# TINIG LOYOLA

A STUDENT PUBLICATION OF THE LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Volume 21 | S.Y. 2019-2020



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

"Nor can there be authentic dialogue unless we are capable
of opening our minds and hearts, in empathy
and sincere receptivity, to those with whom we speak."
-Pope Francis in his Apostolic Visit in Korea during the 6th Asian Youth Day.

It is, indeed, necessary to bring back dialogue in today's social space, a space that is powerfully drowned by technology's noise. But in order to bring it back in the public sphere one important thing should equally be recovered, that is, our "sensible" humanity. Most people today are constantly vying for attention. They want to be attended to—to be listened to—but are not willing to dialogue (or, perhaps, rob of their capacity to do so). They are too glued to their smartphones and gadgets that they become inept to liberate themselves from them. Consider it modern slavery. Under this condition, it seems that genuine dialogue is losing its battle. It might not even be a fad, a passé in our noisy and gadget-filled modern society. Yet it is never too late to sound the clarion for dialogue to reclaim its rightful place in the public sphere.

Mindful of the Church's emphasis on dialogue, Tinig Loyola's current issue carries the theme: The Church in Dialogue: Ecumenism, Gender Issues, and the Year of the Youth. It aims to support the recovery of dialogue's value on matters relating to ecumenism, gender issues, and the youth. Tinig Loyola is convinced that dialogue remains as one sure way towards genuine Christian unity. Likewise, it perceives it as the bastion of resolving gender issues. And, certainly, it is the better communication channel with today's youth. Needless to say, dialogue allows persons to pour their hearts out to an other. For, as Pope Francis had said, it presupposes openness of hearts and minds, empathy, and receptivity. And this is much needed even more today, a period where persons are slowly shutting themselves down inside their filter bubbles breeding the growth of indifference, self-isolation, and self-absorption. The tragic side of a misguided individualism, as it were. Fueled, of course, by the isolating and individualizing effects of modern technology—technology that maximizes individual worlds but minimizes communal worlds. Nevertheless, we are not here to point the blame on technology. It is in itself neutral and its negative or good effects are but dependent on our use.

As the Church moves to dialogue with today's world, it brings into awareness its own need to be open, empathetic, and receptive. Gone are the days when the Church arbitrarily imposes and says this or that, do this or that. Even if the Church retreats to such mode it will be to no avail. Competing voices are too many nowadays. At times, they are even louder than that of the Church. The Church, on the contrary, can barely cope up with them. Conceivably, it is indeed wise to be dialogical. For when the noise of the world is too much to bear and compete with, listening is the most prudent act: an essential aspect of entering into dialogue.

Tinig Loyola has been receptive to the Church's pastoral thrust. Hence, as the Church opens its doors for the celebration of ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and indigenous people, it also opens its pages for insights apropos to the matter. For this reason, Tinig Loyola in this year's issue has produced discerned essays and articles on interreligious dialogue and ecumenism penned, no less, by Tinig Loyola's discerning and dialogical writers. As part of valuing the recent celebration on the youth, on one hand, it also includes articles dealing with the youth. These are perspectives coming from the eyes of sagacious and sincerely concerned adults. It is equally Tinig Loyola's solidarity with the youth, an effort of dialoguing with them.

With today's clamor on gender issues highlighted by that unfortunate event of discrimination that went viral on social media, Tinig Loyola on this note has produced in this issue some noteworthy works. It has a survey of the gender issue and another article about a localized pastoral answer of the Church. These works do not aim at ending the gender issue debate, nonetheless, and do not claim of being exhaustive on the topic. They can perchance be rightly called discerned reflections on the issue. Besides, dialogue entails discernment—a very Ignatian spiritual contribution that has been indispensable especially today. Furthermore, this issue carries insights on the Amazon synod, on being a female lay theologian, the Student Council snippets, Theo-Hour highlights, and many more.

On this note, I am glad to give you, our dear readers and patrons, the 2019-2020 issue of Loyola School of Theology's official student publication magazine the "Tinig Loyola." Have a delightful reading ahead. May you obtain worth-keeping insights from these pages. God bless you all.

All for the glory of God and the benefit of our neighbor!



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Over the last ten years, enrollment at Loyola School of Theology has been steadily increasing, with our student composition becoming ever more diversified. In Academic Year 2010-2011, we were 366; as of this writing, we are now 480, a vibrant international academic community representing 67 religious congregations, 43 dioceses, and 35 countries around the world.

We have also developed a number of degree and non-degree programs over the past ten years, among which are the Doctor of Ministry, the Certificate in Pre-Theology Studies and the Certificate in Integral Ecology. In our desire to serve college philosophy seminaries in the Philippines by way of training their prospective professors, we are currently preparing a special program that will allow students in the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology Program (S.T.B.) to obtain also a Master in Philosophy (M.Phil.) degree from the School of Humanities of the Ateneo de Manila University.

We are blessed by this growth.

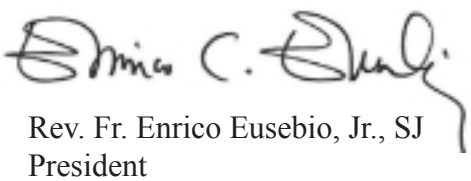
However, we also face the challenge of matching this growth with **greater depth** in our theological and ministerial training. According to our former Superior General, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., "depth" is perhaps a better translation of Ignatian *magis* ("more"). St. Ignatius of Loyola, he says, was always concerned with depth.

The contextualized theological formation, called "Asian Theological Program", that we seek to provide at LST precisely aims at ensuring magis in the quality of theological engagement at LST. This formation constantly strives towards the interpenetration of doctrine and life wherein students are able "to understand and communicate the Gospel within their contexts, to reflect critically on these contexts in the light of the Gospel and to enrich the Catholic tradition with concerns arising from these contexts" (ATP).

I would like to reiterate what I already said during my Inaugural Address as LST President last 28 August 2019: I am grateful to the members of our faculty who – according to the nature of their respective courses – continually strive to commit themselves to our Asian mandate by way of their instruction and research. I am also especially grateful to many of our professors who have patiently and competently guided student research, which produced theses and dissertations with topics that promote creative dialogue between the Christian faith and local cultures.

Finally, my sincerest congratulations to our 20 student researchers who successfully defended their masters, licentiate and doctoral theses and dissertations last Academic Year: 6 from the Philippines, 3 from Indonesia, 2 each from Vietnam, India and Zimbabwe, and 1 each from Benin Republic, Singapore, Myanmar, Korea, and Bangladesh. We thank the Lord for such a rich harvest!

May the Lord Jesus who calls us to missionary service fill our hearts with the Ignatian spirit of *magis*!



Rev. Fr. Enrico Eusebio, Jr., SJ
President
Loyola School of Theology

# VPAA'S MESSAGE

Greetings of peace to All!

This fifty-fifth year of our foundation as a School of Theology brings much rejoicing and hope toward an exciting decade ahead of us. We are thankful to Fr. Jose V.C. Quilongquilong, S.J. for his leadership as president during the last six years and we welcome with enthusiasm our new president, Fr. Enrico C. Eusebio, Jr., S.J. We pray that our Lord blesses our new president so that he may lead us with wisdom.

The hallmark of a Jesuit education is its ability to adapt to the present needs. We are happy to report to everyone that we have successfully launched in the first semester our Saturday MA in Theological Studies Intensive program. This program was designed to cater to requests for LST to offer Saturday classes for credit courses leading to a master's degree. In conjunction with this, Fr. Eusebio in his inaugural address launched a fundraising campaign to build up a scholarship fund for laypeople and women religious.

The school has steadily grown in number over the past ten years. This year is particularly significant because with a total of 479 students enrolled, the school has gained a hundred more students than what it had in 2012. Our students in the STB program have reached a total of 231 students outnumbering the previous years. The growth in numbers has also seen the rapid internationalization of LST with students representing 39 countries from Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands.

As we move forward with our work in theological formation, we are charged with a lot of promising avenues to explore. In the area of research, both faculty and students are encouraged to contribute to on-going theological reflection through publication. We are increasing our efforts in collaboration and dialogue with other institutions of theological formation. The recently released document on the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus invites us as a Jesuit institution to reflect on how we are able to integrate and live-out these preferences in our academic pursuits at LST.

May we be one as a community in thanking our Lord for the many gifts he has bestowed upon us. May we also be one in discerning and concretizing our response to the continuing mission of serving his people.

Rev. Fr. Rogel Abais, SJ
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Loyola School of Theology

# IS INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN THE PHILIPPINES WORKING?

Br. Cassien Nshimirimana, SX



In view of celebrating the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines (1521-2021), the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) dedicated the year 2020 to the theme of 'Dialogue towards Harmony.' With this, the CBCP underlines how interreligious dialogue should be understood: *"Interreligious dialogue does not merely aim at mutual understanding and friendly relations. It reaches a much deeper level, that of the spirit, where exchange and sharing consist in a mutual witness to one's beliefs and a common exploration of one's respective religious convictions."*[1] In this article, I shall revisit and reflect on the current journey of interreligious dialogue in the Philippines through my personal experiences.

Three years ago, I went to visit the Golden Mosque located in Quiapo with some of our Filipino seminarians who were studying philosophy at that time. Although we did not have a formal invitation or prior request, we decided to go there just to be in contact with our Muslim brothers and sisters. When we arrived at the gate of the Mosque, we met a Senior Muslim who started to inquire about our identity and the aim of our visit. I responded that we were seminarians desiring to visit the Mosque. He said: *'Pinapatay namin ang mga Kristiano'* (we kill the Christians). And I replied laughing: *'Today, you will be welcoming the Christians.'* Some of my companions started distancing themselves while we engaged in dialogue, which became later cordial. At the end, he was the one who guided us and taught us the basics of Islam. Even though it may seem like a simple experience, it was the starting point of my interest in interreligious dialogue.

This scenario appears to be the pattern of interreligious encounter.

> Sometimes, the encounter begins in an unexpected way, or we often start with curiosity, doubts, biases, fears, etc.

Before assessing the current state of interreligious dialogue in the Philippines, we first need to clarify some key concepts related to interreligious dialogue.

**What is interreligious dialogue and why does it matter?**

One way of defining interreligious dialogue might be something like this: *"A conversation between persons of different minds, where the dialogue-partners come to learn from the other, to witness to the other, as well as to convert the other.*"2

Why covert the other? Many people are suspicious of the word *"conversion"* in interreligious dialogue. However, the ultimate goal of dialogue is the conversion of both partners for a mutual understanding. In other words, the dialogue partners hope that the other would eventually come to see and truly appreciate the fundamental religious conviction of the other.

> It is a mutual conversion that brings about an authentic transformation of hearts, and not so much a change in religious affiliation.3

Thus, the interreligious dialogue demands relations grounded on equality and mutual respect that can be expressed in different forms4such as: dialogue of daily life, dialogue of action (deeds of service), dialogue of theological exchange (religious experts), and dialogue of religious experience (faith experience).

**The process of interreligious dialogue in the Philippines**

Even if there are different religions, the discourse on interreligious dialogue in the Philippines is more oriented to the Christian-Muslim dialogue since Christianity and Islam are the main religions in the Philippines in terms of numbers. Without any intention to underestimate other religions, the main focus of my inquiry refers to the relationship among the Christians and Muslims. In this perspective, the remark of Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, founder of Silsilah5and new executive secretary of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue in the Philippine Bishops Conference is sound. He stresses "We must help Catholics, Christians of different denominations, Muslims and people of other religions to have a better understanding of the mission of interreligious dialogue [...]. In the Philippine context, this invitation becomes an urgent sign of the times when Christians are able to overcome the fears and prejudices built over the centuries above all towards Muslims, in order to reach an authentic understanding and respect for indigenous culture and tradition."6

**Challenges and Opportunities of interreligious dialogue in the Philippines**

I belong to the Xaverian Missionaries, whose charism is dedicated to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God to non-Christians, and our involvement in dialogue has made me aware of challenges and opportunities related to interreligious dialogue in the Philippines. As a Loyola School of Theology student preparing for the mission Ad-Gentes, I have been exposed to different interreligious groups inside and outside Ateneo. Furthermore, the Xaverian interreligious conferences where the different speakers share their experiences in the field of dialogue progressively enlighten the mind-set of the participants who may understand the interreligious dialogue as a strategy to convert others to one's religion.

My Silsilah immersion experience in Zamboanga last June 2019 – where the Christian participants were sent to live with Muslim families while Muslim participants stayed in Christian families – helped me weigh biases on both sides through the dialogue of daily life and faith experiences. By experiencing the sharing of the participants and staying with foster families, I became convinced that we have to dialogue not because of the expectations or fruitful outcome of dialogue, but because of a shared experience of God's unconditional love regardless of our religious affiliation. Otherwise, a dialogue without love will

become a strategy to proselytize: 'The real dialogue motivated by love not only requires pain but also gives joy. Real dialogue can only be sustained by love."7

Taking into consideration the various groups and institutions dedicated to the interreligious dialogue at the community, regional and national levels, there is a growing awareness about the need for interreligious dialogue. Among these groups are the **Bishops Ulama Conference** composed of the Catholic bishops, Muslim Ulama, and Protestant bishop-pastors; the CBCP Commission on Interreligious Dialogue; the Mindanao Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC); the UNIHARMONY PARTNERS MANILA (UPM), a group of 22 religious communities and interreligious organizations that aim to promote dialogue to enhance mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among peoples of different faiths; The Silsilah Dialogue Movement that promotes harmony, solidarity and peace through formation on interreligious dialogue especially on issues related to Muslim-Christian understanding; the Peace Makers, etc.

While many positive aspects are achieved by these different groups and institutions dedicated to interreligious dialogue, many elements can still be improved in order to harmoniously live out our religious diversities during this period dedicated to 'dialogue towards harmony.' In his survey, Fr. Sebastiano lists some weak points of the interreligious dialogue in the Filipino context8 There are still a lot of prejudices against the Muslims on the part of the Christians and vice versa. Since the common complaint of the Muslims is that they have less opportunities in society, it is the same complaint from the Christians where the Muslims are majority in number. Moreover, while most of the efforts of interreligious dialogue are still in line with the "strategy" of dialogue, the interchange with other religions like Buddhism and Hinduism is presented only in big cities and does not have relevant impact on the national level.

Overall, the experience of interreligious dialogue in the Philippines is still an ongoing project that involves everyone, beginning from the religious and political leaders to the grassroots.

Therefore, the different conferences and formations on interreligious dialogue organized at the community, regional, and national levels may help the people to nurture the culture of interreligious dialogue which is an integral part of the Church's evangelizing mission.

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Endnotes:

1 Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Dialogue Towards Harmony (December 01, 2019).

2 Dialogue, Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia, ed. Edmond Chia, FSC, (FABC-OEIA, Bangkok, 2001), 181

3 Idem, 181

4 Cf. Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue: Dialogue and Proclamation no 42, (Rome, 19 May 1991)

5 Silsilah is a movement based in Zamboanga and envisions a life-in-dialogue for all Muslims, Christians, and peoples of other living faiths in respect, trust and love for one another, and moving together towards a common experience of harmony solidarity and peace.

6 http://www.fides.org/en/news/66222ASIA_PHILIPPINES_Interreligious_dialogue_to_overcome_prejudices_and_live_human_fraternity (Accessed Jan 27,2020).

7 Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, PME , Call to a Dream: Silsilah Dialogue Movement,( Silsilah Publications, Zamboanga, 2008 ),10.

8 Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, PME, Interreligious dialogue, the Mission of Dialogue and Peace in the light of the Beatitudes , (Claretian Communications Foundation, Quezon City , 2019), 26.

# COURAGE: ON LIVING CHASTITY AND SAME-SEX ATTRACTION

Br. Robert T. Jacome, OCD



"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1).

I grew up with friends who openly shared with me that they have this Same-Sex Attraction (SSA). I knew it was difficult for them especially that we were in an era when homosexuality was considered taboo by most of the people in society. I even knew some parents who believed that having a homosexual child is a curse and a disgrace to the family. The result: people with SSA, including my friends, would rather suffer silently while having a secret relationship with the same sex than to open up and be judged or condemned.

These friends of mine who are experiencing SSA are good people. They are law-abiding citizens, attending mass every Sunday, and even selflessly helping their neighbors. They are aware of the teachings of the church that we are all children of God, the God who created man and woman from the very beginning (CCC 355).

> The struggle between their homosexual tendency and following the teachings of the church cannot be underestimated and so they must not be judged by their homosexuality alone.

They themselves also want change and do what is right but this SSA is not like a switch that can be easily turned off. As a religious seminarian, I feel that I am obliged to do something to help my friends as well as others who have SSA.

Two years ago, a friar discussed to us The Way of Perfection of St. Teresa of Jesus and how she explains prayer as being transformative. Teresa says that the person who is in prayer is transformed from being a worm into becoming a beautiful butterfly who is truly dead to the world. It cannot recognize itself anymore and cannot believe that it was an ugly silkworm before. The Prayer sees within the self a desire to praise the Lord and experiences great pain when he or she offends the Lord.

I believe this is what our SSA-brethren need right now, as they seek to follow the teachings of the church – the gift of transformation to become chaste through prayer. Teresa says that prayer is a friendly conversation with God whom we know loves us. Therefore, we can be assured that when we pray we will never be judged or condemned whether one is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersexual, Ally/Asexual, + (to cover those who are not included) or simply LGBTQIA+. The transformation to become chaste indeed will surely not come easy and I strongly believe that a co-journeyer would be of great help. In the book "Homosexuality and the Catholic Church," it states that to preserve chastity, one must fully admit one's own vulnerabilities and not pretend that one can handle the situation.

In that same talk about the book of St. Teresa, the same friar mentioned to us this group called Courage Philippines and their desire to be transformed from being self-centered to Christ-centered. This spiritual support group is for those who are struggling with SSA and want to seek guidance and companionship. By providing them a safe space to openly talk about their struggles in a Catholic setting, without feeling judged or misunderstood, our SSS-brethren grow in prayer and sacramental life, fellowship and community.

Courage is an international group founded in 1980 by the late Archbishop of New York Terence Cardinal Cooke and Fr. John Harvey, OSFS and was endorsed by the Holy See in 1994. Through His Eminence, the late Jaime Cardinal Sin, the group was granted permission to establish a local chapter here in the Philippines in July 1995 with Archbishop Rolando Tria-Tirona, OCD as their first chaplain. Many people, especially the youth who struggle from SSA, are not aware that this group or any other support group like Courage exist. That is why the group works hard to spread the word about their mission to give spiritual support to those who have SSA and journey with them in overcoming this homosexual tendency.

The group believes that as children of God they are also called to a life of chastity. They, too, are experiencing the same difficulties that any other person who desires to grow in chastity has to face—pornographic secular culture, permissiveness, equating love with sex, sexual gratification is equated to fulfillment, easy access, isolation, peer pressure, etc.

## Chastity is a universal call and not just an exclusive call for persons without SSA.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2347 states that "the virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. It is expressed notably in friendship with one's neighbor. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends, who has given himself totally to us and who allows us to participate in his divine estate." A life of prayer then will serve as their guide in achieving the transformation they are longing for, which is to become imitators of Christ.

However, following the path of Jesus is never a cozy bed of roses, more so to those who have homosexual tendencies. Aside from the struggles that members of Courage experience within themselves, there are also external struggles. Despite their positive disposition to help their brethren with SSA and be faithful to the teachings of Jesus, they are still judged and misunderstood by some of the people who perceive their SSA tendency differently from them. Yet, the group still looks at them as brothers and sisters whose weakness is the stirrings of their homosexual tendencies and, therefore, must be loved and understood.

Amidst the great contradictions against their group, Courage continues to offer themselves to help and let the people with SSA, and even the whole world, know how the Truth of the Word of God and the Church's teachings made a life-changing impact on them and on those who seek for their support. They will always stand for their group's name, Courage, by boldly choosing a life that is counter-cultural, bravely facing a stronger adversary, and valiantly persevering despite all the difficulties. Their existence is a proof that God is alive and that He is with us no matter what are our sexual orientation is and the struggles that come along with it. Their "determined determination" to evangelize, as how St. Teresa calls it, comes from the power of transformative prayer which can profit their neighbors if it is done with love.

Courage will always be one with the church in shepherding the people of God especially those who are struggling with SSA. Since we are all children of God, the battle is not theirs alone but ours as well—regardless of our sexual orientation. We must tirelessly offer ourselves in bringing the wounded sheep back to the True Shepherd through the church. As Edwin Valles, the group's president, puts it, "The Church is our home. She is our mother. In Filipino, mothers are described as 'ilaw ng tahanan'. Let our mother Church enlighten our path. She wants what is best for us as she will always lead us to Christ." In the end, no matter what sexual orientation we think we have, we are all children of God who does not judge us according to the flesh or human standards (John 8:15). He loves us so much that He gave his only begotten Son not to condemn us but in order that we can be healed and saved through Him (John 3:16 - 17).

# UNDERSTANDING GENERATION Z

Br. John Michael Dion, SchP



Pope Francis in his Post-Synodal letter called "Christus Vivit" states that

> young people are not only the future of the world but also its present.

Today, whenever we hear the word "young" we always associate it with the Millennial Generation. Various documents were published about the characteristics of the Millennials but there is an emerging generation that we also need to know and understand, and we call them "Generation Z." Who are these members of the new generation? And why we need to understand them?

Knowing and understanding this generation requires a general view on who comprises this group, their environment, behavior, belief, identity, family, Intellectual interests and goals. For this reason, I will cite several types of research made to have a better understanding of Gen Z.

**There are different views on who comprise this new generation**. While studying articles about Generation Z, I was surprised that the authors of different researches do not agree on the exact year where Generation Z starts. According to Octavio Esqueda, the author of *"What Every Church Needs to Know about Generation Z",* Gen Z is the present teenagers and children, born between 1999 and 2015. Boris Joaquin, from the Rappler, has a different answer. He wrote in his article "Zooming in on Gen Z" in 2018, that members of Generation Z are those who were born between 1996 and 2005. He added that they are the generation that follows the millennial. Doug Tooke, the writer of *"The Spiritual Questions of Gen Z,"* states that this new generation is comprised of individuals born between 1997 and 2010. Despite the differences in the year the only thing that we are certain of is that Gen Z is the first generation born into an environment where the internet, smartphones, and modern gadgets have already existed.

**Gen Z members are "screen-agers."** Jonathan Morrow, a faculty member of the Biola University, exposed in his study that technology is a central element and a major influence for the Gen Z. In his research, he concluded that they are the first generation raised by parents who are on-screens. For this reason, Morrow described this generation as "screen-agers." He stated that their whole experience is being narrated by the culture, by the media, by Netflix, and everything else. This unlimited and constant connection to the internet is also a challenge for Gen Z because they receive a piece of overflowing information, temptation to conceal their true identities in social media and cyberbullying.

**The majority of Gen Z individuals need spiritual companions**. In terms of belief, Morrow defined Generation Z as persons who were born in a context where religion is no longer a major influence. For them, secularization is still the trend. Robert Sullivan in his article in America Magazine, *"Generation Groups*



*and Religion,"* explained that the contributing factor on why the Millenials including the generation Z are drifting away from faith is the "lack of companions on the spiritual journey" and an absence of "peer or adult support." He added that skepticism toward religion and the moral necessity of believing in God is prevalent in these two generations. He based his statement on the study made by St. Mary's Press and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University.

Similarly, Pastor James Emery White in his book, *"Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World"* wrote that Generation Z is the first "post-Christian generation" in America. For him, they lack a general vocabulary of faith. He added that 39 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 29 considered themselves as "none" or persons with no religious affiliation. He claimed that Gen Z is less attracted to the socially irrelevant faith. They embrace moral relativism and individual freedom is the core value.

**This new generation is inclusive, sensitive, less prejudiced and driven to make a difference.** A study made by the Barna Group reported that Gen Z tends to be inclusive to all people, practices, and perspectives. Likewise,

they are also open-minded and sensitive to other people's feelings and opinions.

Because of this attitude, they are inclined to embrace various perspectives, comfortable with people who are different than them and fewer prejudices. However, they also find it difficult to determine whether an action is morally wrong or simply incorrect. Individualism is also a key mark of the Gen Z that tend to focus primarily on their success and well-being.

In *"Growing Up Gen Z: A Portrait of Filipino Teens Today,"* Pauline Fermin reported that Gen Z pursues opportunities with purpose and meaning besides seeking adventure and experience that millennials love to do. She added that they are driven by the desire to be seen as valuable and relevant to society compared to the Millennials who want others to see them as individually unique and interesting. Pastor James White claims that

Individuals within Generation Z have a strong desire to make a difference and are attracted to what will enable them to make that difference.

**Gen Z members believe that identity is not about birth sex.** As regards to identity, the Barna research group found that members of Generation Z consider identity as something that

a person feels inside rather than birth sex. In a survey made by the same group, seven out of ten believe that it is acceptable to be born in one gender and feel like another. They also tend to express their ideas about sexuality because of their great desire to empathize with the marginalized. The result of this view about gender and identity is confusion.

**They look for good role models.** In the study made by the Barna Group, they observed that the individuals from Generation Z admire their parents but at the same time do not feel the importance of family relationships in their lives. They love their parents, but still long for good role models.

One of the reasons why this generation perceives things in that way is because of the consequences created by broken families and of distant parents who lack the time to raise them.

**The ultimate goal of Gen Z individuals is to be happy**. According to the study, the focus of Gen Z is primarily on professional success and financial security. Most Gen Z individuals believe that their ultimate goal in life was "to be happy," and they defined happiness as financial success. For them, personal achievement is greater than family, background, and religion. They look for role models, but in relationship to career or financial success. This is due to the materialistic and individualistic culture of our society. The money-oriented culture tends to measure success in financial terms and Gen Z seems to be following these ideals with even more enthusiasm than previous generations. Furthermore, Gen Z members see the business of their parents with work and other occupations and consciously or unconsciously desire to imitate them.

The Challenge for church pastors and leaders is to understand this new generation.

Today the majority of Catholic pastors and leaders are not well prepared to relate to this generation, while some are also allergic to the technological world that Generation Z occupies. There is a great need to understand this new generation to help them in the Christian direction we all aim to be.

Pope Francis constantly reminds us of the words "accompaniment" and "encounter." And we can accomplish these two words by understanding the young generation.

Our task is not only to understand them but also to evangelize them, emphasizing that they are not only the future of the church but also the present.

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# TOUGH CROWD

Br. Joseph Patrick Echevarria, SJ




How do you talk to someone who doesn't want to listen? Have you ever experienced talking about something you deeply believe in to someone who believes in the total opposite with as much passion and conviction as you?

You might have experienced this when you broached the topic of politics with a friend and then found out that they held the opposite view. It is a frequent occurrence on social media too. We all know that one relative, friend, or colleague who takes the time to write a long comment to voice opposition to a post or article on social media. Sometimes it is worth reading, many times it is just toxic. And when it all becomes too much to stomach, how tempting is it to just turn off, disengage, and leave the discussion. That is politics. But then the same can be said about religion.

How do I speak about my faith to someone who believes the opposite? Or worse, to someone who is not even interested?

I remember being shocked by my 12-year-old niece when she described her Christian Living (CL) teacher as stupid. CL, she says, is officially her "least favorite" subject in school. To be fair, her CL teacher's communication and grammar mistakes are atrocious. But more than that, the presentation of Christianity is primarily through arguments based on authority and doctrine. For someone brought up in an environment that encourages critical thinking, philosophical discussions, and scientific discovery, it is no wonder that appeals to authority and tradition do not resonate with her very well.

Perhaps you know someone in your own circle who has also been turned off by the Church for one reason or another. Maybe someone who has stopped going to Mass because he feels it is irrelevant. Or someone who goes to Sunday Mass but then just follows the routine and whose eyes glaze over once the homily starts. They are respectful of the faith and traditions of the Church, but perhaps part of them is just humoring it, even patronizing it.

How then does one share the faith with the agnostic, the atheist, or the apathetic?

Certainly, they can be a tough crowd when it comes to religious and spiritual matters. But from my experience with friends in the scientific community, the world of business, and with my niece, I find that three things help when it comes to sharing the faith.

The first is to focus on relationships, on building good relationships. Not rules, but relationships.

The truth in Scripture is about God relating to humanity. It is likewise God's invitation to us: to connect and relate well with others.

I have noticed that, these days, the crucial—though often missing—part of relationships is the capacity to listen, i.e. to listen genuinely, to listen patiently, and to listen beyond the words, to what is not being said, to the goodness of the other. How many conflicts could have been avoided if people took more time to listen?

Many years ago, I found myself in front of a class of rebellious high school students—one of the toughest crowds I have ever faced. I was supposed to teach them physics. But the catch was: they hated physics. In fact, they hated science in general. As I walked in on that first day, I felt their angry eyes boring into me. I have not even said or done anything yet and they were already against me!

Thus, I decided to spend the better part of the first two weeks not teaching physics, but just listening to each one in the class and building my relationship with them. I found out that their previous science teacher treated them horribly, and left not just a bad taste but a trauma in many of them. After finding out, we worked out a deal where I would avoid the pitfalls of the previous teacher and they would give me (and physics) a chance. Relationship first, the rest will follow.

The second practice I found helpful is, when talking about my beliefs, to concentrate on the core experienced truths and values like love, service, forgiveness, and justice. Leading a conversation with the intricacies of original sin, disordered homosexual acts, and unnatural contraception are layers of doctrine that simply invite debate, ridicule, rolled eyes and most likely, closed ears.

> Concentrating on the core tenets of faith—that God loves us and He asks us to love one another so that we may have a fuller and happier life—can more deeply resonate with people than the theological gymnastics of medieval scholasticism.

After all, who wouldn't want to talk about love?

There is an argument about excess baggage in the Church. Before being a Christian simply meant believing in Jesus, loving God, and loving the neighbor. Now, one is asked to believe and espouse so many other authoritative pronouncements and practice so many more elaborate rituals and traditions to be a good Catholic. And not all are still practical, helpful, or even palatable to many today.

Last, and I think the most helpful practice, is exemplifying the faith by one's own life—by what one says and how one behaves.

> There is no better argument and proof of the validity of one's values than the authenticity and integrity of one's life.

The invitation is to follow Christ, and it is not easy. Personally, when I look at the saints and at others whom I consider holy, I find that I am nowhere near them. So many times, I have missed the chance to make the right choice, to do the more loving act, and given in to my issues and compulsions. I am so so far away. But then that does not stop me from trying again. And I try to listen to correction as humbly as I can. Even if it is painful. The image I often have is of a large delicate vase tipping over and falling down. Then, looking down at all the broken pieces scattered on the floor, one just has to bend down on hands and knees and pick up the pieces one by one. That is not easy too. But I think the effort matters.

We never know who we affect, influence, and touch by our words and actions. Even when we are simply trying to be kinder, more patient, more understanding, more disciplined, more industrious, more available—it is felt, and noticed, and can make a big difference to someone who is also struggling with life, struggling to be good, struggling with finding meaning and happiness and love in their own life.

When dialoguing with someone who holds the opposite views, connection need not be impossible. I believe that there will always be that common humanity and goodness that can be the foundation for a relationship. However, believing in this commonality does not mean it is easy to find, especially when dealing with a tough crowd. It can even be very stressful and frustrating when facing an antagonistic group or person. When those negative feelings come, it can be so tempting to just turn off, disengage, and give up the discussion. But then, the other side might wonder: how do we talk to someone who doesn't want to listen?

# THE GREATEST THING YOU'LL EVER LEARN

Dr. Ruben L.F. Habito



One of my favorite songs of all time is sung by Nat "King" Cole, entitled "Nature Boy" (composed by Eben Ahbez, and which became a hit in the late 1940s). I am especially moved by the refrain of the song, which goes, *"The greatest thing you'll ever learn, is just to love, and be loved in return."*

Listening to this song, humming and singing it to myself time and again, and reflecting on the words in the light of my own personal journey at this stage of my life (I'm now in my early seventies), I am inspired to shift the order of the verse:

*"The greatest thing you'll ever learn, is that* ***you're loved, so just love in return."***

My response to the question, "What is my mission as a senior disciple of the Lord to the youth?"—is to sing the refrain of that song again, in this revised form. "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is that you're loved, so just love in return."

To expand this a little,

"My dear young ones,
the greatest thing you'll ever learn
as you go through your life in this
world is that *you are beloved,*
*in infinite measure, just as you are,*
*and unconditionally so!"*

Once we realize this fundamental fact of our human existence, contained in those words You are Beloved, there will no longer be any need to strive to prove ourselves to anyone, to take special efforts to meet up to any standards imposed by anyone else or to seek others' approval so we can be "worthy" of that love we are so earnestly seeking from the bottom of our hearts. This love is already being poured out to us every moment, every day of our life. Once we realize *that*, we will be free, to be our true self, fully and wholeheartedly, and free to live our lives in simply loving everyone back, in every way we can!

You ask, "But how may I come to realize this?" A famous scriptural passage gives a hint: "*Be still, and know….*" (Psalm 46:10) Concretely, this invites us to take time in our daily lives from time to time, to stop whatever we are doing, sit down, take a deep breath, and continue breathing in awareness, letting our mind be quiet, and just listen in silence. Stay in that silence for a while, even for a few minutes at a time. If this becomes a regular habit, then our heart and mind will become attuned to the silence, and we may, at some point or another, hear a voice from within, addressing us in a most intimate and personal way: "You are my Beloved, in whom I AM well-pleased." (Mark 1:11) These are the very words that Jesus heard as he was baptized by John in the river Jordan.



In cultivating stillness on a regular basis in our day to day lives, these words may resonate in a way that you hear them as addressed to yourself as well, and come to realize that you yourself are a beloved one upon whom God's unconditional love is being poured out, just as you are. You are created by a Loving God in God's very own image. So in loving you, God is simply loving Godself.

You may have already heard this voice in some form or another sometime in your life. This is precisely what may have inspired you to take on this path of service to others in priestly or religious ministry. There may have been a time when you were in a situation of suffering or hurting from the loss of a loved one, or in a set of circumstances that have brought deep pain upon you, in a state near-despair. Then all of a sudden, within all that, something hits you and makes you realize that in and through all that, you are not alone because you are being held by a Loving Power that was sustaining, holding, keeping and affirming you all throughout, giving you the inner strength to bear it all. This is what must have been heard by Jesus as he was stretched out on the Cross, in unbearable pain, abandoned by his friends and followers, as he cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

In and through all that, he must have been sustained by a quiet, almost inaudible voice, that told Him, "You are My Beloved, in Whom I AM well-pleased."

Once we have heard that voice of Love in our lives, once we have realized that we are already loved just for what we are as we are, no matter what, then our hearts will sing in praise to God.

And the rest of our lives will be spent simply living in that praise and gratitude for that Love. At that point, all that we can do is to love back, by loving everyone, with everything we are and all that we have, for the rest of our lives. This means to spend the rest of our lives as a witness to and the embodiment of God's love to the world, to everyone we meet. How? Matthew 25: 35-36 gives us a hint. "When I was hungry, you gave me food. When I was thirsty, you gave me to drink… when I was in prison, you visited me."

Yet, as we go through the busy-ness of our day to day lives, trying to fulfill our duties, catching up with our schedules, doing our assignments, getting overwhelmed with all the details we need to take care of, we easily tend to lose sight of this fundamental reality of the Love that embraces us every moment of our lives. What can we do? We can take a deep breath, open our hearts, and listen: "Be still, and know…You are my Beloved, in whom I AM well-pleased."

# MASS MEDIA AND EVANGELIZATION: CARD. TAGLE'S THEO HOUR LECTURE SNIPPETS

Br. Archie R. Magarao, SchP



"For Vatican II, they reveal to us the changes in the human spirit. And the Church welcomes these new means. They are potentials for the Church to reach people through the Gospel and to help the Church promote, what we call, the social media of the Church, human development—our vision of human development and social transformation."

"The Church also watches with vigilance the means of social communication because sometimes they contribute to insecurity… and often they operate outside the realm of the ethical and moral norms."

"Vatican II invites us to develop the right consciousness regarding the use of these means of communication."

"The means of social communication are supposed to inform and to give accurate truthful information."

"We need a serious study of the contemporary brand of information society that we have…. What is the quality of the contemporary information society? Is it for knowledge? Is it for the common good? Or for other things?"

"Vatican II was also quite concerned about how is moral evil depicted in movies, in news and entertainment? Yes, you report evil but be cautious. Sometimes evil is reported in a manner that glamorizes evil… and you leave the news broadcast believing that evil is stronger than good. Then, that is not the good news."

"Are you glamorizing evil already in your manner of reporting?"

"Vatican II asks the Church to get involved in the work of social communications, to get involved in public affairs."

"What of our contributions? To bring to the attention of viewers and listeners, the duty to discern—to discern what is true."

"The youth needs guidance so that they could acquire a self-critical attitude towards their use of the media and to use them with moderation."

"Civil authorities, as mentioned by Vat. II, are to protect the true and just availability of information. And the public authority should see to it that morals are not eliminated in the dissemination of information."

"Is it truthfulness or class propaganda? Is it truthfulness or Capitalist business interest?"

"In media evangelization, we are not just talking about training on how to use the means of communication, but also to evangelize that world. Social Media is a world in itself. It has its own language. It has its own mindset…. It is a world that needs to be evangelized."

"Forgetting our neighbor because my (our) cellphone is more important than the person next to me (us)."



# INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS CHRISTOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

Br. Byamungu Mahanga Augustin, SX



Interreligious dialogue is one of the most relevant issues of our time. It remains also an actual preoccupation of the Church in its mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God throughout the world.

As an experience, dialogue enhances our understanding of other religious traditions and beliefs, which results in mutual understanding and acceptance, leading to common action to promote human rights and peace. This process of dialogue is then experienced as an instance of sharing life and acting together so as to promote the project of the Creator. However, in this article, our preoccupation is to find out if there is a Christological experience in these interactions between different religious traditions and spiritual or humanistic beliefs. What does dialogue reveal to us about the person of Jesus Christ? Is Jesus Christ present in this togetherness of diversities?

We will broach this topic in three main points. First, we will deepen our understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ through dialogue. Second, we will see the possibility of encountering Jesus, present in the people professing different faiths. Finally, we shall reflect on "witnessing to Jesus" to other believers.

**1.Deepening understanding**

The experience of dialogue for us is an opening to the mystery of Christ, his boundless love. This love impels us to go and reach out to other believers. Dialogue is then configured to the mystery of Christ, the Word of God (Logos) who was from the beginning (John 1:1) and has been in dialogue with cultures1. The same Word entered in dialogue with humanity by taking human flesh and sharing our human condition. Dialogue is also a revival of Christ's earthly ministry that went beyond the limits of Israel. Interreligious dialogue then makes us experience and understand deeply that the salvific mission of Jesus reaches all human beings, regardless of their belongingness to a religion or belief. This boundarylessness of Jesus' salvific mission is to be read under the light of Mark's pericope about the Syrophoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30). Mark describes her as a gentile, born in the region of Phoenicia in Syria (7:26). She came and begged Jesus to drive the devil out of her daughter. Jesus' first reaction to her sounds heavy as he said: "Let us first feed the children. It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (7:27). Right away, we may say that at this level, Jesus' ministry was still understood as restricted to the children of Israel. However, the woman's aspiration was high, although she was a gentile. Her reaction to Jesus proved her greater faith as she said: "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's leftovers" (7:28). The Woman's faith has given rise to the understanding that even the gentiles need to be reached by Jesus's salvific ministry. Jesus then extended his

healing powers on her daughter. Israel, therefore, is no longer the sole beneficiary of the salvation brought by Jesus. Everyone is part of those for whose salvation Jesus took the human body.

Interreligious dialogue then is a sign of Jesus' unconditional love and his unicity in salvation. Through experience, it makes us understand that the members of other religious traditions and beliefs are also saved by Jesus and that Christ is close to us as he is to them.2 Nostra Aetate explains that we all form one community, since we all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth, and also because all share in a common destiny, namely God (N.A. no.1). Dialogue makes us "reach the religious experience of others, discover the hidden elements of the grace"3of God in Jesus. It has us grasp the deeper meaning of salvation through Jesus, the unique savior. Vatican II, in Gaudium et Spes, clearly states that Christians have been made partners in the paschal mystery, and that they will go forward, strengthened by hope, to the resurrection. However, there is strong stress that all this holds true not for Christians only, but also for all men of goodwill in whose hearts grace is active invisibly (GS. 22). Lumen Gentium also explains that the plan of salvation includes those who acknowledge the creator, in the first place among whom are the Muslims ( LG chap. 2, No 15). The experience of dialogue results in a vivid understanding of what God has revealed to us in Jesus Christ and the living teachings of the Church.

**2.Encountering Jesus.**

We have come to conclude that interreligious dialogue opens us to a deeper understanding of Christ's mystery. This understanding is a certainty that Christ is present in other religions and beliefs, and more so, he is present in individuals belonging to these. We are convinced that the mystery of Christ is present in these traditions although "it remains unknown by their members4 It is the continuation of the mystery of incarnation through which Jesus Christ has, in a certain way, united himself to each human person (GS 22).

Henceforth, if Jesus is present in the person of other believers, interreligious dialogue is then a special context of encounter. We encounter Jesus, the unique savior, present in individuals belonging to other religions and beliefs. The same Jesus we bear in our hearts, the same we encounter in the Word of life, in the sacraments of the Church, is the same we encounter in dialogue with other religions and beliefs. He is united to all human beings regardless of their religious belongingness.

Interreligious dialogue makes us, then, experience a deeper spirituality that consists in contemplating the Holy Trinity in human persons.

**3.Silent witness.**

A deeper understanding of Christ's mystery enables us to seek and encounter him in everything, and the encounter makes us his true witnesses in this pluralistic world. While keeping our own identity and respecting the identity of others, we silently witness to Jesus Christ among them, without attempting to proselytize. This silent witness is concretized through a dialogue of presence, a "dialogue between 'brothers', a dialogue of 'friends', a dialogue of fellow 'pilgrims', a dialogue where we challenge each other not by words, but by actions"5. This silent witness presupposes a Christocentric life that enables Christians to share Jesus' love with other believers and have them experience the Kingdom of God established by Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of peace, where "Jesus is All and is in all" (Col. 3:11).

Given all these points, interreligious dialogue is an experience of the boundless love of Christ who sends us to be with others; it is Christ-centered.

Jesus makes us experience his mystery of salvation, graciously gives himself to us, and enables us to witness to him. He is truly present in the togetherness of diversities.

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Endnotes:

1 Saying of Father Luigino Marchioron, s.x., a biblical Scholar.

2 JACQUES DUPUIS, SJ., Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions. Faith Meets Series. (New York:Orbis Books, 1991), 128.

3 Idem, p. 142.

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5 Ian Latham, "Charles de Foucault (1858-1916): Silent Witness for Jesus in The Face of Islam" in Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue, Monasticism, Theology and Spirituality., ed. By Antony O'Mahony & Peter Bowe, OSB (2006), 65.

# JESUS' EXAMPLE AS GUIDE FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Br. Isidore Kawaya Idumbo, SX



For the year 2020, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) wants the local Church to focus its attention on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, in preparation for the celebration of the fifth centenary of its first encounter with Christianity. It leads one to think about its relevance to the said preparations. If one were to go back to the great commission of Jesus in the Gospels, the mission partially involves ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, and the same mission is still carried out today by the Church.

This article tries to present how Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh is interreligiously dialogical, so that His mission may be pursued by the Church even through interreligious dialogue. Indeed, in "Ecclesia in Asia", Pope John Paul II states that dialogue is one of the various aspects and elements of evangelization which represents a rich and dynamic reality today. The Pope continues that "the desire for dialogue is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples; but it is an essential part of the Church's mission because it has its origin in the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church can accomplish her mission only in a way that corresponds to the way in which God acted in Jesus Christ: he became man, shared our human life and spoke in a human language to communicate his saving message."1

By studying the data of revelation as well as the tradition of the fathers of the Church, one can grasp the creative and saving God through Jesus Christ reveals Godself either as the "Word as such"2 or as the "Word incarnate". Léon-Dufour, quoted by Jacques Dupuis on his commentary on John's Gospel, explains that "the Logos was working from the beginning of creation [vv.2-5] as the source of light and of life, setting up a personal relationship between God and human beings: as such, coming into the world in the way of the wisdom of God in Sirach 24, he is the source of light for humanity and to those who have received him he gave "power to become children of God" [vv. 9, 12].3

**Jesus Christ, the "Word as such"**

> The shortest definition of interreligious dialogue is "to seek the truth in love"4

As Jesus Christ presents himself as the "Truth" (Jn 14:6), Jacques Dupuis presents the "Word as such" as the "sower" of all the "seeds of truth" (AG 9) among the religions in dialogue. Though it is impossible for human beings to comprehend the totality of the Truth, interreligious dialogue highlights that everyone can become actors/partakers in the universal saving plan of God for humanity since the "Word as such" can reveal truths about our human nature through different aspects. Even in the promotion of universal human values such as justice, peace, human right, […], these lead to the proclamation of the Truth that not only reminds us of shared humanity but furthermore brings back the whole creation to the Creator after making known that all the peoples are brothers and sisters in truth and love. Through Jesus, the

dimension of our relationship between God and humanity is made more known. Saint Paul calls him "the mediator between God and humankind" (1Tim 2:5). He reveals God as our Father (Mt 6:9) which makes all of us, the children of God, brothers and sisters. This reality came to us in a very special way when the Word himself took flesh, becoming the "sacrament of the Father" and of salvation.

**Jesus Christ the "Word made flesh"**

Jesus becoming man makes it possible for the revelation of God to be formulated directly in an intelligible way, and for all peoples to have access to a definitive communication with God.5

The Gospel values which Jesus upholds, the Kingdom of God he announces, the human project or program which he puts forward, his option for the poor and the marginalized, his denouncing various forms of injustice, his message of universal love: all these, no doubt, contribute to the difference and specificity of Jesus' personality.6

It is evident that the words and deeds of Jesus Christ contain everything that can be shared in interreligious dialogue, as he shows concern for humanity through his miracles, engaged in life-enriching discussions that led to a change of perspective in law and living, taught his disciples to pray, and encountered people where they are. In this way, Jesus Christ becomes the "source and summit" (LG 11) of interreligious dialogue. From him, all the men and women get inspiration about the truth which becomes a matter of dialogue in order to meet God all together as brothers and sisters. Ecclesia in Asia confirms the importance of dialogue to find ways for a sincere and honest sharing of experiences, ideas and proposals leading towards a genuine meeting of spirits, a communion of minds and hearts which, in love, respects and transcends differences. (See EA 3).

**Conclusion**

This article has pointed out only a few ways that Jesus Christ is an important guide in our encounters with our brothers and sisters of different faiths. As we believe in Christ, through whom the whole creation came to be, we also believe in a God who wishes to engage in true dialogue by choosing to become a human person to authentically communicate the universal Love of God.

Therefore we have called Jesus Christ the "source and summit" of the interreligious dialogue which is codified as a way to "seek the truth in love".

Jesus Christ is the Truth and God is Love (see 1 John 4:8). Whenever the Church does interreligious dialogue, there Jesus is shared, and so is the love of God in a spirit of inclusion and mutual respect and understanding. Indeed, Ecclesia in Asia says it better," The more the Christian community is rooted in the experience of God which flows from a living faith, the more credibly it will be able to proclaim to others the fulfillment of God's Kingdom in Jesus Christ. This will result from faithfully listening to the word of God, from prayer and contemplation, from celebrating the mystery of Jesus in the sacraments, above all in the Eucharist, and from giving an example of a true communion of life and integrity of love. The heart of the particular Church must be set on the contemplation of Jesus Christ, God-made-Man, and strive constantly for a more intimate union with him whose mission she continues." (See EA 107)

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Endnotes:
1 Saying of Father Luigino Marchioron, s.x., a biblical Scholar.

2 JACQUES DUPUIS, SJ., Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions. Faith Meets Series. (New York:Orbis Books, 1991), 128.

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# ONE HUNDRED YEARS, BUT NOT DYING! The relevance of Maximum Illud for Contemporary Missionaries

Br. Mugisho Pasteur, SX



Last November 30, 2019, we celebrated the centenary of the promulgation of *Maximum Illud*, Pope Benedict XV's apostolic letter to all missionaries. Its purpose was to encourage and renew the spirit of mission and indicate some new evangelical approaches in mission lands. This celebration took place just after the extraordinary mission month of October 2019 which, with almost the same purpose as *Maximum Illud*, aimed at "fostering an increased awareness of the mission *ad gentes* and taking up again with renewed favor the missionary transformation of the Church's life and pastoral activity"1. The fact that Pope Francis based this missionary renewal on *Maximum Illud* shows the great importance of this document despite its age. Thus, what is the relevance of *Maximum Illud* for today's missionary? Or, how does *Maximum Illud* speak to us a century after? These questions impel us to check out, with the help of this article, two things: the context in which it was written and how this document serves us today.

**_Maximum Illud_ and its Historical and Missionary Context**

Just after the First World War, several missionary activities were revived for the expansion of the Church motivated primarily by the zeal to gain many souls to Christ. Nevertheless, despite all the religious undertakings and the achievements of that time, some tendencies seemed to remain to confuse missionary activities with colonial/political expansions. That is why *Maximum Illud* reasonably reminded missionaries of the "spiritual goal" that must be the sole motivation of their endeavors:

> "Remember that your duty is not the extension of a human realm, but of Christ's; and remember too that your goal is the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly fatherland, and not for an earthly one."2

It is a tragedy, continues the letter, if a missionary would exalt the prestige of the native land or devote himself to serving the interests of his homeland. Nor is it acceptable "to engage in worldly schemes of some kind", instead of devoting himself exclusively to the work of the apostolate3.

Aside from denouncing nationalism and the quest for economic gain, *Maximum Illud* discouraged the practice of *Ius Missionis* which consisted of entrusting a whole territory to a congregation with no interference of other missionaries. It instead suggested that "The man entrusted with a Catholic mission, if he is working single-mindedly for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, goes out whenever it is necessary and searches, searches everywhere, for helpers in his ministry. He does not mind they are; he does not mind whether they belong to his order or another, or whether or not they are of his nationality, 'provided only that, in every way… Christ is being proclaimed' (Phil 1:18)"4

Looking at the concerns of this letter i.e. mixing up the mission with colonial and political interests, nationalism, *Ius missionis* and so on; it seems that these are outdated. In fact, there are no more colonized countries today and no religious missionary can engage in political affairs or business without due dispensation. It is now common sense that we share our missions and let them open to other congregations and, if necessary, ask the help of lay people and volunteers to partake in the mission of "gaining souls to Christ". And yet, contemporary missionaries need than ever before a renewed spirit as they continue Christ's commission. Any agent of mission reading *Maximum Illud* does not need special help to discover its necessity and timely impetus displayed for two reasons. First, these hindrances to mission did not disappear but have only changed guises or facets, as economic exploitation and inappropriate displays of force perpetuate inequality. Second, the characteristics of a good missionary displayed in *Maximum Illud* and which are still valid until today.

**On the New Facets of Missionary Deviations**

It seems that nationalism and colonial practices did not totally disappear as they were being uprooted from the world of missions by the Church. They have probably changed into the modern colonial mindset of opposition between the global NORTH and SOUTH, or the differences between the EAST and WEST. If these socio-economical patterns still influence our way of dealing with people, both for missionaries and the people who receive them; then it is as if *Maximum Illud* is made for us today. Fortunately enough, *Maximum Illud* is very eloquent on this matter telling us that

> the faith preached by a missionary is a faith that embraces all who worship God in truth and Spirit, "a faith in which there is no Gentile, no Jew, no circumcised, no barbarian, no Scythian, no slave, no free man, but Christ is everything in each of us" (Col 3:11)5. This should strike each one of us and say: "this letter is still relevant".

**On the Characteristics of a Good Missionary**

If reading *Maximum Illud* is like listening to an aging friend; upon asking him what is a good missionary like, his answer is simple. A good missionary is "an alert, efficient man, a man filled with charity, deeply interested in everyone and everything, a man who rejoices when things go well with his subjects and sympathizes when things go badly"6 And stressing Ad extra and ad Vitam, he has to give up "his country and his family in order to aid in the extension of faith. When he set out of on his long and often dangerous journey he is, as rule, eager to brave the most grueling hardships, and all he asks is an opportunity to win for Christ as many souls as possible"7. This selfless way is also timely.

As we are more patient in listening to this old friend whose experience mesmerizes us, he would continue telling all the many things that missionaries know even though they hardly put them into practice. That a missionary must nurture his sanctity before that of his people, that he must work single-mindedly for the glory of God, rely on God's providence, have a careful training and proficiency in all branches of learning are timely reminders. The knowledge of the language is a special endeavor for every missionary: "He should not be content with a smattering of the language, but should be able to speak it with readily and completely"8

Just like every long story of an experienced man where the lesson usually comes towards the end, *Maximum Illud* reminds us to preach by example. "Preaching by example is far more effective procedure than the vocal preaching, especially among unbelievers, who tend to be more impressed by what they see for themselves than any arguments that can be presented to them."9All these characteristics and incentives taken from *Maximum Illud* are to be nurtured daily in this complex world of mission. In its complexity, a missionary task is not limited to proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom (teaching, baptizing and caring for new believers); it also entails to respond to human needs by loving service, to transform unjust structures of society, and to safeguard the integrity of all Creation. No matter how old this letter may be; we realize that it still bears unearthed treasures. It's one hundred years old but it's a gift that keeps on giving.

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Endnotes:

1 Cfr. Letter of the Holy Father Francis for the centenary of the promulgation of the Apostolic Letter "Maximum Illud".

2 Maximum illud n.19.

3 Idem, n.18.

4 Idem, n.12.

5 Idem, n.20.

6 Idem, n.9.

7 Idem, n.10.

8 Idem, n.24.

9 Idem, n.26.

# WHAT LEADS TO THE CURRENT DEBATE ON GENDER ISSUES?

Br. John Michael Dion, SchP



Last year, several discussions around the issue of discrimination against transgender and members of LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex) led to the current debate on gender issues. On August 13, 2019, Gretchen Custodio Diez, a transgender woman, was prevented from using the women's restroom in a Cubao mall in Quezon City and was later arrested. Diez insisted on her right to use the female restroom because of the City's Gender-Fair Ordinance, which prohibits discrimination against people's sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Section V, ld of the ordinance says, *"All government agencies, private offices, and commercial/industrial establishments shall designate toilet rooms and lavatories labeled as all-gender CR."*

This unfortunate event became a national issue. Filipinos went online calling for the passage of the anti-discrimination bill also known as SOGIE (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression) bill that seeks to protect the members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community from discriminatory acts. Similar bills were also filed in connection with sexual orientation or gender identity.

While the Church leaders of the Philippines support the law against discrimination for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, the CBCP does not encourage choosing one's gender and performing homosexual acts. In 2015, Bishop Socrates Villegas said that anti-discrimination law is a "gesture of charity" if discrimination means "that certain individuals, because of sexual orientation or gender identity, are systematically denied fundamental human rights."

**A Brief History of the Relationship between Gay and Lesbian Catholics and their Church**

This brief overview is drawn from the online article1done by Elizabeth Lefebvre and Kristen Hannun. They highlight the important moment relate to the interaction between gay and lesbian Catholics mainly in USA and the Roman Catholic Church.

**1973**: The American Psychiatric Association votes to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual.

**1974**: The National Federation of Priests Councils and the National Coalition of American Nuns adopts a platform supporting the "civil rights of homosexual persons."

**1975**: The Vatican issues a declaration on sexual ethics: "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of."

**1976**: Jesuit Father John McNeill publishes *The Church and the Homosexual,* the first full-length theological challenge to the magisterial prohibition of same-sex activity. He receives the *imprimi potest*, (it can be printed) from the Jesuit superiors.

**1978**: The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under Cardinal Ratzinger orders Father McNeill to silence in the public media.

**1980**: Father John Harvey found a ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics to help them remain celibate.

**1986**: The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issues "A Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," which stated that "although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder." It further directed that organizations that did not conform to this teaching should not receive Catholic sponsorship.

**1986**: Georgetown professor Father Charles Curran is silenced on issues of sexuality. Jesuit Father John McNeill issues a press release saying he cannot in conscience obey an order to give up the ministry to gay people or be dismissed from the Society of Jesus.

**1987**: Father McNeill is dismissed from the Society of Jesus.

**1990**: The U.S. Catholic Conference releases Human Sexuality: *A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning* which includes a section on homosexuality.

**1992**: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops sends U.S. bishops a Vatican document, "Some Considerations Concerning the Catholic Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons." The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has reservations regarding civil rights for gay and lesbian people in some instances, including adoption, teaching, and the military.

**1999**: The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issues a notification stating that the founders of New Ways Ministry, School Sister of Notre Dame Jeannine Gramick and Salvatorian Father Robert Nugent, "are permanently prohibited from any pastoral work involving homosexual persons."

**2000**: At Lent, Cardinal Roger Mahony issues an apology to those that he or the Roman Catholic Church may have offended, including: "I ask pardon of our Catholic homosexual and lesbian members when the church has appeared to be non-supportive of their struggles or of falling into homophobia."

**2002**: Vatican spokesman Dr. Joaquin Navarro-Valls blames the clergy sexual abuse on gay priests. Dignity USA urges the bishops to "Stop Blaming Gay Priests" at the November U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference.

**2003**: The Vatican issues *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* by opposing efforts to create civil legal relationships for same-sex couples.

**2005**: (November 4) Pope Benedict issues "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders." He wrote: "the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called "gay culture."

**2012**: Barack Obama becomes the first sitting U.S. president to declare support for same-sex marriage.

**2013**: Pope Francis makes his "Who am I to judge?" comment, in reference to gay priests.

**2015**: Final documents for the Synod on the Family, despite reported diversity of opinion by the bishops, are released without significant changes to church language on interacting with LGBT members.

**2016**: *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation in response to the Synod on the Family is released. It acknowledges that "a variety of family situations can offer certain stability" but reinforces that "de facto same-sex unions" cannot be equated with marriage.

**2016**: Shooting at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida kills 49 people. The event served as inspiration for Jim Martin, S.J., to write Building a Bridge in part due to the language he heard from the church when responding to the event.

**2016**: Congregation for the Clergy restates guidelines on admitting gay priests, saying: "The Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture'. Such persons, in fact, find themselves in a situation that gravely hinders them from relating correctly to men and women. One must in no way overlook the negative consequences that can derive from the ordination of persons with deep-seated homosexual tendencies."

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Endnotes:

1 Elizabeth Lefebvre and Kristen Hannum https://www.uscatholic.org/church/2012/02/pride-and-prejudice-history-relationship-between-gay-and-lesbian-catholics-and-their-

# EVALUATION AND REFLECTION ON THE YEAR OF THE YOUTH IN THE PHILIPPINES

Br. John Christian P. Baxa, SSP



"You know it is boring in the Church eh…"

"I don't want to go to the Church anymore because of many hypocrites there."

"The Church is too much traditional and rejects our beliefs, opinions, and sentiments."

These are the few answers of our youth today when you asked them about the Church, particularly the Catholic Church. In these negative aspects and interpretations, how does the Catholic Church respond to this situation of the youth today? How did the Year of the Youth benefit the present-day young people? Let us keep in mind that most of them are millennials longing to discover their faith and their role inside the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines dedicated the Year 2019 as Year of the Youth. Aside from its preparation to the 5th centenary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines, this is also a moment of giving importance to the young people who have a big contribution to the Catholic Church. With its theme, *"Filipino Youth in Mission: Beloved, Gifted, empowered"*, the Catholic Church in the Philippines aims not only to emphasize the role of the youth in propagating faith in the society but also to address the pastoral needs of the youth in their daily situation.

Various activities had been organized by the youth ministries and other groups in all parishes, dioceses, and religious groups to celebrate the Year of the Youth. The activities such as youth camps, vocation jamborees, piety seminars, and others were held. I addition to religious festivities, some trainings and workshops such as leadership training, seminars on addressing depression and preventing suicides, issues on sexuality such as teenage pregnancy, premarital sex, contraceptives, relationships and more activities happened during the Year of the Youth.

Despite the chunky activities during the Year of the Youth, the big question here is whether the Filipino Youth benefited from these activities organized by various youth ministries or youth groups? Is the Church really addressing the needs of our young people? Lastly, is the Year of the Youth becoming a channel of the Catholic Church particularly here in the Philippines to listen to the sentiments and plea of the Youth?

Listening to the youth is fundamental for the Catholic Church in order to understand their emotions, sentiments, and spiritual needs, that will serve as a guide to formulate a pastoral program for them.

In the open letter of the Filipino Youth to the Catholic Church in the Philippines dated August 2, 2018, Filipino Youth voiced out their situations and dreams for the Church, the society in searching the purpose in their lives and sharing this to their families, communities, society and the Church they belong. Thus, most of the Filipino Youth benefited from various programs during the Year of the Youth particularly the millennials

Moreover, the Year of the Youth was a time to see the situation of young people not only inside the parish churches but in the *"laylayans"* of our society as well. Young people are more vulnerable due to the problems in our country, especially poverty. Because of the existence of poverty, innocent youth are exposed to prostitution, forced labor, violence, abuses (even inside the Church) human trafficking, illegal drugs and other heinous crimes. Pope Francis on his apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit* says that the Church has never failed to weep on the tragedies of the young people who have already lost their lives because of poverty and violence and none of this pain goes away; it stays with us because of the harsh reality that never be concealed. (CV# 75) The Year of the Youth was a channel not only to defend our young people, who are experiencing violence and abuses particularly in the slum areas, but also make them aware of God's presence in them through the Church.

Furthermore, the Year of the Youth was helpful to let them discover their faith and their direction in life. We cannot deny that many youths who come from broken families can experience depression. Many of them face rejection in their families. Then, they look for affection and recognition from other people. When they need are not satisfied, this can lead them to suicide. According to 2017 statistics of the World Health Organization, almost 3.3 million Filipinos suffered depression and eight out of 100,000 Filipinos are committing suicide from aged 15 to 29 years old. In response to these outraging cases, the youth ministries and other groups in different dioceses and parishes organized some seminars and workshops in order to help the youth who face depression and other forms of crisis in their lives. Furthermore, during that year, spiritual counseling was organized to guide them in their spiritual life and to treasure their faith in God that will serve as a solid foundation of the life of young people.

Discovering Youth's mission and vocation is one of the outcomes of the Year of the Youth Celebration. Many youths were dynamic in doing missionary works in the church. Many young people were vibrant in various ministries inside the Church that will sanctify their lives and deepen their holiness. Thus, many young people were willing to discover their vocation in life-either religious and consecrated person, married life or single blessedness that makes their life full of joy and fulfillment.

However, we need to face the reality that the Year of the Youth was not fully beneficial to ALL the youths in this country especially in the *"laylayans"* of our society. Not 100 percent of Filipino Youth are active and participate in the religious activities in their respective parishes or dioceses. Some of them are still far away from the Church because of the strong attraction of secularism particularly the influence of digital technology or maybe scandals inside the Catholic Church particularly sexual abuses of the clergymen that victimized young people. It is very sad to realize that some parishes or dioceses until now lack pastoral care to the youth. Most of the youth nowadays cannot feel the presence of Christ in their lives. Instead of preparing formation programs and line-up activities for the youth, most of the parishes and dioceses focus on fundraising campaigns for the renovation and beatification of the church building while the youth who the 'now of God' and future leaders of the Church are forgotten.

From my point of view, the Year of the Youth is an "eye-opener" for both young people and the Church to share the common mission. Pope Francis stressed out that young people are the agents of the ministry in the Church. They need to be guided, but at the same time, let them free to develop new approaches with creativity and certain audacity (CV #203). In this, the Catholic Church particularly here in the Philippines should give more emphasis on the participation of the youth in the Church. Let the Church give not only voice to youths who suffered poverty and misery in the society but also an opportunity to speak and listen to their life's stories of God's love for them. Therefore, they can be motivated to serve in the Church, to nourish their faith, to discover their mission in life, and share the God's love that they received to other people particularly to the youth who are experiencing "spiritual thirst" in their lives.

The youth should draw inspiration from the life of Jesus Christ, who is also ever young. He dedicated his life to the mission by bringing God's Kingdom to all the people, to the oppressed, to the poor, to the sinners, etc. He also sacrificed his life because of his love for the whole of humanity.

The Year of the Youth was not only limited to 2019 but rather it is a beginning for the Filipino youth to journey towards the Church's mission as beloved, gifted and empowered youth to the Catholic Church and the Philippine Catholic Church in a particular way.

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Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation "Christus Vivit", 2019.

# A PASTORAL COUNSELOR'S REFLECTIONS ON MINISTERING TO THE YOUTH

Lei Lopez



As a pastoral counselor of the RMT-Center for Family Ministries, it is a given that individuals, couples, and families are part of my regular caseload. These past several years, however, a surge in referrals for counseling adolescents and young adults (and more seminarians) was noticeable in the cases I handle. There have been more cases related to mental health issues such as anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, depression (with suicidality), borderline personality disorders on the extreme end of the spectrum and on the other end of the spectrum are the more common presenting problems such as identity confusion, transitions, adjustments, relationships (friends, family and love life), vocation, and teen/adulting life concerns in general.

What stories have I listened to? A teenager sits unimpressed and glares at me as he is ordered by his parents or guidance counselor to see me for his erratic moods and incomprehensible "I-don't-care-attitude" (in short, for his being a normal teenager). Yet when he softens at the third session, he spills his story of heartbreak for not being noticed by a girl he adores or that he was benched in this year's basketball league. A patient of our in-house psychiatrist is referred because he has had several suicidal attempts and he shows me his arms lined with scars of his previous attempts like badges of honor. A graduating college student talks about her inability to finish her thesis fearing what comes next in the "real world" after graduation – that is, if she does graduate. A young adult talks about how he seems unable to stay long in a job or relationship and similarly, a young lady asks why she keeps falling for the same types of men and toxic relationships. A seminarian asks about his sexuality and if this religious vocation is really for him. A smart young gentleman spills his angst and skepticism about adults, school, church and institutions asking how he can still have trust in these systems who have, in his words, "betrayed their moral standards and ideals." A budding young actor asks, *"Will people still like me even when I am old?," "How will I let my parents know I am burdened by the responsibility of providing for the family?"* … These are just composites of cases presented to me in sessions.

These stories sound complicated (and they are!) but what best practices and attitudes were helpful so that ministering to these teens and young adults became grace-filled and meaningful?

Just by going through the stories above, I am guessing that the adult voices within us are saying, "What is wrong with this generation?" The initial and usual tendency is to see the pathology or what seems not to be going right for these young people.

> Yet if we are to be ministering to them, we have to set aside these tendencies and judgments. We start with an honest effort to understand them.

There must be a degree of curiosity about what is happening to the teen, adolescent, millennial, young adult or youth whom we are ministering to.

From a developmental and psychological perspective, this cohort is going through a transition of what is now termed "adulting" – a process of seeking one's identity from a biological-social-psychological-spiritual standpoint. The question faced is *"Who am I?"* At this point in their lives, they are grappling with wanting to differentiate themselves from their parents and establish themselves as adults. The problem is that neurobiologically speaking, they are still wired to react from an emotional brain bathed with raging hormones hence the risk-taking, emotionally reactive stance and behavior. In terms, of faith, spirituality and ideology, they are coming from a questioning/skeptical "if it can't be proven, it must be wrong" stance. The part of the brain (prefrontal cortex) that deals with moral judgment, empathy, insight, response flexibility, emotion regulation, morality, intuition, attuned communication, and fear modulation is still developing and is the last to develop at around the young adult's mid-twenties. Complicating this is the context and environment they engage in: a fast-paced digital and virtual world. The many choices, opportunities, stimuli presented on social media make the processes of differentiation, individuation, development and maturing more difficult as they are pressured to keep up with the demands of fast-changing norms and standards.

On the other hand, if we are to understand them from their perspective, the Pinoy youth in their letter to the Church leaders in the Year of the Youth (2019), declare that they are beloved, gifted, and empowered. They would want to be seen as life-giving, dynamic, overflowing with blessings, willing and open to learn and to grow; that they are searching for their identity in terms of meaning and purpose; that they are called to act, but need guidance formation; and that they are gifts, life-given and life-giving.1In short, they have much to offer and they want to be seen and heard.

Having this knowledge and understanding about the youth is the starting point of our ministry with them. In practical terms, a lot can be learned from the practice of pastoral counseling in ministering to the youth. In my dealings with the youth, what stands out as the one thing that makes the most sense and impact to them is when they are noticed and listened to.

## Simply put, the best approach to encountering and engaging with the youth is a ministry of listening.

If I were to reveal what has become of the young men and women whose stories I shared above, it was the listening that they experienced that helped them, they claim.

This listening goes beyond hearing. This listening is active in that our goal is to understand the youth as they are. In this listening, we pay attention with all of our senses (hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, tasting). We notice this human being in front of us and hold sacred with hospitality, reverence and care the stories and narratives he or she articulates both verbally and non-verbally. This listening requires us to be present – attending and tending to another as an authentic, congruent person. This listening is intentional. It gives a sense that no one else matters in this encounter than this human being who is sharing a human experience. This listening prompts us to be guided by the Spirit – to make sense and meaning of what is being shared. This listening is a gift we offer to the other that makes him/her feel important and special in the way he or she was attended to seriously.

This listening is not a one-way process. This listening requires us to also listen to the movements and proddings within like how we feel or are affected by what we listened to. In this sense it demands certain attitudes from us as listeners: humility, openness, patience, empathy, concentration. These too are graces and gifts.

This listening is just the beginning of our helping relationship with the youth. The listening part allows the ventilation, catharsis, and ranting they so need. When someone has listened to their stories, they express that something like a heavy weight is lifted or that finally a light is shining through or that a thorn has been plucked from their heart—and they feel relief and liberation. Most times, this is all that is needed.

If we are to continue the process and when trust and safety have been established through the initial listening process, we can move to the next step to guide them and help them come up with insights by confronting them with care. This activates their pre-frontal cortex to come up with insights, to regulate emotions, to discern between right and wrong, to sort out their value systems and to help them come to terms with what they may be contributing to their situation. Finally, we help them discern what plan of actions and changes in behavior they can enact as regards the concerns they are presenting so that they can be responsible, functional and live life more fully.

If we are truly able to practice this ministry of listening, our encounters and engagement with the youth will have been effective and meaningful. As Pope Francis articulates succinctly:

*"The youth say stupid things and they say good things, as we do, as everyone does. But hear them, speak with them, because we must learn from them and they must learn from me, from us."*

My prayer for us all is that in our encounters with the youth, may they feel Christ as the one accompanying them through us. May they see, smell, feel and touch a Christ who is alive in our encounters with them. May their hearts burn with joy as we journey along the road to Emmaus with them and may they invite us further to stay awhile with them.

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Endnotes:

1 An Open Letter of the Filipino Youth to the Catholic Church in the Philippines, downloaded from http://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/an-open-letter-of-the-filipino-youth-to-the-catholic-church-in-the-philippines/

# TWO INITIAL REFLECTIONS ON THE AMAZON SYNOD

Fr. Oliver G. Dy, SJ



When the Church holds an event as grand a scale as the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, one can be almost certain that it is not a novel initiative springing from Rome radiating outside to the world. In fact, the opposite is true. It is Rome that has received what has been painstakingly worked at for decades by many advocates of the natural environment that is also home to many indigenous peoples. The synod's theme "Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for Integral Ecology" has implications not only for the church but also for the broader world. The word "ecology" indicates that the synod here does not deal with some intramural concern or some area of theological dispute internal to the Christian community, but with a concern of global proportions, one with its own proponents and opponents who share and battle it out in the stage of the broader world.

To draw out the significant points of this key ecclesial event held in Rome last October 06 to 27, 2019, we raise the question: "So what?" In what follows, I lay out my inchoate opinions in response to this question while awaiting the post-synodal exhortation of Pope Francis:

**(1)** "Climate change", a phrase that first emerged in journalistic circles roughly three decades ago, has by now become a buzz word with its associable images such as the flooded coastal cities and sound bites of emergent young personalities as Greta Thunberg ("how dare you!"). For not a few people, climate change at its core is about the ethical concern for plant and animal life amid the danger of the potential and actual disappearance of some species from the face of the planet, or the violation of rights that are now being conceptually extended to non-human forms of life. While there are those who publicly deny climate change for political reasons, the greater majority have already accepted it as a given reality attested by stronger typhoons across the world during one season, and extended periods of drought during another, for example. To those who accept climate change as a scientific fact, there is a debate nevertheless on how much is due to purely natural cosmological processes and how much is caused by human acts. Regardless of the case, one can assume the Amazon region as a microcosm of the entire planet, so that what befalls Amazon as a result of climate change would eventually signal the fate of the whole Earth. As regards the species called *homo sapiens* in the only known planet across the universe teeming with a variety of intelligent life, the status and fate of the indigenous residents of Amazon can be taken to represent and express what is both happening and would eventually happen to humanity as a whole.

In the alarms surrounding climate change, what is at stake is not just the preservation of the natural world, but more importantly, the very survival of the human race who inhabit such natural world.

If one goes further back to the time when the Second Vatican Council was unfolding, there was, in fact, a similar threat to the extinction of the human race engulfing the planet, namely nuclear war. Thus in nos. 80-81 of the conciliar document Gaudium et Spes approved and issued in 1965, one reads about the possibility of "the destruction of entire cities of extensive areas along with their population." Thus, the council sternly warns: "It is much to be feared that if this [nuclear arms] race persists, it will eventually spawn all the lethal ruin whose path it is now making ready" (Vatican website translation). Today, climate change has replaced the Cold War arms race as the clear and present danger of such magnitude and scale of impact on human life across this planet.

**(2)** Another incident that marked the synod was the stealing and throwing of the statue of "Pachamama" by some Catholic non-participants into the Tiber River. The presence of this indigenous cultural symbol in some events of the synod remains a subject for discussion, but it raises the question on the relationship between the Christian faith and culture. Granted that the image is non-Christian in origin, does that mean that in the encounter between the gospel and culture, Christian missionaries have the right to violate and destroy rather than integrate into ecclesial life the cultural heritage of others? In fact, the history of missions as witnessed by the earliest accounts attests to missionaries destroying the images of the rival cults as part of the evangelization of cultures. Should this ancient way of proceeding, therefore, be continued in our day?

The question becomes all the more complex when located within the history of colonialism and the present-day ideology of postcolonialism. Should the Catholic Church, for example, apologize for injustices done to the indigenous peoples in the name of evangelization? Indeed in a speech delivered during his visit to Bolivia in 2015, Francis admitted the "grave sins" done unto the indigenous people and begged for forgiveness. On the other hand, he has refused to respond to calls for him to issue a formal apology for the participation and role of Catholic educators in a system enforced in Canada that forced young natives into boarding schools. As different local churches begin to commemorate different occasions marking the advent and growth of the Christian faith in their land, the Church cannot but also confront, at the same time, the reality of the colonial past into which it is historically implicated. It is in this context that the Amazon synod takes another role of importance: it signals the contemporary way of proceeding in the Church's ongoing mission of the evangelization of peoples.



# YOUNG, LAY, FEMALE - WHY ON EARTH AM I STUDYING THEOLOGY?

Nicole Soriano




In all honesty, I still don't entirely know why. It's hard to describe the strange anxiety that paralyzes me when someone asks me why I'm taking up theology. I was asked to write a "sweet" and "uncomplicated" story on this unique journey, yet I find it difficult to write without it being a little bittersweet, and a little complicated. When people leave their careers to pursue this kind of faith-vocation, I think people expect a neat, complete, inspirational story—but the truth is, I don't have one. It's too soon to tell; I am too young to write happy endings. As cliché as it sounds, all I know is that I was called to do it, and I wouldn't have been able to live with the regret had I played deaf to God's invitation.

Two years out of college, I found myself in a job I loved, that is, writing for an art gallery and simultaneously taking up my MA in Art History. But the deeper I got into this field, an inner conflict within me persisted to grow and overwhelm me, pestering me with many tears and sleepless nights, until I could no longer avoid it. I suddenly grew aware that art had become my ultimate priority, my end goal, my religion, my god. I won't get into the nitty-gritty of this part of the story: but essentially, in my total absorption of art, I subtly developed an unhealthy obsession that drew me further and further away from God.

Praying in desperation one morning in a chapel near my home, I asked Him, bitterly, when this interior conflict would finally end—what it was He wanted from me. He responded immediately, directly, and specifically: "Give it all up, learn the faith, and teach it."

Without grace, I wouldn't have been able to answer this crazy call. For months, I repeatedly had to convince myself that I wasn't insane to give up my dream job, financial stability, sole passion and comfort zone to enter into an entirely new field, restart my career, and surrender myself into a blurry future. But, at the same time,

> I felt God making his presence strongly felt—walking me through the process with closeness, letting me hear His voice whenever doubts would creep in, and, most of all, giving me peace.

While this spiritual high has naturally taken its course, it's an experience I cling to until today, whenever I find myself still questioning why.

I then enrolled in my first few theology classes unabashedly idealistic, thinking my calling was simple: learn, study, and teach the faith that had consoled and liberated me for most of my life. For most of my adolescence, my faith had been deeply personal, an invaluable source of comfort and security, rather than of conflict

and uncertainty. I assumed learning theology would be the same—it would be as if I were perpetually on retreat, where I'd briefly be detached from the noise and weight of the world, where my problems would feel much smaller and more distant.

In a way, it is like this at LST, where incredibly kind, deeply spiritual people greet you in the hallways with painfully pure and warm smiles, asking you what you'd like them to pray for. But no one warns you of how strange, almost subversive, it is to make theology your vocation while living in the secular world—and the unique kind of isolation that brings.

I knew I would face some challenges in spite of my idealism, but I never foresaw how much of an outlier I would be. When I entered the classroom on my first day of prophets class, my teacher, an 80-year old sister, exclaimed, "Yes! We have another woman in this class!" Suddenly self-conscious, I saw the only other woman in the room was a sister. I felt classmates wondering why I was there, as if theology was not the territory for someone like me. Thereafter, I tried my best to blend in: trading skirts and dresses for men's t-shirts and loose jeans, and studying extremely hard to prove to myself that I was qualified to be there. Perhaps subconsciously, I hoped to show everyone that in spite of who I was and how I looked, I wanted to be taken seriously.

Yet, no matter how hard I tried, I could not deny the fact that my very position is unique. Gradually and reluctantly, I'm learning to embrace it—because I get the sense that this unique position is a major reason why I'm here.

My perspective as a young lay woman may not have been that rare back in college or even in the art world, when there were plenty of others like me. Entering LST, I felt as if God had plucked me out of my comfortable, homogeneous, and insulated worlds to expose me to the realities of choosing the religious life from the inside. I've met brave souls from around Asia who chose the Catholic faith despite it being a minority in their countries, risking the possible discrimination of being a missionary in these places; humble seminarians who left their families in the province to spend demanding years studying and taking up the arduous task of being shepherds to thousands of Filipino faithful; sisters full of wit and intelligence, yet are never boastful nor self-centered, using their brains and skills always for the ultimate good of their communities.

The community at LST constantly shows me that studying theology does not equate to a pleasing, self-serving spiritual bliss—but rather, carries with it a heavy weight; for knowing more means more responsibility.

They're conscious of the truth that God deliberately brought each of us here to learn not ultimately for ourselves, but for others—a radical, refreshing change from the world glorifying individual career advancement and competition outside. I should thus no longer perceive their curiosity and puzzled looks as signs that make me feel different and unwelcome, but as shows of genuine care and joy, for it is precisely people like me that many of them hoped to bring into the faith world. I was someone whose perspective was sorely lacking, yet needed.

Contemplating this need, I'm starting to ponder more deeply the reason why I'm here: not just because God called me, but why He did. And the more I accept the things that make me unique rather than resist them, I feel as if I draw closer to the path he wants me on. Studying the prophets, I was drawn to the elusive yet powerful narratives of women in the Old Testament: from Tamar to Gomer to unnamed women who led profound and complex lives, but had long been misunderstood, flattened, or forgotten. Learning revelation, I was awed by the drama of God, who revealed Himself throughout history freely and intimately and undeservingly—the way great artists are urged to create purely out of love, not for a transactional need in return.

I'm seeing how my own distinct experience as a woman and my natural gift to appreciate the affective power of art can be used to effectively tell the stories of our rich tradition: stories that are rarely told with excitement and passion to the youth, stories that are often ignored or forgotten because of this, yet stories that have nonetheless sustained the faithful for centuries. Because when understood and interpreted with openness, seriousness, and love, these are stories that reveal the true face of a just, compassionate God—not a distant, discriminating one that too many young ones like me had grown up with.

I came in theology hopeful and idealistic, and in many ways I still am. But I'm learning that what matters is not how sweet, smooth and certain the journey is—just that I continue to stay. While I may not know where this vocation will take me tomorrow or ten years from now, I do have a dream I hold close to my heart: a dream where studying theology will be normal for a young girl like me. A dream where she will no longer get strange looks, where she will have plenty of women to identify with amongst the faith's gatekeepers—not just a few old white men. A dream where people from all walks of life—young and elderly, women and men and LGBTs, artists and activists and recovering alcoholics—are actively engaging questions of faith, knowing that the God at the heart of this faith desperately wants their unique voices to be heard and valued; knowing His Church is made infinitely richer because of them.

# MAGDILANG ANGHEL!
## 2019 LST CHRISTMAS PARTY HOMILY

Fr. Eric Eusebio, SJ




There is an expression still in use in the Tagalog-speaking regions of the Philippines – and perhaps there might be its equivalent among the Visayans – and it goes this way: *"Magdilang Anghel"*. *Dila* is a tongue. The verb *Magdila* is practically never used these days anymore but it is about using one's tongue to speak. *Magdilang anghel* means to speak as an angel would speak. I buy a lotto ticket and my best friend tells me: I pray that you might hit the jackpot so I can have my *balato*, a little gift from you. If I'm a true best friend, I would say, *"Naku, magdilang anghel ka nawa": May your good wish come true!*

Indeed, our Gospel reading (Lk 1:26-38) and the readings of the coming days of *Simbang gabi* and Sundays of Advent might have been the origin of this Tagalog expression. Angel Gabriel spoke to Zechariah and Elizabeth, to Mary and Joseph, likewise to the shepherds and the Magi, bringing the Good News from on high. Every word spoken through the "angel's tongue" was accomplished. God's compassionate and loving kindness was not only manifested but also experienced personally by these individuals and the whole of created reality.

Indeed, Angel Gabriel spoke God's Word and henceforth, God will never be again watching us anymore *"from a distance"* as the song goes, because he has entered into the history of created reality. He has since shared most fully in our human experience of journeying, of setting out, losing our way, falling, rising up again, finding our way again. Indeed, *"though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men and women"* (Phil 2:6).

The Angel spoke, God visited his people, and He never left us again because, *"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt, he pitched his tent, among us"*. Thus, entering into the history of our humanity, God loved us by his self-emptying act and so only by such love are we saved and reconciled with God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in explaining the mystery of our salvation through the Incarnation quotes a Church Father in the 4th century, St. Gregory of Nyssa:

*Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Savior; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and to visit him…?* (Orat. Catech. 15: PG 45, 48B).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews testifies to the faith of the Church concerning the Word-made-flesh and his perpetual and eternal visitation among us. He contrasts Jesus with the prophets:

"In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son".



The prophets spoke to the Chosen People at different periods of Israel's history, addressing certain concerns of the day. Amos' voice was a call for social justice. Isaiah's experience captured the holiness of God. Hosea's truth concerned about the forgiving love of God. For the exegete William Barclay, each prophet had grasped and expressed a fragment of the truth of God. None was able to express the entire truth about God's word. However, continues Barclay, "Jesus is not a fragment of the truth; he is the whole truth. In him, God revealed not some part of himself but all of himself", as expressed John's Gospel: *"From his fullness, we have all received grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*

Indeed, the prophets were the friends of God; but Jesus is the Son, and we, His brothers and sisters. And so he whose birth we will celebrate is our elder brother, our *Kuya* in Tagalog, our *Kakak* or *Kak* in Bahasa, *Ge-Ge* in Chinese, *Anh* in Vietnamese. Through Him, according to St. Paul in his Letter to the Galatians 4, we have received adoption as sons and daughters. And because we are God's sons and daughters, the Spirit of Jesus is in our hearts so we can call God *"Abba! Father!"* All these were fulfilled as Gabriel, angel of the Lord, brought the Good News of the Incarnation to Mary.

If we look around us here in LST, now, this year more than ever, we see a melting pot of various cultures and nations. We come from 35 different countries, from 6 of the 7 continents, unless there is someone here from Antarctica. In our study of theology here at LST, it is precisely the mystery of the Incarnation that impels us to understand and to appreciate our Christian faith from the viewpoint – the lens – of our various cultures and contexts. Just as *"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,"* so too the Word, Jesus Christ, and the entire system of belief of the Church must take root in the concrete life situation of our people so that the Word may continue to be made flesh and dwell among us.

During his recent visit to Thailand, Pope Francis urged the Thai priests and religious *"to seek new ways of transmitting the word, ways that are capable of mobilizing and awakening a desire to know the Lord,"* adding that he was saddened to learn that for many people in Thailand, Christianity is *"a foreign faith, a religion for foreigners."* Pope Francis thus said that *"this reality should spur us to find ways to confess the faith 'in dialect,' like a mother who sings lullabies to her child. With that same intimacy, let us give the Christian faith a Thai face and flesh."*

I pray - with the tongue of an angel – in the spirit of the Incarnation, that your theological formation here in LST may remain always in active dialogue with our various cultures. As the Angel spoke to Mary, so may Jesus Christ continue to take flesh among us – in our lived theologizing – today. For this Christmas, may the Prince of Peace fill your hearts and the hearts of your loved ones back home with unwavering hope and lasting peace. May He bless our respective countries and peoples with sustainable progress that will truly benefit the poorest among our people.

# #GALINGLST

Br. Migs Ramirez



A student studying in Ateneo is commonly known as an "Atenean." A student from UP is called "Isko" or "Iska." A "La Sallian" is a student from De Lasalle University; a "Bosconian" is from Don Bosco; a "Thomasian," from the University of Sto. Tomas. The list goes on. But though we're not talking about exclusivity nor labeling, having these nicknames assures us that we are proud to belong to a bigger institution, a greater affinity, a unique family.

How then do we call ourselves, students of LST? (I know what you're thinking... and I'm sure even you don't like the sound of it!)

When we asked our students the question: "What school are you from?" Their simple answer was: "Galing LST" (Tagalog Adverb, "from")

Corny, we said.

But after listening to it again, we saw the recall. "Gáling" means "from," but "Galíng" means "excellent," "amazing," "promising." It's the same word, but when read differently, it leaps forward and captures the identity and character of the kind of students of Theology we hope to become.

## Leadership is always a gift and a responsibility.

This has been our experience in the months we have been your student leaders. It's never easy to be leaders, especially because it requires greater love and patience. But in the end, it is always a gift, because it reveals a God who calls not out of competence, but out of generosity.

LST is known for its exceptional Theology. There's no question about that. Thus, we as a council envision an Empowering Community—a student body, living and thriving as a family within the walls of our school. How have we translated this? Through committees, celebrations, and collaborations.

The first step we took was to open the different **committees** where the students can participate: Liturgy, Sports, Tinig Loyola, Social Involvement, Programs, Choir, Theological Hour, and the Alumni committees. Over and above the responsibilities, our thanks go to all students who supported and participated in the different gatherings of LST so far. We didn't stop with the functional committees. We activated all the level-representatives from the Pre-Theology, and Pastoral Ministry levels, the first to fourth year STB/MA, and STL/PhD/DMin levels. We have also activated the various unique groups in our institution, such as the International Students group, Women's groups, CEFAM/EAPI students, and Lay students. All the leaders of these groups are part of who we call the Steering Committee of the LST Student body.



Second, we have also come together for various **celebrations** already throughout the first semester.

In August, we took our oaths as the Student Council, side by side with the installation of our new LST president, Fr. Enrico Eusebio, SJ.

In September, we began with the annual celebration of the Season of Creation, which we held in the Oratory of St. Ignatius of Loyola, 3rd floor, LHS. We then proceeded to stage six (6) Theological Hour sessions throughout the semester.

In November, we collaborated with the different committees and hosted the Annual LST Alumni Homecoming. Aside from the Eucharistic Celebration, one of the things we looked forward to was the presentation of the different international groups during the evening program.

December was short. We ushered the Christmas season early by having our international groups decorate specific areas of the LST building. Meanwhile, the semester culminated with an LST Christmas Party, bringing together the different sectors of the community with games, food, and giving of gifts to the Lumad community, now residing in different areas in Metro Manila.

Finally, students have also **collaborated** for the community. Through the efforts of the BPM/PTS batch, a monstrance is in place inside the tabernacle of the La Storta Chapel (Small chapel beside the Gana and Ollado rooms). One can sit and adore the Blessed Sacrament anytime. The women student leaders, on the other hand, have collated a survey for the female students of LST, to hear their voice and bring them together.

The Second semester has already begun, and things aren't stopping yet. We are in the midst of organizing the LST Sportsfest, the LST Blood Drive, and the succeeding Theological Hour sessions. Soon, we will be turning over the leadership to the next elected Student Council. But before we do that, we hope to be able to give honor to this office by passing on this leadership just like how it was given to us: a gift and a responsibility.

We are your student council, proud to be Gáling LST, and will continue to show that we are Galíng LST!

Migs Ramirez, President
Sr. Ancilla Naiyang, MSC, Vice President
Bro. Nhat Van Nguyen, SCJ, Secretary
Bro. Ariel Vidanes, AA, Treasurer
Bro. John Dave Eturma, CP, Asst. Treasurer
Fr. Renato Repole, SJ, Adviser

# FR. ERIC EUSEBIO, SJ INSTALLED AS 10TH LST PRESIDENT

Br. Lloyd Sabio, SJ



The solemn investiture of Rev. Fr. Enrico "Eric" C. Eusebio, Jr. S.J as the tenth president of the Loyola School of Theology (LST) was held on August 28, 2019, at the Oratory of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Loyola House of Studies. This came after the *Congregatio De Institutione Catholica (De Seminariis Atque Studiorum Institutis)* gave the formal appointment and confirmation on February 18, 2019.

The event followed the traditional celebration of the Mass of the Holy Spirit presided by Most Rev. Gabriele Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines. Also present were Most Rev. Honesto Ongtioco, Bishop of Cubao, Fr. Primitivo Viray, S.J., Superior of the Philippine Province, Fr. Jose V.C. Quilongquilong, S.J., previous LST President, members of the LST Board of Trustees, Bishop-Members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, LST administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni, LST benefactors, superiors of religious communities, fellow Jesuits, and other guests.

In his three-part inaugural address, the new president presented LST through the Lens of Its Alumni, Mission, and its Missionary Renewal of its Theological Studies after *Veritatis Gaudium*.

LST through the Lens of Its Alumni:

Fr. Eric shared testimonies of alumni from Africa, Europe, Latin America, Asia, and the Philippines that LST prepared them for their mission in their local Churches. These alumni have responded to the challenges in their ministries as formators, teachers, missionaries, or lay collaborators. A Jesuit alumnus assigned as headmaster in Wau, South Sudan wrote:

> "LST empowered me to develop resilience and pliability to work with displaced and forcibly uprooted people who, in many cases, remain in a state of despair."

In the Philippines, five LST alumni were appointed as bishops by Pope Francis in 2019 alone. This only shows, according to Fr. Eric, the service that LST provides to various Churches.

The Mission of LST:

LST continues to uphold its three-fold mission to make sure that it is always in communion with the Church: Ecclesiastical, Asian and International, and Jesuit. As an ecclesiastical university, LST, through its faculty, commits itself to theologizing students "in a way that is profound, creative, beautiful, attractive, inspiring, and even disturbing" since, according to Fr. Eric, "theology is faith seeking deeper and creative understanding." Originally established to form future priests, a mission which has undoubtedly expanded



over the past 50 years, LST also now caters to the professional and ministerial formation of the laity and religious sisters to help carry out the mission of the clergy. With this, Fr. Eric took the opportunity to launch the **LST Scholarship Fund for the Laity and Religious Sisters**, a fund-raising activity that aims to raise Php 20, 000,000 for the scholarship of prospective students in the masters and doctoral programs.

As an Asian Faculty of Theology, LST assumes a "global character of Jesuit mission" as seen in its Asian context-based course offerings and initiatives such as the **Asian Theological Program** and the recently instituted **Theology in an Asian Language Series**. In addition, LST offers various theology and psycho-spiritual courses available in different Asian languages. Fr. Eric vowed to expand LST's programs in the near future to cater to its ever-increasing number of international students (187 out of 463 for the first semester of SY 2019-2020). This means a constant updating in the curriculum, course offerings, and pedagogy in accord with its Asian Theological Program.

Lastly, as a key Jesuit institution in the Philippines, LST affirms the Universal Society's efforts and directives. In fact, Fr. Eric vouched for LST's commitment to promote and uphold the **Universal Apostolic Preferences** (UAPs), the Jesuits' road map in its mission, in the next ten years.

The Missionary Renewal of Theological Studies after *Veritatis Gaudium*:

Lastly, Fr. Eric invited the whole LST community to consider Pope Francis' 2018 Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* (The Joy of Truth) on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties. He said that "the theology after *Veritatis Gaudium* for Pope Francis is a kerygmatic, mission-oriented theology that never tires in proclaiming the Gospel of Love and Mercy; it is a theology that leads the Church to always 'go forth', constantly finding opportunities to serve instead of being preoccupied with preserving itself in its past glories; it is a theology of discernment that inspires us to be compassionate, to be welcoming, to be always in dialogue with society, cultures, and religions, shunning isolationism, so that together we may realize the peaceful coexistence of individuals and peoples (Naples)."

Fr. Eric's new mission remains a work-in-progress. As he starts his term, it is clear that making LST an even more effective agent in promoting the Church's mission remains his number one priority.

Fr. Eric has been a Jesuit for 34 years. He entered the Society of Jesus on May 30, 1986, and was ordained priest on April 20, 1996. Prior to assuming the presidency, he had been a professor of Canon Law, Dean, and Vice President for Administration of the school.

*The quotations included in this article were taken from Fr. Eric's inaugural address.

# UPDATES ON THE LST FACULTY PROFILE

Br. Aldrin Perez, SchP





**Fr. Enrico Eusebio, SJ,** the current president of the Loyola School of Theology, obtained his A.B. Pre-Divinity degree in 1986 from the Ateneo de Manila University as a seminarian of San Jose College Seminary. In 1996, he completed his Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) and M.A. Theology degrees respectively at the Loyola School of Theology (with thesis). He was sent to Rome for his Licentiate in Canon Law at the Pontifical Gregorian University and at the Pontifical Salesian University for his doctorate. Presently, he is teaching Canon Law I and II, *Ad Audiendas Confessiones,* Introduction to Pastoral Methods and Italian Language I and II at the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University.



**Fr. Francis Alvarez, S.J.** is currently the assistant professor of Biblical Theology and Religious Education at the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University. He is teaching *Ad Audiendas Confessiones*, Synoptic Gospels, Biblical Perspectives on Ecology, and Spiritual Sources of Catholic Education. He finished his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University (with thesis), Master of Arts in Theological Studies at the Ateneo de Manila University (with thesis), Licentiate in Sacred Theology (concentration on Scripture) at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Massachusetts (with thesis), and Doctorate Degree in Philosophy major in Theology and Education at Boston College, Massachusetts with a dissertation entitled "The Unfolding of Your Words (Ps. 119:130): The Pedagogy of the Psalms."



**Fr. Oliver Dy, S.J.** is currently the Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Loyola School of Theology. He is presently teaching Christian Worship and Introduction to Philosophy. He attained his bachelor's degree in Physics at the Ateneo de Manila University (1997), his Baccalaureate degree in Theology at Loyola School of Theology (2009), his Master's Degree in Philosophy (2005, non-thesis) and Theological Studies (2009) both at the Ateneo de Manila University. He had his M.A. in Theology and Religious Studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (2012) including his Licentiate in Sacred Theology (2013), and Doctorate in Sacred Theology and Philosophy (2017).



**Fr. Manuel J. Montesclaros, SJ** is one of the professors of Biblical Theology in Loyola School of Theology. He took his Licentiate in Sacred Scriptures at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He finished his MA in Pastoral Ministry at the Ateneo de Manila University and Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology at the Fu-jen Catholic University, Taipei. He was a full-time faculty at LST during the school year 2004-2005; 2000-2001 and served as a visiting professor in St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, Cagayan de Oro in 1999, 2001-2004, 2005-2013. Currently, he is teaching classes in Introduction to the Old Testament and New Testament, Israel's Wisdom Literature, and *Ad Audiendas Confessiones*.



**Prof. Manuel B. Dy, Jr.** has been teaching philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University for the past fifty years. Dr. Manny Dy is editor and co-author of Philosophy of Man, Selected Readings, *Mga Babasahin sa Pilosopiyang Moral* (Readings in Moral Philosophy), Phenomenological Papers, Contemporary Social Philosophy *(Napapanahong Panlipunang Pilosopiya*), and Values in Philippine Education and Culture. He is a member of the Technical Committee in Philosophy of the Commission on Higher Education and a consultant of the Department of Education's Kindergarten to Grade 12 Edukasyon sa Pagpakatao (Education to Becoming a Human Person) curriculum. His research interests include Oriental Philosophies, Social Philosophy and Philosophical Anthropology.

SINCE 1965

