown and works on projects related to Muslim-Christian relations. Previously, he was the founder and director of the Institute for Study of Religions and Cultures at the Pontifical Gregorian University from 2002-2007. At present, he is a consultor of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims. His research interests include Qur'anic Studies, Interreligious Dialogue (particularly Muslim-Christian relations), and Comparative Theology.See "Rev. Daniel Madigan," *Georgetown University,* https://jesuits.georgetown.edu/members/madigan (accessed December 17, 2019).

9 Daniel Madigan, "Mutual Theological Hospitality: Doing Theology in the Presence of the Other," in *Muslim & Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of "A Common Word,"* eds. Waleed El-Ansary and David K. Linnan (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 62.

10 Daniel Madigan, "A Lenten Journey," in *Christian Lives Given to the Study of Islam*, eds. Christian W. Troll, and C. T. R. Hewer (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 251.

11 A "Common Word" is about dialogue between Muslims and Christians in scripture and tradition. See "The ACW Letter: A Common Word Between Us and You," https://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/ (accessed November 15, 2018).

based on the shared principles of love of God and love of neighbour.[12] Thus, the challenge now is to plunge together into the deep mystery of the "sign" that Muslims and Christians share and thereby discover 'ourselves' and 'the other,' in order to "walk together toward the truth and to work together in projects of common concern."[13]

The Importance of Sharing the Christian Faith with Muslims

As adherents of monotheistic faith, Christians and Muslims believe in the one God of Abraham who continues to create and invite us to participate in His project. Thus, "One cannot say that we adore together the one God and then say that we cannot or may not talk together about that God, or about that sense of adoration that God evokes in us."[14] In other words, Christians should engage in doing theology together with Muslims, even though they may have different ways of expression. Madigan writes, "If the world is one, and God is one, then we as believers have little choice but to do our God-thinking and God-talking together."[15] Together, we can

12 Cf. John Borelli, "A New Era and a New Model for Christian-Muslim Dialogue," in *A Common Word and the Future of Christian-Muslim Relations,* ed. John Borelli (Washington: Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, 2008), 97.

13 Secretariat for Non-Christians, "The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions on Dialogue and Mission," https://www.shinmeizan.com/images/PDF/DialMiss.en.pdf (accessed July 20, 2020). Henceforth referred to as *DM*.

14 *Lumen Gentium,* no. 16 and *Nostra Aetate,* no. 3 in Madigan, "Mutual Theological Hospitality," 58.

15 "If God is one, and God is *al-Haqq*, then there is only one truth. There is not your truth, my truth, their truth. And it is going to take work for us to learn to seek truth together, not simply to put it in the too-hard basket, or to say, 'That's your truth; that's okay for you, but my truth is separate and different." See Daniel Madigan, "Religious Faiths in a Pluralist Society," (Lecture, Washington Theological Consortium, Washington D.C., March 30, 2017).

learn how to live (and offer freely to others) the particular way of being human that flows from a belief in the God of Abraham.

Pope Francis today continues the trajectory set by Vatican II and its determination to engage the Catholic Church with the modern world. He invites all Christians to initiate a "culture of encounter," wherein both theological and pastoral issues that deal with human concerns in this rapidly changing times are discussed.[16]

Nonetheless, to create this "culture of encounter" and plunge more effectively into the deep mystery (especially with Muslims), we need to understand the situation. There are two interesting points in the history of Christian-Muslim relations. First, since early in the seventh century, Islam has presented itself as the re-establishment of the original religion that had existed from the beginning. Judaism and Christianity are examples, as well. Precisely because of this, the faith of Muslims has a very particular claim on the theological attention of both Jews and Christians.[17] In effect, Muslims will always remain as the "proximate other" and lively challengers of our reading of the Jesus' event. They always call on us to clarify our expression of faith.[18] Second, Christians and Muslims believe that God is present and communicates with all humankind. At the same time, both share the same struggle about how to understand the history of God's engagement

16 Harold Kasimow and Alan Race, eds., *Pope Francis and Interreligious Dialogue—Religious Thinkers Engage with Recent Papal Initiatives* (Macmillan: Palgrave, 2018). In this book, scholars from the seven traditions have also contributed.

17 Daniel Madigan, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 244. See also this article he wrote, "Some Aspects of Christian Theologizing in Relation to Islam," Asian Christian Review 2 (2008): 25.

18 Madigan, "Some Aspects of Christian Theologizing," 25.

with humanity. Therefore, dialogue with Muslims is always challenging since it is not only about how we are to live, but also how we are to learn together. Both believe in the presence of God's Word in the world.

The importance of sharing our faith in Jesus with Muslims lies in the fact that it can be a way of developing our theologies together and to search for more convincing ways of expressing it. It is to help each other to see that we are in the same boat when trying to understand who God is and what he is up to.[19] Doing so is neither a form of negotiation to arrive at an agreed position nor to result in a new hybrid religion.[20] Instead, as Madigan writes, "It is a deeper exploration of what is in common but contested."[21] This is not an easy practice since Muslims have their view about those matters based on the Qur'ān.[22] Is it possible then to engage in dialogue with them even if they have a different view of Jesus?

Mutual Theological Hospitality as an Approach in Theological Dialogue with Muslims

To enter explicitly into the theological dialogue with Muslims, Madigan portrays "mutual theological hospitality"

19 Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (Evangelii Gaudium),* November 24, 2013, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed July 20, 2020), nos. 29, 142, and 251. Henceforth referred to as *EG.*

20 *DM,* nos. 37-38 and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," May 19, 1991, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html (accessed July 20, 2020). Henceforth referred to as *DP.*

21 Madigan, "A Lenten Journey," 250.

22 Q 112:3; 9:30; 5:18 (rejection on Son of God); Q 15:17, 72 (rejection on Divinity of Christ); Q 4:171; 5:116 (rejection on Trinity).

as a possible approach to plunge into the deep mystery. This approach is similar to what has been put forward by some Christian writers prior to Vatican II (e.g., Timothy I, Nicholas Cusa, Charles de Foucauld, L. Massignon).[23] In this approach, Madigan coins the image of a "good host" and a "good guest." [24] Thus, it serves as a "door-way" to enter into an experience of the other and sense it from within.

"Being a good host" means that we gradually start to take more notice of our guests, and we learn to speak their theological language to be able to communicate our positions more clearly.[25] It also means accommodating their questions and even letting them enter our 'theological kitchen' instead of just dishing out something already fixed in our dogma or creeds. It requires epistemological humility or knowing the limits of our human understanding and language, as well as the impossibility of ever fully expressing the truth about God. "Being a good guest" implies that we are not proprietors of

23 The complete and longer presentation can be seen in Michael L. Fitzgerald, "History of the Christian-Muslim Relationship," in *Sign of Dialogue: Christians Encounters with Muslims,* eds. Michael L. Fitzgerald and R. Caspar (Zamboanga City: Silsilah Publications, 1992), 1-41; Robert Caspar, *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, 1998), 89-109; and Hugh Goddard, *Christians and Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995).

24 "We would like our new guests to behave themselves; we want them to sit quietly in the corner, as it were, and not interrupt us by raising objections or posing questions. Yet if we are at all hospitable, we gradually start to take more notice of our guests and we learn to speak their theological language so that we might communicate our positions more clearly. Little by little our guests learn to understand how to converse in our language and they begin to take a hand in shaping the conversation themselves. When this kind of hospitality is mutual, something new emerges, and what starts out as doing theology in the presence of the other becomes doing theology together with the other." Madigan, "Mutual Theological Hospitality," 59.

25 Paul VI, Encyclical on the Church *(Ecclesiam Suam)*, no. 87. Henceforth referred to as ES.

the Truth. Together with Muslims, we search for the meaning of the Word in the world. As mentioned in *DM,* no. 13, "We walk together toward truth and to work together in projects of common concern." It calls for moral humility in recognizing our history of failure to live up to the Gospel we preach.[26]

This imagery is very suitable, especially for us who are living in Asia. The purpose of this approach is to question and to be questioned. Madigan also asserts,

> To carry further the metaphor of hospitality, much of our experience as Christians has been that Muslims have barged into our theological 'home' uninvited, complained about the decoration, reorganized the furniture, and even claimed ownership! The Jews might want to say the same of Christians. However, there are some Muslims who are making great efforts to enter seriously into this relationship of mutual theological hospitality. Therefore, this is not the time to abandon the effort on our part, and so settle for being theological strangers to one another.[27]

In other words, hospitality is at its best when both host and guest are sensitive enough to one another and can share the same space with delight. Referring to *ES*, no. 87 and *RM*, nos. 28-29, Madigan emphasizes that listening by heart before speaking, and taking their questions and challenges as part of our theologizing, are essential in the exercise of

26 Daniel Madigan, "Saving *Dominus Iesus*," in *Learned Ignorance: An Investigation into Humility in Interreligious Dialogue among Christians, Muslims and Jews,* eds. James Heft, Reuven Firestone and Omid Safi (New York: Oxford, 2011), 260. See also Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 20-33.

27 Daniel Madigan, "Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Difficult Times," in *Catholicism and Interreligious Dialogue,* ed. James Heft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011),72.

dialogue.[28] How do we exercise mutual theological hospitality in discourse about doctrinal matters then?

The Word as the Hermeneutical Key in Mutual Theological Hospitality

Theological dialogue can only become productive if all partners involved understan the "language" that will be used to be able to explore together. Madigan suggests turning to the "Word of God," not as scripture or prophecy, but as a hermeneutical key in dialoguing with Muslims.[29] This serves as a collective term that can ground our mutual theological understanding, even if it cannot guarantee our agreement. [30] By saying that the Word is a hermeneutical key, Madigan writes, "Muslims and Christians, of course, believe that God addresses us in history. God communicates with us, expresses himself in ways we can understand."[31]

In Madigan's book, *The Qur'ān's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture,* he observes the semantic fields as associated with the Qur'ān's self-image.[32] From his

28 Madigan explores about recognition of other religions as "seeds of the Word," or"rays of truth." See Madigan, "Saving *Dominus Iesus*," 269-72.

29 Madigan, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue," 252 and "Lenten Journey," 253.

30 The Word as a key point is not necessarily new. Some Muslim and Christian writers since the 9th century already used it as a key concept in discussions and disputations. The problem however, was they used it defensively. See David Thomas, Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity: Abu Isa al-Warraq's Against the Incarnation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37-59.

31 We experience the Word both as given "from above," and as already expressed in creation and divine history. Both Muslims and Christians perceive the Word as sent down. For instance, *nazzala* is "sent down" in Qur'ān and its counterpart, the Johannine Gospel, uses *pempo* "send" and *katabaino* "come down." See Madigan, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue," 253.

32 Detailed analysis can be found in Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'ān's*

observation, Muslims grapple with the field of *Kalām* or Islamic speculative theology, when they say that the Qur'ān is the "Inliberated Speech of God."[33] This is not so far from what the Christians understand when they profess that Jesus Christ is the "Incarnate Word of God." In other words, the

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Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). The Qur'ān itself does not say that it is a book or God's book. See below for the semantics associated with the Qur'ān's self-image:

(a) As a creator, God knows the truth of all things and is in command of all things. God is said to keep a written record of all that exists and all that is done. When commanding or determining something, God is said to "write" it. Thus, *kitab* "a writing" serves as a symbol for God's knowledge and authority. People can learn from the revealing signs (ayat) in nature and history much of the truth of what God knows and commands. Yet they rarely do so.

(b) To call humanity to such attentiveness and reflection, God sends prophetic messengers who bring their communities guidance, privileged insight into God's knowledge, and authoritative will. The symbol of this guidance again is the *kitab* – God's sending down through the prophet of an authoritative word to address the current situation and the prevailing issue. This prophetic address bears the name *kitab* not because of its form, but because of its origin and its nature as a communication of God's knowledge and a clear statement of God's commands. The Qur'ān comes to Muhammad not as a completed text but rather as a living voice that intervenes and responds, that engages with the Prophet and those around him.

(c) The Qur'ān refers to itself as *kitab* long before it is written down. It is *kitab* not because it is a book or in written form, but because it is divine. Writing is the quintessentially divine activity – it symbolizes knowing and commanding. *Kitab* is a metaphor for the processes of divine engagement with the World. This symbolic understanding seems to be the only way of making sense of the complexities of the Qur'ānic term *kitab*, even if it calls into question long-held assumptions about the prophet's plans, the nature of canonical texts and the intended form of the Qur'ān.

33 What the Muslims has long grappled with is to understand and reflect: (1) The relationship between God's self and His speech; (2) The relationship between God's speech and the pre-existent Qur'ān; (3) The relationship between the Pre-existent Qur'ān and the actual Qur'ān as it was first revealed (the speech of God); and (4) The relationship between the speech of God and its continuation in the world.

correct parallel in understanding "the Word" is in the nature of the Word—in Christianity (that is Christ) and in Islam (that is Qur'ān).[34]

Learning from past experiences (from the debates on prophecy and scripture), Madigan emphasizes that the correct parallel affirms both Muslims and Christians. Both are in the position to respond to questions and paradoxes that arise from shared affirmations. For instance, on the eternal and transcendent God who has spoken in the Word to our world. Here, it can be said that Christians and Muslims have the same language to understand one another. They can also draw from the correct parallel the roles of Muhammad and Mary, as bearers of the Word; Arabic, and *Flesh* as the language of the Word.

Thus, by using the Word as hermeneutical key, we can share the Christian faith in Jesus with Muslims without hesitation (sceptical or soft-pedal), especially (1) the Word's relationship to God's self (the divinity of Christ); (2) the mode in which that Word is expressed in the humanly understandable form (the incarnation); and (3) in the relationship of the divine and the human within that historically expressed Word (redemption).

Sharing the Divinity of Christ: The Word's Relationship to God's Self

Since the Qur'ān often underlines the transcendence of God, "There is nothing whatever like unto Him" (Q 42:11),

34 From the Muslim side, Seyyed H. Nasr also recognized the same things. He writes, "The word of God in Islam is the Qur'ān, in Christianity it is Christ." See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1996; 2d ed. Unwin Paperbacks, 1979), 43.

Muslims are horrified by every attempt to associate with God anything from the created order (human beings included), and to place it beside Him (*shirk*), or to assimilate it with Him (*tashbīh*). How can we share the divinity of Christ in that condition then?

To explain the divinity of Christ to Muslims, we can use the Muslim language *sifa dhâtiyya* (the essential divine attribute of *kalam*/speech of God). For instance, in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2):117, it is written, "The originator of the heavens and the earth when He determines something, just says to it, "be" and "it is" (*kun fa-yakūn*, Q 2:117)."[35] Madigan notes in some way there are similarities between the Islamic tradition (especially Sunni Muslim tradition) and John's prologue.[36]

Firstly, the divine attribute of *kalām* is described as, *la 'aynuhu wa-la ghayruhu*, or "neither identical with God nor other than God."[37] In the prologue, "The Word was with God and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). Whether in Islam or Christianity, *kalām* (Speech of God) or Logos (the Word of God) is an eternal attribute of the divine. It is not a possession;

35 Daniel Madigan, "People of the Word," in *Review and Expositor* 104 (Winter 2007): 86.

36 Madigan prefers to use Johannine Christology (or high-descending Christology) in exploring more about the Incarnation and the Holy Trinity, rather than use low-ascending Christology. He writes, "A more Johannine Christology finds many echoes in the standard high-descending theology of the Qur'ān which came to define Islamic orthodoxy." Madigan, "God's Word to the World," 157. Madigan follows a complex examination of John's Gospel's prologue from Daniel Boyarin, a Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture and Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley.

37 Daniel Madigan, "The Gospel of John as a Structure for Muslim-Christian Understanding," in *Reading the Bible in Islamic Context –Qur'ānic Conversations,* eds. Daniel J. Crowther, et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 257. See as an example the creed of al-Nasafī and the commentary by al-Taftazānī (*Sharḥ 'alā al-'aqā'id al-nasafiyya*) in *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature*, eds. Norman Calder, et al. (London: Routledge, 2003): 156–58.

neither is it a part of God since God is not divisible by parts.[38] It is intrinsic and unitary to God. Here, Madigan notices, "Muslims and Christians face the challenge of how to appropriately express the relationship between kalām of God and God."[39]

There is a correct parallel between Muslim reflection on the divine attributes (*sifa dhâtiyya la 'aynuhu wa-la ghayruhu*) and Christian discussions on the modes of being and hypostases in the Holy Trinity. Madigan writes, "Both groups were affirming a monotheist position and yet at the same time recognizing that the transcendent God had communicated with us."[40] By understanding this, we can also explain Jesus as "Son of God." Christians use the image of "begetting, Father-Son" to express this relationship because we want to insist that God and His Word have the same nature. The Word is not God's creation in time; rather it is God's eternal self-expression. Some Muslim theologians call it *kalām nafsı*, literally "self-speech" or "personal speech," and at various times and ways, this speech is spoken in the world as *kalām lafzı*, or "speech in words."[41]

Secondly, as many scholars had pointed out about the economy of the logos *ensarkos* before the moment in which the Word took flesh—we turn to John 1:9-13 as the activity of the pre-incarnate logos (and not of the incarnate logos).[42] It is about the relationship between the pre-incarnate Word

38 Madigan, "People of the Word," 86-87.
39 Ibid.
40 Daniel Madigan, "God's Word to the World: Jesus and the Qur'ān, Incarnation and Recitation," in *Godhead here in Hiding: Incarnation and the History of Human Suffering*, eds. Terence Merrigan and Frederik Glorieux (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 164.
41 Madigan, "Universality, Particularity, Finality," 19.
42 C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 281.

(*logos asarkos*) and the incarnate Word *(logos ensarkos).*[43] In the Muslim context, it is parallel with their struggle in reflecting the relationship between God's speech and the pre-existence of the Qur'ān. This involves the notion of the celestial preserved tablet (*al-lauh al-mahfuz,* or "Heavenly Book," Q 85: 21-22),[44] which is believed in the Muslim tradition to contain the text of the Qur'ān and (perhaps) of the other scriptures (*umm al-kitāb*, "Mother of the Book"). There is an ancient belief that the Qur'ān was created on the Tablet prior to the creation of the world. This gives way to the view, much more widely, though not universally held, that the Qur'ān is eternally pre-existent, since, as the Word of God, it is an eternal attribute of God.[45]

Sharing the Incarnation: God's Word is Expressed in Humanly Understandable Form

To Muslim eyes, the person and role of Jesus have been exaggerated by Christians. For them, the Christian deification of Jesus is a blasphemy (cf. Q 4, 171; 5, 116; 19, 34-35). What Muslims find difficult to understand is how Christians

43 A question much under discussion in recent years, mainly because of the work of Jacques Dupuis, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (New York: Orbis Books, 1997): 1-456.

44 It is written in the Qur'ān, "This is a glorious Qur'ān (inscribed) in a preserved Tablet." (Sūrat al-Buruj (85): 21-22). Abdulah Yusuf Ali comments that God's message is not ephemeral. It is eternal. The "Tablet" is not to be understood in a material sense. It is "Preserved" or guarded from corruption (Q 15:9) for God's message must endure for ever. That message is the "mother of the book." (Q 3:7). See. Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān—Arabic Text with an English Translation and Commentary* (Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1937), 1717.

45 Daniel Madigan, "Preserved Tablet," in *The Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān,* vol. 4, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 261-63. In his article, Madigan writes commentaries about the preserved tablet (e.g., *tafsir* of al-Tabari, Ibn Hanbal, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Sufi Tradition).

consider Jesus as human and divine. On the other hand, Christians find it difficult to understand how Muslims think of Qur'ān as a book and divine Speech. Here, we face the challenge of how the Word communicates to humanity with a language that can be understood. God addresses us in history. God communicates with us, expressing himself in ways we can understand.[46]

In the Muslim faith, nothing less than God's eternal speech has entered human history in the Qur'ān (in-libra-tion).[47] Yet in what way can it still be the Word of God if it is so humanly conditioned? This bears an interesting parallel with the Christian question of the Incarnation. Several Muslim theologians have maintained that it could not be. However, the majority of Muslims believe the Qur'ān has a twofold nature: a created and an uncreated one. Albeit one of the natures was created, Ibn Hanbal refrained from applying the term "created" to any form of the Qur'ān at any stage of its existence.[48] Similarly, classical Christology has maintained that although the human nature of Jesus is no doubt created, he has nonetheless only one personal identity. Paradoxically, his personhood must be eternal despite having a human or created element.

By pointing out the particularity of the Word, Christians can now explain to Muslims how Jesus is, in any sense, divine, beginning with their own belief in how the Qur'ān in any sense is divine. Moreover, Christians claim that the Word that is most eloquently and definitively spoken is Jesus. They

46 See footnote 29.
47 Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 244 and Madigan, "Mary and Muhammad," 419.
48 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History,* vol. 3, trans. F. Rosenthal (New York, 1958), 64.

believe him to be God's eternal Word made flesh. Although many people, even those who knew him, thought that he was just a first-century Jewish carpenter-turned-rabbi. Madigan shares, "Muslims, on the other hand, believe God's Word to have been expressed definitively and most eloquently in the Qur'ān. Though to many, even those who originally heard it, it is simply a seventh-century Arabic text with strong biblical echoes, to others, it is God's very Word expressed in Arabic."[49]

Sharing the Redemption: Particularity and Finality of the Word

Here, we must be clear that our purpose is not to prove that every element of Christian theology has a major or minor parallel in Islamic tradition, but to discover our particular identity and role as believers who listen and resonate with the Word. For this, Christians should do well to underline what is particular and essential in the Christian understanding of the Incarnation.

Because the language which God uses to communicate is human-flesh/body language, it is not a series of directives that need to be stated in clear and unambiguous terms. It is the revelation of God's gracious and forgiving love. In this manner, God made himself vulnerable. There was a great possibility of him being rejected, mocked, and hurt. The Word truly and fully enters the condition of human beings.[50]

It is in this sense that the self-emptying love shown on the cross is the fullest revelation of who God is and how things are between God and humanity. It is not some late Johannine invention, but is expressed in an earlier form in the hymn in

49 Madigan, "God's Word to the World," 159.
50 Madigan, "Particularity, Universality and Finality," 20.

Phil 2: 5-11. In the resurrection of Jesus, God is affirming the truth about his divinity and humanity. The union of the human and divine in Jesus is opened to all of us. In other words, self-sacrificing love is ultimately revealed as the way to true life. In living out the same sacrificial love as Jesus did, we, too, share in his rising to new life (cf. Eph 2:18; 2 Pet 1:4).

This is something truly particular (a central theme) to Christianity as there is no death of the Word (and thus no resurrection) in the Islamic tradition. Yet, we still can continue to dialogue with them in this matter and explain this particularity since there are some accounts in the Qur'ān which talk about the rejection of God's speech. The most common verbs connected with this are "to call (something) a lie,"[51] "to disbelieve in,"[52] and "to deny."[53] Thus, one might say that God's revelation in Islam also has some kind of passion, even if not death. It is rejected and accused of making false claims to a divine origin. It is dismissed as nothing more than poetry, lies, sorcery, "old-wives tales" or the product of conspiracy with foreigners. Hence, through this vulnerability of the Word, we can explain to Muslims the significance of the Cross for Christians. Madigan writes, "Coming into the world necessarily involves entering into the history of human suffering. Without that, the incarnation (the Word becomes

51 To call something a lie (*Kadhdhaba*) is used thirty nine times (often in conjunction with *kafara*): Q 2:39; 3:11; 5:10, 86; 6:21, 27, 39, 49, 150, 157; 7:36, 37, 40, 64, 72, 136, 146, 147, 176, 177, 182; 8: 54; 10:17, 73, 95; 17:59; 21:77; 22:57; 23:105; 25:36; 27:83, 84; 30:10, 16; 54:42; 57:19; 62:5; 64:10; 78:28. Interestingly, though this verb is so commonly used to describe the reaction to the ayat, it is used only once (Q 40:70) to describe people's responses to the kitab.

52 To disbelieve (*Kafara* bi) is used twenty four times: Q 2:39, 61, 73, 99, 3:4 (with *Injil, Tawrat* and *Furqan*), 19, 21, 70, 98, 101, 112, 4:56, 140, 155, 5:10, 8:52, 17:98, 18:105, 19:77, 29:23, 39:63, 45:11, 64:10, 90:19.

53 To deny (*Jahada*) is used ten times: Q 6:33, 7:51, 11:59, 29:47, 49, 31:32, 40:63, 41:15, 28, 46:26.

flesh) is incomplete; and so, the revelation of God is incomplete."[54] The more one loves, the more one suffers.

Finality Initiated and Universal Message of the Word: What Is Our Role?

Do we need to boast, since everything is already accomplished in the Cross? The Word, John's *Logos*, is described as *erxomenos* continually coming into the world. One might read the serene, "It is accomplished" (Jn 19:30) of John's Jesus on the cross in this light.[55] When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he breathed on them and said, ''Receive the Holy Spirit'' (Jn 20:23). In the Christian context, this saying indicates that the definitive revelation may have taken place in the Word made flesh. Still, its full significance will only be cleared gradually, to those who allow God's Spirit to guide them to the full truth of that revelation. Thus, finality has already begun but is not yet finished. The consequence, as Madigan contends, is "[t]he correct attitude of a believer before what she or he considers to be God's definitive Word is not one of pride in possession of this revelation, but rather humility before it. The truth of God will possess us, and not vice versa. We are servants of that Word and that Truth, not its masters or owners."[56]

In other words, the mystery of the Cross is teaching us that we can give glory in nothing, but in the self-emptying love of God. The universal message of the Word is to be a

54 Madigan, "God's Word to the World," 166.

55 There are two senses of completion. First, it is unsurpassable, because the love revealed here knows no limit. Second, it is irrevocable. What God has spoken is spoken once and for all. All things can never again be, as though God had not spoken.

56 Madigan, "Universality, Particularity, Finality," 22 and Madigan, "The Gospel of John as Structure," 266.

witness or to embody the Word in the world. As Madigan writes, "Christians are not salespeople for the Reign of God, but free samples of it."[57] Together with other believers, we can find ways to resonate with the Word in the world, since the Word is the universal language.

For many Muslims, to resonate with the Word is a profound experience of opening themselves to the divine will and mercy. Muhammad Arkoun describes it as, "Playing host to a power with an infinite capacity to signify things . . . playing host to the divine-revealing word."[58] Playing host to the divine-revealing word means to allow oneself to be formed by the eternal truth in daily life, to discern and to contextualize the meaning (*ma'na*) of the actual structured text (*mabna*) of the Qur'ān into real actions.

As Christians, we are to witness to the Incarnate Word by emulating his self-sacrificing love. Where else can we see such love in action but in welcoming and proclaiming the truth to God's creation? To put that in Qur'ānic terms: all self-sacrificing love is an *aya*, a sign that reveals God to us. Even though we may be poor witnesses to him, it is the particularities that make us who we are, and who we are is where dialogue begins.[59]

In light of what has been mentioned, Madigan makes a crucial point about the Church: "Christians make a commitment to allow themselves to be formed by God into a community animated by the Spirit of Christ, a community that can serve as a nucleus or seed of that new human family—not its

57 Madigan, "The Gospel of John as Structure," 267 and Madigan, "Religious Faiths in a Pluralist Society," 13.

58 Muhammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers,* ed. Robert D. Lee (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 42.

59 Madigan, "Universality, Particularity, Finality," 24.

gatekeeper or its landlord. Only in that sense is the Church necessary."[60] In pastoral terms, he suggests moving forward together with Muslims by way of "dialogue of repentance" and "dialogue of action to respond to the cry of the poor."[61] This dialogue that leads us deeper into the reality of our moral failures echoes the words of the Qur'ān: "Perhaps God will create friendship between you and those you consider your enemies. God is powerful, infinitely forgiving, most merciful" (Q 60:7).[62]

Conclusion

By mutually practicing theological hospitality, we can explain our Christian faith to Muslims without hesitation., We can together explore theological matters with "the Word" as the hermeneutical key and our role as listeners of the Word. To have the Word as the hermeneutical key affirms that "Christians and Muslims believe the divine Word to have been addressed to us in the concreteness of our history."

Drawing correct parallels (Jesus and Quran as the Word in the world; Mary and Muhammad as the bearers of the Word; Flesh, and Arabic as the language of the Word, Holy Spirit, and God's Power as a guide in the continued presence and activity of the Word within the world) will also help us to realize our role as listeners of the Word. We are to witness to it by living that same kind of self-sacrificing love. To put that in Qur'ānic terms: all self-sacrificing love is an *aya*, a sign that reveals God to us.

60 Madigan, "Saving *Dominus Iesus*," 274.

61 Daniel Madigan, "Christian Reflects on Common Word," in *We Have Justice in Common,* eds. Christian Troll, Helmud Reifel, and C. T. R. Hewer (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., 2010), 186.

62 Daniel Madigan, "Our Next Word in Common: Mea Culpa?" in *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters through A Common Word,* eds. Yazid Said & Lejla Demiri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 15.

Even though we may be poor witnesses to God, it is the particularities that make us who we are, and who we are is where dialogue begins.[63] Thus, together with others, we can resonate with the Word, especially to confess our shared failures and to respond to the cry of the poor.

63 Madigan, "Universality, Particularity, Finality," 24.

Jesus as Guest, Host, and Meal: Three Images as Approach to the Christological Problem in Africa

Barnabé Hounguevou, S.J.

In Africa, the Christological problem is a deep quest that deals with the integration of Christ into the African worldview. At the core of the Christological problem in Africa are the perceived foreignness of Jesus Christ and the question of his divinity.[1]

In the African worldview, the metaphysical conception is of a hierarchy in beings, with God at the top because of his perfection, and human beings and other beings at the bottom. Between God and the human beings are intermediaries or mediators such as spirits-divinities who are governors of the world, the ancestors who are intercessors, and the diviners, who, being "bilingual," can communicate both with the spiritual and the earthly world. Even as that religious or metaphysical universe allows the mediation of intermediaries and acknowledges the existence of some "divinities," it does perceive their role as subordinate to the Absolute and Supreme Being. In such a monotheistic setting, the divinity of Christ, his consubstantiality with God, is incomprehensible. If Jesus is perceived as a stranger in the African's metaphysical conception and religious system, he also remains an "alien in the lives and deliberations of the millions of African

1 Enyi Ben Udoh, *Guest Christology: An Interpretative View of the Christological Problem in Africa* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), 81 and 212.

Christians."[2] In times of trouble or limit situations, many prefer to resort to the traditional diviners for quick answers and find more assurance and comfort in their traditional religion than in Christian rituals or its virtues such as faith and hope.[3]

From an African viewpoint, the identity and role of Jesus remain problematic. Regarding Christ's consubstantiality, he is perceived as an "illegal alien" who becomes out of place in the African religious system. He is likewise perceived as abrogating African religious institutions. As to his role and function, Christ is perceived to have little relevance to peoples' lives in times of trouble or is not believed to be powerful enough.[4] The Christological problem, which deals with the ontological dimension and the soteriological aspect, is related to the image of the foreignness of Christ, which has contributed to a double religious belonging.

2 Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, "The Quest for an African Christ," *Hekima Review* 11 (September 1994): 96.

3 People turn to traditional diviners because they are believed to give quick and tangible answers to people's struggles. At the same time, many pastors or priests usually recommend to people the Christian principles of hope and faith. Suppose the traditional diviners and medicine-men who seem capable of controlling the hidden or invisible forces to help others--are not wholly evil as some people may think. In that case, they also have an ambiguous part or even a mysterious or dark side since the same powers used to help people can be used to harm them. Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1992), 26 and 30.

4 On the perception of Christ: A distinction should be made between the perception and the reality. The perception that many African Christians have may be related to the Christ presented to them by missionaries and even by the local Church today. While people firmly believe that misfortune, sickness, death always have a religious cause, the mainline local Churches generally regard those beliefs of people as merely superstitious, and they hesitate to offer a proper ministry of healing. As a consequence, many who are looking for something tangible and immediate healing believed that the Christ presented by the Church "is not powerful enough" to deal with their situation. Furthermore, this Christ does not intervene in the major cycle or challenge of their life.

Udoh's Self-Understanding of His Project and His Methodology

The Primacy of the Christological Problem and Udoh's Proposal

Enyi Ben Udoh is convinced that African theology will have no substantial contribution if it fails to respond adequately to the Christological problem. For him, the Christ-question is both perennial and imperative. It is "perennial because every generation, every culture and every language which is associated with the image of Christ, has to respond to it. Imperative, because without adhering to it, no Christian body could fully mature and be firmly rooted so as not to be swept away by every wind of doctrine."[5] In other words, the Christological question for Udoh is an essential and legitimate matter which demands an answer. Udoh perceives his task as laying a foundation that can be perennial and on which others can build. Udoh distinguishes his project from other Christological proposals by affirming that his idea is meant to pinpoint the heart of the Christological problem and suggest a re-encounter with Christ.

Udoh approaches the Christological problem in Africa at two levels: the image of Christ's foreignness and the divinity of Christ. For Udoh, because of the tendency of the Western missionaries to impose Christ, by all means, Africans end up perceiving Jesus as an alien. Udoh states that it is imperative to change this image of Jesus as an illegal alien—which makes him vulnerable to rejection and even to exclusion—to being a legitimate guest. Since in Africa, a guest is seen as a benediction and is generally treated with due respect and

5 Udoh, *Guest Christology*, 164.

dignity. If Jesus is presented as a legitimate alien or a guest, he will be accepted and treated with honor by Africans. However, he will also be expected to conform to the customs of his African hosts. To reduce the gap between Christ and the Africans, Udoh builds a Christological approach which "undertakes a dialectical initiation of Christ and Africa to one another in a manner that does not alienate or dissolve the integrity of either party."[6] As a guest, Jesus has to move a step forward by passing through a cultural rite of initiation (inculturation), which will enable him to become a legitimate member of the clan.[7] A progressive change of status may lead Jesus to become slowly a kin and even a Lord.

As to the divinity of Jesus, Udoh states that a proper and suitable Christology should restore his full human status to him. For Udoh, the divinity of Jesus constitutes a stumbling block for Africans. The fact that Africans have difficulty conceiving the divinity of Christ in their worldview and belief system also leads them to perceive Jesus as foreign. The Christological problem in Africa is related to the image of the foreignness of Christ.

Methodology: Starting Point of a Guest Christology

Udoh rejects a Christology from above as a proper starting point and prefers to use a Christology from below. Instead of starting from the Lordship of Christ as some African theologians do, he prefers to begin with what he perceives as Christ's current status. The emphasis is not on doctrinal aspects but rather on the perception of Christ as experienced by Africans. Udoh also argues against a high Christology, which in his

6 Ibid., 17.
7 Ibid., 194.

context seems inadequate. For him, a high Christology is improper for people for whom the divinity of Jesus—being also a human—appears as an absurdity.[8] It is then natural that he chooses a low Christology. Udoh goes back to where people locate Jesus, who is perceived as a foreigner. To encapsulate his idea, Udoh uses the metaphor of a guest. However, while this concept conveys a certain reality or points to Africans' experience, the term "guest" as a metaphor is itself limited because it reduces Jesus to a visitor or a mere human: "At best, it places him on equal footing with us. Because of that limitation . . . a Christian finds him or herself searching for answers outside of Christ. But a Christology designed to deal with those profound yearnings . . . will have to go beyond the mere guest symbolism. It must face up to the naturalization question in Africa."[9]

Udoh strongly believes that it is only after dealing with the alien image of Jesus that it can be possible to talk about his role in the salvation of persons. The proclamation of Jesus' Lordship by Africans should be the term of a process which presupposes a proper engagement with the Christological problem. A proper African Christology cannot bypass the actual given experience, the perception of Jesus as an alien, which is the root of the problem. If it does, there will be a

8 According to Udoh, the slogan "mann no bi god ; god no bi mann" literally means that man is not a god and god is not a man showing the African theism and how difficult it is to accept the divinity of Christ. For him, as an ordinary, normal, and Jewish male, Jesus does not raise serious problems for the African. His historicity is, therefore, incontestable even among non-Christian Africans. At issue is his divinity compounded by the Scottish emphasis in Nigeria. Udoh stresses the gap of communication between the missionaries and the Africans in these terms: "If the missionaries charged Africans with 'paganism' and religious ignorance because they rejected the divinity of Jesus, Africans consider Jesus' divinity blasphemous." Ibid., 167 and 264.

9 Ibid.

severe gap between the profession of faith and the living experience of the believers. Far from being a theoretical issue, this dilemma is perceptible in some Christians' actual living experience. In the same vein, Udoh states that:

> While the average member [in the Church] conceives of Christ as stranger, the Church unequivocally keeps celebrating his Lordship. Creeds, sermons and liturgies are addressed in a Lordship garb. The speakers and the audience, using two contrasting symbolisms to describe the one character, create for themselves a communication problem. So the gap becomes even wider between the preacher and the congregation, between the congregation and society at large.[10]

To close this gap, a proper methodology needs to start with Christ as a guest instead of Christ as Lord. Otherwise, while confessing the creeds or proclaiming Christ as Lord, Jesus will remain in the periphery of the people's lives or just the object of a pure slogan. Udoh's methodology obeys a certain dynamic or progress. By starting with Christ as a guest, Udoh's purpose is to dismiss the alien image of Christ so that people can accept him. According to him, it is only after dispelling the issue of foreignness of Jesus that his soteriological function or his Lordship can be addressed.

The Guest Paradigm

Jesus Our Guest

Udoh does not use the word "guest" in its broad and popular sense but in a restrictive sense. Guest for him describes a person who, by force or volition, has abandoned his historical

10 Ibid., 216.

roots for a new milieu or place where he starts a new life. By identifying Jesus as a guest, "we are suggesting that he is human; that his cradle-history belongs elsewhere; and that he is looking for understanding, love, and acceptance he could not find elsewhere."[11] These three main characteristics need to be clarified.

Historicity of Jesus as Point of Departure of Udoh's Christology

Udoh believes that historicity should be the point of departure of a Christology that tries to re-communicate God through Jesus of Nazareth. For Jesus to be accepted in African cultures and for the faith to be fully integrated to life, Christology must start from the full humanity of Jesus. For a guest Christology, Udoh strongly argues that emphasizing the humanity of Jesus is essential. Why such stress on the humanity of Jesus? In fact, for Udoh, to be accepted in African cultures, Jesus needs to be initiated through the guest ceremony. However, this initiation, which would transform Jesus into a citizen, is only possible in the human world and for those who are humans. The bottom line of Udoh's perspective is that the full humanity of Jesus is fundamental and a prerequisite for the ritual process.[12]

Jesus' Status as a Foreigner

As any other alien or even as a refugee, Jesus' status as an alien and a foreigner makes him exposed or vulnerable to rejection and exclusion.[13] This possibility of Jesus being

11 Ibid., 222.
12 Ibid., 224.
13 Ibid., 225.

rejected can be explored since the New Testament offers episodes wherein Jesus is asked to leave a particular region (Lk 8:37) or is rebuffed even in his hometown Nazareth (Lk 4:23-30).

Seeing Jesus as stranger allows Africans to assume the responsibility of a host, to experience a common life with Christ with his ups and downs and with his joys and frustrations.[14] What is the outcome of such a logic? A presentation of Jesus both as a human and stranger allows the figure of Jesus to be identified with the problems and needs of Africans. This can contribute to establishing a new kind of relationship based on acceptance and mutual trust between both partners. A conception of Jesus as foreigner makes him share the Africans' conditions since, as a foreigner in a host country, he has to struggle like the Africans to integrate two different world views with their contradictions, richness, and limitations situation that Africans also have to deal with. Jesus need not be born biologically as an African to be accepted. Still, he has to participate and identify himself with the host culture's needs and problems.

A Jesus in Need: His "Wretched Imagery"

For Udoh, the guest metaphor also has a relation with a sense of need and a certain vulnerability. The guest—ignorant of his new environment—needs to be introduced to the host culture to become familiar with it. Such familiarity will also be fundamental to his integration. The Christological significance of this third characteristic is to stress not only the limitations of Jesus' consciousness but also his need to be helped. As a stranger in a new land, Jesus needs to be

14 Ibid.

guided by his host to be aware of the socio-cultural environment and is, in that sense, dependent on the host who has the responsibility to lead him on tour.[15] The kind of help needed by a displaced person in a host culture can be expounded or extended from hospitality to compassion and protection.

By suggesting such a disconcerting role reversal, Udoh calls for a reexamination of Christ's status as a guest, which allows for a constructive interaction based on mutual consent between both parties, guests, and hosts. Christ as a guest is no longer perceived as imposed but welcomed freely and responsibly by the Africans. The guest status of Christ not only makes both parties mutually dependent but it also "provides an extra room for the Africans to reevaluate Christ, first hand, based on the scriptural testimony. . . . The guest status of Christ offers us the most adequate prerequisite for his leadership or saving role."[16] For Udoh, the soteriological mission of Christ and his leadership cannot be proclaimed before prior acceptance of him as a guest. From being a guest, he can become kin and later a Lord.

From Guest to Kin

Necessity of the Process of Naturalization of Jesus

According to Udoh, for Christianity to be deeply rooted in Africa, there is a need for Jesus to go through a process of naturalization. Though Christ is proclaimed from the lips, the relationship that many Africans have with him does not go "beyond that of a sojourner. Since he is an ordinary, dependent alien, it makes no sense for them to rely upon him

15 Ibid., 227.
16 Ibid., 229.

for answers to their deep religious questions. Because other forces are closer, more enduring, and often more trustworthy, they choose to stay connected with them in an intimate sense."[17] Thus, there is a need for the naturalization of Jesus so that Jesus can become a kin. How is this naturalization possible?

Cultural Backgrounds: A Christology Based on Family Ethos-Hospitality

To lay the grounds for his Christology, Udoh finds his inspiration in one of the most important cultural values in African societies: extended family ethos-hospitality. African families are characterized by the notion of extended families that are open, inclusive, and accommodating towards guests or even strangers who can become part of the group using cultural naturalization.[18] Various forms of adoption rituals pervade the African continent and thus indicate the importance of this cultural value of hospitality in most of the countries. Udoh chooses the kola nut ceremony, which is practiced in many countries in West Africa. In the West African cultural setting, especially in Nigeria, the acceptance or rejection of a guest depends on whether or not he or she is offered a kola nut. Such an offer marks the beginning of a new and better form of relationship.[19]

Udoh explains that "the philosophy behind the kolanut ceremony is to provide a sensible channel through which

17 Ibid., 230.
18 Ibid., 194.
19 Believed by the *Igbo* of Nigeria to be the first tree created by *Chukwu* (God), the kola tree is regarded as sacred, and the kola nut is used in various ritual ceremonies or events such as marriage, welcoming guests. As for the welcoming ritual, the kola nut is offered just after the greeting as a symbolic action of welcoming. If there are many guests, a plate containing a kola nut is presented to the most

social cohesion and transformation of relationships can come about by hospitable gestures and fair distribution of resources."[20] Udoh is convinced that if such a ritual or social device has proved its importance in terms of integrating or incorporating aliens into a host community in Africa, then this might be useful for Jesus' initiation so that he can be fully accepted. If the Christological problem in Africa is also related to a question of trust and faith, a ritual initiation of Jesus will be useful to establish a bond between him and the Africans.

Impacts of the Ritual Initiation on Jesus' Status

A foreigner who does not go through a process of naturalization remains an outsider. However, by going through this process, one can become kin. As a process that incorporates a person into the group, naturalization requires a point of entry and a process of growth. Guest and kin are two metaphors that try to express this principle of opening and continuity.[21] If the guest rite marks the beginning of an ongoing process, the kin level is perceived as the second stage. For Udoh, "if kolanut [kola nut] represents a social text in this regard, the kin-phase signifies its reading and interpretation. The

senior in the group who touches the plate with his right hand and passes it on before it returns to the host who blesses with these words, "Whatever good he [the guest] is looking for, he will see it." The kola nut is broken and shared with those present and with the ancestors to whom it is offered. The *Igbo* believed that the more parts the kola nut is broken into, the more prosperity it brings to both the guest and the host. Ibid., 197.

20 By breaking the kola nut and sharing it with the guest (distribution), the host shows the guest his hospitality, which includes welcoming, assistance, and protection. The prayers made by the host before or while breaking the kola nut is essentially a petition for the good life, health, peace, prosperity, and protection from enemies or misfortunes. This justifies the common saying among the *Igbo*: "He who brings kola brings life." Ibid., 198. See Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: First Anchor Books, 1994), 6.

21 Ibid., 231.

post-ritual phase is certainly an experimental process. It is a learning procedure by which the new member attempts to justify his citizenship."[22] With the initiation of the kola nut ritual, the guest now enjoys some rights and has some new commitments. But what are the advantages of his new status? For Udoh, the double status of the one who has been initiated is characterized by relationality and participation.[23] But what is the Christological meaning of this initiation?

For Udoh, if such a question can be answered at all, all the answers seem to converge on the fact that "Jesus' initiation puts him on equal footing with us, not only as completely human but also as one with whom we share a common history and destiny. It means we are united in constitution and purpose, sharing similar beliefs, protected by common prohibitions and bound by a common heritage which originates with God."[24] Entering through the family emphasizes Jesus' *kenosis*. By accepting the initiation, Jesus consents to come to the Africans through their door, through their culture. By "entering from below"—and not from above as if he comes to impose his rules—Jesus will gradually win their acceptance. The initiation will transform Jesus' status from guest to kin. It makes him closer and more intimate to the people. He is perceived as one-of-them because henceforth, he shares their story and destiny.

The presence and participation of the guest also call for a certain adjustment and a certain dynamic of growth, which can even come through criticism. Therefore, the presence of a guest can become transformative and enriching.

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 232.
24 Ibid., 243.

This can be said of Jesus as well, the presence of whom has been at once an enrichment and a symbol of our void. Moreover, his presence in our community has set in motion a blending together of past and present, of God and the cosmos in a more intimate manner. That is to say, in Jesus we have seen an important member in our midst, a kin whose presence we can celebrate, whose voice we can heed and in whom we can reaffirm our kinship with one another. For Jesus it is an opportunity to unfold his power and mission in a different culture. It is indeed a chance for him to declare his candidacy publicly in indigenous languages and dialects, and perhaps announce his Lordship over all.[25]

The presence of the guest is beneficial for both parties (guest and host). Jesus' presence is a blessing for the Africans since it enriches them in diverse ways. For Jesus, it is an occasion to make himself known, to lead his host and prepare them to accept his Lordship.

Jesus as Lord

After a gradual process of mutual encounter, learning, and sharing, Jesus' Lordship should be the ultimate experience.[26] For Udoh, since kings are crowned by people and thus have their mandate, Jesus Lordship should be the result of a process where people elevate him. The uniqueness of his role, which encompasses a social integration of the various strands, can make him kin but also a stranger who comes from another world.[27] The fact that Jesus is also detached from his host is a great advantage for the host culture, which he can also enrich with his values and virtues.

25 Ibid., 245-46.
26 Ibid., 168.
27 Ibid., 253.

Such a position of Jesus who can perceive his new home from another vantage point is fundamental and is a source of enrichment for the host. The presence of Jesus coming from another cultural background makes people aware of their true identity, strengths, and limitations. He empowers them to surpass their vulnerabilities and fragilities. That is perhaps what Udoh is trying to explain when he affirms that "the uniqueness of Jesus allows us to see who we really are, a blend of finitude and infinitude. . . . Jesus not only makes us aware of our frailties, he lends us the energy to transcend our limitations."[28]

This special position of Jesus, which is beyond all other human experiences naturally leads him to play a leadership role in his new home. For Udoh, "Jesus as Lord means he is the head of the household, of our lives and our daily deliberations. It is our business then to proclaim his Lordship in words and deeds in such a way as to open for others a free and safe passage into the fold."[29] In other words, the proclamation of Jesus' Lordship should not be the exclusive role of missionaries or theologians but should come from the people of the grassroots.

Grounds for a Dialectic between Guest Christology and Host Christology

Jesus' Dialectical Role as Guest-Host

Through the incarnation, the Logos became flesh and entered space and time as a guest in visitation. The kenosis of Christ has perceived that the Eternal host became a guest

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.

to bring people the hospitality of the Father. Jesus came as a homeless one in this world, and during his ministry, he was dependent on the generosity of friends.

"Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Mt 8:20). This passage well summarizes Jesus' way of life as an itinerant preacher who was dependent on the hospitality of people. Guest of Martha and Mary, Simon, Zacchaeus, and others, Jesus benefited from the hospitality of many of his contemporaries during his ministry. If Jesus was most of the time other people's guest, he was also presented on few but decisive and meaningful occasions as the master of hospitality, the one hosting the others as in the multiplication of loaves (Mk 6:34-44 or Mt 14:14-21 or Lk 9:11b-17; Mk 8:1-9 or Mt 15:32-38 with 16:5-12 and Jn 6:1-15). Thus, while presenting Jesus as a guest seeking hospitality, the Gospels also show him as a host who breaks the bread, multiplies it, and nurtures his people (Mk 6:34-44; Mt 15:32-38; Lk 9:11b-17; Jn 6:1-15). Moreover, he is depicted as a host who welcomes people, especially the outcasts like Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) and the poor (sociological and economical poor like the woman with a hemorrhage, the lepers) into the Kingdom of God. Throughout his life, Jesus embodies this dialectical role as guest and host.

The dialectic "guest-host" relationship which characterizes Jesus is a paradigm which might help Africans to understand "the message of Jesus Christ, through whom God, as a stranger, visited humanity (Cf. Jn 1:1-14), and also played host to it as a foretaste of the eschatological banquet in his heavenly home (Cf. Jn 14:2)." This fluidity of roles which appears not only in Jesus' ministry but also in the use of both concepts (guest-host) reminds one to avoid diametrically opposing host and guest Christology but to perceive them

instead as different but complementary angles from which one can look at Jesus.

Jesus, a Host in Africa

The idea of "organic medium" present in many myths in Africa suggests a conception of an entity that serves as a mediator between the creator and the creatures. Parallelism with Christ's role has been made by some theologians such as Penoukou to suggest the idea of the implicit presence of Christ in African traditional beliefs. From the idea of an organic medium that underlines the double belonging of Christ, Penoukou emphasizes the solidarity (*Ubuntu*), which binds human beings together with Christ and points to him as concerned with their well-being.[30] Penoukou seems to indicate already that Christ can be perceived not only as of the Emmanuel but also as kin and perhaps by extension, a host in Africa. Thus, he can truly feel comfortable in his home. However, it might be useful to see how Christ can be recognized as truly a host in Africa.

Jesus as Embodiment of *Ubuntu*

As mentioned above, African hospitality is based on the central concept of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* defines not only the African's conception of human maturity but also the deep spiritual longing for life fulfilment: "A person who is truly *muntu* [mature human being] and manifests *ubuntu* is . . . someone who is profoundly related to his or her primary source of meaning and power (i.e., God), is deeply grounded in the community, and lives in harmony with other human

30 Penoukou, "Christology in the Village," 42-50.

beings."[31] All of these characteristics are perceptible in the life of Jesus. The New Testament shows clearly that Jesus is in total communion with his Father (Jn 14:9). This communion is so profound that Jesus says that he who has seen him has seen the Father (Lk 9:48) or that He and the Father are one (Jn 10:30). In the gospels, Jesus is depicted as praying alone (Mk 14:23; Mk 1:35; Lk 9:18; Lk 22:39-41) or even discerning God's will (Lk 6:12-13). Jesus is also portrayed as giving thanks to his Father, for example, before the multiplication of the bread (Mt 15:36; Jn 6:11; Mk 6:41). His familiarity with God the Father is revealed throughout the gospels.

Jesus was very rooted in his community. He was fully aware of the reality of his people, their struggles, and their hopes. In Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus suggested three non-violent actions, which are signs of protests against the vicious circle of domination and, thus, a way of proclaiming liberation. Jesus was an artisan of peace and a promoter of non-violence that seeks to resist systemic domination (Mt 5:38-42) and promote the greater good of the community. By curing all kinds of human suffering, Jesus worked for the well-being of his community during his public ministry. However, his mission of establishing harmony or reconciliation between the human race and God also made him an opponent of self-righteous people. Jesus likewise fought for the dignity and integrity of the human person and called for this interconnectedness between fellow human beings and God. His total obedience to the Father until the end won salvation for humanity. Thus, his life was the embodiment of all these values summarized by the term *ubuntu*.

31 Fulgence Nyengele, "African Spirituality and the Wesleyan Spirit: Implications for Spiritual Formation in a Multicultural Church and Culturally Pluralistic World," (paper presented at the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, 2013), 15.

In African terms, Jesus is fully a *muntu* (a mature and accomplished human being) whose life manifests *ubuntu*. If *ubuntu* is described as somebody who is hospitable, generous, kind, caring, loving, compassionate, merciful, and grace-full, there is no doubt that Jesus is himself "the perfect man," as *GS,* no. 38 states it, and thus the perfect embodiment of *ubuntu*.[32] Through his life, Jesus has shown all these values in their perfection (Mt 8:16-17; Mt 9:36; Mt 14:14; Mt 15:32; Mk 1:39-40; Lk 5:12-13; Jn 11:34-38).

In a setting where the host is expected to treat the guest with kindness and generosity, Jesus of Nazareth is the perfect host from an African perspective. Since Jesus lives out the ideal of *ubuntu*, "a major goal toward which [African] communities orient their members,"[33] Jesus can be considered as a model host, like the ancestors who have reached this ideal. Moreover, as the perfect embodiment of *ubuntu*, he can be given the title of an ancestor. But is Jesus only an ethical model of host for Africans? Or can he be considered as a host for Africans? How is Jesus as a host to the Africans?

Jesus is not the ancestor of Africans by association or by privilege. However, as head of the new creation, he is always and already an ancestor, a "proto-ancestor"[34] for all of humanity and thus for Africans, too. As Proto-ancestor, he is related to all the Africans, and accordingly, the argument of his foreignness can be dismissed. By being the first of the new

32 See *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*), December 7, 1965, no. 22 and 38. Henceforth referred to as *GS*. In this paper, the version of *Gaudium et Spes* will come from: *Documents of Vatican II* ed. James H. Kroeger (Pasay City: Paulines, 2011). *Gaudium et Spes* only mentions Jesus as the perfect man. As a perfect man, Jesus is in African cultures, the perfect embodiment of *Ubuntu*.

33 Nyengele, "African Spirituality and the Wesleyan Spirit," 14-15

34 Bujo, *African Theology in Social Context*, 71.

creation, he is the First and Supreme Host who embodies and fulfills Africans' quest for *ubuntu*. He is not only perceived through our categories, but he perfects and transcends them. He is the Master of Hospitality who perfects *ubuntu*.

Jesus as an African Host

As Proto-ancestor and thus universal host of all and by fulfilling all that is expected from a host in Africa, Jesus Christ clearly shows that he is not only a model of hospitality, but he is also "an African" host for all the Africans. Because of his proximity to the poor and the outcasts, and that Africa is still a continent where the majority of people still live in poverty, the image of Jesus as a host for the Africans does make sense. Christ has a particular concern for the poor, the oppressed, and the outcasts, not because of their moral disposition but because of their needs. During his ministry, Jesus always privileged the marginalized and not only the economic poor (widows, strangers, and orphans or the materially deprived) but also the sociological poor (outcasts, tax collectors, lepers, and many others). The Gospel is filled with accounts of Jesus' preferential ministry to the poor. Jesus' option for the poor is not grounded in the virtues of the poor. Still, it is rooted in the fact that material deprivation (for the economically poor) and discrimination (for the sociologically poor) are dehumanizing and are against God's loving plan and intention.

God's love is inclusive, creative, and restorative. Since He wills and intends the full realization of the potentialities of each human being and of the human community, God supplies what is lacking in them.[35] Since the poor are those in greater need, God has a special concern for them. Jesus,

35 Roger Haight, "The Preferential Option for the Poor," in *Morality,*

as the embodiment of God's hospitality, is also the host for all the poor (socially and materially) in Africa. Christ as the host is not a complacent image but a liberating image. As mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 4), Jesus comes to liberate people from their captivity, free them from oppressive and dehumanizing situations, from the slavery of sin and death. Jesus' ministry also means releasing people from their selfishness and the social structures which encourage injustice so that people may live out their true identity as children of God. Hospitality and solidarity with the poor will naturally flow from the recovery of this new identity. The host is Christ who gives life: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). As a host, he also came to satisfy the quest of all Africans for life, vitality, or life-force.

From a Dialectical Guest-Host Christology to a Threefold Christology

Hospitality conveys an exchange between the guest and the host, a giving and receiving that enriches both parties. In Eastern Mediterranean cultures, the primary expression of hospitality is almost always through a meal, however simple.[36] In various cultures in the world, a meal is also how hosts and guests are bound to each other by friendship and mutual obligations. In Africa, the climax of the encounter between the host and the guest is when both share a meal--which is

Religion, and the Filipino: Essays in Honor of Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J., ed. Rene Javellana (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 1994), 173.

36 Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Luke* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1994), 19. According to LaVerdiere, hospitality was expected from everybody, even from the poorest of the poor. It can be offered even in the humblest place at its basic and simple level (a meal and a breaking of bread).

believed to be the symbol of friendship and love. The relationship between the guest and the host deepens as they eat and drink together. The meal is the meeting point in the interaction between the guest and the host. By stressing the idea of a threefold Christology, this writer is saying that Jesus is not only a guest and a host, but he identifies himself also as a meal which binds together God and his people. Jesus has often switched his role from guest to host but also from host to meal or drink.[37]

The episode of the Samaritan woman in the Gospel of John (Jn 4) offers a meaningful back-and-forth exchange of roles. The Samaritan woman who is playing the role of host at the beginning of the story becomes the guest who is begging for a drink. From the guest who asks for a simple drink, Jesus presents himself as the host who provides a better or superior drink—a living and eternal water. Moreover, Jesus introduces himself as both the giver of the gift and the gift itself, the source or provider, and the substance of the living water, which will become available through his death (Jn 7:37-39).[38] The story of the Samaritan woman stresses Jesus' threefold role as a guest, a host, and a meal or a drink (living water). However, the drink he refers to here is not material but metaphorical (disclosure of himself).

The Last Supper offers a complete image of this threefold role of Jesus as guest, host, and meal. According to the Synoptics, the Last Supper of Jesus is held in a place which belongs to someone that Jesus probably knew (Mt 26:17-30; Mk 14:12-26; Lk 22:7-39). Regardless of the relationship that

37 The meal generally includes the food and the drink. In the case of the Last Supper or the Eucharist, the bread and the wine are conveyed.

38 Jane S. Webster, *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 57.

Jesus had with the owner of the apartment, Jesus is the guest in the house where he holds his Passover meal. However, Jesus also becomes the host who breaks the bread and shares the wine with his disciples. During the last supper, he takes the bread, breaks it, and gives to his disciples saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he does the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Lk 22:19-20). By this gesture, which is ritual anticipation of his passion, Jesus indicates clearly that he is not only the host but also the meal.

A Meal Christology

A meal Christology is a proposal that emphasizes not only the significance of meals in Jesus' ministry but also Jesus' self-identification with a meal. A meal Christology involves a soteriological aspect since Jesus identifies himself as the substance of the meal, which gives eternal life. By presenting Jesus as a meal, the researcher does not intend to reduce him to a meal but refers to the metaphor and symbol that Jesus chose to identify himself with: the bread and the wine. In the Jewish setting, bread was a basic food taken at every meal. In that sense, the term bread refers to the entire meal. Given that background where the terms bread and meal can be interchangeable, to say that Jesus is the bread of life (Jn 6:35) is also equivalent to the affirmation that Jesus is the "meal of life." Moreover, during the Last Supper, the words pronounced over the bread and wine suggest Jesus' identification with the sacred meal. He chooses bread and wine as the signs of his salvific death and the sacrament of his abiding presence.

The idea of a meal can be expounded when placed in the general context of a gift. The meal symbolically represents the gift through which communion between the guest and the host is established and deepened. During the Lord's Supper, the gift offered to the disciples, which seems symbolic, is, at the same time, an offer of life and salvation that calls for a response. The meal offered by Jesus to his disciples is a gift which was accepted by his followers. Both the offer and the reception of the gift of salvation are fundamental. A meal Christology is objective and subjective since while the offer of salvation is freely given, it also requires a response of faith.

A Christology Centered on the Eucharist in Africa

Jesus in the Eucharist embodies and transcends the African notion of a common meal. The Eucharist is the meal par excellence which satisfies the deep hunger of Africans. The Eucharist stands as a complete meal that fulfills Africans' longing: a longing for intimacy and longing for reconciliation, peace, and justice. In the Eucharist, God becomes the meal that not only satiates humanity's hunger but also offers us the gift of eternal life or communion with the Lord. The Eucharist also invites people to ongoing conversion.

Intimacy with Christ: Total Allegiance to Christ

The Eucharistic meal through which a believer partakes of the body and blood of Christ deepens one's intimacy with the Lord. The peculiarity of the Eucharistic meal is that not only is one at the host's table but also "consumes" the giver of the gift and so becomes one with him. By uniting one with the person of Christ, the Eucharistic meal incorporates him or her into the Mystical Body of Christ. "Whoever eats my flesh

and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (Jn 6:56). At the same time, the Eucharist introduces one to the inner life of the Trinity, "In eating his body and drinking his blood', one forges a communion of life with the Triune God, a new covenant in the blood of Christ (Cf. Lk 22:20)."[39] By giving his body and blood, Jesus gives people the possibility of entering in a deep relationship with the Trinity and ultimately confers to them the grace of divinization. This intimacy with the Lord is a deeply religious experience that can satisfy the Africans' longing for the divine. Once the African Christians' bond with Christ is strengthened, total allegiance to Christ can follow.

The abiding presence of Christ made real in the Eucharist assures African Christians that the forces of evil cannot prevail in their life. Intimacy with Jesus can strengthen them in their faith. For African Christians who are so afraid of evil mystical powers, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the sure guarantee of God's sovereignty and protection over their life. The disappearance of a double religious loyalty will be a consequence of African Christians' personal and deep encounter and intimacy with Christ himself.

The Eucharistic meal also has a missionary dimension in that one who experiences a moment of intimacy with Jesus through the meal is naturally led to share his experience with others. After breaking bread with the Lord, the disciples of Emmaus return to Jerusalem to proclaim the Risen Christ. The eleven are also sent to proclaim the Good News after a meal that Jesus shared with them (cf. Lk 24:36-53; Mk

39 Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, "Living the Eucharist in Asia," (paper presented at the 9th FABC Plenary Assembly, Manila Philippines, August 10-16 2009), no. 129b.

16:14). The Eucharistic meal thus invites Christians to go on a mission. For African Christians who believe that meals are always shared with others, it is easier to understand that by participating in the Eucharistic meal, they are also sent on a mission, a mission of transforming the world: "The Eucharist invites us to become Eucharistic people. . . . It is an expression of divine caritas, God's kenotic love-as-nourishment. The Eucharist is an invitation and a challenge to become God's nourishing gift for one another."40 The Eucharist is a meal of love that invites Christians to become a gift to others.

Just as food gives strength to a person to walk to their destination, so Jesus in the Eucharistic meal gives people strength for their pilgrimage toward the heavenly Kingdom, where total communion with God will be possible. As promised by Jesus, "those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life and I will raise them up on the last day" (Jn 6:54).

Eucharist as a Communal Meal and its Implications

The Eucharist embodies both the African notion of a common meal and aspirations. Meals in Africa are moments of fellowship and reconciliation among people and between people and God. The reconciling grace of Christ in the Eucharist pertains to the restoration of every human being, their integration to the community, and the healing of human communities disaggregated by sin. During the Confiteor and the Kyrie, Christians are invited to ask for forgiveness from the Lord. They are also called to forgive one another before

40 Ángel Méndez-Montoya, "Eating and the Eucharist: A Transformation of Desire" https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/uploads/content/bible_in_transmission/files/2013_summer/BiT_Summer_2013_Mendez-Montoya.pdf (accessed June 27, 2018).

presenting their offerings. The Eucharist can bring people together, reconcile them, and heal their painful memories.

In Africa, meals have always been conceived as moments of communion and peace akin to the Eucharistic *agape*. However, more than just strengthening relationships among human beings, Jesus in the Eucharist brings human beings closer to communion with God and with one another. The Eucharist is a gathering of the family of God. The Eucharist should foster cohesion and help to overcome hostilities and divisions. In Africa, where tribal and cultural differences can become sources of division, Christians strengthened by the Eucharist should become promoters of unity and peace. The kiss of peace in the Eucharistic celebration should not only be a formality but should lead Christians to become real channels of peace and hope in Africa.

The Eucharistic celebration is a gathering of people from diverse social, political, and cultural backgrounds. Called to be together, the people of God are gathered to partake of the same sacrifice. The Eucharist should foster a sense of justice since all have the same dignity before God. Membership and participation in the Body of Christ should lead Christians to promote solidarity and justice in their relationship with others through their common filiation.

The service of reconciliation, justice, and peace that the Church is expected to carry out is the work of the whole people of God. In African cultures, the preparation of a meal requires the participation of many people. Likewise, in the Eucharistic meal and celebration, each community is involved, each according to their function. Collaboration and cooperation in mission are important.

In traditional African society, there is always a surplus of food shared with a potential guest who may pass by. Moreover, food is never taken alone but shared with others so that no one is hungry. In a continent characterized by an abundance of resources, starvation is a scandal that should be overcome by a serious reflection--both on the African notion of the communal meal and the Eucharist. Christ's command (Mt 25:31-46) and his preferential option for the poor should also become the option of all Christians.

The Model of Hospitality with its Three Components and the Christological Problem in Africa: Theological and Pastoral Suggestions

The recognition by the disciples of the true identity of Jesus was a gradual process. From their initial encounter with Jesus, the disciples grew in their understanding and knowledge of Jesus and his messianic role and divinity. In this vein, the researcher suggests re-encounter with Christ as a guest, host, and meal. This process is also a gradual process that follows the disciples' path on the road to Emmaus. Jesus is seen as a foreigner, the only stranger who is not aware of the recent events. "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" asked Cleopas (Lk 24:18). On the road, the stranger listens carefully to the disciples, and in the light of the content of their sharing, he reinterprets the meaning of the event for them. He starts from their story and connects that story with the Scriptures. After listening to this stranger, the disciples beg Jesus to become their guest: "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." (Lk 24:29).

From being a stranger, Jesus is now a guest. A role reversal has taken place with him becoming the host who breaks the bread. “Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight” (Lk 24:31). Jesus becomes the bread, the meal which gives them the courage and the energy to return to Jerusalem that same night. He disappears from their sight because he has become the meal which they consume but which is not destroyed but integrated into them and transforms them.

As an approach to the Christological model, the researcher proposes hospitality with its three components of guest, host, and meal as a gradual process of encounter or re-encounter with Christ to help dispel the image of the foreignness of Jesus. If Africans accept Jesus as one of them (guest Christology), if he responds to their needs for protection as a host (host Christology) and if a deep intimacy can be established between himself and the Africans (meal Christology), then the image of a foreign Christ--which is at the root of the Christological problem--may gradually disappear. If this image is dispelled, people may begin to rely on Jesus for answers, give him full allegiance, and proclaim him as their Savior and God.

Jesus as a Guest: An Acceptance of Jesus

Guest Christology is an attempt “to bring Africa and Christ closer to one another” and to address the problem of the image of Christ perceived as an illegal alien.[41] Guest Christology stresses the acceptance of Christ in Africa not as an illegal alien but as a legitimate guest. If Jesus is presented as a guest, he may be accepted by Africans because of their legendary virtue of hospitality. The child Jesus has found a

41 Udoh, *Guest Christology*, 209.

refuge, a home in Egypt, in African soil. Africans can show their generosity and care for Jesus and slowly accept him as one of them.

In a worldview where a guest can adapt and fully participate in the activities of the host, Jesus and his disciples can effectively find their way into the new culture by embracing it with the help of Africans. By living with Jesus for a certain time, people will slowly trust him and gradually learn to rely on him. By knowing their culture, Jesus and his followers can transform it from within. The guest Christology respects the integrity of Africans who find a role to play in that paradigm as active subjects. A guest approach will also lead to an acceptance of Jesus because it enables Africans to empathize with him. In fact, as a guest, Jesus Christ is a child of two worlds and has to deal with the difficulty of dual belonging. Though their situation is not the same, Africans who are also children of two worlds (traditional and western cultures) would be able to identify themselves with him. This double identification of Christ—being a child of two worlds who adopts African culture—will help Jesus win the acceptance of Africans.

In an African setting where people are immersed in the African traditional religion before their birth, guest Christology may be a good starting point. For people rooted in their own traditional religion, the proclamation of the Gospel may need to start by introducing Jesus as a guest.

Jesus as a Host: Protector and Healer

For Christ to become meaningful for Africans and be fully accepted in their cultures, he has to respond to their deepest quest. One of the pressing matters for Africans concerns

dealing with sickness, witchcraft, misfortunes, or spirit possession. The mainline Christian Churches in Africa do not always address these issues adequately or even deny the existence of such phenomena. Their inadequacy in dealing with such issues and the pressure of family members who encourage their own to consult diviners during moments of crises lead some converts to go back to African traditional religion or to combine both. Moreover, "because they obtain immediate returns from them [African Traditional Religion, traditionals beliefs and ritual practices], many professed Christians tend to revert back to African traditional practices for worrying socio-spiritual issues."[42]

In a context where illness is believed to be due to supernatural causes, Christ may need to be presented as a host who protects Africans against these hostile forces. Mbiti asserts that "unless Christianity fully occupies the whole person as much as, if not more than, traditional religions do, most converts will continue to revert to their old beliefs and practices for perhaps six days a week, and certainly in times of crisis and emergency."[43] To resolve double religious belonging, which is rooted in the need of people to protect themselves and their families against misfortune, witchcraft, and evil spirits, a host Christology may be helpful. Christ can be introduced as a host healer or a host protector. In fact, in African cultures, ancestors who are believed to be hosts reputedly protect their descendants' lives. Jesus embodies and transcends this role given to the ancestors. As an ancestor-host, Jesus Christ belongs to two worlds, which is a position that enables him to assure more than any ancestor the protection of Africans from all evil spirits and threats. His ministry on earth and

42 Joel Mokhoathi, "From Contextual Theology to African Christianity," Religions 8 (12): 7 https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8120266 (accessed 10 August 2018).

43 Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 3.

his resurrection reveal his sovereignty against all forces. To introduce Jesus as a host may help Africans to rely deeply on him and not look for protection anymore from other forces.

A host Christology thus presents Jesus as the one embracing all Africans with their joys and struggles. Catechetical instruction should develop in the Christian the reflex to turn to Jesus as their Savior and Messiah. A re-evangelization of Christians living with a schizophrenic faith may help address the Christological problem. The structure of basic ecclesial communities may be of great help for individual Christians who are confronted with the pressure of family members who require them to consult diviners to identify the "why" of their misfortune and the "who" behind it. Since host Christology stresses Jesus as a host who is already present in their cultures, the Gospel should not be presented as alienating people from their culture, but as an "enrichment or even perfection" of their culture. A profound catechesis that is based on cultural values like hospitality may help.

Meal Christology: Intimacy with Christ

Meals are not only for subsistence (biological) but also have an important social dimension (sociological and even political) in the life of a community. In African traditions and in many cultures around the world, meals connect and bind people together. Table companionships are moments of intimacy and fellowship. Thus, meal Christology highlights the intimacy that Jesus wants to establish with humanity, especially with Africans. The gap which can exist between host and guest is abolished since Jesus invites them to share in his divine life. If Africans find in Jesus a reliable and trustworthy friend, they will then seek him and eventually give him full

recognition and allegiance. Moreover, as a meal, Jesus can also satisfy the deep fits of Africans' hunger, their hunger for transcendence, for God, their needs for reconciliation, justice and peace, and the right relationship with the environment. In a continent where life is the principal value, Jesus' offer of life may more likely be accepted. The Africans' quest for life finds fulfillment in Jesus since Jesus has come to offer life and life in abundance. Meal Christology underlines that Jesus is offering to Africans living in abundance, is giving himself to redeem them, is inviting them to intimacy (through a meal), and true discipleship (becoming bread broken for others).

A meal Christology aims to root African Christians in their faith by leading them to real intimacy with Jesus Christ. Once a stable relationship with Christ has been established, the African Christian can be thoroughly grounded in his faith and become himself a true disciple and bread broken for others.

Full, Conscious, and Active Participation in the Liturgy in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* as Pastoral Response to the Universal Call to Holiness in *Lumen Gentium*

Ruben B. Orbeta, Jr., S.J.

Among the things emphasized strongly by the Second Vatican Council were liturgical renewal as espoused by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (*SC*) and the universal call to holiness as outlined in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (*LG*).[1] This paper will seek to make the connection between renewed liturgical participation and the universal call to holiness.

This paper will consist of three major sections. The first will tackle the universal call to holiness as the ultimate Christian vocation in the world. The second section will present renewed liturgical participation as one of the basic yet powerful means of responding to the universal call to holiness. This section will have two subsections: (1) the Liturgy of the Word, and (2) the Liturgy of the Eucharist. These subsections will present the two as didactic/pedagogical in living a holy life. The third section will present liturgical spirituality as a means of fostering sanctity. It will establish the link between the universal call to holiness and renewed liturgical participation.

1 All quotations of Vatican II documents are taken from James H. Kroeger, ed., *Documents of Vatican Council II* (Pasay: Paulines Publishing House, 2011).

The Universal Call to Holiness: The Christian Way of Life

Ruggieri writes that in the deliberations on the Schema on the Church, many of its critics highlighted the necessity for an inspiring central idea, the dimension of mystery in the internal life of the Church. For example, there is Msgr. D'Avack of Camerino, Italy, who "insisted that the inner life of the Church be made central…"[2] Perhaps, this sheds light as to why in the final document, *Lumen Gentium*, the whole Chapter V is dedicated to the universal call to holiness, a chapter which Haring considers to be an important tool to better understand Vatican II as a "Council of spiritual renewal."[3] The chapter is composed of four articles, 39-42. The gist of the four articles will be presented below.

Chapter V begins in Article 39. It declares that "The Church, whose mystery is being set forth by this Sacred Synod, is believed to be indefectibly holy." Wulf explains in his commentary that the opening line "the Church is indefectibly holy" points to the reality that "the holiness of the individual is always a mere participation in the holiness of the Church, proclaiming to the world, as it must, the holiness of the Church." However, he clarifies that this holiness is none other than God's holiness. "Christ alone is holy, and not simply because he is God; as man too, he is *essentially* holy because he is one with the divine Person. Christ's human holiness, given to him by the Father and effected by the Holy Ghost, is also based on the essential holiness which he, as the

2 Giuseppe Ruggieri, "Beyond an Ecclesiology of Polemics: The Debate on the Church," in *History of Vatican II: The Formation of the Council's Identity* vol. 2, eds. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 1997), 332-33.

3 Bernard Haring, "Holiness in the Church," in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame/New York: University of Notre Dame Press/Association Press, 1966), 250.

divine *Logos*, directly bestows on his humanity." He explains that the Church's holiness "is a share in the holiness of Christ in the Holy Ghost."[4] *LG* no. 39 further states that holiness can be viewed from the perspective of the gifts of the Spirit which enables her to participate in Christ's mission and life. In a similar way, Melloni observes that in the deliberations on the People of God, there was "a strong emphasis on the equality of the members of the Church by reason of their ultimate vocation, their participation in the gift of salvation, and their call to holiness."[5]

Article 40 states that Christ preached holiness of life in every condition. The article ends by stating that for the faithful to attain the holiness to which they are called by Christ, "They must use their strength accordingly as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things…" To seek the Father's will entails surrender to the Divine. Wulf comments that "the more completely man surrenders to God's love in Christ, the more whole-heartedly he ventures into it, the holier he becomes."[6] Surrender in this sense, can mean an entrusting and offering of one's entire being – life and everything in it – to God.

Article 41 stipulates that although the states and duties in life of each member of the faithful may vary, they are all called to one holiness as moved by the Spirit and in obedience and worship to the Father. *LG* no. 41 exhorts the laity that in "their

4 Friedrich Wulf, "Chapter V," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* vol. 1, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 263. Italics in the original text.

5 Alberto Melloni, "The Beginning of the Second Period: The Great Debate on the Church," in *History of Vatican II: The Mature Council* vol. 3, eds. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 2000), 80.

6 Wulf, "Chapter V," 266.

daily work they should climb to heights of holiness and apostolic activity." It recapitulates, "All Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties, and circumstances of their lives – and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness…" Wulf sees this phrase as one important point made in Chapter V, implying that holiness is "not a road running parallel to the road of one's ordinary life and work, but is a thing achieved in and through the concrete circumstances and events of one's existence."[7] Quoting Pope John XXIII, "No one should make the mistake of supposing that his own spiritual perfection," that is, holiness, "is inconsistent with the tasks of this present life. The two are perfectly consistent."[8] One attains holiness in and through one's context provided that this ultimately "means following the poor and humble Christ as he carries the Cross."[9] The arena of holiness therefore is daily life, as the Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (*AA*) paragraph 2 grounds, "Since the laity… live in the midst of the world and its concerns… are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the Spirit of Christ."

Chapter V ends with Article 42. It enumerates the "means" through which sanctity can be fostered in souls: "Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul… the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace." *LG* no. 42 specifies that "These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the liturgy, application of

7 Ibid., 268.
8 *Mater et Magistra* 254 (*AAS* 53 [1961], 460) as quoted in Wulf, "Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI," 258.
9 Wulf, "Chapter V," 268.

oneself to prayer…" Wulf expounds this provision of *LG* no. 42 by stressing that to grow in holiness,

> the first thing that man must do is gladly *listen* to God's word, in order to understand it more profoundly, to accept it, to be steeped in it (… done most explicitly through prayer… the sacraments especially the Eucharist, and taking part in the liturgy), and sustained by its strength, to give it flesh and blood…[10]

Wulf notes further that *LG* no. 42 reiterates the fact that "growth in Christian holiness is a joint effect of divine grace and man's response to grace."[11] For the Christian, grace is excellently mediated through the sacraments and the internal life of the Church.

What primarily grounds the sanctity of the Church is God's holiness. The Church is called by the Holy One of Israel to share in His holiness. Holiness therefore must be understood as God's gratuitous gift to humanity, a call ultimately to share in God's love.[12] Cunningham writes that the Church intrinsically has formal holiness since she possesses Sacred Scriptures and the sacraments.[13] In the final analysis, Haring posits that "The holiness of the whole Church and of every individual Christian has to be understood in the light of the sacraments… finally in the light of the paschal mystery."[14] The next section will deepen the reflection on holiness as fostered by renewed and active participation in the sacred liturgy.

10 Wulf, "Chapter V," 270. Italics in original text.
11 Ibid.
12 Haring, "Holiness in the Church," 251.
13 Lawrence Cunningham, "Holiness," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1993), 482.
14 Haring, "Holiness in the Church," 252.

The Liturgy: Source and Summit of Christian Life

Sacrosanctum Concilium[15] 10 declares that

> The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed… it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.

It must be strongly stressed that the liturgy is the center upon which Christian living revolves. *SC* no. 7 teaches that,

> Christ indeed associates the Church with Himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified… The liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of man is signified… the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members… every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy…

Jungmann comments that the Liturgy must be understood not merely as an exterior act of worship but precisely as embracing the priestly function of Christ which "forms its backbone and animates it and is its visible sign."[16] Liturgical participation, then, is "sanctifying par excellence" for it is a sharing in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

15 Henceforth referred to as SC.

16 Josef Jungmann, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* vol. 1, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 14.

Since the liturgy is the sacred action surpassing all others, *SC* no. 14 declares that,

> Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the Liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as… 'a royal priesthood'… is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

Lamberigts notes a presentation during the Council by Ferdinando Antonelli in which Antonelli "outlined five fundamental principles [as] the necessary guidelines for implementing the renewal…," the last of which is "promoting the active participation of the faithful out of respect for the hierarchical and communal character of the liturgy and its dynamics."[17] For Jungmann, *SC* no. 14 affirms that "the entire body of the faithful has been summoned to participation in it as the priestly people of God… 'by reason of their baptism.'"[18] Hence, *SC* 14 asserts that "Full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian Spirit." Renewed liturgical participation is thus a powerful means of nurturing Christian life and fostering sanctity.

Full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy requires that involvement of the whole person. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (*GIRM*)[19] expounds this point

17 Mathijs Lamberigts, "The Liturgy Debate," in *History of Vatican II: The Formation of the Council's Identity* vol. 2, eds. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 1997), 109-10.

18 Jungmann, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," 17.

19 All quotes are from the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Including Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy*

by describing "a conscious, active, and full participation of the faithful, namely in body and mind, a participation fervent with faith, hope and charity…" as that "which is desired by the Church and which is required by the very nature of the celebration…"[20] It therefore involves the senses and lifts them up to transcendence. For Jungmann, the active participation called for is "above all an interior participation, that is, a conscious participation elevating heart and soul…"[21] *GIRM* no. 35 explicitates that "The acclamations and responses of the people constitute the level of active participation that is to be made by the assembled faithful…" Pointing to *SC* 48, Jungmann deepens the reflection by saying that the faithful "should participate more fully in thanking God in the accomplishment of the Eucharist… and offer the Holy Sacrifice together with the priest." He further emphasizes that the laity's active participation is "indeed to offer the sacrifice with the priest and not merely 'through him;'"[22] thereby highlighting the laity's exercise of the "common priesthood."

The succeeding subsections will expound this full, active, and conscious participation as "dialogical" (Word proclaimed – response) in the Liturgy of the Word and as "participation in Christ's priesthood" (offering sacrifice) in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Communion Under both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America and Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar Vol. 14 (Washington, D.C: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011). Henceforth will be referred to as *GIRM*.

20 *GIRM*, no. 18.

21 Jungmann, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," 35.

22 Ibid., 34.

The Liturgy of the Word

Rocha calls attention to the fact that in the *GIRM* and in the *Order of Mass*, there is an explicit mention of "the assembled people of God." He explains that "This people is not assembled simply through their own initiative, but is there because God has called and gathered it together…"[23] The congregation is the community gathered by God to render Him praise and worship, and in effect, are sanctified by the celebration. This "gathered" community is holy, as Cunningham explains, for the basic sense of the word denotes the Jewish mindset of being the people chosen and loved by God.[24] Goffredo Boselli writes that this gathered assembly is "called by God, to hear God's word on the day God has made holy."[25]

GIRM no. 29 states that in the proclamation of the Word, "God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel." Hence, the biblical readings are to be "listened to reverently by everyone, for they are the element of greatest importance in the Liturgy."[26] Jungmann speaks of the proclamation of the Word as basis for worship; in it is begun the sanctification of humanity.[27] Boselli in turn believes that the liturgy is didactic in prayer and sanctity primarily because it puts emphasis on the centrality of hearing God's Word.[28]

23 Pedro Romano Rocha, "The Principal Manifestation of the Church (SC 41)," in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives Twenty-Five Years After (1962-1987)* vol. 2, ed. Rene Latourelle (New York/ Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 13-14.
24 Cunningham, "Holiness," 481.
25 Goffredo Boselli, *The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy: School of Prayer, Source of Life*, trans. Barry Hudock (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 53-54.
26 Cf. *SC* nos. 7 and 33.
27 Jungmann, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," 14.
28 Boselli, *The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy*, 107.

Kaczynski prolifically expresses the beautiful dialogical dynamics in the proclamation of the Word. He reflects that God's Word speaks in the readings and the human response is expressed in the psalm and Alleluia acclamation; God's Word speaks in the Gospel and homily and the human answer is expressed in the *Credo* and intercessions.[29] *GIRM* no. 55 aptly summarizes this movement: "By means of silence [brief moments after each reading] and by singing [the responsorial psalm and Alleluia], the people make this divine word their own, and affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith."[30]

Full, conscious, and active participation in the Liturgy of the Word thus entails careful listening to Scriptures, responding to it through chants and responses, and ultimately interiorizing God's word as lived out in daily life. The Word of God as listened to and responded to in obedience and faith by the gathered congregation, molds the faithful in sanctity.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1368 teaches that,

> The Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With Him, she herself is offered whole and entire… In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value…[31]

29 Reiner Kaczynski, "Toward the Reform of the Liturgy," in *History of Vatican II: The Mature Council* vol. 3, eds. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 2000), 225 fn. 149.

30 Words in brackets are added by the writer for emphasis.

31 CBCP-ECCE, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Definitive Edition Based on the Latin *Editio Typica* (Manila: ECCCE and Word & Life

The language of offering and sacrifice, which necessitates priesthood, is very apparent in this paragraph. Hence, we can take it to imply that renewed liturgical participation means an "active" sharing in the priesthood of Christ.

LG no. 10 declares that "Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men… made the new people 'a kingdom and priests' to God the Father… The Baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated… as a holy priesthood, in order that… they may offer spiritual sacrifices…" *LG* no. 10 likewise teaches that the royal priesthood of the laity and the ministerial priesthood, although different in essence and in degree, are related since both of them participate in the one priesthood of Christ, each in its own manner. Meanwhile, the laity's common priesthood, Orsy opines, "come to life and best operates when it is harmoniously blended with the hierarchy." The hierarchical priesthood and the common priesthood of the laity do not oppose one another. In fact, "they are meant to support and balance each other. They exist and work for a common purpose."[32] *LG* no. 10 ends by explaining that "the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life…"

LG no. 11 also teaches that "Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the font and apex of the whole Christian life, [the faithful] offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with it." The notion of offering is central. In this vein, *GIRM* no. 73 explains that the offering of the bread and wine by representatives of the faithful is a praiseworthy

Publications, 1994), 383. Henceforth referred to as *CCC*.

32 Ladislas Orsy, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 35.

practice for this gesture "still keeps its spiritual efficacy and significance." Irwin opines that offering gifts of bread and wine on the altar, the fruits of human labor, signifies that what is being offered for the Eucharistic sacrifice comes from the daily sacrifices of those who offer the very gifts.[33] It is therefore this act of "offering the Sacrifice" with the priest by virtue of their royal priesthood that sanctifies the laity and strengthens them to live holy lives.

Full, conscious, and active participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist ultimately means participation in Christ's priesthood. Pope Paul VI in *Mysterium Fidei*[34] declares that,

> In dealing with the restoration of the scared liturgy, the Fathers of the Council were led by their pastoral concern for the whole Church to regard it as a matter of highest importance to urge the faithful to participate actively, with undivided devotion, in the celebration of this Most Holy Mystery, to offer it to God along with the priest as a sacrifice for their own salvation and that of the whole world, and to use it as spiritual nourishment.[35]

Active participation, Levering avers, ultimately "calls for an interior union of the laity with the priest during the Eucharistic prayer. The goal here is that 'during the sacrifice of the Mass, we pray to the Lord, to receive the offering of the spiritual victim, and then raise our very selves to their perfection in becoming an eternal gift for himself (cf. *SC* no. 12).'"[36]

33 Kevin Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist, 2005), 236.

34 Paul VI, "Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei*", September 3 1965, Vatican Archives, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_03091965_mysterium.html (accessed November 6, 2018). Henceforth referred to as MF.

35 *M*F, 1.

36 Matthew Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America

The next section will tackle the link between renewed liturgical participation and the universal call to holiness. It will show how the living out of a sound liturgical spirituality fosters growth in sanctity.

Liturgical Spirituality: Towards Living a Life of Holiness

The Liturgy is the primary space where sanctity is fostered since it is the sacred action *par excellence*. *GIRM* no. 28 reiterates the Council's teaching on the liturgy as the "one single act of worship" where the "table both of God's Word and the Body of Christ" are spread for the faithful for their instruction and nourishment.[37] In describing the spirituality of the laity, *AA* 4 states that, their "life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids… especially active participation in the sacred liturgy… they do not separate Christ from their life but rather performing their work according to God's will they grow in that union. In this way, the laity… make progress in holiness…" Renewed liturgical participation therefore leads the faithful towards living out a liturgical spirituality.

SC no. 48 expresses the meaning of liturgical spirituality. It states,

> The Church earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary… they should take part in this sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God's word and be

Press, 2017), 76.

37 Cf. *SC* nos. 56, 48, and 51 and *Dei Verbum* no. 21.

> nourished at the table of the Lord's body… by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves…

There are two things that need to be stressed here vis-à-vis liturgical spirituality. The first is "instructed by God's word" and the second is "offering of sacrifice and being offered themselves with it." In the final analysis, Liturgical spirituality is once again an exercise of sharing in the priesthood of Christ, thereby sanctifying the faithful.

Liturgical spirituality educates a believer in God's word. The Mass, especially the Liturgy of the Word, is a living and dynamic encounter with Christ who is present in the proclaimed word. Irwin believes that in the proclamation of the Word, the biblical paradigm becomes alive, that is, what God says to His people is not a once and for all event. It continues to happen in the "here and now;" the dynamo of the proclaimed Word "causes" something to happen in the hearer.[38] Boselli likewise posits that true hearing of the proclaimed Word makes the biblical text an interior reality in the hearer.[39] The Word thus becomes a reality for the Christian "here and now" precisely through one's response to it. This response, initially expressed in chants and responsories, is ultimately lived out by standing up to the challenge posed by the Word in one's life and world. To be instructed in God's word ultimately leads to proclaiming it in and through one's life. To proclaim the Word through the witness of one's life thus shapes a person in sanctity.

Liturgical spirituality nourishes one at the table of the Lord's body by offering the sacrifice and being offered

38 Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist*, 99.
39 Boselli, *The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy*, 110.

along with it. It means an "active" sharing in the priesthood of Christ. Boselli finds it essential to understand liturgy as a school of prayer since it is the core essence of Christian worship. "The worship of Christians is essentially different from both the Jewish and pagan sacrificial economies… because the sacrifice it calls for is not ritual but existential. It is realized in the offering of oneself, of one's entire life."[40] Ratzinger notes that the liturgy allows one to share in the sacrificial self-offering of Christ so that in the liturgy, "the difference between the *actio Christi* and our own action is done away with. There is only *one* action, which is at the same time his and ours – ours because we have become one body and one spirit with him."[41] Liturgical spirituality therefore implies being "priestly." In laying out the foundations of the lay apostolate, *AA* no. 3 states that the lay "are consecrated for the royal priesthood and the holy people… not only that they may offer spiritual sacrifices in everything they do but also that they may witness to Christ throughout the world."

According to Beauduin, "for *all the faithful of the Church without exception*, the greatest possible active and frequent participation in the priestly life of the visible hierarchy, according to the manner prescribed in the liturgical canons, is the *normal and infallible path* to a solid piety…" He goes on to aver that "this is the primary law of the sanctity of souls."[42] Similarly, *LG* no. 34 teaches that Christ "also gives them a share in His priestly function of offering spiritual worship for

40 Ibid., 104.

41 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 174 as quoted in Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event*, 79. Italics in quoted text.

42 Lambert Beauduin, *Liturgy: The Life of the Church*, trans. Virgil Michel (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1926), 4. Italics contained in the original text.

the glory of God and the salvation of men… Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus… the laity consecrate the world itself to God." Likewise, Levering declares that "offering spiritual worship" may mean the fidelity shown in fulfilling their tasks and concerns in daily life, that when ultimately brought to the celebration of the Eucharist, consecrates the laity and the world to God.[43] Boselli also emphasizes that "Prayer becomes sacrifice when words of praise, thanksgiving, and blessing that are spoken express and contain the truth in the person's offering of her whole life to God."[44] Cunningham sees in here "a thread in the NT that transposes the cultic notion of the holiness of worship into a spiritual reality by which the followers of Jesus are 'set apart' for God… 'Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship' (Rom 12:1)."[45] Thus, in the its fullest sense, one's spiritual worship is one's offering of life and everything in it.

In line with this, McPartlan echoes the deep desire of Paul VI that the teaching of the laity offering the sacrifice with the priest by virtue of their royal priesthood as well as their offering of themselves together with it, is "the most effective means… of extolling the dignity of all the faithful, and of spurring them on to reach the heights of sanctity." (*MF* no. 31). According to him, Paul VI wanted to emphasize that "the Eucharistic Christ, who is both priest and victim, draws the whole Church to himself such that she too and all her members become priest and victim along with him."[46] He therefore

43 Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event*, 121.
44 Boselli, *The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy*, 105.
45 Cunningham, "Holiness," 481.
46 Paul McPartlan, "The Mystery of Faith: When We Eat This Bread and

makes explicit what Paul VI alluded to in his encyclical (*MF* no. 31, note 24), quoting St. Augustine who writes in *The City of God* that,

> The whole of that redeemed city… is offered as a universal sacrifice to God through the High Priest who… offered himself in his passion for us that we might be the body of so glorious a head… This is the sacrifice… which the Church continues to celebrate in the sacrament of the altar, in which it is clear to the Church that she herself is offered in the very offering she makes to God.[47]

Holiness as envisioned by Vatican II is fostered by a liturgical spirituality. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Levering proposes, "grounds us in the central liturgical desideratum: that all Christians, united liturgically in Christ's Pasch, interiorly offer 'our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship' (Rom 12:1)."[48] In the ruminations of Denysenko, "The Council envisioned a significant body of Christians participating in Christ's eternal liturgy offered to God; having partaken of God by hearing the proclamation of the Word and receiving Holy Communion, Christians return to the world to bear Christ and contribute to society's transformation and transfiguration into an icon of God's kingdom."[49]

Drink This Cup," *Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions Newsletter* 42, no. 6 (December 2015): 13-14.

47 *City of God,* X, 6; PL 42.284 as quoted in McPartlan, "The Mystery of Faith," 14.

48 Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event*, 80.

49 Nicolas E. Denysenko, *Liturgical Reform After Vatican* II (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 37 as quoted in Levering, *An Introduction to Vatican II as an Ongoing Theological Event*, 19.

Conclusion

There is a strong link between full, conscious, and active liturgical participation (*SC* no. 14) as being warranted by the faithful's sharing a common dignity in Christ (*LG* no.32) and the universal call to sanctity (*LG* nos. 39-42). McPartlan synthesizes, "The faithful, 'by virtue of their royal priesthood, participates in the offering of the Eucharist' (*LG* no.10). Indeed, 'they offer the divine victim to God and themselves with it' (*LG* no. 11). They join the sacrifice of their lives and of all their activity in the world to that one sacrifice of Christ… the laity consecrates the world itself to God' (*LG* no. 34)."[50] Paul VI beautifully integrates holiness and liturgical participation, by "indicating that the universal way to holiness is actually by priestly sacrifice: 'the heights of sanctity are reached by the total and generous offering of oneself to the service of the Divine Majesty' (*MF* no. 31)."[51]

Thus, the Liturgy can be considered as a school of holiness and liturgical spirituality as a potent means of fostering sanctity. As Boselli says, "The liturgy as a school of prayer is not optional but essential. The liturgy is the decisive place in which the Christian learns to pray,"[52] and by extension, the central place wherein sanctity is fostered. The liturgy is didactic: it forms the Christian to pray and to be holy. In the liturgy, the Church acts pedagogically, "like a mother teaching her children to pray"[53] and thereby forming them to be holy as God is holy.

50 McPartlan, "The Mystery of Faith," 14.
51 Ibid.
52 Boselli, *The Spiritual Meaning of the Liturgy*, 105.
53 Ibid.

Resonance of Bartolome de Las Casas' Thoughts in Leonardo Boff's Theology

Ramil R. Marcos

Classical theology took root in the West, and subsequent thinkers built on and enhanced the giants' thoughts before them. Since Vatican II, the need arose to pay attention to and acknowledge the faith reflections of other churches beyond Europe, where other Christians felt invited to enter into a critical reflection on their lived realities in the light of faith and in the context of the experiences of people in their own society and culture. As Hunt describes it: "the way opened for local churches to take their own respective situations as the starting point for theological reflection and evangelization." This would bring forth what she describes as "a new surge of theological creativity," characterized by "inescapable peculiarities in vastly differing contexts throughout the world."[1]

One such response to the theological widening brought by Vatican II is the Theology of Liberation that emerged from the Christian communities of Latin America and other third-world countries. This stream of theology seeks to address the crisis of faith from the poverty and marginalization experienced by the poor. Central to the reflections of liberation theologians are poverty, the appalling oppression, and the people's desire for liberation and human dignity.

1 Ann Hunt, *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 8.

In this article, the reflections on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity by Leonardo Boff, a respected protagonist in the circle of liberation theologians, are presented. He offers profound and interesting thoughts on the compelling power of Trinitarian doctrine that bears the potential to inspire both social and ecclesial life. The bases for this work are derived from several of Boff's essays, his major book on the Trinity, and some commentaries on or related to the points he raised. At the same time, resonances of the theology of Bartolome de las Casas—whose theology may rightly be called the Pioneer of Liberation Theology in the Middle Ages—to the issue of the Trinity will be highlighted as well. The aim of this work is rather modest: to highlight the focal points of Boff's theology of the Trinity, without attempting to provide an exhaustive presentation of it, and to discover traces of de las Casas' thoughts in the said theology.

Understanding Trinity Within a Context of Poverty and Oppression

From the point of view of Liberation Theology, the experience of the oppressed becomes a new *locus theologicus*. Thus, in seeking the relevance of the Trinitarian Mystery for today's world, Boff asks the question, "In what sense can the Trinity be called 'gospel,' good news to the people, especially to the poor and oppressed?"[2] In answering this question, Boff first situates the Trinity at the heart of the Christian teaching:

> Christianity's most transcendent assertion may well be this: In the beginning is not the solitude of One, but the communion of the Three eternal Persons:

2 Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 156.

> Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the remotest beginning, communion prevails. This communion constitutes both the essence of God and at the same time the concrete dynamism of every being of the whole creation. Nothing exists only in itself and for itself. Everything is situated in an interplay of relationships through which all beings live in a co-existence with one another, by one another, and in one another. The Trinity, which is the coexistence and co-life of the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit, constitutes the root and prototype of this universal communion.[3]

Boff does not hesitate to say that, for the most part, the Trinity has meant for many Christians a mystery in logic. For him, the essence of Trinitarian faith and communion's reality has been forgotten in society and the Church. While the Church has inherited many Hellenistic concepts such as substance, relation, *perichoresis,* and procession, most Christians today barely understand or relate with them.

Boff argues that this is a difficult path to follow. New approaches that spring from a fresh encounter between the Scriptures and present-day culture are demanded. If the Trinity is central to Christianity, then it must graduate from being a mystery of logic to a true saving mystery. It must touch the lives of men and women in their ongoing struggles. The truth that God is the communion of three divine Persons should be contextualized in our everyday experience. Its meaning and relevance with it must be unfolded accordingly.

In the mind of Boff, certain factors have eclipsed this communion-dimension of the Trinity. On the one hand, classical theology, in general, seems to have ignored the social

3 Leonardo Boff, "Trinity," in Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino (eds.), *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 389.

implications of the Trinity. Meanwhile, in the day-to-day political, religious, and church life, a so-called 'trinitarian amnesia' appears to prevail. In the arena of politics, for example, emerged a historical concentration of power manifested in authoritarianism that prevails in the conduct of both family and government. Within the family, the stress of patriarchy brought inequality into the home, including the oppression of women and children. In the civil government, power tended to be exercised autocratically by a single monarch, tribal chief, or head of state.

Religions, too, practice this centralization of power. For instance, an overly strong emphasis on the unicity of God may be linked to a rigidly pyramidal and clericalist notion and exercise of authority. Following this line of thought, it is easy to determine how much Moltmann influenced Boff's theology. Both of them resonate with what Erikson expressed in his monograph, *Monotheism as a Political Problem* (1931). Here, Erikson claims that monotheistic religions lay the foundation for the idea of one political head.

Boff perceives that once the communion model of the Trinity is ignored, totalitarian structures' legitimization begins. In Latin America, these structures have resulted in the oppression and exploitation of the poor, which has been a menace to many lives. Thus, for Latin America and other similar contexts, it would not be appropriate to develop a theology of the Trinity that is similar to classical Western theology. In classical Western theology, the starting point is the idea of a single divine substance. This is a characteristic of the Latin system. A more appropriate starting point would be to consider the doctrine's relevance to the poor's lives. Only then can it truly be a source of inspiration and good news.

The Trinitarian Communion as Summons to Transformation

The central focus of Boff's teaching is his way of elaborating on a distinctly social model of the Trinity. Understanding the Trinity, particularly communion, is very much in accord with the Theology of Liberation, with the Trinity as the prototype of human solidarity and universal brotherhood. As such, the sense of social belonging and equality that liberation theology advocates find a solid grounding in God's very nature and mystery.

What does it mean to believe that the Trinitarian God is a communion of three divine Persons? Boff begins by observing that only persons can enter into communion. To be in communion means to be ever together, constantly loving and life-giving, mutually receiving and giving. "Life is the essence of God. And life is communion given and received. This kind of communion is love. Communion and love are the essence of God the Trinity."[4]

Of the classical theological concepts, Boff prefers the term *perichoresis* to signify the truth of the Trinity. For him this *perichoresis*-communion model "seems to be the most adequate way of expressing the revelation of the Trinity as communicated by the Scriptures."[5] *Perichoresis* precludes the subordination or elevation of any person in the Trinity. Each Divine Person exists in a relationship of equality, mutuality, and reciprocity. Sovereignty is not seen in terms of power but openness, communion, coexistence, and fellowship.

4 Boff, "Trinity," 399.
5 Leonardo Boff, "Trinitarian Community and Social Liberation," *Cross Currents* 38 (Fall 1988), 300.

In this model, the Trinity does not offer an abstract doctrine but concrete and radical social program. With its mystery of inclusion and participation, the Trinity becomes a paradigm for the human community and social structures. If Augustine sought the V*estigia Trinitatis* in man, Boff seeks in the human community the same image of God as Trinity in communion. In this inclination, Boff joins other theologians who pursue a communitarian approach to the Trinity, including the Jesuit, Joseph Bracken.[6]

Boff raises a challenge. His presentation of the Trinity produces a critical attitude to personhood, community, society, and the Church. According to him, each person is invited to mirror the Trinity in his own life. This can be done when each person engages in communion with others by performing their own tasks in unity with them. Then, the pernicious pyramid of concentration of power begins to give way to more egalitarian participation in society.

The human community and society must also try to embody the inspiration coming from the Trinitarian dynamism in their own relationships. In this vein, Boff criticizes the capitalist system as having produced "the greatest division in history between the rich and the poor, between the races and between the sexes."[7] Capitalism focuses only on the individual and on individual development. In third world countries, this has resulted in the worst of miseries on the poor.

Meanwhile, in his assessment of socialist societies, Boff praises them for starting from "right principles"[8] with their emphasis on universal participation. At the same time, he is

6 John O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1988), 106.
7 Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 149.
8 Ibid, 150.

alarmed about the little regard they have for personal differences. Members of the society are treated as constituting a mass instead of a people. Thus, both capitalism and socialism fail to live the reality of the Trinitarian model.

His reflection also includes a critique of the Catholic Church. For Boff, the Church's hierarchical-monarchical structures are opposed to the principle of collegiality and produce inequality and a powerful clerical-class. The Church is likewise prone to attitudes of paternalism and authoritarianism. If seriously considered, the Trinity can help local and regional churches improve their internal organization to become a community of the faithful truly. In this way, the Church will be able to practice and promote a living experience of communion.

The weight of liberation theology's reflections on the mystery of the Trinity leans heavily on the essential communion of the Divine Persons and the social implications of this reality. This is understandably the case since Boff, among others, has the explicit aim of making the Trinity speak to the aspirations of the poor who cry to God for justice and upliftment. Thus, we recall here the oft-quoted maxim, "The Trinity is our social program."[9]

Perichoresis: Individuals in Communion

In his writings, Boff also offers a treatment of the individual Persons of the Trinity. He treats each one in the context of

9 In the course of my research, I have seen this statement attributed to several persons. One book claims that it is Moltmann who originated it (O'Donnell). Another directly quotes Boff himself (Hunt). While it is interesting to note that in the section "Trinity" written by Boff in the book of Ellacuria and Sobrino, Boff credits the Russian Orthodox Reformers for having coined the sentence.

the *perichoretic*-dialectic and their relation to the situation of the poor. In the revelation of the Divine Persons, it is Jesus' role which is central, because "it is in Jesus that we find the revelation of the trinitarian mystery."[10]

God the Father is unfathomable mystery. He is the origin of creation. He is never solitary, never apart from the Son, who has revealed him and who lives with him eternally. It is through the Son that we know the Father (Lk 6:35/ Lk 3: 21-22; 5:16; 6:12; 11: 1-5/ Mk 14: 32-42). As Boff elaborates: "The *perichoretic* setting of the divine fatherhood strongly challenges any notion of patriarchal father and any social or political structure based on authoritarianism, paternalism and patriarchism – those very structures which have oppressed the poor throughout their lives."[11]

God is the Father of liberation, who listens to the cry of the poor and the downtrodden and desires the freedom of the oppressed. His only Son came to impart to the poor the message of his invitation to fellowship with their heavenly Father. The Father sent the Son, allowing him to identify Himself with the dejected in human society.[12]

In Jesus, the mystery of divine self-communication and integral liberation can be discovered. He is the very image of the Father and the mediator of His plan. Through Jesus, divine sonship is offered to all men and women. In the Incarnation, we see the most radical action of the Son – that he brought all people into the heart of God, their Father. Jesus reveals his Sonship (Mt 11:25-27/ Mk 12:1-19; 13:32), but in doing so, he did not use so much the testimony of words. Rather, he proved to be the Son "in his life, his liberative practice,

10 Boff, "Trinity," 393.
11 Hunt, *What Are They Saying about the Trinity?,* 17.
12 Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 177.

his struggles with those who held power, his tenderness with the abandoned, his passion, death and resurrection."[13] In other words, the attitude of Jesus revealed him as the Son of the Father.

The Holy Spirit is the Giver of life, the acknowledged driving force of integral liberation. Jesus revealed the Holy Spirit in his ministry (Mk 3:20-30/ Mt. 12: 28). According to Boff, his third Person of the Trinity is "the spirit of creativity and the spirit of innovation in a group but never in an individualistic sense of for self-advancement, always for the strengthening of the community."[14] Divine *perichoresis* is best seen in the work of the Holy Spirit, who brings every being into unity. To the Holy Spirit is attributed the work of bringing about unity *and* diversity, and unity *in* diversity.

It is exciting to note that in each of the Three Divine Persons, Boff discerns a feminine side or dimension. Thus, he says, that the Father is also Mother. Jesus, in the full maturity of his humanity, is also full of the feminine traits of tenderness, care, and mercy. The Holy Spirit also exhibits feminine characteristics in the functions of consoling, teaching, reminding, and not leaving men and women as orphans. Boff avers that God is beyond sex, and he does not confer sexual characteristics on God. In finding the feminine traits of God, he "simply discerns the ultimate source of the masculine and feminine values God himself has endowed men and women."[15]

13 Boff, "Trinity," 402.
14 Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 195.
15 Ibid., 198.

An Assessment of Leonardo Boff's Views on the Trinity

Kant made a strong criticism about the seemingly useless content of Trinitarian theology: "From the doctrine of the Trinity taken literally, nothing whatsoever can be gained for practical purposes, even if one believed that one comprehended it and still less if one is conscious that it surpasses all our concepts."[16] To Boff's credit, it can be said that this censure has met an adequate response.

Boff outlines how the mystery of the Trinity can actually function "as inspiration, as critic and as fully and actively present in the struggles of the oppressed for liberation."[17] In this way, the Trinity can have meaning both for society and for the individual Christian. For society, the Trinity can become a pattern of a responsible human community. For the individual, the Trinity offers a fresh challenge for discipleship.

In reading his book, *Trinity and Society*, Boff is careful and respectful in his approach to the topic. He is aware that human concepts are insufficient to exhaust the mystery. He is likewise conscious that the proper posture towards the mystery is adoration and praise.

> Amen is humankind's response to the revelation of the Triune God: So be it! How good that it should be so! Come, most holy Trinity, come! It is pronounced in an atmosphere of worship and reverence…[18]

Boff realizes that the ultimate goal of faith and theology is doxology and not action. Nevertheless, he knows that faith and work are corollaries. Thus, he opens an invitation to the

16 O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God*, 128.
17 Hunt, *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?*, 20.
18 Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 232.

Christian about the correspondence of one's faith and life. Boff identifies the Trinitarian inner life of *perichoresis* as a call to be emulated in society. In treating God's actions in the economy of salvation, he points to the interventions of God on behalf of the poor and seeks a Christian response following the example set by God.

Boff does not aim to critique the classical notions of the Trinity, but rather at criticism of the social institutions and church life in Latin America during his time. With this background, he does not actively construct a new theology of the Trinity, but instead, re-emphasizes the social implications of faith in God who is One in Three Persons.

For Boff, the Trinity can guide the creation of a responsible society where true human solidarity prevails. His theology of the Trinity offers hope to the poor and assures them that God desires them to be free. He calls the attention of those in powerful structures to mirror God's image in the world through the practice of participation, justice, equality, and inclusion. The ultimate call of Boff is to consider the Trinity as a serious step towards discipleship. For a true Christian, faith in the Trinity is a call to listen to the cry of the poor.[19]

The theology of Leonardo Boff on the mystery of the Trinity provides a carefully planned study of the relationship between God and human society. The inner life of God revealed through the ministry and preaching of Jesus becomes a prototype for us to be taken seriously as a model of communitarian life and Christian action in the world. The intention of Boff is not to study the Trinity in terms of lofty

19 See also "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit," *The Word Among Us* 18/5 (May 1999), 4-23. This issue of the periodical explains how true following of Christ involves taking an active part in the plight of the poor.

theological concepts but rather to demonstrate the meaning of the Trinity today, particularly for those experiencing suffering and neglect in society.

For Boff, the Trinity is a challenge, a call to human solidarity and Christian action on behalf of the poor. If only for this, Boff succeeded in giving convincing arguments that indeed, the Trinity is our social program.

Resonances of Bartolome de las Casas' Theology on Liberation Trinitarian Theology

Bartolome de las Casas was a Dominican missionary in New Spain who lived in the 16th century and became bishop of the then newly-created Diocese of Chiapas in Mexico. A revered figure and icon for modern-day liberation theologians, he engaged the social and religious climate of his day while championing the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

On the one hand, it is true that de las Casas did not produce any treatise on the Trinity or embark purposely on creating a systematic theology as Boff has attempted. Nonetheless, some of his writings reveal, even if inchoately, several theological themes that may have a bearing, semblance, and resonance with the Trinitarian theology of Boff, which has the context of liberation as its springboard.

We will now attempt to trace the theology underpinning de las Casas' writings and explore its convergences with the Trinitarian theology of Boff. This section will only treat a limited selection of some of his thoughts and connect them with present-day Trinitarian theology in its liberation aspect.

1. The Non-Person as the Starting Point of Theological Insight

Liberation theology starts from the premise of the need to address the concerns of *non-persons* in society. These are the poor of the Third World, the underside of history who do not count at all, who do not matter to those invested with power.[20] Although there are so many of them in the world, the poor remain powerless under the mercy of the potentates of politics, religion, and economics.

De Las Casas grounded his preaching and ministry in the experience of the *non-persons* of his time - the Indians of the New World. The latter were forced to undergo harrowing poverty and oppression in the hands of their European conquerors. Like the *non-persons* of today – the poor of society – they had to struggle to survive and were exploited to satisfy their greedy exploiters' desires.

The Indians were considered as inferior human beings, casting doubt on their human nature and causing others to wonder whether they were animals, wretches or irrational beasts.[21] For de las Casas, however, who was then an *encomendero* himself, the initial stirring of his own conscience concerning the humanity of came as an influence of the Dominican missionaries he met in the New World, whom he found convincing in their words and witness. At first, the Dominicans observed the affairs in the new colonies. Still, later on, they voiced their protest against the neglect of the

20 Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God* (New York: Continuun, 2008), 72.

21 Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Indian: Person and Poor," in Geroge Sandellin, ed., *Witness:Writings of Bartolome de las Casas* (New York: Orbis Books, 1971), xi-xiii.

spiritual and material welfare of the conquered Indians. As these friars of Saint Dominic asserted:

> Are these Indians not human? Are we not bound to keep the rules of charity, the rules of justice towards them? Are they not on their own lands with their own lords, their own authority? Have they harmed us in some way? As to the law of Christ, are we not bound to preach it and work every way we can to win them over to it?[22]

Becoming a Dominican himself, later on, de las Casas spent his energy in asserting the identity of the Indians as human persons endowed with inalienable dignity and inherent worth. While he is known mainly for his defense of the Indian natives, he also protested the inhumane treatment of African slaves who were brought to the New World after having been captured violently from their homelands. In championing the causes of the oppressed, he showed his profound respect for all peoples and his deep regard for every human person. It is this conviction that the Indians, and all human beings, regardless of race, are noble and dignified, which fuelled his lifelong crusade for the freedom and equal treatment of human beings, especially those who are demoted to the status of *non-person*. As he wrote in the prologue of his book, *The Only Way*:

> …they are all human beings. Their minds are very quick, alive, capable, clear. This mind comes to them primarily from the will of God who wished to make them so. Then secondarily, it comes from the fostering influence of the heavens, from the kind conditions of the places God gave them to live in, the fair and clement weather.[23]

22 Francis Patrick Sullivan, S.J., *Indian Freedom: The Cause of Bartolome de las Casas* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 139.

23 *Bartolome de las Casas: The Only Way*, ed. Helen Rand Parish, trans. Francis, Patrick Sullivan SJ (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 63.

Thus, both Liberation Theology and de las Casas start from persons and focus on persons. Just as Liberation Theology focuses on the persons of the Trinity and not on the divine unity, de las Casas saw the importance of focusing particularly on the non-persons--the Indians--who must be regarded rightly as human beings created in the image and likeness of God, and be treated accordingly as persons.

2. Equality and Justice Among Persons in Community

De las Casas' theology is concretely and practically applied. Like Boff, he did not dwell in intellectual gymnastics or wordplay. Still, he sought ways to teach God, the human person, and the call of discipleship to be concretely felt in society in view of transformation. Thus, he endeavored to highlight the relationship between faith and practice, Indian and Spaniard, God, and creation. On its part, Liberation Theology attempts to underline the connection between God and the universe and the relationship of human beings to one another in bonds of deep solidarity and responsibility.

Boff's Trinitarian theology is anchored on the classical interpretation of the intra-divine relationships called *perichoresis* or mutual indwelling of the three divine Persons, expressed in a language of common love, dignity, and essential equality. For him, this characteristic of divine life is the model for the human community.

Meanwhile, de las Casas was a prophet of a just and egalitarian society. In his defense of the oppressed Indians, he sought to bring about a harmonious relationship between the two races, Indian and Spanish: a kind of human *perichoresis*. He did this by formulating a proposal for a society where

both could live in peace and mutual co-existence, where the Indians could instead flourish in peace and see progress. Thus, he offered his alternative model of a settlement called the *reduccion system* in place of the *encomienda system*, which was harmful and ruthless.

As Sullivan writes, "de las Casas' efforts, after his awakening, were at first to adjust the life of the Indian and the life of the Spaniards to each other by creating community schemes which would allow fruitful cooperation."[24] For this, the fundamental premise he insisted on was freedom for the Indians, which is essential for harmonious co-existence. Unless the Indians were free from Spanish injustice, they could not be expected to live in peace alongside the Europeans. Sadly, this societal experiment did not materialize due to a fiasco arising from the greed of the Spaniards for the wealth of the Indian natives and their abundant natural resources.

De Las Casas believed that if true justice prevailed and the Indians were treated as equal subjects of Spain, then the major players, both indigenous and Western, would be mutually benefitted and enabled to flourish in cooperation. As such, he was not merely an ideological thinker but one who truly thought of ways to bring about real changes in the society of his time, which he conceived as a community of persons called to co-exist in peace and harmony.

Another proof of de las Casas' struggle for justice and equality among human beings is his earnest desire for reconciliation, which he sought to actualize in concrete gestures. For instance, he was responsible for the return of Enriquillo, a legendary Indian warrior, to a peaceful relationship with the

24 Sullivan, *Indian Freedom: The Cause of Bartolome de las Casas*, 157

Spaniards. Although reared as a Christian from childhood, this chief rebelled after a Spanish *encomiendero* raped his wife. This blatant disrespect for his rights and other abuses of the conquerors provoked the valiant spirit of this fighter who was regarded as having legendary combat skills. Unarmed and with only one lay brother to accompany him, de las Casas facilitated the truce and reconciliation between Enriquillo and the Spaniards. In his own words:

> …I was the one who went to Bauroco – with God's grace and with a Dominican brother the Order assigned to me – and brought Don Enrique to peace, and back into the service to Our Lord, the Emperor, and I strengthened him in his resolve. I stayed a month with him, confessed him, his wife, his officers. And I dispelled all of the well-founded fears he had. He did not want to leave the mountains, but I persuaded him to come out with me to the town of Azua where he met and made happy friends of the villagers. I got him to agree to go and reassure the other villages of Spaniards, to bring back under obedience to his Majesty several other rebel leaders and their men, but most of all, got him to settle his own people some seven leagues from Azua, and provide that whole area with bread and other foods.[25]

Though de las Casas did not specifically discuss Trinitarian doctrine, his faith in the Triune God is implicitly revealed in his convictions and manifested in his actions. He believed in authentic human relationships, which are reflections of the divine relationships in heaven--the *perichoresis* of the Trinity in heaven reflected on earth in the human *perichoresis* of justice and in the just and equitable treatment of persons. When this is achieved, the spirit of true communion and solidarity forms the basis of a strong community.

25 Ibid., 198.

This response is a result of the recognition of personhood. Once you recognize another human being as truly a person, you must be willing to reach out in a relationship, and in dialogue, you will act with justice and respect. This was de las Casas' dream and lifelong project: to build a Christian community inspired by the Trinitarian gospel of liberation and freedom. This gospel is sensitive to the cries of the poor.

3. The Salvation of the Indians

Finally, let us venture into one of the theological achievements of de las Casas vis-à-vis the theological climate of his time. This theme pertains to the salvation of the Indians. Based on the *Patronato Real*, Spain's avowed aim in discovering and occupying new lands was primarily the salvation of souls - a missionary expansion on behalf of the Catholic Church - and only secondarily, the expansion of the Spanish realm and its civilizing effects on these newfound lands. At the time of de las Casas, this kind of missionary venture was deemed necessary because of the belief that "outside the Church there is no salvation," a maxim derived from Cyprian, albeit an expression that has been sometimes misunderstood. For instance, a hard-line interpretation of this idea proceeds from the assumption that the Gospel had been proclaimed to the whole world. This was enough to justify leading the unbelievers to accept the Gospel to be saved, even if this meant the use of coercion and force.[26]

Various theologies of salvation prevailed in this period of las Casas that would serve as the background of the concern for the salvation of the "pagan" tribes. Some theologians

26 Gustavo Gutierrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, Robert Barr, trans. (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 242.

taught that to be saved, one must have expressed explicit faith in the truths of Christianity. Some were inclined to believe that implicit faith was needed by those who lived before the coming of the Gospel.[27] At the same time, there were also the likes of Trithemius, who went as far as to declare that "there will be no Indians in heaven." They will be damned, although with a lesser punishment than the Jews and Muslims who rejected the Gospel.[28]

On his part, de las Casas believed in a God who is merciful and loving. He believed in the Holy Trinity whose one goal and mission is the universal salvation of all creation: the Father who reached out to the world in love and was revealed through the effusion of grace by the Son and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation. To be a Christian is to be aware of this basic truth that God revealed himself for our salvation. Fighting for the Indians' freedom in the New World, de las Casas had a deep passion for the salvation of these peoples as a priest and an ardent missionary to the new lands.

Against the current of theology that called for explicit faith in the divine mysteries, de las Casas believed that God had mysterious plans for the salvation of all nations, saying that: "However, to them, as to all others, never has that great means of the supreme and divine assistance been denied that has always been granted to all human beings for their succor."[29] This salvation is an offer by God that must be accepted in full freedom. And de las Casas long championed the freedom of the oppressed so that they can more fully and generously respond to the gift of faith and justification.

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid, 243.
29 Ibid, 254.

For him, the Gospel could not be imposed by force but must be offered with respect to the dignity of those who are to be evangelized. This was to be the gist of his book: *The Only Way*. While we are unable to treat the intricate subtleties behind de las Casas' theology of salvation at a length, it is clear that in his thoughts on the salvation of the Indians, he respected their conscience and freedom and rejected the use of power and force in evangelizing efforts.

Conclusion

As a true theologian of Liberation, Leonardo Boff expounded his Trinitarian theology with his people's experience of poverty and oppression as context and starting point, instead of merely repeating abstract concepts culled from classical Western theology. In this manner, he would give particular emphasis in his Trinitarian theology on communion-perichoresis, which is very relevant in providing a critical appraisal of both capitalism and socialism, which were both rampant during his time. Based on this, he would provide an important critique of the society and of the Church, and their tendency to deal with people in terms of power and hierarchy instead of cooperation and complementarity.

Like Liberation Theology, de las Casas took as a point of departure the daily sufferings of people and reflected on how the light of the Gospel illuminates the situation of those who are maltreated, violated, and treated in scandalous ways. Thus, it is no surprise that some essential aspects of his thought find resonance in Boff's Trinitarian theology. His advocacy for a harmonious and mutually-beneficial coexistence between human beings, regardless of any distinctions or differences, remains especially relevant even today, attesting to the real potency of the Trinity as a social program.

Amoris Laetitia and Admission of Divorced and Remarried Catholics to the Sacraments

Patrick D. Boyoc

Admission to the sacraments, especially to the Holy Eucharist is a contentious topic in *Amoris Laetitia,* a post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis. Does the document open the path of the sacraments for those in irregular situations, especially the divorced and remarried Catholics? Although this topic was highlighted in the 2014 and 2015 Synods, the document does not give a lengthy discourse or explanation regarding the issue. Hence, there is a continuing debate whether the document has allowed the re-admission of those in irregular unions to the sacraments.

Church Teaching

Before 1980, there was no exact pronouncement from the Church Magisterium regarding admission of those in irregular marital situations, particularly the divorced and remarried Catholics, to the sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. However, many considered their state of life contrary to the Gospel and the apostles' teachings regarding the indissolubility of marriage. In the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 5:32; 19:9; Mk. 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18), Jesus explicitly forbids divorce to marry another. St. Paul declared this practice unlawful based on the teachings of Christ. He specifically banned remarriage for divorced persons and exhorted them to remain single or be reconciled to their spouse (1 Cor 7:10-11).

In 1977, the International Theological Commission released the document "Propositions on the Doctrine of Christian Marriage," which enumerated Christian marriage foundations. Part of the proposal asserted the radical teaching on non-remarriage after divorce. Thus, the divorced who have remarried are alienated from "the precept and mystery of the paschal love of the Lord"[1] made manifest in the Eucharist.

This proposition entered official papal magisterium in 1981 in Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio.* The document acknowledged the urgency of pastoral care for divorced and remarried Catholics and the careful discernment of their situations. On the other hand, it also reaffirmed the Church practice of not admitting into Eucharistic Communion those in irregular marital situations. For instance, Catholics married civilly and divorced and remarried persons.[2] However, particular attention is given to the latter since they would be in irregular status for as long as both of them live unless they decide to regularize their union according to the Church's laws. Concerning pastoral practice, the sacrament of Reconciliation may be administered only to those divorced and remarried Catholics who wish to reform their lives by living in continence. In addition to these sacraments, the document also disallowed pastors from performing ceremonies for divorced and remarried Catholics that may

1 International Theological Commission, "Propositions on the Doctrine of Christian Marriage," Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1977_sacramento-matrimonio_en.html (accessed Sept 12, 2017), no. 5.3.

2 John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Whole World (Familiaris Consortio)*, November 22, 1981, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (accessed September 28, 2018), nos. 82 and 84. Henceforth referred to as *FC.*

give an impression that the Church acknowledges these forms of unions.[3]

Meanwhile, the 1983 Code of Canon Law seemed to make an ambiguous statement regarding those to be banned from the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Canon 915 states that "Those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion."[4] Although there is no explicit inclusion of the divorced and remarried persons here, the phrase "others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin" is open to interpretation. Some commentators consider this phrase as including divorced and remarried persons since they publicly and objectively contradict the commandment of Christ regarding the indissolubility of marriage.[5] Others hold that since the canon does not explicitly name those divorced and remarried, including them would be unfair. Instead, one must look at the degree of sinfulness, responsibility, and culpability of each person in an irregular marital situation before concluding that the canon applied to them.[6]

In the encyclical *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia,* John Paul II reiterates the Church's principle of mercy and compassion on the one hand, and truth and consistency on the other. He maintains that the Church is not only a merciful mother who seeks her lost children. She is also a beacon of truth and consistency, whereby she does not call the good evil and

3 *FC* no. 84.

4 Holy See, *The 1983 Code of Canon Law,* January 25, 1983, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/__P1.HTM (accessed at September 28, 2018), no. 915. Henceforth referred to as *CIC*.

5 Kevin T. Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage: Facing the Challenge*, 2nd ed. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), 147-148.

6 Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage,* 149-154.

the evil good.[7] Thus, the document asks those in "painful" situations to approach God's mercy through means other than the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharist, unless they have attained the required disposition (living in continence, abstaining from any sexual act). These other means of coming close to God include piety, mass attendance, prayer, and acts of faith, hope, and charity, which may dispose them to full reconciliation with the church and her precepts.[8]

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* repeats the instructions given in *FC* on the admission to the sacraments of divorced and remarried Catholics. *CCC, no.* 1650 states that the divorced and remarried Catholics are not to be admitted to the sacraments following the mandate given by Christ in the Gospels (cf. Mk 10:11-12): "They find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's commandments" and have "violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ."[9] Moreover, CCC, no. 2384 emphasizes that aside from the grave offense caused by divorce, remarriage adds to the gravity of the matter; ergo, the divorced and remarried person's situation is considered public and permanent adultery.

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis,* Pope Benedict XVI reasserts the teachings of his predecessor on the non-admission of divorced and remarried persons to the Eucharist. According to him: "The Eucharist inexhaustibly

7 John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today (Reconciliatio et Paenitentia)*, February 12, 1984, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html (accessed at September 28, 2018), no. 34. Henceforth referred to as *RP*.

8 Ibid.

9 CBCP-ECCE, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Definitive Edition Based on the Latin *Editio Typica* (Manila: ECCCE and Word & Life Publications, 1994), no. 160. Henceforth referred to as *CCC*.

strengthens the indissoluble unity and love of every Christian marriage. By the power of the sacrament, the marriage bond is intrinsically linked to the Eucharistic unity of Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride, the Church (cf. Eph. 5:31-32)."[10] Therefore, the Eucharist is the nuptial sacrament of Christ and his Church. As such, divorced and remarried couples objectively contravene this union made present in the Eucharistic banquet.

Theological Basis of Non-Admission

What is the theological basis for the practice of non-admission to the sacraments of divorced and remarried Catholics? There are four possible explanations for such practice.

First, divorced and remarried persons are considered as "living in sin." Many Catholics believe that those in irregular marital situations are excommunicated or ostracized from the Church because of their sinful lifestyle. Some regard the Catechism's statement on divorce and remarriage as an absolute judgment on couples that are unworthy for Eucharistic communion.[11] Some also deem the prohibition in Canon Law--that bans who persist in their life of sin from the reception of the sacraments--as further ground for this treatment of divorced and remarried persons.[12]

Second, most of the documents refer to the divorced and remarried situation as "living in contradiction." Contradiction here is not automatically synonymous to "sin," but refers to the fact that their situation contravenes the essence of faithful

10 Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission* (*Sacramentum Caritatis*) (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2007), 27.
11 Cf. *CCC*, no. 1650.
12 Cf. *CIC*, no. 915.

love between spouses. Furthermore, the second union after divorce contradicts the teaching of Christ and the Church on the indissolubility of marriage. Many couples are fully aware of their irregular situation but decide to remain in the second union, believe that it is their best option under the given circumstances. Such willful contradiction prevents the Church from admitting them back to the Eucharist and reconciliation without resolving their situations.

The third reason for their non-admittance to the sacraments in general and communion in particular is that the situation of divorced and remarried persons contradict the Eucharist itself. This was first argued in the ITC's proposition in 1978, reaffirmed in *FC* and elaborated in *Sacramentum Caritatis.* In the last document, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the intrinsic unity between marriage and the Eucharist. He states that: "Conjugal love is a sacramental sign of Christ's love for his Church, a love culminating in the Cross, the expression of his 'marriage' with humanity and at the same time the origin and heart of the Eucharist. For this reason, the Church manifests her particular spiritual closeness to all those who have built their family on the sacrament of Matrimony."[13] Thus, the Eucharist signifies the "irrevocable nature of God's love in Christ for his Church."[14] It implies that both the Eucharist and Matrimony should express the indissoluble bond of love of Christ and the Church in the life of the spouses. Hence, the irregular situation of divorced and remarried persons is a contradiction of the sacramentality of the Eucharist and Matrimony.

The fourth argument is a scandal: "So that people will not be misled into thinking the Church is no longer committed

13 Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 27.
14 Ibid., 29.

to indissolubility."[15] By the same token, *FC*, no. 84 prohibits ministers from performing ceremonies which may lead people to think that the Church approves such unions. The risk of scandal arising from admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments threatens to increase the incidence of marriage breakdowns in the Church. Thus, the safer approach is to avoid all risk of scandal.

Despite the emphasis given to this practice, the Church does not entirely forbid administering the sacraments to the divorced and remarried. There is no existing ecclesiastical law that explicitly prohibits these couples from receiving the sacraments. *CIC*, no. 912 states that any baptized person who is not forbidden by law may and must be admitted into the Eucharist. Meanwhile, *CIC,* no. 915 classifies those forbidden by the law into two: those excommunicated or interdicted and those who persist in manifest grave sin. *FC*, no. 84 does not name the divorced and remarried as excommunicated or interdicted persons. Meanwhile, they cannot be automatically considered as "those who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin" since sin is a subjective disposition or sphere of the person, which cannot be specified by a general law.[16]

Treating divorced and remarried couples as excommunicated would run counter to the constant assertions of papal documents reaffirming their connectedness and membership in Christian communities. For instance, *FC* explicitly exhorts pastors to be concerned with them and to integrate them into the community mercifully. Moreover, official Church Magisterium has never categorically condemned the second union as sinful, since sin is a technical term for the person's willful and conscientious turning away from God. Thus, even

15 *FC,* no. 84.
16 Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage,* 65.

if the second union is considered disordered since it contravenes the bond established in the first marriage, some theologians suggest that God's grace might still be active in the second union and that those in second unions could become collaborators in the Church's evangelical mission.[17]

In practice, the Church sets forth conditions before readmitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments. First, the person needs to have a contrite heart and the intention to regularize his/her marital situation. He/she will either separate from the second spouse or, for serious reasons e.g., the upbringing of children, live in complete continence by abstaining from all sexual acts. Having firmly resolved this, the person may then be granted absolution and receive the Eucharist. However, this requires a painful decision on the part of the spouses who have established their second family or are in the process of building their family in the second union.

The other alternative is via the external forum. "Ministry in the external forum is exercised directly and immediately for the good of the Christian community as a whole; it is the ambit of the common good."[18] It involves canonical and judicial processes. Its ordinary instrument is the law and judicial certitude. In cases of marriage problem and breakdown, the diocesan marriage tribunal arbitrates. Annulment is the proper external forum for the canonical dissolution of an invalid marriage. When the first marriage is annulled, both parties may enter another Catholic marriage without losing access to the sacraments.

17 Kelly, *Divorce and Second Marriage,* 50.

18 Theodore Davey, "Internal Forum," in *Divorce and Second Marriage: Facing the Challenge,* ed. Kevin T. Kelly, 2nd ed. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), 180.

The Internal Forum

In 1973, the CDF published a letter concerning marriage indissolubility and administration of the sacraments to those in irregular unions. Former Prefect of the CDF, Cardinal Seper, wrote: "Regarding the administration of the Sacraments, local Ordinaries should strive, on one hand, to encourage the observance of the discipline in force in the Church, and on the other hand, to act so that pastors of souls show particular solicitude toward those who live in an irregular union, seeking to resolve these cases through the use of the approved practices of the Church in the internal forum."[19]

Thus, the CDF identified the internal forum as a means of administering pastoral care for those in irregular unions. In general, the ministry of internal forum "is concerned directly and immediately in favor of individual persons, or, as the final canon (1752) of the 1983 code puts it, 'having before one's eyes the salvation of souls, which is the supreme law of the Church.'"[20] Some of the instances of internal forum include the sacrament of confession, spiritual direction or private vows made by the faithful. It is also employed when individual consciences come in conflict with the external law.

In this way, the CDF instructs the bishops to uphold church practice and discipline while at the same time seeking out those in irregular situations by including the internal forum solution. At that time in the 1970s, the internal forum solution was still relatively unknown. Thus, Archbishop Bernardin of Cincinnati asked the CDF to clarify its statement. Archbishop Hamer, secretary of the CDF, replied as follows:

19 Franjo Cardinal Seper, "Letter Regarding the Indissolubility of Marriage" April 11, 1973, Vatican Archives, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19730411_indissolubilitate-matrimonii_en.html, (accessed September 28, 2017).

20 Davey, "Internal Forum," 180.

> I would like to state now that this phrase [internal forum] must be understood in the context of traditional moral theology. These couples may be allowed to receive the sacraments in two conditions, that they try to live according to the demands of Christian moral principles and that they receive the sacraments in churches in which they are not known so that they will not create any scandal.[21]

The CDF was aware of and approved a process other than the canonical and sacramental way of accompanying persons in irregular unions. The internal forum solution then became a matter of interest for pastors seeking to minister effectively to these persons.

Theodore Davey gave two common situations where persons in irregular unions need the intervention of a priest through an internal forum. One is when the person/s involved is convinced that the previous marriage was never valid but could not be proven so in the external forum. This can happen because of insufficient evidence, inoperative diocesan marriage tribunal, and the like. The second situation is when the person/s involved is certain in the conscience of the validity of their previous marriage and the cessation of their marital relationship because of infidelity, abandonment, or other circumstances. Through the internal forum, the pastor may lead the persons in irregular unions to discernment of their situation, proper integration to the Church, and if possible, the reception of the Sacraments.[22]

Gerald D. Coleman also gives some uses of the internal forum considering the present canonical jurisprudence and the 1973 CDF letter and Archbishop Hamer's letter. First, the

21 Ibid., 179.
22 Ibid., 180-181.

internal forum solution is used to lead persons in irregular unions to the canonical process of radical sanation (*sanatio in radice*). In this process, the couples validate retroactively the consent given in their invalid marriage ceremony (e.g., civil marriage). The Church, through a competent authority, heals and dispenses the impediments of the invalid marriage and recognizes the validity of the consent given from the very beginning of their marriage, without the need of a renewal of consent.[23] Having been dispensed from their impediment, the couple is now free to receive the sacraments. Second, the internal forum is used to dialogue with couples in an irregular marriage who, believing that their first marriage is valid but are unable to separate from the spouse of the second marriage for pastoral reasons (e.g., care for children), resolve to live a life of continence. Third, regarding those persons who are truly unaware in the conscience of the invalidity of their union, the priest, through the internal forum solution, can lead these persons to the sacraments upon proper discernment and considering the gravity of the situation. If he deems it necessary to tell the invalidity persons, he should lead them to other pastoral solutions as stated above. Fourth, the internal forum can be used for a couple in a subsequent marriage who believes that the first marriage is invalid but cannot obtain an annulment for it. In this case, the internal forum may allow those in irregular unions to receive the sacrament only if the first marriage was invalid, according to Canon Law, albeit without the benefit of an official declaration of nullity. Nonetheless, if a person is convinced of the validity of the first marriage, the person should be advised to live in continence as a condition for receiving the sacraments.[24]

23 *CIC*, no. 1161.

24 Gerard D. Coleman, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 55-56. Coleman enumerated these

In 1991, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger clarified that the magisterium does not sanction the internal forum as a solution that allows those in irregular unions to receive the sacraments for various reasons. First, according to him, the statement released by Cardinal Seper in 1973 was misinterpreted.

> First, Cardinal Seper's mention in his letter of 1973 of the 'approved practice in the internal forum' which Fr. Davey cites was not referring to the so-called internal forum solution which properly understood concerns a marriage known with certainty to be invalid but which cannot be shown to be such to a marriage tribunal because of a lack of admissible proof. Cardinal Seper for his part was not addressing the question of the validity of a prior marriage, but rather the possibility of allowing persons in a second, invalid marriage to return to the sacrament, if, in function of their sincere repentance, they pledge to abstain from sexual relations when there are serious reasons preventing their separation and scandal can be avoided.[25]

For Ratzinger, Cardinal Seper's position does not refer to the internal forum as a means of determining or resolving the validity or invalidity of the previous marriage, which can be done only in the external forum. Instead, it points to the use of the internal forum solution as a way for couples in irregular unions to receive the sacraments despite their situation.

In the internal forum, the pastor may enlighten them on Church discipline that requires sexual continence, if they cannot separate for serious reasons and avoid scandal.

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in the light of the existing magisterial teaching during that time, the CDF letter, and the letter of Archbishop Hamer.

25 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Letter to *The Tablet*" in *Divorce and Second Marriage: Facing the Challenge,* ed. Kevin T. Kelly, 2nd ed. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), 184.

Second, judgment in the internal forum has significant consequences in the external forum, which may confuse the family, the upbringing of the children, as well as the Church and civil communities. In contrast, the marriage tribunal in the external forum can provide a clear closure to the question of marriage validity. Third, the internal forum solution is open to abuse. Priests may rashly decide to grant absolution without enough inquiry and discernment, causing scandal among the faithful. Lastly, Archbishop Hamer's statement in his 1975 letter merely affirms current Church teaching that instructs the divorced and remarried persons to live according to the demands of Christian moral principles by abstaining from sexual acts. Therefore, it does not represent or require what is promoted as the internal forum.[26]

The German Initiative

In 1993, three German Bishops of the Upper Rhine Province, namely, Bishop Karl Lehmann, Bishop Walter Kasper, and Archbishop Oskar Saier, wrote a pastoral letter on the care for the divorced and remarried. They issued guidelines and principles which direct pastors on how to discern the situations of those in irregular unions and how to accompany them towards full communion with the Church. The letter affirmed *FC*'s teachings *and* reemphasized the prohibition against admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments. However, they also saw the need to look carefully at individual situations and form individual consciences such that admission to the sacraments could be possible later. Moreover, they proposed sustained counseling by a priest as an aid for couples to learn how to form their conscience and to understand their situation before God.

26 Ibid., 184-185.

The bishops also acknowledged the difficulty of fulfilling the mandate of living in continence especially for young couples in irregular situations. Thus, the bishops highlighted the need to exercise careful discernment of situations as stated in *FC*, no. 84. In this regard, they enumerated certain guidelines to assist pastors in facilitating the discernment and judgment of various situations.

When there is serious failure involved in the collapse of the first marriage, responsibility for it must be acknowledged and repented;

- It must be convincingly established that a return to the first partner is really impossible and that with the best will the first marriage cannot be restored;
- Restitution must be made for wrongs committed and injuries done insofar as this is possible;
- In the first place this restitution includes fulfilment of obligations to the wife and children of the first marriage (cf. *CIC*, no. 1071,1.3);
- Whether or not a partner broke his or her first marriage under great public attention and possibly even scandal should be taken into consideration;
- This second marital partnership must have proved itself over a long period of time to represent a decisive and also publicly recognizable will to live permanently together and also according to the demands of marriage as a moral reality;
- Whether or not fidelity to the second relationship has become a moral obligation with regard to the spouse and children should be examined;

- It ought to be sufficiently clear – though certainly not to any greater extent with other Christians – that the partners seek truly to live according to the Christian faith and with true motives, i.e., moved by genuinely religious desires, to participate in the sacramental life of the Church. The same holds true in the children's upbringing.[27]

After a series of conversations with the couple in dialogue and discernment, the pastor will judge whether the persons concerned may be admitted to the sacraments or seek other ways of integrating into the community. This depends on how well the discernment process is undertaken, especially the disposition of the persons involved.

To address the possibility of scandal, the pastor must inform and catechize the community to help those in irregular unions in their desire to be integrated into the Catholic community. The teaching about the indissolubility of marriage should be reinforced so that people may not misinterpret this response as weakening the Catholic stand on marriage. This should be accompanied by strengthening community efforts in healing broken marriages and marriages heading towards a breakdown. After a series of conversations with the couple in dialogue and discernment, the pastor will judge whether the persons concerned may be admitted to the sacraments or seek other ways of integrating into the community. This depends on how well the discernment process is undertaken, especially the disposition of the persons involved.

In December 1993, the CDF sent a letter informing the three bishops that they did not fully uphold Church teaching.[28]

27 Karl Lehmann et.al., "The Bishops' Principle of Pastoral Care," in *Divorce and Second Marriage: Facing the Challenge,* ed. Kevin T. Kelly, 2nd ed. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), 112.

28 Ibid., 129.

Consequently, they were called to Rome for dialogue and clarification. In September 1994, the CDF published a letter addressed to all bishops concerning Holy Communion for the divorced and remarried. It reiterated the current teaching of not admitting to Holy Communion the divorced and remarried persons whose previous marriage has not been declared null or have not resolved to maintain sexual continence. Pastoral practices that contravene the approved teaching were to be discontinued. The CDF letter emphasized the following:

1. The Church affirms that a new union cannot be recognized as valid if the preceding marriage was valid. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive Holy Communion as long as this situation persists [29]

2. The faithful who persist in such a situation may receive Holy Communion only after obtaining sacramental absolution, which may be given only "to those who, repenting of having broken the sign of the Covenant and of fidelity to Christ, are sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage. This means, in practice, that when for serious reasons, for example, for

29 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by the Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful,* September 14, 1994, Vatican Archives, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_14091994_rec-holy-comm-by-divorced_en.html, (accessed September 28, 2017), no.4.

the children's upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they 'take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples'"(8). In such a case, they may receive Holy Communion as long as they respect the obligation to avoid giving scandal.[30]

3. Members of the faithful who live together as husband and wife with persons other than their legitimate spouses may not receive Holy Communion. Should they judge it possible to do so, pastors and confessors, given the gravity of the matter and the spiritual good of these persons as well as the common good of the Church, have the serious duty to admonish them that such a judgment of conscience openly contradicts the Church's teaching. Pastors in their teaching must also remind the faithful entrusted to their care of this doctrine.[31]

4. It is certainly true that a judgment about one's own dispositions for the reception of Holy Communion must be made by a properly formed moral conscience. But it is equally true that the consent that is the foundation of marriage is not simply a private decision since it creates a specifically ecclesial and social situation for the spouses, both individually and as a couple.

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., no. 6.

> Thus, the judgment of conscience of one's own marital situation does not regard only the immediate relationship between man and God, as if one could prescind from the Church's mediation, which also includes canonical laws binding in conscience. Not to recognize this essential aspect would mean in fact to deny that marriage is a reality of the Church, that is to say, a sacrament.[32]

5. In inviting pastors to distinguish carefully the various situations of the divorced and remarried, the Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* recalls the case of those who are subjectively certain in conscience that their previous marriage, irreparably broken, had never been valid. It must be discerned with certainty by means of the external forum established by the Church whether there is objectively such a nullity of marriage. The discipline of the Church, while it confirms the exclusive competence of ecclesiastical tribunals with respect to the examination of the validity of the marriage of Catholics, also offers new ways to demonstrate the nullity of a previous marriage, in order to exclude as far as possible every divergence between the truth verifiable in the judicial process and the objective truth known by a correct conscience.[33]

32 Ibid., no. 8.
33 Ibid., 9.

These positions highlight the exclusion of those in irregular union from the sacraments unless they regularize their situation via external forum or by living in continence while avoiding scandal (although it maintains a case-to-case approach). The German bishops replied to the CDF letter[34] and clarified their position while promising to continue striving for a consensus with the Holy See on a solution which is theologically acceptable and pastorally responsible.

Amoris Laetitia and Admission to the Sacraments

AL does not explicitly state that the divorced and remarried Catholics can be admitted to the sacraments. Instead, a simple footnote in Chapter 8 gives a hint regarding the issue.

> In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, "I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [24 November 2013], 44: AAS 105 [2013], 1038). I would also point out that the Eucharist "is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (*ibid*., 47: 1039)[35]

The footnote speaks of the sacraments as the Church's available aid for those struggling to regularize their marital situation. Pope Francis reminds pastors of two guiding principles from *Evangelii Gaudium*. First, regarding the sacrament of Confession, the pope wants priests to use the

34 Lehmann et.al., "The Three German Bishops' Message to Their People (Comment on the CDF Letter, 14 October, 1994," 134.

35 Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family (Amories Laetitia)*, March 19, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf (accessed September 28, 2017), no. 305. Henceforth referred to as *AL*.

sacrament to accompany people and help them encounter God's mercy. Second, he quotes *EG, no,* 47, where he presents the sacraments of Eucharist and Confession, not as a reward but as a medicine to be taken each time we fall because of our weakness. This view is derived from St. Ambrose and St. Cyril of Alexandria who speak of the power of the Eucharist to forgive sins, making it a remedy for sinfulness, and who consequently urge people to come to it for spiritual healing.[36] *AL* sees the sacraments as an opportunity for encounter where weak members can experience the mercy and help of the Christian community.

Meanwhile, *AL, no.* 305 states that the sacraments may be administered in certain cases where one discerns psychological and social conditioning and other mitigating factors that significantly diminish the person's subjective culpability. Thus, a person can be deemed as living in God's grace even if one is in an objective situation of sin, and the Church must extend her maternal care to such persons through the administration of the sacraments.

Furthermore, *AL,* no. 299 revitalizes the call for integrating the divorced and remarried into the Christian communities. Their irregular status should not isolate or hinder them from being active members of the community. To this end, *AL* presents the method of careful pastoral discernment of situations before God as open access to proper integration into the Church. Pastoral discernment via the internal forum is essential to making the help of the sacraments available to them.

36 Cf. Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (Evangelii Gaudium),* November 24, 2013 (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2013), no. 47; footnote no. 51. Henceforth referred to as *EG.*

Commentaries and Theological Discussion

Local ordinaries and the academic community differ in their reception of *AL* on the admission of divorced and remarried to the sacraments. Generally, there are two interpretations of footnote 351 of *AL*. The first interprets *AL* as allowing the admission of the divorced and remarried persons to the sacrament so long as the conditions set forth by *FC*, no. 84 are fulfilled. The second interprets AL as adapting the conditions for admitting to the sacraments according to *AL*'s pastoral discernment of situations, which takes mitigating factors and subjective culpability into consideration.

Adherents of the first interpretation claim to be more faithful to the teachings of the Church. For instance, the *dubia* signed by the four cardinals reiterates the three conditions given by John Paul II in *FC*, no. 84. First, they can be admitted to the sacraments if they separate and end the irregular union, presuming no impediment hinders such separation. Second, if they cannot separate because of grave reasons (e.g., the upbringing of children), they should live in complete sexual continence. Third, they should avoid giving scandal by behaving as if their relationship were normative or approved by the Church. Moreover, the *dubia* reemphasizes that sexual relations is exclusively for married couples. Hence, any sexual activity outside marriage counts as adultery and is prohibited by the 6th commandment. In light of this, they posit that admitting those in irregular unions to the sacraments would endanger the connection between Church teaching and practice. "The sacraments, therefore, are detached from life: Christian rites and worship are on a completely different sphere than the Christian moral life."[37]

37 Brandmuller, Walter, Burke, Raymond, Caffarra, Carlo and Meisner,

Cardinal Caffarra elaborates on their stand in the *dubia* by emphasizing that the Church cannot cease to teach and enlighten people regarding "adulterous" unions. The pastoral practice prescribed by *AL* causes doctrinal instability and havoc in actual practice. How will a priest accompany these persons? "If I say to the person who cannot have sexual relations with him who is not her husband or his wife, but in the meantime, seeing that it takes such effort, one may have (sexual relations)… only once instead of three times per week, it makes no sense; and I do not show mercy to this person."[38] Only by helping the persons arrive at a firm resolution to amend their ways could they be properly accompanied to receive the sacraments.

In an interview, Cardinal Burke says that admitting those in irregular situations to the sacraments "constitutes a formal error that goes against what Jesus himself taught and has always been the teaching of the Church."[39] By failing to respect the demands of the moral law, this approach does not lead them to spiritual liberation. Rather, it leads them further into a sort of moral imprisonment. The prohibition against entering such a union, which the prohibition against admitting them to the sacraments is meant to support, is not

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Joaquim, "Full Text and Explanatory Notes of Cardinals' Questions on *Amoris Laetitia*," *National Catholic Register*, November 14, 2016, https://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/full-text-and-explanatory-notes-of-cardinals-questions-on-amoris-laetitia (accessed February 1, 2017).

38 Matteo Mattuzzi and Carlo Caffarra, "Only a Blind Man can Deny that there is Great Confusion in the Church," *The Catholic World Report*, January 15, 2017, trans. Andrew Guernsey, https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2017/01/15/only-a-blind-man-can-deny-that-there-is-great-confusion-in-the-church/ (accessed December 3, 2019). Original Italian version is published in *Il Foglio*.

39 Staff Reporter, "Cardinal Burke: There Are 'Other Cardinals Who Fully Endorse the Dubia'," *Catholic Herald,* January 12, 2017, http://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/01/12/cardinal-burke-there-are-other-cardinals-who-fully-endorse-the-dubia/ (accessed May 12, 2017).

only a simple commandment but also a path to freedom and happiness.

In a similar vein, Cardinal Gerhard Muller, former prefect of the CDF, gave a speech regarding *AL* at a seminary in Oviedo. He likened the Church to Noah's ark, and today's ecclesial challenges to the Great Flood. He stressed that the pope had not changed any teaching nor had he departed from the Church discipline regarding the sacraments. Otherwise, he said, the pope would have given enough reasons for the change. A footnote cannot give enough arguments to enact change. Instead, the footnote referred to objective situations of sins in general and did not pertain directly to those in irregular situations. For Muller, the situation of those in irregular unions "has particular characteristics that distinguish it from other situations."[40] Thus, he also interpreted the pronouncements of the document regarding the access to the sacraments based on previous magisterial teachings. For him, "the first key element for this journey of accompaniment is the harmony between the sacramental celebration and Christian life."[41] The sacraments should not be administered without conforming one's life to the Christian ideal. The basic principle for this teaching is that no one can truly desire a sacrament without conforming one's life to the demands of the sacrament. A person who receives the sacraments must live as a visible sign of the sacramental reality.

This has been the teaching from the very beginning and the Church cannot alter what Christ commanded. The Cardinal indicated that interpreting Pope Francis' statements

40 Gerhard Cardinal Muller, "What Can we Expect From the Family?" trans. Matthew Sherry, May 4, 2016, http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1351294bdc4.html?eng=y (accessed October 19, 2017).

41 Ibid.

as contrary to current teaching amounts not a gesture of mercy but "a way of the disintegration of the ecclesial ark, a way of water."[42] He also cautioned against the great emphasis on the individual at the expense of considering a wider perspective of the Church. Therefore, allowing access without desire for conversion would affect the essence of Church communion that is founded on the ontology of the sacraments.[43]

Several bishops have chosen to interpret *AL* solely through the lens of *FC*. For instance, the bishop of Marquette maintains *FC*'s criteria, given that *AL* does not explicitly refer to communion for divorced and remarried persons. Thus, he argues that *AL* should be interpreted according to the current practice of the Church, highlighting the criteria in the 1993 CDF letter concerning the reception of Holy Communion by the divorced and remarried.[44] The bishops of Alberta and Northwest Territories emphasize in turn that there is no change of practice in the pastoral care for those in irregular unions: "They are bound to live with the consequences of that truth as part of their witness to Christ and his teaching on marriage."[45] Likewise, the bishop of Portsmouth addresses the issue by declaring no change in pastoral practice regarding the administration of the sacraments. Instead, he prescribes a method of accompaniment and discernment for those in irregular marital situations.[46]

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 John F. Doerfler, "Guidelines in the light of *Amoris Laetitia*," Diocese of Marquette, http://www.dioceseofmarquette.org/images/files/Bishop/GuidelinesInLightOfAmorisLaetitia.pdf (accessed July 13, 2017).
45 The Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories, "Guidelines for the Pastoral Accompaniment of Christ's Faithful who are Divorced and Remarried without a Decree of Nullity,", September 14, 2016, Pastoral Letters, http://www.dioceseofst-paul.ca/images/Pastoralletters/BishopsofAB2016/2016-09-14_PastoralAccompanimenttoDivorcedandRemarried.pdf (accessed December 3, 2019).
46 Philip Egan, "Pastoral Message from Bishop Philip about the

Meanwhile, Bishop Steven Lopes of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter underscores the duty of couples in such situations to live in complete continence. A civilly married couple, if committed to complete continence, may have the Eucharist available to them, after proper discernment with their pastor and having recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation.[47] The bishop knows the difficulty of this pastoral practice but he believes that it is not impossible, with God's grace.

The Polish bishops likewise believe that Pope Francis' teachings do not contradict those of John Paul II concerning the reception of the Eucharist by divorced and remarried Catholics. Following the teachings of John Paul II, they withhold sacramental absolution and the Eucharist unless the parties are led to true repentance and sacramental reconciliation[48] and are committed to live as brother and sister.[49]

Bishop Charles Chaput also advocates a traditional stand regarding the pastoral practice. He affirms the Church practice as described in *FC* and other magisterial documents. As a rule, communion should not be given to those who persist in grave sin. They should confess if they have sufficient

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Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*," April 24, 2016, http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/bishop/docs/20160424-BoP-Pastoral-Message-Amoris-Laetitia.pdf (accessed December 3, 2019).

47 Stephen J. Lopes, "A Pledged Troth: A Pastoral Letter on *Amoris Laetitia*, Letters and Statements," https://ordinariate.net/letters-and-statements (accessed December 3, 2019).

48 Staff Reporter, "Polish Bishops: *Amoris Laetitia* Does Not Allow Communion for the Divorced and Remarried," *Catholic Herald,* June 12, 2017, http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/06/12/polish-bishops-amoris-laetitia-does-not-allow-communion-for-the-divorced-and-remarried/ (accessed October 19, 2017).

49 Staff Reporter, "Updated: Polish Bishops Consider New Document on Accompanying the Divorced and Remarried," *Catholic Herald*, October 18, 2017, http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/10/18/polish-bishops-conference-accompany-the-remarried-but-no-communion/ (accessed February 25, 2018).

knowledge of having committed serious sins. In the case of diminished subjective responsibility, the person should repent, and amend his/her ways. The divorced and remarried couple should remain in sexual continence, living as brother and sister to be worthy of the sacraments. The bishop also encourages the divorced and remarried that if they fail in chastity, they must regularly approach the sacrament of Penance to open the way to the Eucharist.[50]

The second interpretation of *AL* regarding admission to the sacraments is a more progressive stand which considers the conditions given by *FC*, including the possibility of an internal forum solution. Through the internal forum, the persons concerned and the pastor discern the situation, after which judgment could be rendered as to whether admittance to the sacraments is possible.

Some local ordinaries have formulated guidelines on how to implement this internal forum option. For instance, the German bishops grant access to the sacraments only after a particular situation has been discerned. For them, accompaniment in discernment by a pastoral worker does justice to the particularity of each case. However, the divorced and remarried are not free to receive the sacraments unconditionally. The bishops specify that the pastoral worker should know and teach the way of life demanded by the Gospels. As such, going through a discernment process does not guarantee a path to the sacraments.[51]

50 Charles Chaput, "Pastoral Guidelines for Implementing *Amoris Laetitia*, Archdiocese of Philadelphia," http://archphila.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/AOP_AL-guidelines.pdf (accessed December 3, 2019).

51 Elise Harris, "German Bishops Say the Divorced-and-Remarried May Receive Communion," *Catholic News Agency,* February 1, 2017, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/german-bishops-say-the-divorced-and-remarried-may-receive-communion-43199

The Belgian bishops also published a pastoral letter that addresses the implementation of *AL*, especially in wedding preparations, family ministry, and pastoral discernment. Like the German bishops, the Belgian bishops open a path to the sacraments for the divorced and remarried based on the judgment of the pastor-in-charge. However, no clear-cut procedure is spelled out for pastorally discerning such situations.[52] The Maltese bishops likewise published their criteria for the application of Chapter 8 of AL.[53] While these do not give step by step instructions on how to care for those in irregular unions, they exhort pastors to help couples observe the following: adequate distinctions between situations, nullity of a previous marriage bond, an examination of conscience, determination of moral responsibility, sexual continence, and the law of gradualness. If the couple or person is able to form one's conscience properly regarding one's situation before God, and if one believes that one is at peace with God, nothing should preclude the person from receiving the sacraments.

In a statement for the Pontifical Council for the Family, Cardinal Ennio Antonelli invites Christians in irregular unions to regularize their situations in conformity with present norms. He encourages them to undertake the path of discernment and recommends the following steps to guide them. First, the validity of the previous marriage and the possibility of its annulment must be verified. Second,

(accessed February 2, 2017).

52 Belgian Bishops' Conference, "*Amoris Laetitia* Lettre Pastorale*", Church Militant,* https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aakAo-H6BiigKUzeS_n11aL0j4g2MAE2BEjRHQ6sjPw0/edit (accessed October 19, 2017).

53 Charles J. Scicluna and Mario Grech, "Criteria for the Application of Chapter VIII of *Amoris Laetitia*," Press Releases, http://ms.maltadiocese.org/WEBSITE/2017/PRESS%20RELEASES/Norms%20for%20the%20Application%20of%20Chapter%20VIII%20of%20AL.pdf (accessed December 3, 2019)

where possible and appropriate, a religious marriage must be celebrated, or a radical sanation of a civil marriage must be performed. Third, the cohabitation must end if there are no impediments. Fourth, sexual continence must be practiced if other solutions are not possible. Fifth, in the case of temporarily invincible error and refusal of sexual continence, the rectitude of conscience needs to be determined in the light of personal and global experience. Sixth, sacramental absolution and Holy Communion may be given while avoiding scandal.[54] Nevertheless, the Cardinal cautions that "it does not seem that a Christian, as long as he remains in an objectively disordered situation, can claim the right to receive the sacraments, by appealing to his inner disposition and his judgment of conscience."[55]

Meanwhile, a set of guidelines crafted by the Buenos Aires bishops contains a more detailed account on the way of discernment and accompaniment for those in irregular situations. First, the guidelines issue a disclaimer that this particular method of pastoral care allows all divorced and remarried to receive the sacraments. Each couple must then undergo their own process of discernment under the guidance of a pastor. This discernment process emphasizes the *via caritatis,* a commitment "to follow the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and integration,"[56] where the persons meet and discern with competent pastors. The pastor listens to the person's situations and admonishes them to live according to

54 Ennio Cardinal Antonelli, "*Amoris Laetitia*: For its Interpretation and Actuation," http://www.familiam.org/pcpf/allegati/13757/Amoris_Laetitia_ING.pdf (accessed 3 December 2019).

55 Ibid.

56 Buenos Aires Bishops, "Basic Criteria for the Implementation of Chapter VIII of *Amoris Laetitia*," *Catholic Voices*, September 18, 2016, , https://cvcomment.org/2016/09/18/buenos-aires-bishops-guidelines-on-amoris-laetitia-full-text/ (accessed December 3, 2019).

the Gospel. However, this path does not necessarily lead to readmission to the sacraments and may culminate in other forms of integration into the community. Second, the pastor should always help the couple to consider the option of a life of sexual continence, even while recognizing the great difficulty this entails. The pastor should also assure them of recourse through the sacrament of confession each time they fail to keep sexual continence. Third, in more complex situations where nullity of the previous marriage cannot be established and continence is not feasible, the pastor may consider if mitigating factors diminish subjective responsibility and culpability. If so, the person may be admitted to the sacraments. However, the document insists that there are cases that do not merit the reception of the sacraments, especially where it involves family injustice or that their behavior seems to assert that their situation is perfectly normal and acceptable publicly. Moreover, to avoid scandal, communities must be catechized in accompanying and guiding those in irregular situations. Private access to the sacraments may also be considered if situations of conflict become unavoidable.[57]

The Buenos Aires guidelines, though brief, embody a clearer articulation of the process of discernment and integration. Pope Francis received the document and then sent a letter affirming and lauding the efforts of the Argentine bishops in formulating the guidelines. He also declared that, "The document is very good and completely explains the meaning of chapter VIII of *Amoris Laetitia.* There are no other interpretations. And I am certain that it will do much good. May the Lord reward this effort of pastoral charity,"[58]

57 Ibid.

58 Francis, "Text of Letter of Pope Francis to Mons. Sergío Alfredo Fenoy, Delegate of the Buenos Aires," *Pastoral Region,* September 5, 2016, , trans. Matthew Cullinan Hoffman, https://franciszekfalszywyprorok.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/

thereby giving the document his papal recommendation, even if unofficial.

Several theologians have in turn expressed their interpretation of the pastoral practice prescribed by AL. Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, President of the Pontifical Council for the Legislative Texts, gives an in-depth method of interpreting and understanding the document. He confirms that the document allows the readmission to the sacraments of the divorced and remarried persons under certain conditions. First, "it is impossible that all these faithful (those in irregular unions) may not be living 'in a state of mortal sin,' and are not 'deprived of sanctifying grace.'"[59] Therefore, some are rightfully denied in the sacraments. But others may be deprived of full knowledge of situations because of a possible ignorance of the rule, an inability to recognize the "good" of the rule, or an inability to act as the rule dictates without committing more sins.[60] These latter persons must be led through a process of discernment and catechism. However, there are those who are unable to end the irregular union as the rule dictates because of grave reasons such as the upbringing of children: "Abandoning the irregular situation would harm other people who are themselves innocent, namely the partner and the children."[61]

Second, some persons may be fully aware of the irregularity of their situation and thus are conscious of their sinful condition.[62] Church teaching clearly states that these couples

letter_of_pope_to_pastoral_region_of_buenos_aires__september_5__2016.pdf (accessed October 19, 2017).

59 Francesco Coccopalmerio, *A Commentary on Chapter Eight of Amoris Laetitia* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), 3.1.

60 Cf. *AL*, no. 301.

61 Coccopalmerio, *Commentary,* no. 3.3.

62 Ibid.

should live as brothers and sisters, abstaining from sexual relations. *AL* does not rule out encouraging couples to practice sexual continence. However, *AL* also considers that lack of sexual intimacy may lead to infidelity, thereby endangering the good of the children.[63] It cites *GS*, no. 51 which admits the necessity of intimacy in strengthening family ties in legitimate conjugal relationships and applies this consideration to cases of irregular unions as well. Thus, embracing continence or leaving the union may be considered inadvisable in certain cases, if it will bring serious harm upon the partner and/or the children.[64]

Third, subjective reasons such as behavioral conditioning may lead to difficulty in the observance of the law. AL speaks of forms of conditioning and mitigating factors that may not hold those in irregular unions subjectively culpable. Because of this, paragraph 305 strives to emphasize the help that the Church may render in this situation. This help also does not exclude the possibility of admission to the sacraments.

> The Church, therefore, could allow access to Penance and the Eucharist, for the faithful who find themselves in an irregular union, which, however, requires two essential conditions: they desire to change the situation, but cannot act on their desire. Clearly, the essential conditions above must be carefully and authoritatively discerned by the ecclesial authority… the ecclesial authority will, at least normally, be the pastor, who knows the people directly, and for this reason can make a proper judgment in these delicate situations.[65]

However, Coccopalmerio also addresses the need to avoid scandal in exercising this pastoral care. The faithful must be

63 *AL*, no. 298; footnote no. 329.
64 Coccopalmerio, *Commentary,* no. 3.5
65 Ibid., no. 3.7

informed and instructed about the pastoral efforts to integrate into the Church community those divorced and remarried persons.

> And this is achieved instructing the faithful and in a practical way offering to them the following yardstick: when the faithful who live in irregular situations are allowed access to the Eucharistic table, this means that the faithful themselves, in the judgment of the Church which knows their situations, confirms that the two conditions, which must always be considered essential, have been satisfied: the desire to change and the inability to do so.[66]

Coccopalmerio holds that in this interpretation of chapter 8, the doctrines are respected. The doctrine of indissolubility is maintained because the document affirms the illegitimacy of such unions and they are objectively contradicting the precepts of the law. Thus, by clearly affirming the need to avoid scandal, the document does not welcome such unions' proliferation. The doctrine of genuine repentance is affirmed since the prescribed pastoral intervention of integration targets persons who are conscious of their situation and intend to reform their situation but are not yet able to do so. The doctrine of sanctifying grace as a requirement for admission to the sacraments is also respected by considering their intention to regularize their situation amidst mitigating factors that may nullify or diminish culpability. Moreover, Coccopalmerio maintains that the Church may not admit to the sacraments those who are aware and conscious of their sinful situation but do not intend to change their irregular situation.[67]

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., no. 3.8.

Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernandez, a very close adviser of Pope Francis and one of the drafters of *AL,* confirms that the pope desires to open the path of the sacraments to those in irregular situations. But to keep the focus of *AL* on the broader reflection on love and marriage, Pope Francis decided to address the issue discreetly in the footnotes. Nevertheless, his approach has generated much attention and controversy.

Archbishop Fernandez further confirms that the Pope's letter to the Buenos Aires bishops regarding their pastoral guidelines calls attention to possible reforms in the pastoral practice of the Church involving those in irregular situations. In a sense, the Buenos Aires guidelines received an authoritative endorsement from the Pope, shedding light on how the Pope interprets his exhortation. However, Fernandez cautions that this does not open the path of the sacraments to everyone. If the person is not in a state of grace, he/she remains precluded from receiving the Eucharist. In this way, the path of discernment should be made available to discern one's situation before God: "In this discernment, the conscience of the concrete person plays a central role with regard to his real situation before God, his real possibilities, and his limits. That conscience, accompanied by a pastor and enlightened by the guidelines of the Church, is capable of an assessment that gives rise to a judgment, sufficient to discern regarding the possibility of access to communion."[68] Thus, merely examining one's objective faults is insufficient for assessing one's spiritual state. This is the essence of pastoral discernment.

68 Victor Manuel Fernandez, "Chapter VIII of *Amoris Laetitia:* What is Left after the Storm," trans. Andrew Guernsey, https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2017/08/full-text-pope-francis-ghostwriter-of.html (accessed October 19, 2017).

Rocco Buttiglione, an Italian philosopher, defends the pastoral practice employed by Pope Francis. Buttiglione traces traditional Church teaching regarding mortal sin and forgiveness from it and finds that they are honored in *AL*. "The path the Pope proposes to divorced and remarried persons is exactly the same as the Church proposes to all sinners: go to confession, and the priest, having considered all the circumstances, will decide whether to give you absolution and admit you to the Eucharist or not."[69] Also in line with Church teachings, the pope includes mitigating factors and forms of conditioning among the considerations in assessing the culpability of persons. Buttiglione reiterates that *AL* does not indiscriminately allow all divorced and remarried persons into the sacraments. Instead it invites them to undergo the path of discernment, which does not guarantee absolution and reception of the Eucharist because of the variety and complexities of situations.

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, archbishop of Vienna and one of the official presenters of *AL* to the press, reflects on the continuity of the Apostolic Exhortation with previous magisterial teachings. He believes that the document opens the path to the sacraments for those in irregular situation under certain circumstances. The Exhortation emphasizes that all "are called to beg for mercy, to desire conversion: 'Lord I am not worthy…'"[70] Following the pope's meditation on Paul's letter to the Corinthians about worthiness in receiving communion,

69 Rocco Buttiglione, "The Joy of Love and the Consternation of Theologians: Some Comments on the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*," *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 19, 2016, http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/joy-love-and-consternation-theologians (accessed December 3, 2019).

70 Christoph Cardinal Schönborn and Antonio Spadaro S.J, "Cardinal Schönborn on "The Joy of Love": The Full Conversation," America, August 9, 2016, https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/richness-love (accessed December 3, 2019).

he underscores the need for everyone to discern their spiritual disposition before receiving the Eucharist. Discernment may show that some who are faithful in observing the rules are not disposed to receive the Eucharist. Alternatively, discernment may show that a person in an objective situation of sin may be in a state of grace and receive the sacraments.

> The Pope invites us not only to look at the external conditions (which have their own importance) but also to ask ourselves whether we have this thirst for a merciful pardon… One cannot pass from the general rule to 'some cases' merely by looking at formal situations. It is therefore possible that, in some cases, one who is in an objective situation of sin can receive the help of the sacraments.[71]

Schönborn sees a parallel between admitting to communion those in irregular marital situations under special circumstances and those belonging to other ecclesial communities that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church. Both instances are justified by the intention "to meet a grave spiritual need for the eternal salvation of an individual believer"[72] The Church believes in the primacy of her mission to lead people to salvation and to secure for them an access towards it especially in critical and consequential situations.

Schönborn understands that the change in pastoral practice proposed by *AL* is one step in evolution, as Pope Francis contemplates the signs of the times. There is a new consciousness of an ongoing evolution in our societies, that is, the various social conditionings that affect our capacity to make

71 Ibid.

72 John Paull II, *Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church (Ecclesia de Eucharistia),* April 17, 2003, Vatican Archives, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html (accessed October 20, 2017), no. 45.

the right decisions. Discernment takes into account these conditions, which render persons less culpable or responsible in their objective situations.

Some Theological Considerations

Before examining the consistency of *AL* with Church teaching, it is important to ask whether or not the document approves the readmission of those in irregular marital situations to the sacraments. Did Pope Francis change the present Church practice on this matter? The answer is yes, but only in certain cases. This is implied in footnote 351 which names the Eucharist and Reconciliation as possible aids that the Church can make available for those in irregular situations. We can also deduce this from the Pope's letter to the Buenos Aires bishops commending their interpretation of AL that allows the readmission to the sacraments of persons in an irregular union, though only after a process of pastoral discernment with a pastor. Archbishop Victor Fernandez, close adviser to Pope Francis and one of the document's drafters, and Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, one of the presenters of the document, similarly favored the interpretation of the Argentine bishops. Therefore, we may conclude that AL allows the readmission to the sacraments in specific cases.

We may now ask: Is this pastoral practice of admitting to the sacraments the divorced and remarried persons consistent with Church moral tradition? The answer is yes. Notwithstanding the perceived deviation from traditional pastoral practice, the essence and soul of the Church's moral tradition remain consistent and unchanged. *AL*, as such, updates earlier pastoral practice by incorporating pertinent Church teachings such as the primacy of conscience, mitigating factors, the use of

the internal forum, and pastoral discernment to help couples who are in irregular marital situations adequately. Church teachings that were somehow sidelined in previous pastoral practice are presently being put to good use to supplement the ongoing development of Church practice.

The pastoral practice advocated by Pope John Paul II is to admit the divorced and remarried to the Eucharist and Penance only after their firm resolve to change their situation, or in cases where there is an impediment to breaking the relationship, the commitment to live in complete sexual continence. *AL* maintains this tradition. However, *AL* points out that there are extreme cases where, even if there is firm resolve to change their situation and live in continence, they cannot do so without endangering the family's situation. AL identifies that lack of intimacy between couples may lead to infidelity or endanger children's upbringing. People in such cases and other similar circumstances that prevent them from acting in accord with Church teaching should be given appropriate help and guidance.

Nevertheless, Pope Francis encourages those in irregular unions to come to confession and take the path of discernment so that they may truly understand their situation and what God wants them to do under the guidance of Church teachings and pastors. This process of discernment is evident in *FC*'s directives where John Paul II also reminded pastors about this path of discernment.[73] Nonetheless, Pope Francis does add substance to the discernment process prescribed in *FC.* He fine-tunes the concept of pastoral discernment by calling attention to persons' particular situations and mitigating factors and forms of conditioning that affect persons'

73 *FC*, no. 84

decisions. These mitigating factors are also recognized by the Catechism and are used in discerning the subjective culpability of a person.

Pope Francis underscores the use of the internal forum. As stated above, the CDF issued directives regarding the use of the internal forum in marital irregularity situations. The internal forum may come in different forms. The CDF letter understood the internal forum solution in the context of marriage annulments. On the other hand, Pope Francis refers to the internal forum as it is practiced in the Sacrament of Confession and in the process of pastoral discernment. The CDF did not recognize the internal forum as a solution for those who fail to obtain a declaration of nullity for a previous marriage. Acknowledging the CDF position, Pope Francis clarifies that the internal forum would contribute to the person's moral maturity and hopefully lead to one's integration with the Church community. Thus, the internal forum envisioned by Pope Francis does not privately or internally annul marriages.

The admission to the sacraments that *AL* prescribes, particularly Reconciliation and Eucharist, is not indiscriminate. The pope opens the path of the sacraments only to certain cases of the divorced and remarried.[74] He refrains from enumerating these cases, and instead allows the pastoral discernment to fulfill its role, precisely in recognition of the complexities of particular situations. However, he expressly defines the condition of those who cannot be admitted to the sacraments as those persons who, while being aware of their objectively sinful situation, persist in and exhibit their situation as something permitted and sanctioned by the Catholic

74 *AL*, no. 297.

Church.[75] Two concerns need prior clarification prior to admission to the sacraments.

First, admission to the sacraments makes sense only if a person is remorseful and resolved to avoid sin, which does not seem to be the case of someone who remains in an irregular marital situation. Remarriage of divorced persons during the lifetime of their previous spouse is considered an adulterous union which is sinful. Indeed, the second union objectively contradicts the Gospel teaching and is therefore, an objective situation of sin.

AL does not deny this but considers the subjective culpability of persons in an objective situation of sin. Far from undermining the moral law, the Pope stresses that ascertaining the subjective culpability is essential in the discernment of situations and determining whether someone should be admitted to the sacraments. Sin is a personal 'no' to the call of God to goodness. However, to be in a state of mortal sin, there must be sufficient knowledge, full consent of the will and freedom, and serious gravity of the act. For instance, a prostitute may be in an objective situation of sin, yet, in many cases, one does not have the freedom or full knowledge in what one does. Thus, while prostitution remains an immoral act, we cannot brand them in an automatic and unqualified manner as sinful persons. The Catechism likewise identifies mitigating factors and forms of conditioning that may reduce or even nullify persons' culpability. The Pope includes these in the discernment process to provide access to the sacraments, not for all, but for persons in irregular situations who precisely have significantly limited culpability. For him, the sacraments aid the Church in helping these persons, by the

75 Ibid.

grace of God, to achieve a firm resolve towards the regularization of their current situation. In this way, the sacraments serve as the universal remedy for the weak to ensure their encounter with the Lord's mercy.[76]

The other problem is that the second marriage contradicts the union of Christ and his Church. This is the main reason why those in irregular situations are prevented from receiving the sacraments unless they mend their ways or resolve to live in complete continence. Admitting them to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, without proper contrition and resolution contradicts the Eucharist's essence, which signifies the marriage feast of the Bride, who is the Church, and the Paschal Lamb who is Christ.

AL does not deny this contradiction but affirms the irregularity of the situation of these couples that they are indeed objectively contradicting Church belief and teaching. It also guards against the risk of scandal that can arise from admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments. As such, *AL* exhorts pastors as a precaution to explain to the faithful the updated pastoral programs of integration for those in irregular unions. A catechesis that affirms the values and indissolubility of marriage is essential in this age of marital breakdowns. The Church must also spearhead the formation of faith groups, which can greatly assist these persons, especially in their integration to the Church›s life.

To conclude, the changes and developments proposed by AL appear to be faithful to Church teaching in light of the signs of the times. First and foremost, the document is issued to address the difficulty and challenges of married life in this present age. Through it, the Pope urges the Church to

76 Cf. *AL*, no. 305; footnote no. 351.

exert more effort in caring for couples, especially in difficult marital situations. The sacraments become the most powerful aid for our weak brethren. At the same time, the document does not weaken the Church's commitment to marriage indissolubility, nor does it water down Gospel values. Instead, it empowers the Church to enhance the affirmation of its doctrine while reaching out to those in irregular situations. The supplemental considerations, such as mitigating factors and forms of conditioning, the inability of parties to act according to the moral law without committing graver sins, internal forum, and pastoral discernment in general, are components that are expected to further the continuous development of doctrine. *AL* has not departed from doctrine; rather, it revolutionizes and highlights the Church's attention and care for its faithful in irregular marital unions.

"What You are going to do, do quickly": A Close Reading of Judas' Betrayal of Jesus and Jesus' Self-Knowledge as "Lamb of God" in John 13:21-32

Joseph Don Zaldivar

In 2011, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Philippines (CBCP) website featured a series of videos that were meant to help Filipinos in their observance of the Holy Week. One of the videos that were uploaded was that of reflection points being given by Pablo Virgilio David, then an auxiliary bishop of San Fernando in Pampanga. His video-reflection was intended for Holy Thursday. The following are transcriptions of pertinent parts of what he said:

> On Holy Thursday, we celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper, and of course the ritual of the Washing of the Feet. I remember when I was a child…, I wondered why our people would usually celebrate the *pahatid ng pagkain ng apostol.* There was a ritual procession, and somebody was holding a platter of the *kordero*, roasted lamb.
>
> According to the Synoptic Gospels, especially the Gospel of Mark, that evening they were supposed to be celebrating the Passover meal. We know that the usual Passover meal included unleavened bread, wine, bitter herbs, and of course, the main course—the roasted lamb.
>
> I asked, 'Why is it that during the mass, we only have bread and wine, and there is no lamb? And why is it only during Holy Thursday that the people bring the lamb on a platter?'

I remember asking my mother these questions. And my mother answered, 'But the Lamb is Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God.' So I said, 'Oh does that mean they did not really celebrate the Passover meal?'

The Jewish people celebrate the Passover meal in the same way that Americans celebrate Thanksgiving with roasted turkey; the difference is that the Jewish people had lamb. What we call the 'Last Supper of the Lord' is really in memory of another 'last supper,' that of the last supper of the Jewish people before their freedom from being slaves in Egypt; this is what Jesus and his disciples were commemorating.

But there is a serious issue about the fact that there was no lamb that showed up on table. One time I was meditating on the Gospel of John, and I realized the clue right in this Gospel. Remember Jesus said, 'One of you will betray me.' Then one of the disciples asked Jesus, 'Who is it?' Jesus said, 'I will dip the bread in the dish, and the one I will give it to, that's him.' And he dipped the bread in the dish, and sure enough, he gave it to Judas.

After Judas had eaten the bread, Jesus said, "What you are going to do, do quickly." What was he supposed to do? The disciples were also wondering what Jesus was instructing him to do.

Well, I would like to believe that Judas was supposed to procure the lamb because he was the treasurer of the group. Unfortunately, he did not come back. And when he was not coming back, it became clear to Jesus that he had been betrayed. It became clear to Jesus that no roasted lamb was going to show up at table. That is because, he was going to be the lamb.

> I can imagine the disciples already hungry and asking, 'Where is the lamb?' Remember that the same question was asked by Isaac to his father, Abraham. Abraham answered, 'God will provide.' And now, the disciples were asking the same question to Jesus. Maybe Jesus humored them and said, 'I am the Lamb!'
>
> That was the beginning of our Eucharist, which is Jesus giving himself, body and blood, to us. Jesus gave us an entirely new meaning to the Passover meal of the Jewish people. It is no longer about a lamb by which the Jewish people are saved. Now it is about Jesus, by whose passion and death, we are all saved; not just the Jewish people, but everyone's salvation is guaranteed by the death of Jesus.[1]

The passage from the Fourth Gospel that the good bishop might have read is 13:21-30, which I will call the Betrayal Announcement Narrative:

> When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.' The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus; so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks." So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the

1 Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "Holy Thursday Reflections." *Visita Iglesia* 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBG8Qic1gjI (accessed February 12, 2013).

> feast;" or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night.

The conclusion the bishop has arrived at with this passage is that the Johannine Jesus came to understand himself as the Lamb of God when Judas left and did not return with a lamb procured from the temple. However, several questions arise from this interpretation. This research seeks to make a review of his reflections in light of the Fourth Gospel through a close reading of the Betrayal Announcement Narrative in order to understand how Jesus might have been thinking and feeling regarding the attitudes and actuations of Judas, of Satan, and Judas' betrayal of him.

However, before looking into the Betrayal Announcement Narrative itself, I shall try to discover how the Johannine author seeks to determine how the read is to perceive Judas (and Satan) and his relationship toward Jesus. I shall therefore undertake a close reading of the character of Judas (and Satan) in parts of the Gospel preceding the Betrayal Announcement Narrative, with particular focus on his character development during the foot-washing scene.

Reader Knowledge about Judas (and Satan) until John 13

By the time the reader has reached chapter 13, one must have already encountered references to the figure of Judas twice: at the conclusion of the Bread of Life discourse (6:60-71), and at the scene of the anointing of Jesus' feet at Bethany (12:1-8). Likewise, one must have been confronted also with the figure of "the devil" being referred to once: at the confrontation of Jesus with "the Jews" (8:44).

Judas: The Devil among the Twelve (6:60-71)

In 6:31-59, Jesus is portrayed to be delivering his "Bread of Life Discourse" during a dialogue with "the Jews" at the synagogue in Capernaum. Jesus spoke of himself as the "bread of life" (6:48) which must be partaken of in order to gain life (6:57). In 6:60, the narrator reveals that Jesus's own disciples found his words to be very difficult to receive.

Then, for the first time, in 6:64, the narrator makes his very first reference to Jesus' betrayer. For now, the narrator withholds from the reader the identity of the betrayer, but states that Jesus knew who his betrayer would be. It would be seven verses later, in 6:71, that the narrator gives the reader a share in the knowledge of Jesus by explicitly stating that it is Judas who is about to betray Jesus.

We also know from 6:64 that "the Twelve" are not perfect disciples; they are "half-hearted" about believing in Jesus and following him. Apparently, however, one of them is most imperfect; and him we find Jesus referring to as his betrayer, the "devil" among "the Twelve" whom he has chosen (6:70). The reader here would find a "tragic irony in the making."[2] Judas keeps being considered and treated as one of "the Twelve," someone whom Jesus himself has chosen, yet he acts contrary and is called "devil."

"Devil," here may be understood as "the enemy" or "the adversary," i.e. someone who will oppose the words and deeds of Jesus.[3] The Johannine community would have easily understood the Bread of Life Discourse as an allusion to the

2 Margaret Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals* (London: Continuum, 2004), 147. Cf., André Gagné, "Caractérisation des Figures de Satan et Judas dans le Quatriéme Evangile," *Science et Esprit* 55 (2003): 268.

3 Gagne, "Caractérisation des Figures de Satan et Judas," 269-70.

Eucharist i.e. the *memoria passionis* communion meal of the early Christian community. At the foot washing scene, some allusion to the Eucharist will also be made and Judas shall respond in a remarkably opposite manner.

The Devil: Father, Murderer, and Liar (8:44)

A clearer Johannine characterization of "the devil" appears in 8:44 where the evangelist identifies "the devil" to be the "father" of "the Jews".[4] This occurs within the 8:32-47 pericope which narrates another discussion of Jesus with "the Jews."

Upon reaching this pericope, the reader has already encountered several times the Johannine portrayal of "the Jews" to be having murderous intentions against Jesus (cf. 5:18; 7:1, 19-20, 25; 8:37, 40). Moreover, in 7:19-20, "the Jews" have also been portrayed to be lying because they deny their desire to kill Jesus, and thus they are devoid of truth (cf. 8:47).

Alas, in 8:44, the evangelist exposes the reason for their homicidal intents and dishonesty. According to the Fourth Gospel, "the Jews" are engendered by their "father," the devil who is a murderer and a liar (8:44b). And so it is that their wills are servile to the desires of the devil (8:44a).[5]

4 The very negative depiction of "the Jews" by the Johannine author does not warrant a judgment of anti-semitism against the Fourth Evangelist. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Fourth Gospel does not refer to modern-day "Jews", i.e. a particular group of people belonging to a particular race or religion, nor to their ancestors *in toto.* Rather, most probably, he uses the term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι to identify a group of persons encountered by the Johannine community to be unbelieving or apostatic. Cf. Amy Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 102-16. A more detailed discussion of scholarly opinions are outlined in Urban C. von Wahlde, "'The Jews' in the Gospel of John: Fifteen Years of Research (1983-1998)," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 76 (2000): 30-55.

5 Juan Barreto and Juan Mateos, *El Evangelio de Juan: Analisis Linguistico y Comentario Exegetico* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad,

Judas: A Hypocrite, i.e. A Thief and an Uncaring One (12:1-8)

The second time that the reader will encounter Judas is in chapter 12. By this time, one has knowledge of Judas as the devil (6:70-71) and that the devil is murderer and liar (8:44).

One then finds Jesus in Bethany, having just finished the spectacular raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:1ff). At the house, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anoints the feet of Jesus with a pound of very expensive perfume (12:3). Then Judas figures in the scene, very indignant at what Mary did. He points out the financial wastefulness of the act, asserting that resources could have been used for the poor (12:4-5). However, the narrator exposes his hypocrisy (12:6). Judas was actually lying about his intentions for the poor. Furthermore, he was embezzling from the treasury of the believing community.

Judas, the betrayer, not only stands here in contradistinction against Mary, the loyal and loving friend of Jesus.[6] Rather, the reader will also sense a lot of diametric opposition of Judas against Jesus the "good shepherd" (cf. 10:11). Not only was Judas uncaring towards the poor and little ones, unlike the "good shepherd" who cared for the weak sheep (10:13). Judas was also a thief, i.e. the very adversary of the "good shepherd" (10:1, 8, 10). The reader could now have the sense that Judas, the symbolic representation of the unbelievers and apostates in the Johannine community, is the referent for "thief" in 10:1-18. Indeed, apart from the Good Shepherd discourse, the only other mention of "thief" (κλεπτης) in the Fourth Gospel is in 12:6. Furthermore, 10:10 makes a link

1979), 589.

6 Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, 140-69 and Michael Crosby, *'Do You Love Me?' Jesus Questions the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 139-41.

between thief and murderer, hinting for the reader to think that Judas also has murderous intents against the sheep he preys upon.

Thus, by his thievery and hypocrisy, Judas stands not only in contrast with Mary and the Good Shepherd, but also parallel to the devil, who is murderer and liar.[7] This now definitely confirms the direct description given to him by Jesus in 6:70-71: Judas is the "devil" among "the Twelve."

Reader Knowledge about Jesus until John 13

Upon reaching chapter 13, the reader is already fully aware that Judas is set to betray Jesus, and that Jesus is aware of the betrayal that is to happen to him as well as who his betrayer is (6:70-71). In addition to this, as Moloney observes, the reader must have also appropriated a good amount of the Fourth Evangelist's image of Jesus.[8]

First, the reader has by now repeatedly heard Jesus speak about the "hour" which is yet to come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). It is the "hour" of the passion of Jesus and the glorification of himself and of the Father. Several times, this "hour" is associated with the Passover feast (11:55-57; 12:20-24, 27-33). Indeed, in chapter 13, the readers find that the two themes coalesce (13:1). The reader has also heard Jesus speaking several times about his departure (7:32-36; 8:14, 21-27). This, too, is now made clear in chapter 13.

It is also clear to the readers that, in the course of his ministry, Jesus has gathered a group of disciples that are called "his own" (οἱ ἴδιοι) i.e. "his own people" (1:11-12), "his own flock"

7 Gagné, "Caractérisation des Figures de Satan et Judas," 271.
8 Francis Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 12.

(10:3,4,12) and in chapters 13-17, he tells that his departure towards the Father is for the sake of "his own."

But most importantly, by reading the Prologue itself (1:1-18), the readers know *who* Jesus is. He is the Word of God, the one from the Father, and is destined to return to the Father. And so now, at the opening of chapter 13, they will learn of *what* he did (loved his own to the end) and the rest of the Passion narrative will explicate *how* he will fulfill his identity.

The Foot Washing as the Preceding Literary Context (13:1-30)

In John 13:1-30, the figure of Judas/the betrayer is three times referred to: at the beginning of the foot washing (13:2), during the dialogue with Peter (13:10b-11), and at the explanation of the foot washing gesture (13:18). Satan is referred to once, at the beginning (13:2). While Judas (with Satan) is not the main theme of the foot washing narrative, the relatively frequent reference to "the betrayer" means that the Fourth Evangelist intends to emphasize the role of the betrayer in the thematic development of the narrative.[9]

The characterization of Judas in the Foot Washing narrative may thus be done at three moments within the narrative: the "prologue" (13:1-3), the actual foot washing and dialogue with Peter (13:4-11), and the explanation discourse (13:12-20). In analysis, one may easily notice the tendency of the Fourth Evangelist to insert allusions to Judas/the betrayer to create an irony that would further highlight the themes present in the foot washing narrative.

9 Blaise Arminjon, *Nous Voudrions Voir Jesus : Avec Saint Jean Decouvrir Son Visage* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1996), 43-44.

Loving to the End (13:1-3)

Verses 1-3 of chapter 13 provide a "second prologue" within the Fourth Gospel[10], i.e. a sort of *introduction solennelle* to the whole passion narrative.[11] It stands parallel to 1:1-18 in that it explains in more concrete terms how Jesus is Word of God (1:1) and revealer of the glory of the Father (1:18); it is Jesus who "loved his own to the end."

What is crucial here is Jesus's knowledge of the arrival of his Paschal "hour," of which he was aware "with plain conscience and full lucidity."[12] Jesus knew of his Passion and he actively consented to it.[13] More importantly, he also knew that his hour of Passion is also the hour of his glorification and victory (13:3). And this "double knowledge and power" of Jesus climaxes in absolute love—loving till the end (εἰς τέλος, cf. 19:28, 30).[14]

It is against the themes of love, glorification, community, and light in 13:1-3 that the "parenthetic insertion" of 13:2 stands. Almost immediately, at the mention of "Judas" and the "devil," the bells in the mind of the reader peal with alarm. There is a "break in the rhythm!"[15] Betrayal, perdition, discord, and darkness are about to happen. Through the use of irony, the insertion of Judas here highlights at best the loving act that Jesus is about to do.

Closer reading may further highlight this irony; four noteworthy details may be mentioned: (1) the use of the nominative

10 Arminjon, *Nous Voudrions Voir Jesus*, 35.
11 G.M. Behler, *Les Paroles d'Adieux du Seigneur* (Paris: Cerf, 1960), 2.
12 Arminjon, *Nous Voudrions Voir Jesus*, 35.
13 Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Evangile selon Jean* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 39.
14 Ibid, 36.
15 Ibid.

Ἰούδας, (2) the meal setting, (3) linking with death, and (4) the double yet ironic use of the verb βάλλω (put into). First, one may observe that in the original Greek, "Judas" is in the nominative Ἰούδας rather than the genitive Ἰούδα ("of Judas" as in RSV). It is thus better translated as "…when the devil had put it into *the heart that Judas, son of Simon Iscariot*…."[16] It may seem therefore that the devil was seeking entrance into every heart in the room, i.e. of all the disciples, not just that of Judas.[17] This further highlights the link between the foot-washing and the issue of group solidarity.[18] The devil, in this sense, fulfills his identity as the "sower of discord,"[19] over which Jesus will triumph through his Passion that will gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (11:27).

Second, equally worth noting is the mention of the setting of a meal. Meals take a communitarian function in the context of Semitic cultures and the testimonies of the Hebrew scriptures, e.g. Isaac and Abimelech (Gen 26:30), Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:54), Moses and the elders of Israel (Ex 24:9-11) It is also a mark of hospitality and intimacy (Ruth 2:14). The treason of Judas and the "divisiveness" of the devil are therefore very unacceptable and stand in irony against the whole theme of 13:1-3.[20]

Third, from a narrative perspective, the inserted mention of the betrayal of Judas also signals the reader about the

16 D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 462. This version is apparently more attested in the ancient sources and Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John : Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 2 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 550.

17 Thomas Brodie, *The Gospel according to John : A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 447.

18 Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social-science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 219.

19 The word διαβόλος may also mean "sower of discord", i.e. destroyer of unity, cf. Arminjon, *Nous Voudrions Voir Jesus*, 37.

20 Leon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Evangile selon Jean*, 25.

imminence of the death of Jesus. In this way, the Fourth Evangelist links the act of foot washing to the death of Jesus, further emphasizing the notion of love-to-the-end.[21]

And fourth, as soon as the reader reaches 13:5, the love-betrayal irony would be further sharpened by the relatively frequent use (twice) of the relatively rare word, βάλλω (put into), within one pericope or chapter.[22] In 13:2, it is used for describing the action of the devil putting (βεβληκότος) betrayal into the heart; while in 13:5, it is used to denote the action of Jesus pouring (βάλλει) water in the basin for an act of love. The two contradictory uses imply the experience in the disciples of two opposing forces. The first is an infection of darkness and betrayal of the heart, and the second, a loving purification of wrong.[23]

Indeed, 13:1-3 encapsulates for the reader what is to be expected in the next chapters: the paradoxes of love-hatred, loyalty-betrayal, passion-glorification, solidarity-discord. Even this early in the narrative, the reader can now feel with anticipation the drama of conflict that is to unfold in the Passion narrative between Judas (with Satan) and Jesus.

Washed yet Unclean (13:10-11)

In 13:4-5, Jesus has washed the feet of his disciples, which is the *semēion* of his love-till-the-end (13:1) and of his "hour" of Passion and glorification.[24] Then in 13:6-10a, the reader

21 Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 563-64.
22 Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 448.
23 Ibid.
24 Fernando Segovia, "John 12:1-20, The Footwashing in the Johannine Tradition" *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 73 (1982): 31-51. Also cf. James Dunn, "The Washing of the Disciples' Feet in John 13:1-20," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 61 (1970): 247-52.

encounters the terribly poor understanding of Peter (who likewise represents the rest of the disciples). This stands in irony against the full knowledge of Jesus which the reader has just seen in 13:1-3. In the subsequent verses 13:10-11, Jesus chooses to respond to the confrontations of Peter (i.e. with the rest of the disciples). Probably fed up with Peter's weak comprehension, Jesus had to do some explaining, even if futile, so that somehow, the disciples might understand his gesture.

In his explanation, Jesus initially suggests linking the act of foot washing to its cleansing effects (13:10). Earlier in the Gospel, the reader has read a little mention about the Jewish rite of purification (2:6, the water jars at Cana) and may also know the purity rules of the Jewish religion. However, one will later find Jesus, in 15:3, redefining the meaning of cleanliness from ritual purity to cleanliness brought about by the word spoken by Jesus to them.

Thus, on the one hand, 13:10a might be an attempt of the Fourth Evangelist to contradistinguish faith in Jesus (washing of the feet) against Jewish ritualism (purification).[25] On the other hand, it may also signify spiritual cleanliness, which the disciples received through the word spoken to them by Jesus (15:3).[26] It is therefore not really the washing that purified the disciples, but the long time they have spent with Jesus listening to his word[27] and believing in it.[28]

It may be noted further that foot washing may be symbolic of forgiveness. With the feet as a symbol of action, washing becomes a symbol of cleansing away the errant actions of a

25 Bareto and Mateos, *El Evangelio de Juan*, 585.
26 Behler, *Les Paroles d'Adieux*, 37.
27 Bareto and Mateos, *El Evangelio de Juan*,596.
28 Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 466.

person (similar to how cutting away one's hand is to cease acting in a certain way, cf. Mk 9:43).[29] The shift from the second person singular in addressing Peter to the second person plural (ὑμεῖς) to address all the disciples may signify Jesus concern for solidarity and community among his disciples through mutual forgiveness, mercy, and love.

Again, using irony, it is against these themes of faith in the word of Jesus and solidarity with the community of disciples that the Fourth Evangelist makes mention of Judas. Appraised as unclean, Judas stands in irony against the disciples who are already clean. Aware of the traitorous intents of Judas, Jesus knew (13:11) that Judas refused to believe in Jesus' word (6:64) and to be one with the believing community. The foot washing had no effect on Judas; he remained unclean.[30]

It is not that Judas only refused to be cleansed in this moment. He has always refused to believe Jesus (6:64). Moreover, the use of the present participle παραδιδόντα (been betraying) rather than the future tense shows that Judas has always been scheming to betray his master.[31] Judas has always been unclean and intends to remain so.

The stubbornness of Judas to be an outsider while remaining an insider makes this "insertion" stand out again in the narrative[32], just as it did in 13:2 and 6:60-71. The Fourth Evangelist heightens the irony by a mere mention of Judas or betrayer.

29 Rohrbaugh and Malina, *Social-science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 220-221.
30 Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 568.
31 Ibid., 552.
32 Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John : A Commentary*, ed. by R. W. N. Hoare, & J. K. Riches, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 473

Intimacy yet Disloyalty (13:18)

As Jesus continues his discourse in explaining his symbolic act of washing the feet of his disciples (13:12-17), he introduces not simply a revelation of a truth but a *mandatum* to some action. "Knowing" and "acting" go hand-in-hand in Jesus (cf. 13:1-5), and so it must also be with the disciples (13:17).

The action to which Jesus exhorts his disciples becomes clear in the use of the rare word ὑπόδειγμα (example) in 13:15. This word is a *hapax legomenon* in the Fourth Gospel, but elsewhere in the Bible, it is used to signify exemplary death (2 Macc 6:28; Sir 44:16; cf. 4 Macc 17:22-23).[33] In being told to do as "Jesus did," the disciples are also being exhorted to take Jesus' death, symbolized in foot washing, to be the norm of life and conduct for the believing community. Thus, it does not only mean "just as *I have done*, so you must do;" rather, it may also mean, "just as I *will do* (i.e. to love until death), so you must do." The disciples are expected to take part in the death of Jesus and are invited by Jesus to the loving gift of self.

Here now, the Fourth Evangelist inserts a reference to the betrayer in order to hint at the concrete manner by which he will show his example of love-till-the-end (13:1). The evangelist makes Jesus quote the Hebrew scriptures:

> The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me. (John 13:18 RSV)

> Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me. (Psalm 41:9 RSV)

33 R. Alan Culpepper, "The Johannine Hypodeigma: A Reading of John 13," *Semeia* 53 (1991): 133-52; cf. Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor*, 16.

This passage from the Psalms seems to be also alluded to in Mark 14:18 (cf. Mt 26:21ff, Lk 22:22ff). Indeed, the use of the quotation may have originally been from the Synoptics.[34] However, it was used by the Fourth Evangelist using a different scheme that contains three purposes.[35]

First, it intends to prepare the reader for the betrayal. In this passage from a Psalm, the theme of intimacy-betrayal irony is emphasized. Betrayal is more tragic if done by an intimate friend rather than just anyone.[36] Jesus knew who among "his own" was not disposed to follow his message of equality and love; and that it is he who is not clean (13:11). This quotation is Jesus' ultimate invitation for Judas towards reconciliation and friendship with him (cf. 15:13, 15),[37] an offer that later he would still refuse.

Second, the reader is informed that Jesus had the exact foreknowledge of his betrayal. In Semitic cultures, pointing one's sole at someone was an extreme discourtesy. Worse therefore was the gesture of the lifting of a heel which can signify contempt, animosity, or even treachery. By quoting this verse, Jesus is expressing his awareness that Judas is not just betraying his master for profit or self-interest but because he has actually hated his master from the very beginning (6:64).[38]

Third, the citation serves to provide a scriptural proof that such betrayal has been prophesied in scripture and is thus contained in God's salvific plan. Since the psalms are usually

34 Günter Reim, *Studien Zum Alttestamentlichen Hintergrund Des Johannesevangeliums* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 41-2.
35 Ernst Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. by R. Funk (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 109.
36 Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 470.
37 Baretto and Mateos, *El Evangelio de Juan*, 559.
38 Eric F.F. Bishop, "'He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his

alluded to David, the quotation may also mean that the citation attempts to show David as made a "type" or "model" of "great David's greater Son," the promised Messiah (cf. 2 Sam 7:12-16, Ps 16:8-11).[39] Just as David in his Psalm experienced betrayal, so too will the promised Messiah. In citing the Scriptures, Jesus shows full knowledge and consent for the design of God.[40]

Now, the irony of love-till-the-end is at its full sharpness with the hints at and explicit mentions of the betrayal-of-the-intimate-friend. This time, it is not just the will of Judas or Satan that is at work but more so the design of God.

Initial Conclusions

With the foregoing, we can make the following conclusions about the Jesus (and God/Father)—Judas (and the devil/Satan) relationship. First, Judas is fully intent on handing Jesus over to the authorities who will bring him to his death. The Fourth Evangelist has made him a foil to the characters whose faith in Jesus are portrayed to be developing. Judas' contempt and hatred at Jesus only impinges, hardens, and overwhelms his heart. He is a figure of discord, deceit, and thievery. The fact that he remains one of Jesus' "own" makes him the "consummate hypocrite, the epitome of those who reject the truth."[41] Second, Judas here is the corporal manifestation (if not the identification, cf. 6:70) of the devil. His will is to manifest the design of the devil.[42]

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heel against me.'--Jn xiii.18 (Ps xli.9)," *Expository Times* 70 (1958): 331-33.

39 Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 470.

40 Leon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Evangile selon Jean*, 41.

41 Tom Thatcher, "Jesus, Judas, and Peter: Character by Contrast in the Fourth Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 435-48.

42 Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 75.

Third, in contrast to Judas, Jesus is very intent on manifesting love to "his own," establishing solidarity and community among his disciples, inviting friends to intimacy, and encouraging faith in them. Fourth, Jesus here is the revealer or concrete manifestation of the glory of the Father, a glory that is concretized in love-till-the-end (13:1). Fifth and most importantly, Jesus is fully aware that betrayal forms a constitutive and integral dimension of the will of the Father. It is instrumental to making love-till-the-end happen. The schemes of Judas could do no harm to Jesus. Jesus knew and controlled everything Judas did and used Judas as a "tool" for his own glorification.[43] With this much information provided by the Fourth Evangelist, it is as if the Gospel-writer is intent on making the reader have the same full knowledge as Jesus has. At the same time, the reader is made to feel that with the knowledge is the burden (or beatitude) of action (13:17). The awareness brings the reader to motion.

With verse 20, the reader comes to the close of the foot washing narrative and discourse. By this time, one already has knowledge of Judas (with the devil/Satan) and his relationship with Jesus (with God/the Father) which is enough to predict what is to occur—betrayal towards love-till-the-end (13:1). But how exactly this betrayal shall occur is the *quaestio disputatae* of this essay.

Spotlight on Judas (13:21-30)

In order to analyze the Betrayal Announcement Narrative, it may broken down as follows:

43 Thatcher, "Jesus, Judas, and Peter," 448.

13:21-26a: Announcement and Questions

13:26b-30: Jesus' gesture and the exit of Judas

13:31-32: Interpretation of Jesus

Knowledge and Ignorance (13:21-26a)

There are many things that are known to the reader but remain unknown to the disciples. Jesus's "own" do not fully understand the meaning of the foot washing given that the death of Jesus is outside their purview. Despite two hints (13:10b-11; 13:18), the disciples do not sense the imminence of the betrayal, passion, and death of Jesus. Thus, when, in 13:21, Jesus announced that he was to be betrayed, his disciples were dumbfounded in ignorance; but the reader is not surprised.

However, even though the disciples have become aware of the betrayal that is to come, they did not know who among them was the betrayer (13:22). Aside from Jesus, the only other person now who knows about the identity of the betrayer is the reader. This knowledge of Jesus and of the reader is counterposed to the ignorance shown by the disciples (cf. 13:6-11). This ignorance will persist until the end of the Betrayal Announcement Narrative (13:28-29), even if Jesus has already given some sort of clue (13:26a).

While the disciples here are filled with curiosity (or possibly indignation, or even fear, in the case of Peter) and are busy asking questions (13:22-25), the reader who shares the knowledge of Jesus cannot help but also share in his emotions. Unlike the betrayal announcement narratives in the Synoptics (Mk 14:18; Mt 26:21; Lk 22:21), the Fourth Gospel reports in 13:21 that Jesus was deeply "troubled in the spirit" (ἐταράχθη τῷ πνεύματι; notable is the use of the aorist passive

of ταράσσω)[44]. The reader has already twice encountered this disposition of inner unease earlier in the text. The first was when Jesus saw Mary weeping for his brother Lazarus (11:33). The second was during the coming of the Greeks, when he learned of the nearness of "the hour" (12:27). More and more, the knowledge of the reader is geared towards evoking emotions, and eventually actions, in the reader.

A Final Offer and a Definite Refusal (13:26b-30)

In 13:26a-30, the word "morsel" (ψωμίον) is mentioned four times (13:26bis, 27, 30). This word therefore is an important key to the interpretation of this passage.

Given the insights and discussions above, it would be unreasonable to say that the morsel here is some sort of a "magical thing" with which "Satan entered the heart of Judas" in order to show that Fourth Evangelist did not desire Jesus to be betrayed, to become a deceived sacrifice.[45] The discussions above demonstrate that the evangelist does not exclude a freely-willed betrayal by Judas in the narrative of Jesus's mission of fulfilling the will of the Father. The morsel did not take away the freedom of Judas, as if Judas was a puppet in the plan of salvation.[46]

The more reasonable argument would be that ψωμίον evokes notions of the Eucharist in the early community.[47] The giving of bread is a normative gesture of love in the community of disciples. One may therefore sense that Jesus hid the identity of Judas and avoided denouncing him in the presence

44 Leon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Evangile selon Jean*, 43
45 Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 111-15 and Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 482.
46 Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 454.
47 Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor*, 20.

of everyone. In doing this, he fulfills his mission, which is "not to judge but to save" (12:47; cf. 3:16-17).[48]

Furthermore, in dipping (βάψω, βάψας) the morsel, the Fourth Evangelist insinuates for the reader the idea of body soaked in blood. Jesus offered Judas his own body and blood, his own self.[49] Jesus continues to invite Judas to be one with him (6:56) and to have eternal life (6:54). In offering the dipped morsel, Jesus reaches out in love for Judas, his betrayer. In so doing, he reveals love-till-the-end (13:1), thereby also revealing God (1:18).[50] It was an effort of Jesus to recall Judas from his act of betrayal.[51]

At the same time, by Jesus' offer of dipped morsel to Judas, he maintains the host-commensal relationship with his "fake guest." In so doing, Jesus embodies, accomplishes, and consents to the scriptures (13:19, cf. Ps 41:10).[52]

Judas embodied irony *par excellence*! He used the occasion to turn good into evil.[53] He accepted the symbol of Jesus' offer of himself, but he received only the sop; Judas kept himself from the love-till-the-end, intimacy, abiding, solidarity, and reconciliation.[54] Instead, he succumbed to the desire of Satan (13:27) and chose to "go into the night" (13:30) where he now belongs.[55] He went on to hand over the body and blood, i.e. the person, of Jesus to those who intend to kill his master. He took the "morsel" but chose to bring it to death.[56]

48 Baretto and Mateos, *El Evangelio de Juan*, 608-609.
49 Ibid.
50 Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor*, 23.
51 Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 454.
52 Leon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Evangile selon Jean*, 46-47.
53 Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 454.
54 Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 475.
55 Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1978), 449.
56 Baretto and Mateos, *El Evangelio de Juan*, 609.

Now, the reader comes to a definitive picture of Judas: he is not anymore a disciple, but the one to hand over—a betrayer. "Night," here, does not only serve as a time indication. Judas himself embodied the night;[57] he is the darkness where the evildoers hide (3:20).

Jesus Understanding the Situation (13:31-32)

Seeing Judas off to finally carry out the plans of Satan, Jesus knew that it was also time for him to accomplish the designs of his Father. Thus, Jesus says:

> Now is the Son of man glorified,
> and in him God is glorified;
> if God is glorified in him,
> God will also glorify him in himself,
> and glorify him at once.
> (John 13:31-32 RSV)

Indeed, the "hour" of the full revelation of the glory of the Father, of love-till-the-end, is about to happen. Jesus will enter his Passion. What was symbolized in the washing of the feet will now be realized. Jesus knew it was time for him to say his farewell to those who are "his own." (13:31-17:26). Yet the good reader, who continues to be deeply immersed in the trepidation of Jesus, does not despair because one is assured that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (1:5).

Jesus, "Lamb of God"

It was Jesus himself who bade Judas off to "do quickly" what Judas "had to do" (13:27b). In the video mentioned

57 Arminjon, *Nous Voudrions Voir Jesus*, 45.

above, David seems to understand this passage as an order by Jesus for Judas to procure the lamb for the Feast. However, a reader who has gone through the entire drama of the Jesus-Judas relationship might highly doubt this interpretation.

Given the discussion above, it would seem more reasonable that the bidding, "what you are going to do, do quickly," was more of an "imploration than an order."[58] The traditional interpretations somehow coincide with this. For John Chrysostom, the bidding for Judas to act quickly seems to be neither an order nor a counsel but a reproach and a now-resigned desire for Judas' repentance that seems to say, "since you have decided to betray me, then do it quickly."[59] For Augustine, it denotes the participation of Christ in the act of being handed over in that while Judas, concerned with the details of the sale, delivered Christ to the Jews, Christ delivered himself being concerned with the work of redemption.[60] With this bidding, Jesus puts his fate in his hands. He holds by his own capacity the power to lay down his life. Neither Judas nor Satan, but Jesus and the Father, will bring about the final glorification.[61]

The time indication in 13:1-2 and the guesses of the disciples as to the purpose of Jesus for bidding Judas (13:29) provide an essential tension of data in the argumentation.

In the Synoptics, especially in the Gospel of Mark, it is clear that the "Last Supper" indeed happened during the Passover Feast (Mk 14:12-16; Mt 26:19; Lk 22:13). However, the time indication of 13:1-2 does not seem to agree with this. The meal during which the foot washing occurred could

58 Ibid.
59 John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Ioannem* 72:2 (PG 59:391); Behler. *Les Paroles d'Adieux*, 53.
60 Augustine of Hippo, *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractus* 62:4 (PL 35:1802-03); Behler, *Les Paroles d'Adieux*, 54.
61 Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 111-14.

not have been a Passover meal.[62] "Before the feast of the Passover" (13:1) means that the day is at the latest the night of 13th Nisan (already 14th Nisan), not the night of 14th Nisan (already 15th Nisan, when the lamb was slaughtered in the afternoon and then feasted upon at night). Moreover, there is no mention of the Passover meal; rather, it was simply an ordinary meal, and foot washing has no place in a Passover meal.[63] In other words, the traditional lamb is not yet needed during that particular meal.

The guesses of the disciples, in 13:29 do seem to support the theory that the "Last Supper" in the fourth Gospel was on Passover night. First, they intuited that Judas is being sent by Jesus to buy "what is needed for the Feast" (and David believes that Jesus actually intends this). Perhaps, the disciples thought that Judas was sent by Jesus to purchase the "food for the feast" because shops would close for Passover and Sabbath. But why shop at night, when there is a full day to do this the next day without violating Jewish customs? [64]

The disciples' second intuition was that Judas was off to give alms to the poor. This may also point to the Jewish custom of giving to the poor, especially during the feast of Passover. But then again, why on Passover night, when there is a full day to do this the next day, and many other days of the year? [65]

At any rate, it seems that by inserting 13:29, the Fourth Evangelist merely intends to highlight the ignorance of the disciples as against the knowledge of Jesus and of the reader. Jesus is clearly aware of the betrayal that is to happen, and the reader knows about the absence of concern in Judas for the

62 Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 460-61.
63 Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 461-62.
64 Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 576
65 Ibid., 556

poor (12:6) or for the communal meal, as well as his avarice and his thievery.[66] Therefore, the guesses of the disciples only serves to affirm their cluelessness about the real reasons for Judas' departure. Indeed, they did not know at all what was going on, and what was to unfold (13:28).

It is very unlikely that David follows Loisy and Jeremias in being determined to squeeze the Synoptic timing of the "Last Supper" into that of the Fourth Gospel. However, even if the calendric debate remains inconclusive[67], the hypothesis of harmonization is most likely untenable. Nevertheless, the close linkage that the Fourth Evangelist has given between the "hour" and the Passover of the Jews, leaves the reader helpless, except to surmise that the identity of Jesus has something to do about some Passover icon. Undeniably, the supper had some Passover characteristics.

And yes, early on in the Gospel, the reader gets a sense of this (and this might be the clearest support for the interpretation of David). Before even reaching any mention of "the hour," the "betrayer," the "devil," the "Passover of the Jews," the reader has already met John giving an unequivocal witness about Jesus. Having informed the reader that John is from God (1:6) and his witness is believable (1:7) and that he is about the light and the truth (1:8-9)[68], the Fourth Evangelist then makes the reader believe that Jesus was indeed the "Lamb of God" (1:29, 36). The reader then knows that the witness of John is fulfilled when the gospel reaches the actual Passion Narrative, where the reader finds Jesus condemned to death at noon on the eve of Passover (19:14), which is the same time that the paschal lambs are prepared for the Passover meal.[69]

66 John Meier, *A Marginal Jew.* vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 209.
67 Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 475.
68 Meier, *A Marginal Jew,* 21-22.
69 Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 556

But did Jesus come to know this only when Judas did not return to the meal (as David supposes)? The discussions above have shown that the Fourth Evangelist intended to make the reader's awareness about "the hour," "the betrayer," and the betrayal gradually approximate to what Jesus knows as the narrative progresses. Certainly, Jesus, the true light (1:5-9), knew more than what the reader knew. Jesus is both knowledgeable predicter and conscientious fulfiller of his own fate.[70] Thus, Jesus must have known himself as the "lamb of God" at the moment (or even before) the reader knew about this upon encountering the witness of John, and not later in 13:29.

The traditional interpretations hold water. Jesus has already known himself as the "Lamb of God" and in 13:29, Jesus instructed Judas to do as the devil designed—to hand his master over—not to purchase the paschal lamb, as the disciples mistook it to be.

Conclusion: Theological-Pastoral Implications

This close reading of John 13:21-32, and its related texts, did shed some light in the murky issues on the identity and role of Judas. Nevertheless, this issue remains cloudy to this day[71] (especially with the now hypermedia-popularized appearance of some gnostic Gospel).

Yet, more than any elucidation on the character of Judas, this close reading of the text shall have made a more concrete

70 Adele Reinhartz, "Jesus as Prophet: Predictive Prolepses in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (1989): 3-16.

71 Alice Camille, "Fall Guy: Judas might seem like the quintessential enemy, but was he misunderstood?" *US Catholic* 73/3 (March 2008): 39-41. Cf. also Curti, Elena. "Judas the Obscure: An Interview with Fr Francis Moloney and Jeffrey Archer," *Tablet* (March 2007): 8-9.

Christology and understanding of the Paschal mystery from the perspective of the Fourth Gospel. The reader discovers a Jesus who, in the face of imminent betrayal, loved his own till the end (13:1), and in so doing made his Father known (1:18).

The ancient hymn "Agnus Dei" has long held an important place in the liturgy of the Church. In the current liturgy, it is sung to accompany the gesture of the *fractio*, i.e. the ritual breaking of the consecrated bread. More often than not, this part of the liturgy is neglected and obscured by noisy and rowdy exchanges of signs of peace (especially in the Philippine context). Most mass-goers (and chances are, even the priest) are incognizant of the sacramental re-presentation unfolding right before them at the *fractio* and the *Agnus Dei*.

However, one who has gone through a close reading of the Fourth Gospel shall have a fuller, more active, and more conscious participation in the liturgy. When the minister says, "This is the Lamb of God…" while raising the broken bread above the chalice, the well-read Mass-celebrators shall have assumed Johannine readership and will feel evocations of the "hour," the tragic betrayal by an intimate friend of the Lord, the glorification of the Father through "love-till-the-end" on the cross. The gesture and the hymn are re-presentations of the great drama (and glorious scandal) found in John chapters 13-19. One shall have felt both the "Beloved" and the "Betrayer" revolt in tension within and cannot help but resonate with the words "happy are we, who are invited to partake" and "Lord, I am not worthy…"

BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY

SYNTHESIS PAPERS

Revisiting the Admission of Persons in Polygamous Marriages into the Church from a Renewed Understanding of Faith, Sin, and Salvation

Mokam Saa, S.X.

> God created humankind in his image,
> in the image of God he created them;
> male and female he created them.
> God blessed them, and God said to them,
> Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth
> (Gen.1:27-28).

The Church's notion of the sacrament of marriage is based on the divine mandate. However, actual marriage practices and customs can vary across cultures, as they differ according to social norms and beliefs. At times, the marriage bond can be restricted to monogamous relations, or its definition can be so broad as to include polygamy, polygyny, or even polyandry.

Many African cultures have a long history of diverse marriage practices and customs. To date, some countries in Africa have legalized monogamy and polygamy, while others only recognize monogamous marital relationships. In my home country, Cameroun, the legislation allows a couple to choose between polygamy or monogamy.

Given this context, Africa's re-introduction to the Christian faith brings with it serious theological and pastoral

concerns concerning the admission of persons in polygamous relationships into the Church. Generally, there has been a set of specific requirements for individuals who want to be baptized. One of those prerequisites is the obligation to commit oneself to only one partner and live in a monogamous relationship. Consequently, other forms of union with more than one companion are considered to be against the Church's teaching.

However, suppose all prospective converts in traditionally polygamous societies would be required to renounce polygamy to become a Christian. What would become of those who, for one reason or another, cannot break away from such relationships without causing serious pain and harm to the other parties? Can we then ask: is there any possibility of an exception in the Church's position? Are there some limiting cases that can challenge such a rule? How can we approach such specific cases from a theological and pastoral standpoint?

A Case Study from Cameroun

To give a concrete picture of such a situation, we present here the case of a man who is prevented from becoming a Christian by his polygamous marital situation.

Coming from a polygamous family, 68-year-old Mr. Lucas Saa is the Chief of a village in the western part of Cameroun. At the age of twenty-five, Mr. Saa married his first wife, Moche Marie Brigitte. Six years later, his younger brother died unexpectedly, leaving behind a widow with two children. To comply with the family and his culture's demands, Mr. Saa had to take his deceased brother's widow as his second wife and her children as his own. For this, he had to sacrifice his own interest and work harder to take care of his two wives

and their children. Eventually, the second wife would bear him three more children, but this was far from the end. A few years later, his father passed away, and he was chosen to be his successor: the family heir. Consequently, he became the village chief and received another wife as a gift according to their custom. Thus, he now has three wives and sixteen children and enjoys a happy and harmonious family relationship.

Three years ago, before I left my country to go back to the Philippines, he shared his desire to become a Christian. He was discouraged when I told him that if he wants to become a Christian, he should divorce two of his wives and remain with only one. He explained to me that he ended up in this situation because of the tradition and that it is now somehow too late to change this situation for a good reason. First, to send away his brother's widow would be perceived by the whole village as an inhumane act. Sending away a widow would be leaving her and her children without all the social protections that marital status would provide them. Furthermore, taking care of the third wife would make him appear as a responsible Chief. On the other hand, sending her away because of his newfound faith in Christ will be potentially detrimental to Christianity in the village because people will think that Christianity leads to irresponsibility. This might even lead to his revocation as the village Chief by the tribe, thus imposing on him the shameful fate of disgrace. Last but not least, the innocent children will suffer most from the consequences of such a decision, ending up deprived of enjoying the loving presence of both parents. Thus, he asked: "who is this God who divides people instead of uniting them?"

Polygamy in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Church's Tradition

Mr. Saa's polygamous situation is neither new nor unique. We see the presence of polygamy in both Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. The first instance of polygamy in the Bible is in the book of Genesis (Gen 4: 23) with Lemec, son of Cain. Another account of polygamy is found in the same book with Esau who married two pagan women (Gen 26: 34). The father of the prophet Samuel was also polygamous (1 Sam 1: 1-7). Even David, who was called by the Lord himself as his faithful servant, had many wives. This practice is also mentioned in Deuteronomy, where God himself speaks about polygamy without condemning it (Dn 21, 15). Undoubtedly, the polygamy of patriarchs and kings is practiced unquestionably in the Old Testament.[1]

In the New Testament, Jesus never mentions the word polygamy in his preaching. When he speaks about marriage, he refers to the first purpose of marriage, which is to make the husband and wife one flesh, although he also appears to be stricter than Moses in his prohibition of divorce. Meanwhile, Paul reserves some functions in the Church such as those of deacons and bishops to those who have only one wife, as we see in his first letter to Timothy (1 Tim 3: 2, 12) and letter to Titus (1: 6). This can imply that polygamous unions were accepted to some extent within early Christian communities.

Nonetheless, after the Council of Nicea, the Church would begin to exclude polygamous couples from the Church[2] and

1 CBCP-ECCE, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Definitive Edition Based on the Latin *Editio Typica* (Manila: ECCCE and Word & Life Publications, 1994), no. 610. Henceforth referred to as *CCC*.

2 Christian Classics Ethereal Library, "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," http://www.tertullian.org/fathers2/NPNF2-08/Npnf2-08-206.htm (accessed January 2, 2018).

this negative position towards polygamy has more or less been maintained since then. The Fathers of the Church also had a very negative view of polygamy. Justin[3] and Tertullian[4] were among the first to criticize those who were using the matrimonial life of Jacob in the Bible as a precedent to justify their polygamous state.

The Church teaches the unity and indissolubility of marriage and claims that from the beginning man and woman were made to become one flesh (Gen 2: 24). In fact, "The unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity which must be accorded to man and wife in mutual and unreserved affection"[5]. Vatican II declared that the Church is against polygamy because this is contrary to God's plan of unity, which is manifested in "the equal personal dignity of husband and wife, a dignity acknowledged by mutual and total love."[6] In the same vein, John Paul II reaffirmed this position of the Church by saying that polygamy is against God's plan from the beginning, since "it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive."[7]

3 Christian Classics Ethereal Library, "The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeaus, Ante-Nicene Fathers," http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/001/0010595.htm, (accessed January 2, 2018).

4 Philip Schaff, "Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second," http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iii.v.i.ii.html, (accessed January 2, 2018)

5 *CCC*, no. 1645.

6 GS 49 Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the World (Gaudium et Spes),* December 7, 1965, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (acessed August 18, 2020), no. 49. Henceforth referred to as *GS*.

7 John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Whole World (Familiaris Consortio)*, November 22, 1981, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/

However, it is worth noting that while the Church's opposition to polygamy may appear to be unequivocal, there have been instances when the Church addressed specific issues related to polygamy in a practical, case-to-case manner. For example, the regional council of Catholic Franconia, with the approval of the archbishops of Bamberg and Würzburg, decided on the 14th February 1650 to permit laypeople to take two wives but only within the next ten years. This position was justified by the need at that time to replace the male population destroyed by war, plague and famine.[8]

The topic of polygamy was more recently discussed in the 1980 Synod of Bishops, which focused on the family. In their interventions, each bishop addressed polygamy according to the context of his specific apostolic region. In general, all of them maintained the current stand by rejecting polygamy despite the difficulties encountered. Cardinal Arinze, for instance, insisted on the Christian ideal of marriage as involving one man and woman, thereby excluding polygamy in all its forms.[9]

Nevertheless, the Church is conscious that there are persons with a sincere desire to live as Christians who find themselves in a prior polygamous situation. At the same time, it maintains that those who have been practicing polygamy before their conversion should be gradually led to accepting the ideals of Christian marriage. Thus, a strict demand of monogamy remains a condition for admission into the Church, with due consideration in charity and justice to all

hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (accessed August 18, 2020), no. 19. Henceforth referred to as *FC*.

8 Cairncross John, After Polygamy was made sin: The Social History of Christian Polygamy (London: Routledge, 1974), 74.

9 Francis Arinze, "Polygamy and Childlessness," African Ecclesial Review (Feb-Apr 1981): 97.

polygamous families.[10] The same position has been maintained by the conference of bishops in Cameroon.[11]

We shall now attempt to take another look into this situation by revisiting our understanding of faith, sin, and salvation.

Revelation and the Notion of "Implicit Faith"

Revelation is the process by which something that has been hidden is revealed.[12] From a theological perspective, it denotes God's self-communication to the human race and the people God has created. Since divine self-communication is universal, a revelation in its primary and original sense is universal: it has a history that coincides with the whole history of humanity.[13] Thus, divine self-communication is meant not only for a specific category of people but for everyone, regardless of one's origins. By creating all humans in his own image and likeness out of love, God initiates this self-disclosure process to each and every human person.

Hence, although the full and authentic interpretation of revelation is found in Christianity, the possibility of responding to God's self-revelation is not confined within the Christian religion. While those who have not only heard but have also accepted Christian revelation are said to have the divinely imparted disposition of "explicit faith," a person who is yet unable to embrace Christian doctrines and its true interpretation of revelation but has been open to God's self-communication may be living an "implicit faith," even if

10 Ibid., 98.
11 Card Christian Tumi, "La polygamie, l'enfer dans nos familles," in Guide Pastoral Pour le Mariage Catholique Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun (Presses de L'UCAC, Yaoundé , 2000), 24.
12 Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason (London: SCMP, 1947), 22
13 Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 270.

one is unaware of its implications, As Rahner says, a person living in a state of grace and justification, but has not yet come in contact with the explicit preaching of the Gospel can be said to live an implicit Christianity.[14]

A person's faith is one's response to God's self-revelation. Out of love for every creature, God reveals himself to everyone and gives us an innate openness to his grace that allows us to respond in love to this self-communication, even if our response is always imperfect and remains incomplete. In the above case study, although Mr. Saa found himself prevented from joining the Church owing to his polygamous situation, his desire to convert to Christianity can be counted as a real sign that he is already open to some extent to God's revelation.

Original Sin Present in the Structure

Original sin can be defined as "the state in which we are born as members of the human race. We are thus situated in a sinful history that affects our capacity to love God above all, to become our true full selves, and achieve our destiny."[15] It is called 'original' as it dates from the origins of the human race as something we are born into.[16] This term might be summarized as the general sinfulness of the world that goes back to our human origins, which we inherit by being born into this sinful world and in turn, gives rise to our human weakness.[17]

In this way, sin can become institutionalized and systematized in the structures, laws, and customs of a society.[18] This

14 Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian,'" in *Theological Investigations*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 394.

15 ECCE-CBCP, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Makati, Philippines: Word and Life Publications, 2005), no. 383.

16 Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: the challenge of the Gospel* (London: Mambo Press, 1988), 90.

17 Ibid.

18 Nolan, *God In South Africa*, 43.

is called structural sin, which is is slightly but significantly different from social sin. Structural sin is the objectification of sin whereby it becomes embodied in social structures and cultural entities. Such objectification is thereby empowered to be self-perpetuating, becoming a kind of cultural domain where sin is fostered and the virtue inhibited.[19]

The case, as mentioned above of Cameroonian polygamous cultural practice, can be understood as a vivid example of original sin becoming embodied as a social structure in which certain deviance has been widely practiced to the point of being institutionalized. Thus, the personal sin in which the polygamous person finds himself or herself is also the result of the structure into which he or she has been born.

In the specific case of Mr. Saa, his experience can be perceived as that of a person who has inherited a system. It was present even before his birth, and he cannot escape being born into it. Thus, the system began to affect his agency since his childhood—being himself born from a polygamous family. As he was growing up, the structure influenced the formation of his conscience, leading him to normalize the status quo since the constitution of his nation even recognizes polygamy. He was socially molded by it. In this way, original sin has been mediated to him through the social structure and existing cultural norms.

19 John Paul II, *On the Twentieth Anniversary of Populorum Progressio (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis),* December 30, 1987, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html (accessed August 18, 2020), no. 36. Henceforth referred to as *SRS.*

The Church and the Salvation of Non-Christians

Following Jesus' mandate, the Church has been entrusted with the mission to spread God's love and mercy worldwide. Thus, the Church does not bring new teaching different from the one brought by Jesus himself. Therefore, the Church's mission is to make the kingdom of God accessible to everyone and everywhere. In fulfilling her mission, the Church is called to announce and denounce whatever is a hindrance to building God's kingdom.

Consequently, one of her primary tasks is the humanization of all people, to build a just society where there is neither man nor woman since all are one in Christ (Gal 3: 28). With respect to polygamy, the Church sees it as a threat to human dignity because the unitive aspect of marriage is put at stake.[20] The Church therefore defends the unity and indissolubility of marriage whereby one man is given to only one woman and the two of them become one flesh with the same right and dignity.[21]

Nevertheless, for a pastoral and theological approach, it is worth noting that while full communion with the Church is a necessary step in Christian conversion, God's plan of salvation goes beyond the Church. While the Church teaches that Christ's salvation is mediated through her, she acknowledges some exceptions for those who, through no fault of their own, find themselves unable to embrace Christianity.[22]

In light of this, it can be argued that a person who is willing to convert to Christianity but is unable to join the Church owing to significant cultural constraints such as one's

20 *FC*, no. 19
21 Ibid.
22 *CCC*, nos. 846-847.

matrimonial state, may still be saved on account of implicit faith in the form of a good disposition manifested in acts of love, peace, and unity in one's family[23] which are otherwise impossible without the grace of God. Following Yves Congar, we can argue that Mr. Saa and those in a similar situation can be saved by virtue of one's intention, which is ordained to God and his plan of salvation in a very real even if unconscious way, under the form of dedication to an absolute value as it can be known and recognized by one's conscience.[24]

Conclusion

This synthesis paper aimed to revisit the Church's position on persons in polygamous marital situations who want to become Catholics and propose a pastoral and theological approach to accompanying them. Although the Church's position is clearly against polygamy and requires prospective converts to embrace monogamy before baptism, the case presented here showed that there could be reasonable motives that make it genuinely difficult for a prospective convert to separate from the other spouses in certain situations.

In the same way, the bishops in Germany allowed polygamy in their country due to the peculiar need that they faced at that particular historical period. In comparison, the church in Africa in general and Cameroon, in particular, could likewise be more open to new ways of addressing polygamy on a case to case basis in the pastoral accompaniment of people

23 Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium),* November 21, 1964, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed August 18, 2020), no. 16. Henceforth referred to as *LG.*

24 Andrew Meszaros, "Yves Congar and the Salvation Of Non-Christians," *Louvain Studie*s 37 (2013): 204.

in traditionally polygamous societies. As the Church today allows debate regarding the possibility of ordaining married men to the priesthood, finding new ways to address these pastoral concerns for persons in polygamous relationships who want to become Catholics remains a frontier pregnant with opportunity. It would certainly send out a joyful message if the Church began to recognize reasonable exceptions in particular cases for such persons and open the possibility for their admission to the fold.

Catholicism is Communication

Angelo Paolo O. Asprer, S.S.P.

Crisis in Communication

With the advent of the Great Information and Communication Technology Revolution, the world has become larger—and smaller. With just a push of a button, people can have fast, cheap, and global access to information, connectivity, entertainment, education, commerce, etc. Many experts say that the Experience Age has already begun. Users do not only create, transmit, or store data to and from the internet, but can modify, actively engage with, and share their life-in-the-moment and virtual journey. Thanks to human genius and God's providence, life has become easier, more convenient, and enjoyable.

Communication is a vital component in God's economy of salvation. Verbal or non-verbal, written, or visual, personal, or mediated communication can serve as privileged means and milieu of divine-human encounter. Language is known as the most sophisticated form or technique of communication. Ideas or thought processes and interactions inevitably occur within the web of language.[1] The whole perceivable world, says Hugh of St. Victor, is like a book written by God's finger.

However, despite its tremendous benefits and potencies, language is a multifaceted human construct and phenomenon. Hence, it is fraught with ambiguities and limitations:

1 David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 43.

"It is not simply that we are limited in our capacity to use language; language itself is limited."[2] God (or talk of God) is and will always fall short of who God is since, in the words of St. Anselm, He is "a being than which no greater can be conceived." This formidable truth is evident in our efforts and struggles to grasp and articulate the infinite reality of God and the innumerable wonders in his creation and the tremendous scope and depth of our human experiences.

Consequently, with this difficulty in understanding life's realities and mysteries, and more crucially, to communicate and sincerely, meaningfully and responsibly, various conflicts arise—personal, social, cultural, political, religious, etc. When left unresolved, these eventually lead to the breakdown of friendships and alliances, collapse of marital relations and family life, scandals and schisms in communities of faith, violence, aggression, and deep-seated distrust among religions and nations. Not only do we encounter the disparaging effects of turmoil or deadlock in our relationships. Many times we feel this chasm within our self, when our mind and heart, our best intentions and conduct, our most cherished hopes and reality contradict (cf. Rom 7:15; 17-19).

Moreover, we encounter a "crossroads" in the "new culture" of communication in which we inescapably live. In his 2008 World Communications Day Message, Benedict XVI describes the "new culture" as no longer determined by eternal values. It promotes economic materialism and ethical relativism—the "true scourges of our time."

2 Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 28.

These, then, contribute to the gradual disintegration of the Gospel and fundamental human values. Hence, while the Church considers social communication and mass media as marvelous human discoveries and divinely ordained gifts,[3] they are rich in potential for the propagation of faith[4] and integral human development.[5] They also remain a special field of mission that needs to be evangelized, as stressed by John Paul II in his Mission Encyclical.[6]

With all these communication challenges that lurk within, among, and outside us, we ask: is it possible to achieve true and humanizing communication? How can we overcome the widespread misunderstanding and miscommunication and heal this divisive "Babel phenomenon" (cf. Gen 11) in our families, communities, and societies?

Perhaps, a discerning glance at the historical and salvific "communications journey" of humanity, which this paper intends to present, may lead its readers:

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3 Vatican II, *Decree on the Media of Social Communications (Inter Mirifica),* December 4, 1963, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 1.Henceforth referred to as *IM.*

4 Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation In Proclaiming the Gospel (Evangelii Nuntiandi),* December 8, 1975, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html (accessed August 21, 2020), nos. 45-46. Henceforth referred to as *EN.*

5 Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Pastoral Instruction on Social Communciations (Aetatis Novae),* February 22, 1992, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html(accessed August 21, 2020), nos. 7-11. Henceforth referred to as *AN.*

6 John Paull II, *On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate (Redemptoris Missio),* December 7, 1990, Vatican Archive, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 37. Henceforth referred to as *RM.*

1. To reflect on one's message, motives, methods, and means of communication, especially in proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God
2. To rediscover divine purpose and destiny, dignity and beauty in authentic human communication as revealed by Jesus Christ
3. To rekindle one's faith commitment through charity both in word and witness, and one's hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who shall bring all our communication capacities—even constraints—to fulfilment.

A Sacred Science and Art

Communication (from Latin *communicare*, which means "to share," "to transmit," "to make common") is the essence of God and human existence. Salvation history presents God, who profoundly, perceptibly, and persistently shares his very being and communicates his gracious will so that human beings may attain a meaningful and fuller life. Bearing albeit imperfectly this trace-mark of God's free and voluntary initiative of self-disclosure, our thoughts, words, and actions, as well as the manifold events of our life both individual and communal, banal and extraordinary, tragic and triumphant, speak of our insatiable need—and capacity—for authentic self-expression and self-actualization, intimacy with others, and lasting faith and friendship with God.

Communication is not simply a systematic body of knowledge dealing with facts and truths, processes, principles, and paradigms. Nor is it merely a creative engagement and expression of human skill or imagination. Nor is it solely concerned with words, images, sounds, gestures, signs, codes, symbols,

rituals, music, arts, theater, popular culture, advertising, and public relations. Nor does it deal with only the means of information transmission (e.g., print, broadcast, internet or social media, etc.), or with the contemporary milieu of communication with its diverse opportunities and challenges. We widely employ its techniques and technologies to convey ideas, influences, feelings, experiences, and to exchange goods and services.

Communication, above all, is "the giving of self in love".[7] It is a sacred gift and a human goal to strive for. It is growing in a genuine relationship with God, with fellow human beings, the cosmos, and creation. It is the mutual sharing of life's meaning, the establishment of fellowship within and among communities of faith, and peoples of different beliefs or traditions yet unified by a commitment to the continuing realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. Communication is presence, witness, mission, and an inevitable pathway to communion. It is "at the heart of what the Church is all about."[8]

Consequently, for Christian theology and communication to be truly faithful to its Catholicity, it needs to discern deeply the prevailing signs and spirit of the times, and dialogue ingeniously and effectively with peoples, cultures, and religions. Catholic Christianity ought to live up to its most profound purpose—love or charity—after God's *kenosis* for all, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and proclaimed, celebrated, and witnessed by the Church today, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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7 Vatican II, *Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communications (Communio et Progressio),* May 23, 1971, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_23051971_communio_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 11. Henceforth referred to as *CP.*

8 Avery Dulles, "The Church is Communications" in *Catholic Mind* 69/1256 (Oct 1971): 7.

Cradle of Genuine Personal Communication

All communication begins and finds fulfillment in the Trinity, a communion of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 13:13) completely one with each other, inseparable in their divine substance and their activity.[9] This inner life of God or *agape* among the three divine Persons comes to us as an incessant, intense, and inexhaustible communication (cf. Mt 11:27; Jn 10:30; Jn 10:38; Jn 12:49-50; Jn 14:26; Jn 15:26). *Agape* is a mystery fully revealed in the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery of the Son of God and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The Father "speaks" the Son and generates him, and intimates to him all that he is and he has; the Son "names" the Father ("Abba").[10] The Son offers himself entirely to the Father in obedience, and to humanity—even to his executioners—in faithful love, that they may rightly be called "children of God" (1 Jn 3:1) and thus become "heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ" (Rom 8:17). The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the living bond between the Father and the Son, and the personal fruit of the interchange between the Father who utters and his living Word. The Spirit "breaks open" and makes present the mystery of divine communication to the world through the Church, and at the same time unites the world to the Son and through him to the Father. [11] Consequently, we find in the Trinity the supreme act of free, personal, reciprocal, dialogical, self-effusive, and self-emptying communication.

9 CBCP-ECCE, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Definitive Edition Based on the Latin *Editio Typica* (Manila: ECCCE and Word & Life Publications, 1994), 267. Henceforth referred to as *CCC*.

10 Carlo Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World* (Quezon City: Claretians Publications, 1996), 30.

11 Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World*, 30.

God's Primordial Act of Self-Communication

The divine and dynamic circle of Love does not remain closed in itself. Trinitarian *circumincessio* leads to *communio*. This inner fellowship overflows and constantly permeates creation, most especially in human beings, who bear no less than their Creator's image and likeness (cf. Gn 1:26; Ps 139:13-14). Human beings are called to dialogue with God and be part of eternal friendship and communion (cf. Jn 6:40; Jn 15:15).

God's revelation in history, though symbolic—an event or encounter both luminous and enigmatic, a mystery beyond human words, wisdom, and worlds—is nonetheless a real communication. God's communication is not merely functional, in which God transmits information about himself. Instead, divine self-manifestation is deeply and wholly *personal.* God communicates himself in word and deed[12], privately and publicly[13], through living signs and symbols (e.g., things such as rainbow, manna, burning bush, and people such as community, strangers, "anawim") and wondrous events (e.g., creation, exodus, theophanies).

God's self-disclosure is also *progressive*. God is the one who initiates the process and respects the freedom and maturity of the recipients (e.g., patriarchs, prophets, religious and political leaders). His plan of salvation finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 1:1-2), "the Father's one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word"[14], the "image of the invisible God" (Col

12 Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum),* November 18, 1965, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 2. Henceforth referred to as *DV.*

13 CCC, *nos.* 66-67.

14 *CCC,* no. 65.

1:15) who "fully reveals to man to himself and brings to light his most high calling."[15]

Moreover, God's self-communication is *purposive*. Salvation history draws God and human beings together to a point where there is unity in the divine life (cf. Jn 10:10). However, divine communication does not force or control but invites and bestows "a new spirit and a new heart" (Ez 36:26). Hence, it confers a renewed consciousness and communicative power to its recipients.

Roots of Incommunicability

Nonetheless, God's gift of communication can always be refused and even abused. This happened in our first parents who raised themselves up against God and sought to attain their goals apart from God.[16] Adam and Eve's free and conscious turning away from God was initially prompted by allowing trust in the sincerity of God—manifested in the entire created reality, and in bestowing human freedom and the capacity to exercise this freedom to the fullest—to die in their hearts (cf. CCC 397). Tempted by the serpent, they feared that God was not dealing with them gratuitously and must have a hidden vested interest in cautioning them not to eat the fruit in the middle of the garden (cf. Gen 3:1).[17] Overpowered by their doubt and self-sufficiency, they lost their original closeness to God. Thus, inner turmoil, appetite, and domination, mutual reproach, and cruelty defined their relationships,

15 Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes),* December 7, 1965, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 22. Henceforth referred to as *GS.*

16 *CCC,* no. 415.

17 Martini, Communicating Christ to the World, 25.

and eventually, despair and death entered human history (cf. CCC 399-401).

This proclivity, attitude, and worse, this cycle or "culture" of mistrust/distrust continue to pervade human communication. Many are wounded by it and continue to suffer greatly. Everyone needs healing and recovery of integrity, a special gift that can only come from God's Word and Spirit.

Climax of Divine-Human Communication

Despite human beings' alienation from God because of the Fall, God's steadfast communication never ends. Instead, it stretches, overflows, and deepens all the more; "for the Son of God … was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has been in him (cf. 2 Cor 1:19-20; Rom 5:20). It even pleads, like a persistent lover (cf. Hos). This gracious act of God builds on and permeates human beings' communicative nature.

God's covenant with his people seals a new bond between God and human beings. Israel becomes God's firstborn, called to a particular mission as a "priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). Through the covenant with Israel, God prepares human beings, now bestowed with a renewed *imago Dei*, for the coming of his Son, in whom he will establish his covenant forever.[18]

The entire Christ-event—Incarnation, proclamation of the Kingdom of God, public ministry, passion, death, and Resurrection—stands in history as the apex of God's communicative presence to human beings and human beings' faith-filled response. As Mediator and Message *par excellence* of the Father, Jesus Christ heals, transforms, and elevates the

18 *CCC,* no. 73.

communication between God and human beings, interrupted and broken by sin, and lays the foundation of communion among human beings.[19]

Yet we may ask: how did Jesus manifest himself as the "Perfect Communicator"[20] when he appeared almost as a "failure" at the end of his earthly life? His communication was often puzzling, ambiguous, and probing. Many of his followers, even his own family and relatives, misunderstood him (cf. Mk 3:21) except for a few who grasped his significance, such as the Roman centurion (cf. Mt 27:54). His core group of disciples whom he became intimate with forsook him and hid in terrible fear (cf. Jn 20:19) that they might suffer the same fate as their master. Condemned as a public criminal, Jesus subsequently endured agonizing communication in his "dark night of the soul" (cf. Lk 22:44; Heb 5:7) and more especially in his ignominious death.

While it may seem that Jesus had encountered failures or failed to some extent in communicating God's message clearly and effectively, we hold on to our principal belief that "he lived, died, and rose to communicate new life for all of us."[21] In his entire life, Jesus fulfilled the ultimate goal of communication, that is, "the giving of self in love".[22] He preached as God instructed him in the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 8:26-28). He sought to live a balanced life of deep prayer and contemplation (cf. Mt 14:23), and dedicated service to the peoples (cf. Mt 9:35). He

19 *CP,* no. 10 and John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter The Rapid Development (Il Rapido Sviluppo),* January 24, 2005, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 6. Henceforth referred to as *IRS.*

20 *CP,* no. 11.

21 Gerald O' Collins and Daniel Kendall, *Focus on Jesus: Essays in Christology and Soteriology* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1996), 66.

22 *CP,* no. 11.

related in genuine solidarity to a wide range of people (e.g., children, women, religious authorities, Gentiles, common people, outcasts, sinners), fed and dined with them, taught them the values of God's Kingdom and human virtues, and shared to them his intimate encounters and convictions about God. He gave them hope and ushered them to see meaning and fulfillment beyond life's stark realities. He used familiar objects to convey his message (e.g., bread, water, light, seed, vine) and adjusted his approaches according to his audience (e.g., Nicodemus vis-à-vis Samaritan woman). He spoke with authority (cf. Mt 7:29) such that the unclean were cleansed, the mute speak, the sick healed, the sinners forgiven, the dead raised, demons cast out, and storms stilled, etc. He empowered, consoled, challenged, confronted, and converted people to walk in truth, joy, freedom, justice, and peace.[23]

Consequently, in Jesus Christ, "the communication between God and humanity has thus reached its perfection."[24] In the Incarnation of the divine Logos, God has assumed and has spoken totally and unreservedly the language of humankind in all its quirks and baggage save for sin. In Jesus, humanity in turn rejoiced and responded totally and unreservedly to God's loving self-communication, notwithstanding its veils and shadows. In the Resurrection of Jesus, God has revealed the fullness and fecundity of his communicative and cosmic presence to humanity. As the Son of God and Lord of the universe and history, Jesus became obedient unto death. He embraced, conquered, and even transformed death—the nadir of non-communication—to its divine dimensions. Indeed, the silence of death on the Cross has led to the eternally beaming

23 Cornelis Bennema, "Was Jesus an Effective Communicator?" in *Engage* (Jan–Mar 2010): 19-25.
24 *IRS,* no. 5.

word of life in the Resurrection. Thus, humanity can hope to achieve this pledge and path to redemptive communication, which the Son now enjoys with the Father in the Spirit.

God's Community of Salvation

The self-communication of God with its fullest manifestation in the Paschal Mystery brought into being the Church: a community where life, meaning, and love are shared and communicated. At the root of this communion is love, which is not self-seeking (cf. 1 Cor 13:5) but leads the members to "hold everything in common" (Acts 4:32) and to grow in greater charity and service, especially to the poorest.[25] Moreover, this love is expressed in the service of the truth about God's universal pedagogy of salvation. The Church is the mother, teacher of the language, and guardian of the "deposit of faith," the community's wellspring of redemptive communication. Consequently, through communication, the Church is established as a community of faith that constitutes and perfects itself through communication.[26]

Communication in the Church is realized in the common sharing of members of the following perceptible elements: a collection of beliefs and oral proclamation (*kerygma*), cult (*leiturgia*), creed (*didache*), community (*koinonia*), and code of service (*diakonia*). Yet this fellowship in the Church point as well to a mysterious spiritual dimension. Founded in the Word of God, the Church is the "people of God," the "body of Christ," and "temple of the Holy Spirit." As vitally a gift of the

25 CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2004), nos. 122-36. Henceforth referred to as *PCPII.*

26 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 363.

Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47), the Church is a sacrament, a sign and instrument both of communion with God and of the unity of humankind.[27] God's grace in and through the Church, then, regenerates the pathways of divine-human communication disrupted by the Fall and restores the possibility of genuine relationships in the name of Jesus Christ. The Church fulfills this enormous task through the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who opens hearts and loosens tongues, and hence, enables believers to proclaim, "Jesus is Lord!" (1 Cor 12:3).

Consequently, the Church is a "vast communications network."[28] Her whole life—origin, nature, mission, and destiny—is a communications process. Communication is crucial to the personal and communitarian witness of faith and "evangelizing presence," to the proclamation of the Word in catechesis and apologetics; to the worship or liturgical life in prayer and contemplation and inculturation; to the works of charity or commitment to social development and human liberation; to the interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, in the effective utilization of mass media, and in the development of a communicative spirituality and the formation of communicators.[29] Moreover, Church communications concern relations between bishops and priests, the hierarchy and laity, the Magisterium and theologians, and the Church and the press. It involves matters on collegiality,

27 Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Lumen Gentium),* November 21, 1964, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 1. Henceforth referred to as *LG.* Cf. *CCC*, nos. 774-775

28 Dulles, "The Church is Communications," 7.

29 Avery Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (New York/Mahwah,NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 30-42 and James Kroeger, "To Live is to Evangelize: Recent Popes and Integral Evangelization,"

public opinion, authority-dissension, dogmatic and doctrinal enunciations, etc.

Of all the witnesses and communicators in God's community of salvation, Mary stands preeminently for the fundamental reason that God himself freely chose her from all eternity to be the Mother of his Son, Jesus Christ.[30] Hence, she is the Mother of the Church, as Jesus is the Head of the body, which is the Church.[31] Consequently, Mary enjoys this privileged intimacy with Jesus, who is the "Perfect Communicator." Bestowed with God's superabundant grace and the merits of Jesus her Son, Mary freely gave her consent with "the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5) to be the rightful spouse of the Holy Spirit. She submitted herself entirely as "handmaid" to the redemptive mystery and ministry of Jesus. Hence, she is a model of faith and charity, contemplative respect and receptivity to divine communication, of profound joy and praise to God's fulfilled promises. Mary's *Magnificat* is the "foundation of communicative praxis and anticipation."[32]

Another exemplar of effective Christian proclamation is Saint Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. As the "saint of universality," he employed dogma, morals, and worship in his Gospel of salvation, evangelized cultures, and founded faith communities. He was radically breaking religious-social-cultural barriers and extending the Church's missionary frontiers "to the ends of the earth." Always seized by the love of God (cf. 2 Cor 5:14), he labored to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples (cf. 1 Cor 9:16, 22-23) with all the efficacious means of social communication available at that time so that God

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Landas 16 (2002): 101-104.

30 *CCC,* nos. 492 and 508.

31 Ibid., nos. 963-964 and 973

32 Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World*, 46.

may be all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28). His life was directed and dedicated to Christ so much so that death was gain for him (cf. Phil 1:21): "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives on me" (Gal 2:20). He loved God in Christ and loved the mission of proclamation. Hence, he assiduously integrated sanctity and zeal in evangelizing and pastoral communication.

Living Channels of Divine-Human Communication

The Church is replete with various pathways to deepen our communication and sustain our communion with God and others. Contemplative silence—inspired by God's creative silence (cf. Eph 3:8-9; Rom 16:25) and illumined by Mary's faith-filled discernment (cf. Lk 2:19)—is to gaze upon with wonder and gratitude God's power and providence in creation, in the events of our lives, and in the "signs of the times." Silence brings about the purity of heart (cf. Mt 5:8) or clear conscience ready to heed God's lone voice that echoes in the depths of "one's most secret core and sanctuary."[33] Silence is well complemented by deep prayer. It is the capacity to confidently engage in a mature dialogue with the Father as his children.

Attentive listening, learning, and dialogue with the Scriptures—the living account of God's faithful self-manifestation in human history, and the Church's definitive self-portrait, hence, the "soul" of the Church's discernment, preaching and witnessing—enables us to know God's precepts and promises, and the ultimate purpose and meaning of human life. It provides wisdom and guidance for a loving and liberating communication with others and draws us into a

33 *GS,* no. 16.

prayerful union with Jesus, our Way, our Truth, and our Life, in his Church.[34]

The liturgy serves as a powerful medium of divine-human communication. Primarily, it is a celebration of God's ongoing salvific communication to the community of faith. In carrying out the priestly office of Jesus Christ, the Christian community praises and offers a sacrifice to God in the highest solemnity. God, then, sanctifies the faithful through signs perceptible to the senses.[35] The liturgy is a rich communicative event taking place at the heart of the believing and worshiping community through a variety of signs, symbols, sacred objects, invocations, gestures, music, architecture, sacred space, etc. The liturgy holds many functions and implications for building up the people of God, including religious-pastoral, social-cultural, moral-ethical, etc.

The heart and culmination of all liturgies is the Eucharist, the "most perfect and most intimate form of communion between God and humankind possible in this life."[36] While the Word of God, Eucharistic sacrifice, and fellowship are the core communicative elements. In the Eucharist, Jesus' "self-giving in love"[37] becomes an enduring gift to us and the whole world until the end of time. Thus, the Eucharist draws us into the very mission of Jesus, which is the communication of the divine gift of love.[38]

34 ECCE-CBCP, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: Word and Life Publications, 2005), no. 112. Henceforth referred to as *CFC*.

35 Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium),* December 4, 1963, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 7. Henceforth referred to as *SC*.

36 *CP,* no. 11.

37 Ibid.

38 "Eucharist as Communication," *FABC Papers* 124 (2007)

The other sacraments also make present and communicate God's grace: Baptism (new life in Christ), Confirmation (strength for Christian commitment), Penance and Reconciliation (forgiveness of sins), Anointing of the Sick (integral healing), Holy Orders (sanctification and service), and Matrimony (family life).

Authentic Christian communication also discerns the divine communication that occurs in the history and cultures of all people of goodwill[39] and in non-Christian religions.[40] As they possess the "seeds" or vestiges of the divine Logos as traces of truth and rays of redemption, they, too, are profound channels of God's grace and self-manifestation.

Consummation of Communication

Even though divine self-communication has already culminated in the Paschal Mystery, it is not yet fully realized here on earth. As God's pilgrim community, we are still on the way to our homeland, where "we will see God as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). Divine-human communication remains an ongoing and progressive event, and we fervently anticipate its eventual fulfillment in God's time. However, we are never alone as we oscillate between hope and anxiety. The saints and our departed loved ones who already enjoy the glory of God's fellowship confirm our hope in this beatific communion that awaits us. Their powerful intercession helps us endure our earthly pilgrimage and eventual purification.

39 *CFC*, no. 74

40 Vatican II, *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate),* October 28, 1965, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 2. Henceforth referred to as *NA*.

The incompleteness of communication here on earth comes from this "already-not yet" reality. Nevertheless, this should not be a cause for hopelessness but a call for deeper humility. In our relationships, there will always be a mysterious threshold that is impossible or even futile to traverse. In our intense desire for truth, clarity, and authenticity in communication, there will always be shadows and pitfalls.[41]

The imperfection of communication is a challenge for greater responsibility. Our ultimate vocation as Christians is to rise above the "muteness of faith" we at times exhibit to witness and proclaim "from the housetops" (cf. Mt 10:27) the truth of the Gospel—the truth that "works through charity"—in the world fragmented continuously by meaninglessness, skepticism, desperation, injustice, oppression, and death.

All these undertakings point to the "cross" of (mis)communication that we have to bear. As people of the Resurrection, we do not despair even though we only perceive life's confounding realities now as "in a mirror, dimly" and "only in part" (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), which at times is even made more blurry (or blinding) by the glitz and glory from present-day media. Jesus' faithful obedience to the Father and his loving embrace of the "cross" of (mis)communication grounds our hope and inspiration.

Catholicism is Communication

Communication is God's loving and personal self-manifestation to humanity. In his creative Silence, redeeming Word, and abiding Presence, God speaks to us, in us, through us, and among us, in manifold and mysterious ways, in our joys and hopes, and in our griefs and anxieties.[42] As men

41 Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World*, 36.
42 *GS*, no. 1

and women of this age, He is always calling us, individually and communally, to partake in the banquet and beatitude of everlasting communion.

Communication is not only a scientific and secular endeavor. It is also a *locus theologicus*, a crucial context and challenge for theological reflection, ecclesial proclamation, and praxis. A reflective examination on the integral, transcendental, and missionary purpose of communication is needed, then, more than merely focusing on its practical roles and gains.

A truly Catholic/Christian communication today consists not just in preaching Christ but in giving witness to him in word and deed; not only in communicating but in creating spaces, events, or networks for connection and communion. This implies discerning how to live well in the Digital Age, not just possessing or mastering the use of the latest gadgets or technologies.

Theology of the Streets

Valedictory Address for the Class of 2020

Robbie B. Paraan, S.J.

Fr. Enrico Eusebio, Jr., SJ, President of Loyola School of Theology, Fr. Rogel Anecito Abais, SJ, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Rev. Monsignor Sabino Vengco, our distinguished guest, LST administrators, professors, and staff, our formators and communities, family and friends, dear graduates of LST 2020—good afternoon!

I am supposed to deliver a 'valedictory speech,' but my mind has been on quarantine for much of the past months, so I had to Google what a 'valediction' actually meant: "an act of bidding farewell." On behalf of the smartest, holiest, and best batch in LST history to graduate on Zoom, goodbye! But doesn't that sound strange? It seems ages since we last met. Hasn't this quarantine forced us to say a silent, uneventful goodbye already? What is the use of a valediction—or graduation—when COVID-19 has unceremoniously stripped us of the 'goodbye' we've always wanted—in togas and formal garb, with our haircut and some fully made up, with lots of laughter, tears, and pictures? Don't get me wrong; we really appreciate how the administration has gone to great lengths just to celebrate this milestone. But as we mumble our goodbyes, it's painful for me as it must be for you, dear graduates, to admit that we won't be able to do it the way we usually do.

But LST has always taught us to go deeper, hasn't it? To not be satisfied with the superficial, the first naivete, the first notion. To go deeper, we can ask: what surprise might God be cooking up for us? What gift might he be excited to spring on us despite the darkness and uncertainty? Might the Spirit of truth be teaching us something more today, our last day in school? If we can't have the closure we so desire, a closure we have earned with the support of so many, perhaps this is not the end. Maybe, God is inviting us to consider that the task—our task—of doing theology continues even beyond our graduation.

At the height of the virus scare, when the masses were stopped, and the churches closed to the faithful, someone pointed out that on the streets, there was a Gospel in the making. There has been an eerie quiet on the streets for much of the past weeks. The streets have always suggested danger, crime, and the unexpected while our homes would stand for comfort, security, and warmth. But in the months of lockdown, there is an even greater risk of going out. Not only could you get mugged or hurt on the streets, but you could also actually die. How fitting that the Gospel is finding a home out there! In proclaiming the Kingdom of God, didn't Jesus place his entire life at risk? Dear graduates, there is a Gospel in the making on the streets, and it is out there that we are tasked to continue being students of the Spirit. Today we graduate, and we must say goodbye, but this is not the end. How then should we imagine this theology of the streets?

This theology of the streets must listen to those who call the streets their home. The pandemic of poverty will remain long after a vaccine; sadly, there will always be those excluded by society. LST has always taught us to place our theology in a context, and today, that context will be in the hearts of the

poor. Listen to them. Hear their stories. And take to heart their burning questions: Where is the Church? How can her doors be closed now when we need to be with her? Who are the People of God? How can we be part of them when we have always been left out? Is God still real? Or is he asleep? If he is there, why can't we see him? Why are so many still suffering? Why are we still dying? Has he abandoned us? Dear graduates, theology's task is not yet finished because the people of God out on the streets are still asking the same questions the people of God asked during their exile. These are the same questions Jesus' disciples had to confront; the same questions the early Church had to struggle to address. The questions persist, and so must our theology continue to offer meaningful, nourishing, saving responses, even if always provisionary. Throughout centuries, especially during dark times, not only do we ask about God's goodness and God's love, we question them!

Thus, not only must a theology out on the streets listen, but it must also speak and speak boldy! Mind you: boldy, but not heretically. To be bold is really to be creative with the Gospel handed on to us through the Church. Bishop Ambo David, at one Holy Spirit Mass, called LST the Loyola Preschool of Theology whose main goal is to "make us properly mature from grownups to children, [and] not the other way around" where theology means "learning the grammar and vocabulary of the Holy Spirit." Dear graduates, be bold and creative with your theology. Our professors have given us the basics of our faith, the grammar and vocabulary to now speak—or even sing!—in tongues. It is not enough to give a good account of and to speak responsibly about our faith. We must mine the gifts of the Spirit to inspire others to believe. The streets have become for us a frontier, a scary space seeking the Good

News. But it is also a brand-new locus theologicus, a place for doing playful and exciting, creative yet solid, inspired, and always relevant theology.

Out on the streets of the 'land of the free', there is something else happening. Thousands have gathered in mostly peaceful rallies to protest police brutality and demand equal rights. LST has tried to instill in us an Asian theology, but we cannot ignore that the division in America is ours as well. In the West, their cry resonates: "Black lives matter!" Here in Asia, or Africa, or the Pacific islands—indeed in every place created by God, we proclaim: "All lives matter!" Even the drug addicts? Yes. Even unrepentant abusers? Yes. Even corrupt police or politicians? Yes. All sinners? Yes. Jesus Christ, who came to heal and redeem all, is still the main actor in the Gospel of the streets. The theology we are tasked to carry on, dear graduates, is theology with Christ's love and mercy as its core and center, drawing all of creation, sinners and saints alike, back to God. This theology on the streets must heal divisions, build bridges, and regather His people. When Jesus prayed for us—yes, he prays for us!—he begged the Father that we may be one and be one in Him. Let not our theology only strive to save souls, but to gather into community flesh and blood human persons, together with all of creation, and bring them back to God's embrace.

Paalam, dear LST! Goodbye, dear graduates! I look forward to the day we meet each other out on the street so that we can exchange stories about the questions we have heard from God's people, which hopefully we would have accepted as our own. Perhaps by then, we would have learned a new language or two, any language that speaks straight to the hearts of the poor and the oppressed, inspiring them, and transforming them. I pray that day, and we can finally take off our masks, smile, embrace as proof of our friendship, and testify to our theology of the streets.

CONTRIBUTORS

A perpetually professed member of the Society of St. Paul Philippines-Macau Province, **Angelo Paolo O. Asprer** was ordained priest in 2014. He finished his Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology degree in 2013 and completed his Master of Arts in Theological Studies degree in 2018. He currently serves the Provincial Council and the Publishing/ Creative Sector of his congregation, and teaches at St. Paul Seminary Foundation.

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